

Hacking the Core Competencies

In Module I, I ask new coaches to focus on the key skills and stages of coaching human change. And we use the Play Card (**The 3 A's and the Core Four**) to begin to play with the balance and rhythm of coaching. In Module II, and later in the Mastery Alliance Teams, I widen our focus to, 1) the development of your personal presence as a coach and, 2) the further development of your balance and rhythm as you understand and make personal the ICF Core Competencies. When you are ready to apply for certification, your grasp of the following competencies will be assessed at the ACC level on the multiple choice "knowledge assessment," and then at the PCC level, your actual performance will be evaluated via recordings and transcripts. My goal for coaching in our SeattleCoach Network is for each of you to feel comfortable coaching at the PCC level by the time you complete Module II.

Coaching becomes nearly magical when, instead of driving to solution and accomplishment, we trust our clients more--and when we stay open to learning from and being touched by them. We are always more effective when we see them as bearers of gifts for us. Mastering the following will help you to foster the magic.

A few years ago I designed a document called, "Hacking the Core Competencies." In those days, the ICF's Core Competencies were big philosophical targets that, in my opinion, needed a little decoding in order for new coaches to grasp what they looked like behaviorally, in practice. Then, in early 2014, the ICF's standards went up, along with their need to give their assessors clearer direction. I happily edited my work to include their new markers.

I still keep my own personal learnings-log, noting what I believe each of these competencies looks like in practice--as I hope you will. Please keep a copy of this document with you throughout Module II. It's designed for you to add your own insights and learnings. Get to know it well--the multiple choice ICF assessment is based on the CC's and the Code of Ethics.

- Everything in blue below is © [ICF](#) and describes the behaviors that should be in place in coaching at the Professional Certified Coach (PCC) level.
- Everything in red below is my take on things.

A. Setting the Foundation

#1: Meeting Ethical Guidelines and Professional Standards

1. Understands and exhibits in own behaviors the [ICF Standards of Conduct](#).
2. Understands and follows all [ICF Ethical Guidelines](#).
3. Clearly communicates the distinctions between coaching, consulting, psychotherapy and other support professions.
4. Refers client to another support professional as needed, knowing when this is needed and the available resources.

Patty's summary: *Get clear about the ICF Standards of Conduct and Code of Ethics. Act like a coach and be able to explain distinctions (like between consulting, psychotherapy, rescuing, nagging, etc.) when you need to. Refer when you need to. Consult with another coach when you need to. Focus on inquiry and exploration, the present and future rather than on telling, advising, assigning or acting alone to choose the focus or answers.*

Your comments and learnings:

#2: Creating the Coaching Agreement

1. Coach helps the client identify, or reconfirm, what s/he wants to accomplish in the session.
2. Coach helps the client to define or reconfirm measures of success for what s/he wants to accomplish in the session.
3. Coach explores what is important or meaningful to the client about what s/he wants to accomplish in the session.
4. Coach helps the client define what the client believes he/she needs to address or resolve in order to achieve what s/he wants to accomplish in the session.
5. Coach continues conversation in direction of client's desired outcome unless client indicates otherwise.

Patty's summary: *Explore fully your client's focus of learning, vision and intended change. Explore and establish the measures of success for the session. Check/revisit in along the way to see if the coaching is on track. Explore if there was anything else you and he/she should talk about and if they are getting what they want from the conversation. There is a full partnership.*

Your comments and learnings:

B. Co-creating the Relationship

#3: Creating Trust and Intimacy

1. Coach acknowledges and respects the client's work in the coaching process.
2. Coach expresses support for the client.
3. Coach encourages and allows the client to fully express him/herself.

Patty's summary: *This one is about the signal strength and about the creation of enough safety and trust for deep learning to happen. The coach provides support for and champions the client's full expression and experimentation with strengths, assets, new behaviors and risks. The coach works from not-knowing and shares his/her observations without attachment to being right about*

them. The focus is on the client's view of the situation more than the coach's. The coach asks permission, there is mutual equality and vulnerability and comfort with not-knowing. The client is a full and complete partner and the ultimate decider of what's important. The coach is at ease and NOT more interested in his or her own views, tools, performance or demonstration of knowledge. What is the client taking away from the conversation? With trust and intimacy, value almost always happens.

