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A message from Patty Burgin to “SeattleCoach Certified” Coaches About Supervision Cohorts

Like you, recent events have given me time to reflect. Since 2008, I’ve loved every minute of creating a state-of-the-art coach training program and attracting over 500 brilliant coaches and coaching leaders to it. Lately I’ve been thinking about what comes next—as SeattleCoach grows, and as the practices of many of you grow, how will we keep our edge? Our connections? Our magic? Our impact?

Coaching can get lonely. As with any rigorous and caring profession, the human capacity to support and challenge can erode when you get bored, overwhelmed or lacking in hope. And as humans, your coachees will attach their own meanings to what they see (“*it must be me!*”). When a coach becomes isolated, it’s always costly to their craft, to their presence and to their ethical confidence.

And maybe then coaching becomes less fun. And when coaching stops being fun, you will stop getting better.

For the past thirty years, professional coaching has become increasingly well-defined, recognized and in-demand as a key part of executive development. It has become the most popular form of leadership development.

Now, our market is asking more about our preparation as coaches and coaching leaders. Our market wants to know not only about our training and grasp of essential skills and core competencies, but about our continuous personal development and emotional support. Both are core to the quality of any professional practice.

Enter Coaching Supervision

Borrowing at first from the mental health professions and starting in the UK, coaches have begun to talk about Supervision—especially in small Cohorts. An excellent Supervision Cohort is a place to regularly attend to:

1. Quality assurance, ethical maturity and practical resources for coaches, and through them to the people they lead, serve, influence and love.
2. Continuous personal reflection, learning and development for coaches. For example, “*What happens in your heart and mind as a coach just before you stop listening at Levels 2 and 3?*” and “*How and what are you currently testing-and-learning?*” In all things SeattleCoach, I aim for this strengthening of your coaching presence to be both rigorous and fun.
3. And the cultivation of the satisfaction, mutual support and joy that we were all looking for when we started coaching. As everyone learns in their first Cohorts, on-going close connections with other coaches invites reflection, testing-and-learning and support when persevering alone would be tough.

In our work, every conversation can be a place of potential learning and new understanding, and coaches who have a way of reflecting on and metabolizing the lessons, wins, biases, triggers, joys and hard knocks of their coaching practice will get better and have more fun--maybe even find that coaching is their life’s work.

Yes. Coaching can get lonely and a good Supervision Cohort can be an antidote to isolation and its effects. It is a container for connected and focused conversation with trusted people who are as serious as you are about this work.

Good Supervisors are marked by their training, experience, their ethical maturity, and their ability to invite “systems” into the conversation.

So yes. I’ve been reflecting. I’ve also been creating.

For the past two years, I’ve been doing more Coaching Supervision with SeattleCoach graduates:

- With our team at Seattle Children’s
- With our Triad Coaches at [Microsoft](#) and [Vulcan](#)
- And with the [SeattleCoach Shepherd Coaches](#)

If you are SeattleCoach Certified, i.e. a graduate of **Coaching for Leaders** or of one of our **Flagship Cohorts (Modules I and II)**, I invite you to participate in the adventure of [Coaching Supervision](#).

No doubt you have a few questions:

Q. *What is Coaching Supervision in Cohorts? How does it work? Especially when a coach is facilitating?*

A. Though I will always resources, Supervision is less a “class”—and it’s not mentor coaching for ICF requirements. It’s more of a wise and customized team consultation. Much like “rounds” in the development of medical residents, we will challenge you to review and apply all of that stuff you on-boarded during coach training, and since. We will expect you to bring your projects, aspirations, and your content creation to our times together—along with your coaching presence, your curiosity, honesty, and courage. All of our work will respect confidentiality and some of it might inspire collaborations. Questions we might ask:

- *What’s happening between you and your coachee (or coachee group or team)?*
- *Tell us about the emerging vision and strengths of this partnership.*
- *What happened just before you found yourself reacting—and bouncing into “level 1”? How did you recover? How could you?*
- *Tell us about your usual pattern showing up with this coachee.*
- *What’s working?*
- *Does the “dance” need more (or less of) something?*
- *What went wrong? How did it go wrong? What will you do next?*
- *Any hunches about what you’re not talking about?*
- *From the balcony, do you see any limiting beliefs? Alternative perspectives?*
- *Do you need to be right? Or liked? Or admired? Or unique? Or knowledgeable? Or cautious? Or fun? Or in charge? Or calm at all times? What if your coachee keeps asking for a simple way forward and you’re think your job it to transform their whole life?*

A good Supervision Cohort will help you think through what has become complex, to attend to ethical issues, to reflect on tendencies that can undermine your effectiveness and to take care of yourself along the way.

