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Topic: Coaching Models by Merci

Welcome

Coaching models help us understand coaching intervention from a systems perspective. Most of us understand it, especially as professionals or people who are in support positions whether you be a manager or a coach, that structure is really something that offers us both flexibility and a framework at the same time.

Your coaching model offers you flexibility and a structure for the coaching conversation in micro, in the moment of the coaching conversation, and the overall coaching journey or process. Models create a system within which coach and client work.

The models are not supposed to be prescriptive or rigid. Some people have models which are very much the way they work and they work very specifically to that model but it doesn't have to be that way. In coaching the conversation is always about the client. You hold the process.

If it is too prescriptive or rigid you might be fulfilling your own agenda as the coach rather than your client's agenda. That's something we want to keep in mind when we think about lightly holding a model as a representation of the coaching process, not a prescriptive, must-be-this-way kind of thing.

You'll notice that often a coaching model is a metaphor or some sort of analogy is used to help us visualize it. I'm often asked whether or not my coaching model has to have a visual. Well, models as a general definition are something that has a visual aspect to it. It helps us see an unseen process.

If you were to sit and observe coaching you would certainly see what's happening in one way but if you took a snapshot of the process, what would that look like? You started with a vision. Where is the person now? Where do they want to be? Maybe you moved toward brainstorming and discovering beliefs or whatever the model that you're moving towards.

You wouldn't necessarily be able to take a picture and look at that. A model helps us envision the system or the process that cannot be directly observed. So if you develop a model that encompasses that coaching conversation and the coaching intervention, as some people call it, you will begin to work with considerably greater ease as a coach. You will sort of know where you're going a little bit.

Your model might change from time to time. You might have a different picture of what it looks like or you may develop a model that's more specific to a different niche. I might have an executive coaching model and a life coaching or wellness and health model.

So it's a framework. It's a structure. It represents a system with an implied process.

The GROW Model

I'm going to talk about the first three of the five coaching models in order to have time to get to your questions and comments. I think most of us are familiar with the GROW model, which is *Goal, Reality, Options, and Will*. Some people change those words a little bit but it still comes out to GROW.

We have a goal. The client comes and they have a *goal*; they have something they want to achieve. They have a goal both for that individual session and a goal for the over-arching process of working with you as a coach.

So the goals might be set individually in each session but we generally know we're going toward an over-arching goal or vision, as I call it. What is the current *reality*? Where are you versus where you want to be? Where do they start?

Options are the exploration aren't they? What can you imagine? Let's brainstorm. What do you think the first step forward is? What do you need to do that? What could get in the way? What are our options?

Will, of course, is the commitment, the motivation, the intent behind this goal. Is it there when talking to a client about what is present for them and what, if anything, is missing?

That's the GROW model. I feel very comfortable—and this is strictly my opinion—that almost every other model comes out of the GROW model. It's very simple. It's four steps. And it's the general process of coaching. We have something we want to achieve. We know where we are. We want to know where we're going. We want to be able to open up to opportunities and possibilities about how to get there. And we need the will, the intent, and the motivation to get there.

The STEPPPA Model

So when you think about it, that's probably present in any model that moves you forward that utilizes coaching. For example, I picked this one. I'm not overly familiar with it. It's called the STEPPPA model. Its overall perspective is that behaviors are driven by emotion, which means that action is motivated by the emotional commitment.

As a coach, behaviors are driven by emotion. Well, I can certainly see the logic in that. That means action is motivated by an emotional commitment.

S stands for **Subject**. What is the subject of the coaching? What's the topic or what's the goal?

T stands for **Target**. What are you aiming for? What is it that you want to achieve?

E stands for **Emotion**. Is the goal worth it? A great question, right?

P stands for **Perception**. What is the meaning of the goal? How does it have meaning for you?

P stands for **Plan**. How do you achieve it? What do you need to do to get from Point A to Point B?

P stands for **Pace**. When do you want to achieve this?

A stands for **Act**. Step-by-step actions are needed. What are they?

Motivational Interviewing Model

I've picked this other model because I'm pretty familiar with it and it's Motivational Interviewing. I actually didn't think of it as a model but it really is. It's a style of coaching and changing behavior. It helps clients explore and resolve ambivalence and find the best solution.

