



THE POWER OF COACHING IN THE NOW

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(Note: In this article, the term “Talent” refers to the person being coached.)

Eckhart Tolle wrote a brilliant book entitled *“The Power of Now”* which is a guide to living primarily in the present moment while avoiding being constantly plagued by thoughts of the past or future. The concept of working in the “Now” is critical for coaches. In fact, in any coaching conversation, the moment we are in and the moment ahead of us are really all we have. This can be a significant challenge for all of us, especially for those in leadership roles. Most leaders are constantly thinking in time-based terms - and understandably so. Every day they are called on to make choices with long-term consequences, and they need to constantly be creating plans and strategies for the future. But when they shift into the role of coach, they find themselves needing to learn to operate in an unfamiliar place - the present moment.

A coaching conversation is essentially a series of nows. This is the reason why coaching programs that prescribe a series of steps rarely produce great results. When coaches are continually thinking ahead to the next step, already sure of what it should be, they cannot give their full attention to the now. Great coaches approach every coaching conversation with one overriding thought: *“What do I need to do to temporarily subordinate my own agenda and utilize all my strengths to serve the Talent?”*

THE GIFT OF PRESENCE

Presence is an extraordinary gift that the coach can give the Talent. Before anything is said—before questions are asked, insights offered, or pathways created—the coach’s simple act of being fully in that moment and available can be transformational. Being truly present means bringing your whole self to the conversation; your attention, your values, your perceptiveness and your discernment. Start by approaching each coaching session as if it was the first time you had talked with this particular person. Set aside both external and internal distractions, and be aware that your ability to serve rests on the quality of your attention and intention in each of the series of “nows” that make up the coaching conversation.

MINDFULNESS AND COACHING

The mindful coach is fully aware of his or her thoughts and emotions and strives to become aware of those of the Talent. Paradoxically, learning to be more mindful of your own thoughts and feelings is a good way to become less distracted by them during coaching conversations. As you become more familiar with the movement of your own mind and emotions, you will start to recognize their patterns. Getting into the habit of observing your thoughts and feelings will help you to increase your mindfulness. In the coaching conversation, practicing mindfulness also means paying attention to the Talent—not just to what they are saying, but also to their unspoken cues. Be mindful of their tone, their demeanor, their body language, their energy level. Pause and reflect frequently after the Talent speaks.

THE ART OF DEEP LISTENING

As a coach, it's easy to sit in a conversation with one ear tuned to what the Talent is saying and the other turned inward, busy thinking about what you want to say in response, what pearls of wisdom you can bring, how you feel about them, how you want them to respond, and so on. Many of these may be well-intentioned concerns, but nevertheless, they take your attention out of the moment. And the Talent will sense it. We are quite transparent and others usually have a good sense of how committed we are to a conversation. Great coaches train themselves to listen beyond the words being spoken so that they can effectively paraphrase, reframe, challenge, etc. in service of the Talent. They listen deeply for values, aspirations, inconsistencies, emotions and what's not being said.

The strength of a coaching connection is greatly influenced by the degree to which the coach is willing to invest themselves in the process. Do you care enough about yourself?

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