Maybe your Supervisor, and peers will just champion you and help you to become clear that you really are on the right track.

Q. *What does a typical Supervision meeting look like?*

A. Pre-work-wise, I ask each coach to have a conversation with themselves ahead of our time together. Plan on a two-hour meeting each month. And I'll ask two coaches at each meeting to plan on taking the spotlight to present a case, a question, a significant break-through or opportunity to build on, a dilemma or a stuck place. Here's how it will usually go:

1. Everyone checks in about recent experiences and reactions.
2. We all listen for trends.
3. Then a coach takes the spotlight for 10-15 minutes to present. The rest of us will listen and respond at Level 3. We'll take a break and then a second coach will take the spotlight. The individual challenges and learnings brought by each coach will help all of us.
4. And, as we close, we review our take-aways and what we will do next.

Q. *What are the expectations?*

A. Each Cohort will have room for up to nine coaches. I ask members to join a Supervision Cohort for six months at a time. The cost is \$900 per six months. The "door will open" for departures and new arrivals every six months (Fall and Spring) with a steady max of eight coaches per Cohort. The time commitment is two hours a month with your Cohort + some preparation/pre-work. As with supervision groups in other professions, there will be no limit on re-upping, and I'll expect some Cohorts to stay together over time. Evaluation is continuous. Each Cohort defines and refines its ground rules and whether to meet virtually or at the SeattleCoach offices. As always, bartered peer coaching between meetings is an option.

Because of our emphasis in on coaching/facilitating with groups and teams, SeattleCoaches in Supervision have permission to use Patty's "Intro to Coaching" Workshop content and deck. You just find or create the audience!

Q. *How is Coaching Supervision different than Mentor Coaching?*

A. While individual and group Mentor Coaching focuses on your understanding and skillful application of the ICF's Core Competencies (and it's a credentialing requirement), Coaching Supervision is a professional practice designed to help you in your person and continuing learning and self-reflection. Supervision, while keeping the Core Competencies steadily operating in the background, offers a coach a broader and longer-term opportunity for overall professional support and development.

Q. *Will the ICF count Supervision hours for certifications and renewals?*

A. For renewals, coaches at all levels need to complete forty hours of "continuing coach education hours" every three years. You can count up to ten hours of Supervision hours toward that total (I'm appealing this).

So. You In? I've launched several Cohorts, each one meeting one Thursday afternoon per month.

Let me know and I'll tell you more about the (very reasonable) costs and expectations. If you're reading this, I'd love to have you join a SeattleCoach Supervision Cohort.

As with everything else at SeattleCoach, you can probably guess that my approach is not "pre-cooked" or formulaic. It is informed as always by three great currents:

- First, by my background as a licensed systems therapist, a clinical supervisor, as a pastoral counselor, as a Master Certified Coach and by my understanding of the power of a differentiated coach: self-aware, separate yet connected, curious about the strengths and vision of their coachee as well as the impact of the work into the coachee's larger system.

- Second, by my own continuous learning about the application of neuroscience to helping people create desired and sustainable growth and change.
- And third, “as the small craft brewery” of coaching development programs, by my faith in the quality of the “ingredients” of every SeattleCoach Cohort: State of the art content + the brilliant human beings.

[Click here to send me your information and preferences. I'll keep you posted about openings.](#)

Great coaching is hard and caring work. Serious coaches may get tired, but they don't have to become joyless, automatic, isolated and rote. A good Supervision Cohort will help you to stay renewed in your own inspiration and self-care—to keep hearing the music as well as the words of this work we love.

What got us through the past thirteen isn't sufficient for the next thirteen. My hunch is that Coaching Supervision at SeattleCoach will likely help to define the quality and future of our work.