

## Dear Master Coach

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### Dear Master Coach:

**I have a client who seems ready to work, yet is never prepared for our coaching sessions. We seem to play "catch up" every time we meet which consumes valuable coaching time. How do I get my client to prepare before meetings or should I assume this lack of being prepared is the coaching issue? Help!**

**Frustrated Franny**

Dear FF:

What a great question. You want to do a good job and you've been taught to find the agenda and to explore accountabilities—usually at the beginning and at the close of a session, right? And then your client skids into sessions seemingly unprepared. And you know (a) you're not the only person in his or her life to experience this frustration and (b) you might be the only one who addresses it.

Here are a couple of "maybe's" I explore with these "Kramers":

**Maybe** your client is moving more slowly through the stages of change than you are. This might be time to step back, say what you see and then to explore what's below the water-line in the resistance: Saboteurs? Missing resources? Competing agenda? Old stories, feelings and structures? Fear of the unknown?

**Maybe** your client needs to hear you talk about your expectations as a coach. This might be time for you to use your non-anxious coaching presence to get clear about how you work and what you expect of the partnership—i.e. to refresh your agreement. Invite a conversation with your client about how he or she wants you to work with them around accountabilities. And if you really like to have a pre-session focus form or email, say so. If your client is clear that they'd rather do the focusing as a part of the session, make that part of your agreement.

Personally, once I know I've explored those things and the client and I still keep landing on the same accountability and time table, I've been known to say, *"OK Kramer. It seems like we've explored and established a pretty solid next step. Does that seem right to you? ("Yes.") So here's my idea: Rather than rescheduling now, would you be willing to be in touch after you've given your plan a shot? Then we'll book a session, explore what you've tried and what you've learned/accomplished and look to what happens next."*

Sometimes it works. Sometimes coaching is just more art than science.

PEB, MC