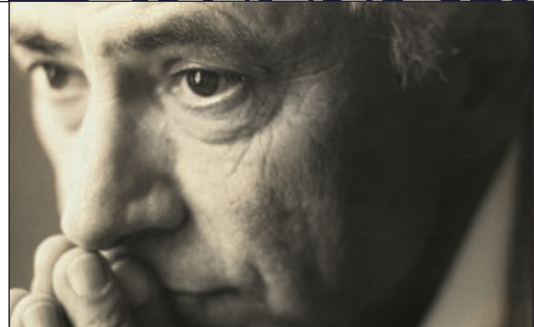


EXPERT GUIDANCE ON CRITICAL COACHING ISSUES

My client feels like a failure



the situation

“I have a client who recently lost his job, his home is in foreclosure and his marriage is on the rocks. I have offered to give him free coaching until he gets back on his feet financially. However, he is feeling very defeated by the recession, and hopeless that things will turn around. How can I help him regain his confidence and his sense of self-worth?”

the experts weigh in

By Victoria Trabosh, CDC®

It is possible that all the things that this man measured himself by are in jeopardy: his career, his finances and his family. For him, finding who he is in the process of losing so much of his identity is more than challenging: it could be the greatest challenge of his entire life. If he is exhibiting signs of clinical depression, make sure you refer him to his therapist, or suggest therapy. But if he's just overwhelmed, then you can assist as his coach.

While as coaches we know that all failures can lead to success, how difficult is that to see in the moment? REALLY difficult!! So your intention should be to be there for him, but first make sure he's there for himself.

Help him to keep his perspective.

He must be the one doing the talking –the one working through his challenges, and the one finding the silver lining and opportunities.

Dr. Saj-nicole A. Jani wrote an article in Forbes.com column “The Third Opinion” in November 2008 titled, “Never Waste a Crisis.” The first step she describes is to figure out how to survive: “You should be systematic and transparent about balancing optimism with realism in your current plan for survival.” You as his coach can help him with this balance.

Set mutually agreed-upon goals. With permission, hold him accountable. Stretch him as he wants to be stretched, and then stretch a bit more.

As a coach, are you walking your talk? Have YOU figured out how to survive? You're offering free coaching but I feel strongly that clients

value what they pay for. Often free coaching is not valued. In this case, it's a wonderful gift but set a time-frame around “free.” I suggest three months and then review if you want to continue. If he fails to show up, literally or figuratively, free coaching may not be a tool he's willing to leverage. Be careful about offering free coaching on a regular basis or you'll be saying, “I need to figure out how to survive!” Care well for yourself and your business and then you can be of service to others.

Remember, all failures can lead to success. His confidence and self-worth may be restored as he comes through this. Time will tell. So coach confidently and compassionately and give him your best – and you will have done your part.

Are you grappling with a sticky situation?

You don't have to go it alone. Let our senior coaches give you some different perspectives to consider. Email your situation to: editor@choice-online.com and put “sticky situations” in the subject line.

By Craig Carr, PCC

There is a job that coaches must take on in these changing times. This recession is like no other in our lifetime, and for many people it will hit like a Great Depression. It's not business as usual and savvy coaches must respond with innovation and heightened relevance. It is important to find new ways to get good coaching to more people at lower prices, and in that I applaud you. At the same time, you sound like an experienced coach who knows the pitfalls of a client who doesn't have "skin in the game."

Coaching give-away is a big deal and needs to be addressed, but it is not the concern I want to focus on here. Rather, it is the coaching approach with this individual, and from almost any perspective building confidence and self-worth takes time. The challenge is that your client has been hit with a triple-whammy that adds up to a big "You Failed!" If left to his own devices, he will easily be able to find a truckload of evidence to prove a negative assessment of himself.

I've looked for a quick fix to self-esteem issues and short of lightening bolts of grace, there is none! Don't get pulled into a promise of fast confidence repair. In time it can be done, of course, and it's going to take a

combination of resiliency training, focused mental re-patterning, and new goal-setting and values work. One thing to watch for is a growing orientation that out of crisis comes opportunity. The fact is that in the meantime his financial situation may worsen. Arguably, it is easier for people to deal with financial decline, even catastrophe, than with the dissolution of a good relationship. Most can see that money comes and money goes and fortunes are made and lost every day. Love and intimacy, however, come rarely, and far fewer recover a vital sense of wholeness when they lose what they truly value most.

