

Behind Closed Doors: The Critical Moments in Coaching

So what is this Coach Supervision stuff? The international coaching community frequently cites the words attributed to Michael Carroll and Maria Gilbert who define it as *'the bringing of our work experience to a specially trained other in order to learn from it'*. It is a formalized on-purpose-with-at-least-one-other approach to a concept we coaches already know something about. We know it as reflective practice, and if we practice it at all, we usually do so privately or sometimes informally with a trusted colleague or peer group. That has value - with the clear understanding of what peers can and cannot do for each other.

The reason the formalized concept and practice has gained so much traction in the global world of coaching, is the recognition that our work as coaches is conducted behind closed doors, similar in setting to the work of behavioral practitioners and others where confidentiality and privacy are cornerstones of the work. It gradually dawned on coaches that it might be useful to adapt something like 'the specially trained other' aspect of supervision, a standard accepted practice for continued professional development, as well as for safeguarding both practitioner and client in those private settings.

This recognition was based on the global desire to continue evolving the level of professionalism in coaching. It seemed rather important that what happens behind those closed doors should have access to a reliably useful method of reflection, especially for those 'pebble in our shoe' moments. We all know that kind of discomfort isn't enough to keep us from moving forward with our clients but it probably needs attention if we are going to continue to be at our best.

How do we recognize critical moments in coaching? Some of them answer to the acronym TAD: Tension, Anxiety, and Doubt. If you as a coach have ever encountered a moment in a coaching session where one of those uncomfortable feelings has arisen in you, it is a critical moment. I am going to make a slightly outrageous statement here: if we haven't encountered those moments at least periodically, we may not be growing any more as a coach – we may be just treading water... and that way lies burn-out.

Those critical moments in coaching often form the kinds of content we who engage in Coach Supervision purposefully bring to a specially trained other. The outcome often is that we learn something useful about ourselves and our way of coaching which can positively address not only the next time we encounter a similar situation, issue or circumstance, but also often in a larger context, the way we approach the work itself.

Supervision won't put an end to those TAD moments and it shouldn't. Good coaches are always looking for opportunities to grow along their learning edges. That is what

makes them good coaches. Coach Supervision has shown to be one consistent way globally that helps good coaches become uncommonly good coaches. I hope and lobby for the idea that one day, taking mentor coaching or Coach Supervision may be accepted as an additional option for fulfilling our Continuing Education Credits for credential renewal.

Some quotes for reflection –

- *The depth of the intervention is directly related to the depth of the intervener.*
Peter Senge, C. Otto Scharmer,
- *Internal changes show up on two levels. First we come to embody a new capacity for action. Learning also creates new domains of meaning. It shifts our awareness and understanding.*
Peter Senge, C. Otto Scharmer, Joseph Jaworski, Betty Sue Flowers,
- *How we work is who we are and who we are is how we work.*

Diana Shmukler

These capture so well for me why good coaches worldwide choose to periodically engage in Coach Supervision. For questions about or more information on Coach Supervision – please don't hesitate to contact me.