Using active listening and powerful questioning with clients: *The role of emotional intelligence*

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Session overview

In this session will explore:

1. What emotional intelligence is
2. How the skills of Emotional Intelligence relate to a coach's active listening and questioning skills
3. The three elements of active listening to a client's emotions
4. The four levels of listening and how to know which level the coach is listening at, and
5. when listening is not enough - the use of powerful questions to deepen a client's insight.
Learning outcomes

As a result of this session we should have:

1. analysed the reasons why Emotional Intelligence (EI) is critical to effective coaching

2. learnt how the EI skill of Emotional Awareness of Others underpins a coach's capacity to listen deeply to a client within a coaching conversation

3. identified how the use of powerful questions deepens both the coach and client's understanding of the client, and

4. developed a personal action plan for enhancing a one's own active listening and questioning skills so as to further deepen the coach-client relationship.
Introduction to active listening?

• What is Active Listening and how does it differ from other types of listening?

• Why is Active Listening important to being an effective coach?

• What are we doing when we Actively Listen?
What is active listening?

• Active listening is a way of listening and responding to another person that improves mutual understanding. It is listening beyond the words or ‘facts’.

• Active listening is a structured form of listening and responding that focuses the attention on the speaker (e.g., their body language, gestures, etc); rather than just the words they are saying at the time.

• Active listening encourages the listener to interpret the speaker’s words in terms of feelings. Thus, instead of just repeating what happened the listener demonstrated that they have understood the psychological element to the situation.
Why is active listening important to being an effective coach

- In order to help clients get the best out of themselves, coaches need to know what *truly* motivates and de-motivates them.

- Oftentimes clients don’t say what they really want to – this may occur both consciously and unconsciously. Active listening allows the coach to listen for those times when this might be occurring.

- High impact coaches take the time to connect strongly with their clients and Active Listening allows them to do this effectively.
So, what are we doing when we are Actively Listening to a client?

- Group discussion
What is powerful questioning in coaching

• Good coaching involves asking great questions. In coaching, what types of questions are we:
  • typically asking, and
  • NOT asking?
Emotional intelligence is...

“A set of seven skills that define how effectively we perceive, understand, reason with and manage our own and others’ feelings.”

All coaching involves...

| Have |
| Do |
| Be |
| Desired states |
| Results |
| Outcomes |
| Approaches |
| Models |
| Coaching skills |
| Present |
| Connected |
| Empathetic |
How do the skills of EI help us actively listen in coaching?

How do the skills of EI help us “ask the right questions” in coaching?
3 minute reflection
The first element of active listening

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of listening</th>
<th>Specific elements and actions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Attending</strong></td>
<td>• S.O.L.E.R.</td>
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<td>• Eye contact and a posture of involvement</td>
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<td>• Providing others with your time in a non-distracting environment</td>
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<td>• Providing the opportunity for others to ‘just talk’</td>
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Reference: *People Skills* by Robert Bolton
What are we attending for?

• **Verbal**
  - Words used (emotions based and other). For example:
    - happy, sad, glad, mad, etc
    - should, could, must, ought, want, etc
  - Story ‘patterns’ (e.g., different context but with a similar theme)
  - Expression of values, beliefs, points-of-view, opinions, etc

• **Non-verbal voice attributes**
  - Voice tonality
  - Vocal clarity
  - Vocal expressiveness

• **Non-verbal physical attributes**
  - Facial expression
  - Body language
  - Eye contact
  - Posture
  - Touch
  - Dress and grooming
  - Gesture
  - Silence
Strategies for allowing-the-space to attend

• What gets in the way of you ‘attending’ to your client?

• What strategies do you employ to ‘attend’ to your client within a coaching conversation?
# The 3 elements of active listening

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| **1. Attending**   | • S.O.L.E.R.  
|                    | • Eye contact and a posture of involvement  
|                    | • Providing others with your time in a non-distracting environment  
|                    | • Providing the opportunity for others to ‘just talk’  |
| **2. Following**   | • Asking general open ended questions. For example: “How is your day going?” or “What was your experience of that conversation?”  
|                    | • Minimal encourages that invite the person to continue talking. Encourages such as: “Yes”, “Really?”, “Hmm mmm”, “And?”  
|                    | • Questions that directly relate to a person’s emotion. For example: “What is on you mind, Tom?”  
|                    | • Attentive silence  |
| **3. Reflecting**  | • Basic empathy. For example: “I understand you feel [emotion] because [specific situation]. Is this correct?”  
|                    | • Paraphrasing  
|                    | • Reflecting feelings  
|                    | • Reflecting meaning (linking feelings to content and context)  |

Reference: *People Skills* by Robert Bolton
So, why is ‘attending’ so important?