For that reason I suggest you focus on his marriage. Two can weather a financial storm better than one if (and it's a BIG "if") blame and personal agendas are set aside to work together, and they share deeply their respect and love for each other. A second advantage of working on the relationship is that it's where he could see success happening right away, which he needs as soon as possible. If you are trained in relationship coaching, work with the couple together.

Confidence and self-esteem expands in a positive environment. You'll have to start small and keep his view on a new future, not the past. Make new plans, write a new life story, be his coach and champion. Be sure to also take care of yourself – don't drift into caretaking.

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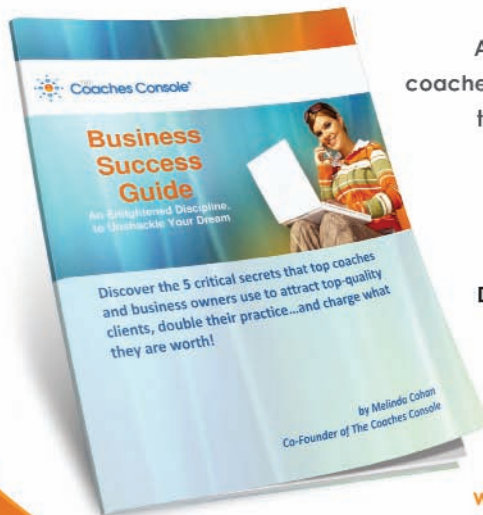
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By Carol Adrienne, PhD

Your situation brings up the following four questions in my mind. **1.** How long have you been coaching this client? If you two have had a few sessions, you might offer one free “exit” session. The objective is to break things into small steps, and help him finish any unfinished business – in any area of his life. Sometimes, it’s the straw that breaks the camel’s back, and we need to pay attention to one, specific, area of our life. A major breakdown causes overwhelm. To get going again, all we can do is take one step at a time. Help him break things down into one or two key mini-goals (e.g., making a date for a heart-to-heart talk with his wife, or calling the foreclosure agent. Have him agree to send you – by a certain date – a short email update to give him a sense of accounting to someone who cares about him.

2. What did he say in response to your offer of free coaching? If he was not very receptive, you may have to let him take time to deal with his process – and trust that the void is there for a reason. He also may be reluctant to feel indebted to you. Not only that, but in my experience – as generous as your intention may be – people often tend not to benefit from “free” offers because they are not paying good money for it.

3. Have you made any progress on a specific issue in your previous coaching so far? I’d be tempted to review previous points of clarity. To re-connect him to recent advances, insights, or developing goals and strengths, make a summary statement of where he started, what issues he addressed, and the insights he found. Granted, he may be too depressed to make the connection to past strengths, but having a written summary from you might prove useful when he’s ready to take it in. Ask him, “What philosophy always gets you through the rough spots?”

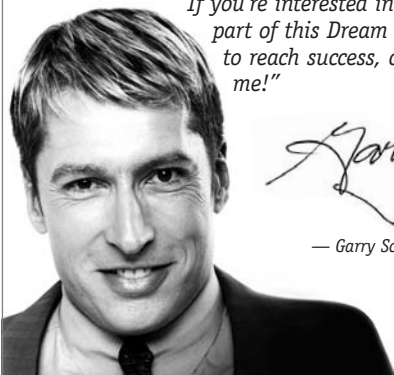
4. How many free sessions were you thinking of offering him? I’m wondering if your offer has any bearing on your own sense of self-confidence and self-worth as a coach? As for advising your client, my feeling is that our sense of self-worth stems from doing even a small activity well. We gain strength whenever we connect to something that has meaning for us – it could even be a volunteer activity or getting back to an old hobby.

Self-worth often comes in through the back door – in small things, small joys. Encourage him to take this time to do something he didn’t have time for while he was working, married, etc. Suggest that he take time to make amends where he needs to, and to see this as a time to ask himself what he really wants. •

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— Garry Schleifer

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