It's goal-driven and focused toward solving internal conflict and bringing change about, of course. It's non-judgmental, non-confrontational, and non-adversarial. It helps the client identify their intrinsic values and the goals that align with those and then to align their behaviors. It involves the coaching process such as proactive listening, non-judgment.

While I couldn't find a visual for Motivational Interviewing, I still see it as a model. I chose that one to look at because if there's no visual attached to it do people wonder if it's still a model. Yes, it is, even though in the truest sense of the word a model has some kind of visual in the way we take it in. I guess that goes to the 70% of people who are visual learners as to why we like movies and television and everything in-between these days. Video is very powerful.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

So that's where we are with understanding the models and understanding what some of the more popular models are. I'm going to open up the lines now and see if you have any questions or comments. I'd love to hear your experience with the models.

Diane: *Are there steps to the Motivational Interviewing?*

Merci: Yes, that's a good question. I guess there are when you look at it more closely. They may not be steps that are near like a staircase. Maybe they're more spiral because you might go back and forth into different conversations, you know what I mean? It's not always a linear process. In fact, many times it's not so in-and-out. There are indeed steps to it.

Step 1 is to establish rapport. Open the lines of communication. Connect with somebody.

Step 2 is an assessment of readiness. There may be several questions. How ready are you? What will it take to be more ready? How do you know that you're ready?

Step 3 is assessing your motivation and confidence.

Step 4 is identifying the problem or challenge and possible solutions.

Step 5 is identifying next steps, follow-up actions.

After a while, when you look at all these models you see that they share a lot in common.

Did that help, Diane?

Diane: *It sounds to me like there should be a lot of curiosity and questioning in this process from a coach's standpoint. A lot of questions.*

Merci: Exactly. We hold that the client is creative and resourceful and even if they don't have their own answers yet—sometimes people say, "I don't have my answers," they are capable. We fully believe that they can find their own answers. So for something to be a coaching model that has to be present.

The coach doesn't have the answers and can't say, "This is right or wrong or good or bad." The client gets to decide those things. But I can challenge my client to say, "Well, what if?" What would happen if you put that judgment aside? What comes up?

Often judgment stands in the way of possible solutions so by asking a client to do that I'm not invalidating their perspective. I'm just asking them to take on a different one. My goal is to present them with possibilities that they themselves have come up with.

Bonnie: *A couple of things came up. I just did a Google on Motivational Interviewing and it seems that it's used a lot within the counseling field. My concern would be that overlap between coaching and counseling.*

Merci: Tell me more about your concern there. What is the concern that you have around that?

Bonnie: *Well, we are coaches, not counselors and I honor that role as being a coach. Clearly I'm not trained as a counselor so I think that's important to really have that clear distinction within the coaching profession, for me personally. In the same breath, I clearly see the model as very interesting. There's a ton to pull from it.*

So that might lead to my next question, which is can we just take anyone's model and own it as our own or is there some sort of intellectual property rights to these models?

Merci: Absolutely great questions. I hear two things here. The thing we understand about people in general, what we understand about achievement and accomplishment doesn't vary much in the process itself. People need to feel safe. They need to feel that they're not being judged. They have to have a certain level of awareness and a certain level of self-management.

So when you're dealing with someone who fits that kind of bill and they're looking to move from where they are forward, you're generally looking at the ideal coaching client.

If someone is struggling with self-management awareness, then to me what happens is if they get stuck in that perspective then there's some past thing that needs to be addressed in a more therapeutic environment.

But no doubt about it, psychology has contributed to the coaching process. You might not see it in there. It's sort of like woven into the whole thing because therapeutic practices have evolved and changed from something that was considered Freudian to positive psychology. Positive psychology and coaching share a lot of these same general understandings of people, as do most models.

Thomas Leonard once said this and I think it still holds true today. He's considered one of the people who really promoted coaching as a profession. There is a blurry line between some coaching and some counseling.

The thing to remember is that I am not a counselor. I don't present myself as a counselor and I don't work with people who aren't able to be self-managed and have a certain level of awareness about themselves. That's where I feel like I'm out of my competencies.

Coaching does go into the past from time to time because that's where our beliefs are formed and sometimes we come up against a belief that doesn't serve us. It's getting in the way of what we want. As a coach I am equipped with working with underlying beliefs and making them conscious and encouraging a client to look at them. However, that's pretty much the scope of my competency.

So understand that therapy and coaching is not this really sharp, sharp line. It's kind of a fuzzy line. That's why, as a profession, we need to be really clear with ourselves about exactly what we're doing. When we're in doubt we check in with a mentor or a coach and we get clarity on it.

That's certainly what I've done in my 12 years of coaching. It gives me a great measure of professional integrity when I do that and I feel like I'm staying in the competencies that I love doing.

Your second question has to do with intellectual property rights. Some models you can say, "I use the GROW model," and it's so out there it's almost in the public domain. But I can't say, "Oh, Merci Miglino invented the GROW model."

If I'm using some other person's model and I'm in alignment with how they see coaching and the process of achievement, that's okay. I can feel free to use somebody else's model. You get into trouble with intellectual property when you claim it's yours.

If I go and Google "coaching model" there are 32 million results. Some of them are going to be copyrighted. For some of them you need to pay an affiliate fee if you want to use it or you have to get permission.

Others are so out in the world, like the Co-Active Coaching Model, because there are books written about it. There are various leadership models like the Emotional Intelligence models. We refer to those people who did any work around them, researched and developed them.

For example, the GROW model is just one of those that you can say to a client, "I'd like to use the GROW model and the GROW model is G-R-O-W and it stands for this. It was one of the first coaching models and it was created by X."

If I say, "I'm going to use the GROW model, which I invented," then I'm taking someone else's work as my own.

Bonnie: *That's great; that's helpful. Both of your answers are helpful. Thank you.*

Ahmed: *My question is about the International Coach Academy and forming my own business model. Is it possible to just take one of these models and change them? Is that enough or do you need to have one of your own?*

In order to get certification one of the requirements to form a coaching model. Do you have to come up with your own model or can you take one of these and work with it in that position?

Merci: So if I understand you, the International Coach Academy, which does coach training, asks as a requirement of graduation that you create your own coaching model.

At this point I must have seen hundreds of coaching models. I've seen people say, "My model is based on the GROW model but I've changed it in this way to make it more mine." So it might be the GROW Well Model because I'm a health and wellness coach, or it might be the GROW Up Model because I'm working with teens.

People might take some of those steps but honestly, if you look at the GROW model which is a very simple, straightforward kind of model and let's say I was coaching executives or managers, I might say, "The G is the Goal." I would adapt that. I would say, "What's your professional goal? Where do you want to go from where you are?" I might make that be a little bit more specific to the niche that I'm coaching.

But if I'm borrowing from another model then I definitely want to attribute that, you know? I might say, "I'm adapting this from the GROW model or NOP or whatever." As long as it falls within the criteria of coaching and it's not consulting, advice-giving, or recommendations where the coach/consultant is leading the client, the client is still setting the agenda, then that's a coaching model.

If you'll bear with me a little bit I'll talk to you about when I first did a coaching model. It related in my own personal history to a strategic planning model. It starts with the vision. Where do you want to be in a year from now? What do you see? What's it going to look like? What does it feel like? What does it smell like? Who are you with? Where are you? And I would write that down.

Then you brainstorm. The second step of my model would be brainstorming. That would be, what are all the possible things you might have to do to get there? Think really big; think really small. Don't worry about it if they don't make any sense. You're brainstorming.

The third one would be to look at these brainstormed items and toss out the ones that were just getting us going and let's put them into some kind of order. Some kind of organic order like if I got my website up, got my LinkedIn profile up, and got a business card, I would meet my marketing goals that I set. So I put them under a general category of "Marketing."

The fourth step might be the priority. What are you going to do first? And so on.

It had seven steps. I adapted this from a very common kind of strategic planning or project planning kind of model. The fact that I had a model—this is one of the reasons to have a model—is because when I presented this and the visuals to them to potential clients, I made visible a process that was invisible.

They were able to see that we were going to start here and end here and at the end you're going to have action items with dates and milestones and measurements. We're going to be able to track where you are at any given point versus where you want to be. It even produced some kind of report for them.

I didn't have to convince them of the value of coaching. I rather presented the value of coaching because I had a model.

From that point of view, you can coach without a model once you understand this process. I do think it enhances us when we have a framework. It helps us articulate what it is that we do, provides a visual. And you know what it also does? It let me step into my competence as a coach.

I wasn't just having a conversation because like many people, I equated work with sweat and toil and hard work. Then I find a process that I just love and it feels kind of easy and I just have a conversation—but it's isn't. Of course it's so much more than a conversation; it's a powerful process.

So I want to be able to feel solid and confident when I'm talking about it and when I'm with my client or potential client. The model helped me do that. It helped me see that this was way beyond a conversation. That's the value, not only in using a model but developing your own.

Question: *I am a student at International Coach Academy and I'm six months into my program and I started doing peer coaching. I've done 40 hours now. So I have decided to do life coaching. This is what I'm drawn to. What I'm realizing is I'm not working with any particular model and I've given myself time to see how it grows.*

I have a framework in mind where I am exploring the client, where they want to be, where they are now, where's the gap, and how to bridge that gap. What I'm realizing is that every session the same client can come up with different issues. Sometimes it can be, "I want to lose weight." Then the client comes next time and says, "I really need to boost my confidence. I put myself down." That's a whole different issue.

So sometimes I feel like the GROW model type of model would be more applicable, more straightforward, because it's more performance related. The other one is we really need to dig deep and explore emotions, body/mind, etc.

Merci: I understand what you're saying. It's interesting because one of the ways that we can address some of this where I start out somewhere in a coaching session and I wind up somewhere else is that's going to happen. That's sort of how people operate, isn't it?

I have a basic structure, a basic foundation, and it's a model. Within that model I'm not precluded from following a client where they want to go. The model is sort of like a snapshot of what coaching looks like. When you're in the process yourself you're going with a flow of some sort.

What comes up for me when you talk is that when we're in a coaching session, a tool that coaches use that helps make for very effective sessions is the coaching agreement. You come to the call:

"What is it you'd like to focus on today?"

"I would like to change my job."

"Okay, great. Tell me a little bit about that so I can get some background. How would it be if you changed your job? What would it look like? What would you do?"

Just really talking with the client about this job change. Maybe in them talking to me about it the issue of confidence comes up. The client's really talking about confidence, so I might come back in as a coach and say, "So when we started this session we were talking about leaving your job and that's what we agreed to focus on. Are we still there? Do you see this as related to that? Or are we going somewhere else that you'd like to explore?"

Now the client gets to decide. Is this still part of the conversation about changing her job or are we going somewhere else? I don't know as a coach. I'm just listening really carefully.

The person might say, "I think if I had more confidence I wouldn't struggle so much with changing my job."

So as a coach I say, "Okay, I hear that. So I'm hearing that we want to look at confidence in this session. Is that accurate?"

"Yeah."

“Okay, so let’s agree to go down that path. Tell me more.”

In this way I’m keeping some structure going and I’m holding the client’s goals for themselves, their promises, without enforcing it. I’m not here to say you have to focus on this. But I am there to gently remind my client where it is they’re going and how it relates to the coaching agreement.

Sometimes if we do something like that, the coaching can go in a lot of different directions and still our model is clear. We’re still dancing on the same dance floor. Does that make sense?

Question: *Yes, it does. I’ll keep that in mind, the model goal. It’s difficult because of every way that people seem to come up with different challenges and then you really have to improvise. But I have the session form, which helps me to prepare in advance. I have a few hours to get in the right frame of mind.*

In regards to life coaching, I’m thinking there are so many different areas you can cover within life coaching. People can talk about problems, their weight issues, their emotional state. There’s a huge variety of issues you can talk about within life coaching.

Merci: You know, a coach once said to me early on when I was learning that the content doesn’t matter in coaching, in a way. I’m using kind of an extreme here but for example, coaching, the model, is a big, beautiful bowl. Just imagine a shiny enamel-colored bowl. That’s the coaching competencies and that’s the coaching model. What gets put in the bowl is from your client.

But you are always the bowl. You are always proceeding in a certain way, aligned with the coaching competencies, and the bowl’s a bit of a model, isn’t it? It holds things up while you work. It holds up the fruit if you put it in there. So in a sense the content doesn’t change the process. The process is always the process. You can coach anybody anywhere.

We niche because we have a passion for a particular group of people or community. We niche because it’s easier for people to find us and resonate with us and build rapport with us. That’s why we niche, not because I’m not competent to coach somebody in another field or someplace I’ve never worked. Niche is a function more of marketing than of competency.

I wouldn't know the first thing about what a bench scientist does but I've coached a bench scientist. I've coached executives in bus companies. Do you think I know anything about running a bus company? No.

What they bring to it, I actually enjoy this bit of it because everything's new and I get to meet all kinds of interesting people. What I bring to it is the process. I understand how people are and what is needed, using what I believe to be a powerful process, to get people from where they are to where they want to be.

I also strongly believe that coaching is about moving people from good to great. So often my clients come to me and there's no real problem, per se, but they'll say, "This week I want to focus on writing more. I feel like I could write more and I'm not doing it. I just want to explore that."

It's not like, "Oh, I had a fight with my boss. I want to change my job." Yeah, people tend to come to any change process with something in mind but other times it's just like they want to enhance what they're already doing. There are very few processes out there that are ideally tailored to that, for moving people from good to great, however they define it.

So the content can be anything. The coaching container stays the same. It's coaching. A model just helps others see what it is that we do and it helps us understand better what we do.

Anyone else? I'll take one or two more questions.

Debra: *Do you recommend any components that all models have? What are some key components we should have in our model?*

Merci: First of all, I've got to ask the client, right? I've got to establish what it is that they want. Whether we call it a goal, an objective, a target, we have to establish what it is that they want.

Then I need to really explore that with them. What is the meaning of having this? What will you have if you have this? How would life change? I need to get to what the meaning is behind it for the client. It helps me understand them. I've got to know that, right?

Then I have to know where they are going. "So you want to change jobs? What would a new job look like? What would it have that you don't have now? What's missing? What do you want more of? What do you want less of?"

When we use language to create pictures, there's lots of data out there about new brain research that confirms what we already know, that if I can begin to see it and touch it and hear it I am more likely to put my energy in that direction. So I want to know why the client is so excited about this. What are they going to have when they reach that goal?

Then we move into what it's going to take to reach that goal. Where are you now? Where do you want to be and by when? When we do that, all kinds of stuff comes up, doesn't it? Maybe we hear blame.

Maybe we hear some old beliefs that just don't serve them, like you can't change your job; you're lucky you have a job. Maybe that belief isn't right or wrong or good or bad but it's getting in the way of what the client wants. So I'm looking at their belief system. I'm looking at their perspective.

I'm inviting questions and I'm listening to how they see things and what's working for them. What are our powerful perspectives that you can give them that energy and what are those that are cycling? Either their creativity or their energy.

And then I'm holding a space of accountability. Someone once said, "A coach doesn't stand for a client's goals. They stand for the client." How can I support this? What do you need to have happen? Any obstacles that might get in the way of this—how can we ensure that this doesn't happen?

Really, in some ways given what we know about people and if you read a lot about every coaching model, what you would start to see from your creative right brain, the brain that likes to squint and see things with a fuzzy edge rather than the brain that wants to see everything neat and in line, you would see that there's a synergy that all processes that move people from where they are to where they want to be include very similar elements.

Once you put your own perspective and experience on it, it becomes a bit unique to you and that's good. It tells people who you are.

If you look at the top coaching models you know they share certain things. You need to establish trust, communication, and confidentiality. You have to formulate client-based, agreed-to goals and expectations. Then you're involved in a questioning and learning dynamic around those goals set by the client.

So we're not creating a new coaching process. That's already been established, right? What we're doing is finding a way that we naturally step into. What is our word for it? How do we coach? One of the best ways to see your model is to step back after you've coached someone and see where you started and where you landed. What were your favorite kinds of questions? Look at how you operate. What felt unique to you?

Debra: *That helps a lot.*

Merci: Good, I'm glad. If you are a student of International Coach Academy there's quite a bit of this on our forum at the Learning site. If you want to snoop around there you'll see examples of all our students' models which we publish from time to time on our blog. You'll see that our trainers have lots of discussions around what constitutes a model.

CONCLUSION

It's a fascinating study because we have students from 90 countries so you get that kind of perspective and influence into it, too. You can appreciate that no matter where we come from in the world and how old we are and what our gender is, we see that people generally achieve along a certain process. So your model is not changing that process but it's taking that process and putting it in terms that make a natural approach for you.

Thank you, everybody. I want to apologize that Robyn couldn't be with us this evening as she was under the weather. So thanks for letting me do something I really enjoy, which is sharing my knowledge of coaching with you all. Thanks for coming along.

END OF AUDIO