



“Keep this book at your side
at all times! It’s everything
a great coach should be.”

Kim Morgan,
MCC and Director of Barefoot Coaching

The **Transformational Coach**

Free your thinking and
break through to coaching mastery

CLARE NORMAN

Shift 79

OLD MINDSET: When a session is over, it's over

NEW MINDSET: Closing the session fully allows for continued new thinking afterwards

I see so many coaches end their sessions abruptly: it's as though they want to get as much accomplished in the time they have with a thinker, that they forget to keep an eye on the time. Even as they approach five minutes before the end, they're still asking divergent questions rather than convergent; questions that open up the thinking rather than ones that bring the session to a close.

Good endings are vital to ensure that thinking and forward motion continues post-session. I suspect there are many (conscious or unconscious) beliefs that contribute to abrupt endings:

- ➔ We must cover everything we set out to cover.
- ➔ 'I've started, so I'll finish.' (the famous catchphrase of Magnus Magnusson, the first presenter of TV quiz *Mastermind*)
- ➔ I add value by getting the thinker to a resolution to their issue.
- ➔ They can't do the thinking on their own outside of the session.

If you were to replace these mindsets with the following, you could give the ending the attention it needs:

- ➔ Any progress is good progress. (Amabile and Kramer 2011)
- ➔ We get to wherever we get to in the time we have together.
- ➔ The thinker is 'creative, resourceful and whole' (Whitworth et al. 1998) and can continue thinking and moving forward without me, if we plan for that.
- ➔ Good endings make way for great new beginnings. (Bridges 2004).

With these different beliefs in mind, you can shift your behaviour away from a bumpy landing into a much smoother transition from coaching back into day-to-day life.

Mindsets we learned from our coaching experience that we need to discard...

Good endings in coaching might look something like this CLOSE (which we already discussed in depth in Shift 17):

Consolidation: 'We have X minutes left. You said you wanted X today... what progress have you made towards that?' 'What experiments are you committing to after the session that will continue your progress?'

Learning: 'What are you hoping to learn from your experiments?' 'What have you learned about yourself today that you can apply in this situation and beyond?'

Obstacles: 'What might get in your way?'

Support: 'How will you hold yourself accountable?' 'What support mechanisms might you put in place?' 'What internal and external resources can you draw on?'

End: 'On that note, is that enough for today?'

As you can see, this calls on the thinker to pull together the threads of what they've been thinking about, and make some commitments to themselves post-session. This gives them the momentum to keep going after the session is over, and makes room for a great new beginning to the next chapter of their growth. Each session creates an outline for the next chapter; then the next chapter in between sessions is given life through new ways of being.

And if they haven't finished everything they set out to achieve in the session? Don't tell them to bring it next time, as that presupposes they can't make progress alone. Instead, ask a question about where they will get the support to figure that out.

Shift 80

OLD MINDSET: Coaching sessions are a set length

NEW MINDSET: It's OK to finish early

As we've seen previously, some coaches follow a model of 90–120 minutes of coaching, while others stick with 60 minutes. Still others go for shorter 30–45-minute sessions. Those who learned to work with 90 minutes at the start of their coaching practice find it hard to adapt to shorter sessions and vice-versa. I started my coaching career coaching for 60 minutes at a time, and when asked to coach for 120 minutes, I couldn't imagine how to make it last that long!

We do need to contract for a length of time per session, so that we can both have clear diaries for that duration, plus some additional time before and after to get prepared and reflect. But here's the thing: sometimes the thinker has finished before you've used up all that time. They've done some great thinking, made a breakthrough and are ready to get on with the actual work of doing and being different. They don't need to keep going, just so that you can say you used all the time you had together.

How do you know that they are done? Ask them. For example:

- 'You said at the beginning that you wanted X; where are you with that now?'
- 'Your question today was X; how are we doing in finding an answer to that?'

Then let them know how much time you still have left, and ask how they would like to use it: 'What would be useful in our remaining 20 minutes together?'

If they are done, and if you've built a good partnership where they feel they can say they're done, they will tell you at this point that they're ready to wrap up – so, move to CLOSE. Don't just stop dead, but end the session well (see also Shifts 17 and 79).

On several occasions over the course of my coaching career, a

thinker has decided to work alone for the rest of their time on the action they've decided to take, as they want to strike while the iron is hot. For example, writing a business case while ideas are fresh in their mind, drafting an email requesting a meeting, picking up the phone to have a conversation or creating a spreadsheet to address one of their concerns.

This is their choice to use the time in this way, and they are continuing to get value from the time that they have set aside in their diary for the coaching. They don't need you there to be able to do this, but the time is a gift to them to get it done before they slot back into their busy operations.

The new mindset is that you are done when you are done! Again, move to CLOSE at this point rather than carrying on just because you are contracted to work for longer. You will over-egg the pudding if you take control of the agenda and keep going.

This can apply equally to the number of sessions you plan for. If a thinker feels that they have enough from one session rather than the contracted four, they are done. No need to continue just because that's what has been paid for (although you may wish to think about how you structure your contracts with organisational stakeholders: for example, are you charging for a set number of sessions or hours, or completion of objectives?).





In fact, maybe it's time to look at how many sessions you do contract for, and whether each thinker really does need that many. Single-session coaching might be all they need to make a breakthrough – and you both need to believe that this is possible. If you think it will take six sessions, often it will. The work expands (or contracts) to the time you have available (you will recognise this as Parkinson's Law; Parkinson 1955).

Do you ever doubt your coaching style is achieving the best results for your clients? Have you ever felt there's room for growth, but you're not sure how to achieve it?

To create a more sustainable transformation in the people you coach, you need to start with your own mindset. As a coach, you know you can't change what you do unless you alter what you believe first.

By shedding the ineffective scripts, trappings and beliefs that a lifetime of personal interactions, professional training and even your parents have taught you, you can reset your thinking to a beginner's mentality and so begin a fulfilling and exciting journey to coaching mastery.

In this fresh and highly effective field guide, Master Mentor Coach, Clare Norman gets into your head to help you pinpoint the attitudes that you need to unlearn and reframe. Through Clare's rich experience, illuminating real-life stories and practical guidance, you can shift towards more useful thinking and powerful skillsets by:

-  Spotting and changing your own restrictive coaching mindsets
-  Understanding how marginal gains can lead to maximal outcomes
-  Embracing replacement paradigms and new thought patterns
-  Rediscovering what you love about coaching and its power to resource people

It's time to ditch the old beliefs that are holding you back, free your thinking and make the move from getting transactional results to being a transformational coach.

“Essential reading for all coaches. Skilfully lays out the important mindset shifts required to become masterful in your work.”

Marie Quigley, MCC, EMCC ESIA, director and co-founder of Empower World

“Thought-provoking! This is a must-read for anyone who wants to get out of their own way and move further toward becoming a great coach.”

**Roger Fielding, coach, mentor coach,
course tutor at the University of Cambridge**

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