

choice

the magazine of professional coaching

COACHING
TO
*Unlock
Joy*

HOW DO I REDISCOVER MY JOY?

The Situation:

“As an executive coach, I help overwhelmed leaders find clarity, purpose and fulfillment in their work and lives – yet due to recent extreme family situations, combined with the heaviness my clients are reporting, I’ve lost my own sense of joy. The emotional weight of client work and the constant need to hold space for others leave little room for lightness in my own life. I give so much, but lately, I find that what used to give me energy and happiness no longer fuels me. The disconnect between the joy I help others reclaim and my inner reality is deeply disheartening. How do I reconnect with the version of myself who feels alive and joyful, without walking away from the meaningful work I do for others?”



By **Victoria Trabosh, CDC, CEC**

As an executive coach, you’re in a unique position of giving so much of yourself to others, and it’s natural to feel depleted when the balance between giving and receiving becomes skewed. The disconnect you’re feeling is not a failure – it’s a signal it’s time to take stock of what you need.

According to the great Joseph Campbell, we are all on a hero’s journey. We set out on a quest, encounter difficulties, work through them, continue our journey...and rinse, lather, repeat. I’m not being snarky; I’m talking from deeply personal experience. While I don’t often speak of my personal circumstances in this column, I’ve been battling oral cancer since 2014. And what a battle it’s been.

I’ve continued to work through radiation, massive surgeries, and now immunotherapy, but sometimes, I’m just done. And I pause. And it’s better to pause on purpose rather than be forced to pause because we’re out of energy spiritually, emotionally and physically. This work is so important, and it’s time to give yourself permission to prioritize your own well-being.

Just as you encourage your clients to invest in themselves, you must extend that same grace to yourself. Reflect on what used to bring you joy and energy, and consider how you can reintroduce those elements into your life in small, manageable ways. Consider taking a pause or reduce your client load from coaching; it’s amazing how clients understand and will be there when you return.

It may also help to seek support from a trusted mentor, therapist or peer group. Sharing your struggles with someone who understands the demands of your role can be validating and may offer fresh perspectives on how to navigate this season of life. You don’t have to carry this alone.

By tending to yourself with the same care and compassion you offer others, you can begin to reclaim the joy and vitality that will allow you to continue your meaningful work with renewed energy and authenticity. It is incredibly difficult to continue working in the midst of personal upheaval. But you can find your joy again. It may take time, but it will come.

You are a hero on a journey, no doubt.

By Suzi Pomerantz, MT, MCC

It is completely understandable that you would feel this way, given the state of global affairs as well as your personal situation. You can absolutely still help others, and I would argue that your own grief journey only adds to your resilience as well as your ability to authentically and empathetically connect with clients who are also grieving.

That said, the question you actually asked is how to reconnect with the version of yourself that feels alive and joyful, so here are three practical ideas for you to experiment with as you navigate your journey.

1 PUT YOUR OWN MASK ON FIRST. Protect your energy during client sessions so that you are not absorbing or taking in their heaviness. You want to be able to distinguish between what is yours and what is theirs in terms of all that you are feeling.

You do not have to show up joyful to client sessions, but you do have to regulate and manage yourself so that you can truly be present for them. As airlines say, put your own oxygen mask on before helping those around you. Take a walk, meditate, journal, engage in some gratitude practices, do some light stretching, yoga inversions or deep breathing techniques to re-regulate yourself, and perhaps even help to co-regulate your clients in real time.

2 GET HELP. Use your own coach or therapist, your coach supervisor or your mastermind group to support you in reclaiming your inner joy and help you process that which feels heavy to you. Experiment with different modalities of healing and processing, including somatic and energy work to move the stuck heaviness.

Remember, everything you are feeling is real and valid, and needs to just move through. E-motion stands for Energy in motion, so keep it moving.

3 RECOGNIZE GLIMMERS. Have you heard of glimmers? They are the opposite of triggers in terms of your central nervous system. Small, positive moments or experiences of safety, hope and lightness can help to regulate your dysregulated system.

If you intentionally notice them as a conscious practice, glimmers can serve as breadcrumbs to help you find the path back to your internally joyful, fully vibrant and alive self.

The good news is that you needn't believe everything you think. You are in charge of your thoughts and can systematically reclaim or reinvent who you want to be.

By Craig Carr, PCC, CPCC

What you're experiencing isn't a failure of resilience or a glitch that requires a career reboot. You seem confident in your client work, providing value and fulfillment, so the issue isn't coaching or your skills; it's how you're managing your life circumstances in relation to your work – especially where you focus your attention and how you create meaning.

You got caught in a pattern where client sorrow, family crisis and professional identity collapsed into a single burden, and you're unconsciously carrying it alone. Under stress, a caring coach can be pulled into an emotional role that isn't theirs to take on. Your trap was to fall into the role of surrogate emotional processor for your clients and your family, mentally blending them into one. It's no surprise you're feeling drained and disheartened.

In Systemic Intelligence, we know that when issues arise, it's not always about doing less or working smarter. Often, it's about where you stand in the system and what you've taken on that doesn't belong to you. When you stop functioning with the detachment of a coach who is both a witness and a strategist, you become vulnerable to absorbing the emotions of others.

When that alarm sounds, the system alerts you, and one thing it might do is pull the plug on joy.

The solution isn't about pushing through or walking away; it's about stepping out of the center and letting go of over-functioning. You're not meant to be the keeper for unresolved

grief, complexity and healing. Allow yourself to receive as well as give, and think about when emotional labor became a currency for belonging – or when you learned that it's okay for give-and-take to be unbalanced.

Here's a simple yet powerful practice: Before your next client session, visualize your own system behind you—family, teachers, mentors, ancestors—and imagine their presence supporting you while you hold space for your client. Feel their loving hands on your shoulders.

You'll be surprised how this subtle repositioning can shift the entire dynamic. You're no longer the sole anchor; you're part of something larger where others carry the burden, too, even if it doesn't externally look that way.

And don't confuse the absence of joy with the absence of meaning. Joy may not return as energy or elation. It may reappear first as relief, or breath, or a quiet "yes" that comes when you reclaim your rightful place and can authentically say the words, "This is not mine to carry." •

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 submissions@choice-online.com and put "sticky situations" in the subject line.