Your comments and learnings:

#4: Coaching Presence

1. Coach acts in response to both the whole person of the client and what the client wants to accomplish in the session.
2. Coach is observant, empathetic, and responsive
3. Coach notices and explores energy shifts in the client.
4. Coach exhibits curiosity with the intent to learn more
5. Coach partners with the client by supporting the client to choose what happens in the session.
6. Coach partners with the client by inviting the client to respond in any way to the coach's contributions and accepts the client's response.
7. Coach partners with the client by playing back the client's expressed possibilities for the client to choose from.
8. Coach partners with the client by encouraging the client to formulate his or her own learning.

Patty's summary: The coach demonstrates deep partnering with his/her client and doesn't coach for just a solution to the client's concern. The coach responds both to what the client wants to accomplish and to who he/she is and wants to be. The coach is curious, empathetic and encourages the client's use of space/time to reflect. The coach pays attention to his/her own somatic intelligence and energy: Beliefs, mood, body and behavior, voice, breath, posture—and invites the client to do the same. The coach leaves time for what he/she says to land. The coach is present, flexible, intuitive, equal and at ease, not driving an agenda, and willing to risk along with the client. The coach is open to what the client has to teach him/her and there is complete curiosity without the need to perform. The coach's job is far more about creating trust, space and focus than it is about driving an agenda.

Your comments and learnings:

C. Communicating Effectively

#5: Active Listening

1. Coach's questions and observations are customized by using what the coach has learned about who the client is and the client's situation.
2. Coach inquires about or explores the client's use of language.
3. Coach inquires about or explores the client's emotions.
4. Coach inquires about or explores the client's tone of voice, pace of speech or inflection as appropriate.
5. Coach inquires about or explores the client's behaviors.
6. Coach inquires about or explores how the client perceives his/her world.
7. Coach is quiet and gives client time to think.

Patty's summary: The coach listens with emotion and presence to the client's wholeness and agenda at all levels, to what is and is not possible in the client's thinking--to both the logical and the emotional. The coach invites the client to explore what he or she feels deeply about, listening for underlying beliefs and incongruities. Level III listening is unfiltered by the coach's need to demonstrate knowledge, tools and methods. The coach is curious along the way, what are limiting beliefs? Is the client getting what he/she really wants?

The coach's questions and observations are customized and based on what he or she is hearing from the client. The coach listens beyond the words to the client's shifts in energy and emotion. The coach doesn't rush the client, nor fill up the silence with stacked questions or meandering comments. The coach doesn't finish the client's statements/questions. The coach doesn't listen in order to teach or impose a story. The coach lets the client lead and explores the truth from the client's pov.

Your comments and learnings:

#6: Powerful Questioning

1. Coach asks questions about the client; his/her way of thinking, assumptions, beliefs, values, needs, wants, etc.
2. Coach's questions help the client explore beyond his/her current thinking to new or expanded ways of thinking about himself/herself.
3. Coach's questions help the client explore beyond his/her current thinking to new or expanded ways of thinking about his/her situation.

4. Coach's questions help the client explore beyond current thinking towards the outcome s/he desires.
5. Coach asks clear, direct, primarily open-ended questions, one at a time, at a pace that allows for thinking and reflection by the client.
6. Coach's questions use the client's language and elements of the client's learning style and frame of reference.
7. Coach's questions are not leading, i.e. do not contain a conclusion or direction.

Patty's summary: This one is at the heart of things. Ask simple questions that are big enough to matter, questions that help your client to move below the surface, or into a larger space with his/her presenting issues. (What do you notice about your breath, voice...? What part of you is not ok with this?) Your questions aren't standardized or informational, but rather encourage self-reflection and discovery as well as consideration of next steps to support your client's objectives. Ask questions to which you don't know the answer early on. The goal isn't data collection, the goal is to raise/deepen your client's awareness. Powerful questions are not leading. If your question is big enough to matter, don't clutter it with too many words, or stack other questions on top. Wait for it to land. Maybe ask it a second time. Let your client work a little harder. Let silence do some of the heavy lifting.

