

8) Creating Awareness

**(A systemic perspective,
to also develop your own awareness as a coach)**

CREATING AWARENESS

CAUTION : Coaching competencies are not displayed in a sequential fashion, one after the other. Whenever appropriate, any competency may be present to the coach at any time, throughout a coaching relationship. As a consequence, all the competencies including co-creating new awareness are not to be considered as sequential skills.

This being said, the Creating Awareness coach competency could be considered:

BOTH as the last of all the previously numbered 1 to 7 ICF competencies focused on:

- **Setting the Foundation,**
- **Co-creating the Relationship** and
- **Communicating Effectively :**

AND This competency is presented as the first in the last four ICF competencies focused on consolidating client **learning, action and results.**

Consequently, this competency can both be:

- **A synthesis of the client's learning, acquired by appropriate display of the seven previous presented competencies.**
- **A competency that sets a foundation for client focus on establishing an action plan with measures and deadlines.**

In as much as coaching is defined as a profession that accompanies clients while partaking in **a peer or a partnering** type of relationship (between equals), the title of this competency could well be re-worded as:

CO CREATING NEW AWARENESS

Such a revised wording underlines that:

- **Effective coaching rests on co creating a very strong and respectful partnership with clients.**
- **In this particular partnership between peers, coaches are *not* external to client concerns and patterns. Coaches are participating observers (part-ners), participating within the client issues.**
- **Consequently, coaches need to very specifically and actively own that they have patterns and concerns that are similar (if not identical) to their client's (or partner's) issues, goals, challenges, ambitions, etc.**
- **To be effective, coaches need to learn how to develop and grow with their (partners) clients. This is done by actively participating (for themselves) in everyone of their client growth experiences**

The Paradoxical nature of Creating Awareness (and coaching)

- How can coaches help their clients begin to conclude on their new learning, without *telling*?
- How can coaches help their clients begin to finish their work on time, without *pushing*?
- How can coaches help their clients synthesize on their essential learning, without *dispossessing* clients or client ownership?

One of the best ways for coaches to communicate is to speak and behave as and for themselves.

Clients will then model on their coaches, and own their coaching quests for themselves

Reflections for the coach:

- **How can the coach integrate shared patterns that are common characteristics of both coach and client histories and backgrounds?** How does the coach attract what type of client and client issue? What client pattern are manifested in their choice of coach? Who else is this client in the coach's life? Who else is this coach in the client's life? What are common or shared factors in this unique choice of partners?
- **What is each particular client teaching the coach about the latter's own personal and professional patterns?**
- **What are common or shared coach and client patterns?** How are the coach and client similar (if not identical) in the way they emote, think, behave, intuit, react, feel, etc. What are their shared values, beliefs, habits, frames of references? What is the common foundation for their apparent differences?
- **What do both the coach and the client need to change in their distinct lives?** Related to any specific client's desired outcome (issue, goal, project, ambition, problem, etc.), how do both the coach and the client need to change perspectives, adopt new paradigms, enlarge their frames of references and **co-create new awareness?**

Coach authentic awareness of shared coach-and-client patterns will open the way for clients to own their personal issues, ambitions, goals, challenges and potentials.

Whenever a coach authentically *shares* his or her own:

- vulnerability,
- Modesty,
- humility
- honesty,
- transparency,
- etc.

The ensuing low position (or underdog attitude) will help create the space for clients to more powerfully own their issues, goals, aspirations, action plans and results.

In this way, profoundly human coaches can practice a “not-knowing” posture in order to allow their clients truly become who they are.

Coach Systemic Strategies:

(These need to be practiced on a regular basis to be truly embodied)

How can the coach make appropriate ethical-sharing comments? Ex: "I need to tell you I have a very similar issue in my own life. I can coach you on this if we both take care not to mix our issues. So if you get the impression I may be projecting in any way, please let me know. OK?" (Note that this needs to be done in the present tense. Not "I've been there" but "I am there now". This will not invite the client to say "how have you solved the issue?")

How can the coach share personal feelings or emotions that may surface during the client's work? Ex: "I would like to share that I am feeling tense here, as if time pressure or the pressure to perform was on my shoulders. Now that I am aware of this, I will manage it better. In the issue you are facing, however I am wondering if you or others in your situation are also feeling some similar time pressure or are putting pressure on you (or pressure to perform)."

How can the coach meta-communicate observations on the coach-client relationship by sharing how both may be re-enacting shared relational patterns during the coaching relationship? Ex: "I am observing that I have not been taking my space in this coaching session so far. I have been relatively passive, letting you proceed, almost on your own. Noticing this, I will become more active now. I am also wondering who in your issue does not have, or does not take their rightful or useful place, or if you are facing this situation without having or eliciting active support from your environment?"

Coach Systemic Strategies (cont.):

How can the coach share an awareness of personal behaviors that may affect the client's work? Ex: I am suddenly noticing that I have been quite involved in our coaching relationship, maybe taking more than my share of responsibility in your issue. I will adjust so as to let you have much more appropriate working space. I am wondering if in your issue, someone else is also taking more than their fair share of responsibility, and getting in your way. Or you may be doing that, taking more than your share of responsibility in the issue you are facing.

How does the coaching environment such as the coaching setting, interruptions, objects, positions, etc. play into the shared coach-and-client issue? Ex: Your work was interrupted by a visit, just as you were starting to focus on something that seemed to be a new insight. I am wondering if the same type of disruptive interruption is also characteristic of your issue's environment, also getting you off focus at inappropriate times.

How can coaches validate and thank the client for the opportunity to learn and grow through their client's work? Ex: I would like to share that I really appreciate your focus and courage while you work through this issue. You are even modeling what I need to do to move forward on my issue that is quite similar, so thank you very much for this opportunity for me to learn from you.

ICF DEFINITION (a formal reminder):

Creating Awareness—Ability to integrate and accurately evaluate multiple sources of information and to make interpretations that help the client to gain awareness and thereby achieve agreed-upon results.

- **Goes beyond what is said in assessing client's concerns, not getting hooked by the client's description.**
- **Invokes inquiry for greater understanding, awareness, and clarity.**
- **Identifies for the client his/her underlying concerns; typical and fixed ways of perceiving himself/herself and the world; differences between the facts and the interpretation; and disparities between thoughts, feelings, and action.**
- **Helps clients to discover for themselves the new thoughts, beliefs, perceptions, emotions, moods, etc. that strengthen their ability to take action and achieve what is important to them.**
- **Communicates broader perspectives to clients and inspires commitment to shift their viewpoints and find new possibilities for action.**
- **Helps clients to see the different, interrelated factors that affect them and their behaviors (e.g., thoughts, emotions, body, and background).**
- **Expresses insights to clients in ways that are useful and meaningful for the client.**
- **Identifies major strengths vs. major areas for learning and growth, and what is most important to address during coaching.**
- **Asks the client to distinguish between trivial and significant issues, situational vs. recurring behaviors, when detecting a separation between what is being stated and what is being done.**