• Given the three elements of listening, why is ‘attending’ to your client so important?
Here’s some of the reasons why …

• Research suggests that we spend more time listening during our waking hours than in undertaking any other activity.

• Approximately 70% of our time is spent in communication, with approximately 45% of our time being spent listening to others.

• Clients provide us both the:
  • **content** (i.e., words), and
  • **process** (i.e., why the client is saying those words at that time) underpinning what they are experiencing.

Effective questioning is critical to finding out the **content** and the **process** for what a client is experiencing.
The four levels of listening available to the coach

- **Level 1**: Content
- **Level 2**: Context
- **Level 3**: Values and beliefs
- **Level 4**: Hidden assumptions
### Example of listening relevant to each level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1: Content</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Q. How are you feeling?</td>
<td>I am feeling upset and hurt.</td>
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### Level 2: Context

| Q. What led up to you feeling this way? | For the past few weeks I have been working so hard to complete this project. I have done it all myself and am angry because no one helped me. |

### Level 3: Values and beliefs

| Q. What about this situation you describe is the issue? | One of my professional values is **personal strength** and another is **determination**. I try to complete any task set for me within the time frames allocated and strive to be the best I can be in all that I do at work. |

### Level 4: Unknown assumptions

| Q. What’s really going on here underneath the two values you describe? | Throughout my career I have always assumed that those people who needed help in completing a task would get it. Further, people shouldn’t have to ask for it – I don’t wait for people to ask for help before pitching in. |

### Moving from insight to action

| Q. What could you do differently next time? | Maybe these assumptions are incorrect and that I owe it to myself to ask for help from others when I need it. |
Exemplar questions related to Level 1 listening

Level 1: Content

- Tell me what you are feeling?
- How are you feeling?
- What are you feeling right now?
- Explain you feeling about the issue?
- What is the emotional *content* of the present situation?
- Tell me some more about how you are feeling?
- What is the physical sensation you are feeling as we talk about this?
Exemplar questions related to level 2 listening

- **Level 2: Context**
- Explain the situation that led up to how you are feeling?
- What is the context for how you begin to feel this way?
- What let up to what is happening now?
- Tell be a little more of the background?
- What have been the triggers that have led you how you feel right now?
Level 3: Values and beliefs

• Which of your values is coming into play in this situation?
• What are the thoughts you have not shared with me yet?
• Tell me a little about what you believe is going on in this situation?
• What about the situation you describe makes you feel de-valued?
• What are the values and/or beliefs driving how you feel in this situation?
Exemplar questions related to level 4 listening

Level 4: Unknown assumptions

• What is really going on underneath the values clash you describe?
• What are the unknown assumptions in this situation?
• What is your criterion for a successful way forward from how you feel?
• Are we able to separate assumptions from ‘facts’ in this situation?
What are your experiences

- What happens when you ask a ‘content’ question of a client?
- What happens when you ask a ‘process’ question of a client?
- What might stop you from asking a Level 3 or Level 4 question of a client?
- What might encourage you to ask a Level 3 or Level 4 question of a client?
Developing your Personal Action Plan

• Develop a S.M.A.R.T goal for enhancing your active listening and powerful questioning skills as a coach.

• In developing your plan, consider:
  • potential impact
  • ease of implementation
  • measurement of progress
  • support and feedback required, and
  • importance to you.
Upcoming sessions …

• Upcoming ICF sessions planned for 2009

  • 24th March 2009
    • Enhancing client awareness within the coaching conversation

  • 21st April 2009
    • Influencing your client towards focused action using Emotional Intelligence

  • 19th May 2009
    • Using a self-reflective practice to develop greater Emotional Intelligence
• Genos Americas

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