Your comments and learnings:

#7: Direct Communication

1. Coach shares observations, intuitions, comments, thoughts and feelings to serve the client's learning or forward movement.
2. Coach shares observations, intuitions, comments, thoughts and feelings without any attachment to them being right.
3. Coach uses the client's language or language that reflects the client's way of speaking.
4. Coach's language is generally clear and concise.
5. The coach allows the client to do most of the talking.
6. Coach allows the client to complete speaking without interrupting unless there is a stated coaching purpose to do so.

Patty's summary: The coach is authentic, direct and clear and responsive with both inquiry and observation. The coach says what he/she sees, leaving space for the client to create and learn. The coach is clear about the purpose for any exercises and requests. The coach is authentic and shares his or her own experience and observations in the moment, simply, easily, freely without

attachment. The coach celebrates the client's directness, deeper engagement, metaphors, learning and intuition in return.

The coach shares his/her observations and thoughts as an invitation for the client to more deeply reflect and consider. The partnership uses the client's thinking, language, metaphors and learning style. Exploration includes the client's underlying stories, limiting beliefs, critical voices.

Your comments and learnings:

D. Facilitating Learning and Results

#8: Creating Awareness

1. Coach invites client to state and/or explore his/her learning in the session about her/his situation (the what).
2. Coach invites client to state and/or explore his/her learning in the session about her/himself (the who).
3. Coach shares what s/he is noticing about the client and /or the client's situation, and seeks the client's input or exploration.
4. Coach invites client to consider how s/he will use new learning from the coaching.
5. Coach's questions, intuitions and observations have the potential to create new learning for the client.

Patty's summary: The coach helps the client to find and hold the focus, to use silence, to take the time and space to "keep coming back to himself/herself in deeper and deeper ways." The invitation to explore important issues is greater than the invitation to find a solution (unless it is clear the client has a time-sensitive agenda). Through the coach's questions and observations, the client "unpacks" their thinking around their 'best self' and recaps any new thinking from the conversation. The coach grows in his/her own awareness along the way and stays curious about how the client will integrate new learning. The coach goes beyond what is said and invites the client to do the same in order to explore new thoughts, beliefs and possibilities for movement forward.

Your comments and learnings:

#9, Designing Actions; 10, Planning and Goal Setting; and 11, Managing Progress and Accountability (these three are pretty related)

1. Coach invites or allows client to explore progress towards what s/he want to accomplish in the session.

2. Coach assists the client to design what actions/thinking client will do after the session in order for the client to continue moving toward the client's desired outcomes.
3. Coach invites or allows client to consider her/his path forward, including, as appropriate, support mechanisms, resources and potential barriers.
4. Coach assists the client to design the best methods of accountability for her/himself.
5. Coach partners with the client to close the session.
6. Coach notices and reflects client's progress.

Patty's summary for #9: This one's about the ability to create opportunities for learning as the client moves forward from the session. The coach asks things like, "What kind of a plan will be useful as you leave this conversation? How will it fulfill the measure of progress we talked about?" As a coach, you want to hear more "I-coulds" from your client (vs. "you-coulds from you). Actions can't just be physical actions without thinking, learning, being, creating. The coach keeps holding the focus.

Patty's summary for #10: This one is about coach holding and following the client's focus and outcomes over time—they evolve and deepen as trust grows. Check with the client about how he or she likes to learn. Check with the client about the pace of your coaching. Leave responsibility with the client. What will you do? When will you do it? Who will know? Do you need a plan? Again, there is either full partnership or the client leads.

Patty's summary for #11: This one is about that dance between holding attention on what matters most to our client, and the discipline of leaving responsibility for action with the client. The coach encourages the client to determine his/her own strategies and methods of accountability and offers support for those methods. Accountabilities must be related by the partnership to agenda, learnings and outcomes. Accountabilities must also reflect and call forth the client's best strengths and stories. Accountability structures and relationships are reflective of the client's agenda and broader learning. The coach's voice is never the most significant, yet the coach skillfully interrupts to hold the focus and revisit measures. Again, any tools that the coach suggests must be fully discussed and explained for their value and congruence with the client. The coach holds, revisits and supports the client's agenda and measures of success: Are we hitting it? What are you taking away? What can you carry forward? As always, the coach leaves responsibility for action with the client.

Additional resource: HBR webinar: Six principles of influence and persuasion—and inspiring accountability.

<http://stream1.krm.com/Mediasite5/Play/4eb01cf76b8042e6ba4f9592fff2a0751d>

Your comments and learnings: