

# HELLYERCOACHING

## Personal Coaching Approach

### **Overview**

I primarily coach individuals in work situations, typically senior leaders and entrepreneurs. My clients are resourceful and creative people: if they could resolve a problematic situation themselves, they would just get on with it. They need a thinking partner to help them perceive things differently, whereupon the necessary action is no longer obscured.

My approach relies upon emergence and intuition (both mine and theirs), backed by the theoretical bases of several coaching and therapeutic traditions. Together, we discover the topics that need addressing rather than adhering to a set agenda. Through conversation we create meaning and insight, enabling them to think more clearly about their 'stuff', to make decisions and take action with their eyes open.

### **Why do people engage my services?**

Many of my clients have a logical / technical / professional background that has been a strength in their careers, a strength that is no longer sufficient to address current challenges. My own background in finance, systems, and business leads them to have confidence that I'll be a good choice of coach. And indeed, my experience helps me ask better questions and offer observations as appropriate. Accordingly, although I'm often walking the line between mentoring and coaching, I'm not interested in giving advice but rather in helping people discover what works for them.

I think the overriding reason that people choose me is trust and rapport. I'm good at rapidly establishing a deep connection and holding a space in which they feel comfortable and safe — clients often discuss deeper topics than they had expected, but in retrospect they're the right topics. Even in an organisational context, the client has to choose to work with the coach; that's where the power comes from.

I'm good at noticing what might be behind a statement and asking questions without imposing my own meaning. I'm good at understanding the structure of systems and how that might be driving unwanted behaviour.

People come away from conversations with me having gained insight and clarity. Some of this comes from my ability to pay 'exquisite attention' and to be truly interested in them; it is a joy and privilege to witness new thoughts occurring.

## Core Assumptions

People are naturally resourceful, creative, and whole — and so is the system of relationships that they are a part of. They need help perceiving the system from different vantage points because the solution never has anything to do with the problematic situation described.

People and relationship systems are in a constant state of emergence. They are where they are in each moment, and their priorities are expressed over time through what they are doing. We seek to express the potential of what unfolds.

People often need space in order to think more clearly. Holding that space for them creates safety and confidence. Space also comes from not having to explain yourself or to be understood; I don't try too hard to understand the words that people use, but embrace clean language techniques. Through conversation and questioning we can get beyond layers of abstraction; meanings are not fixed and belong to the client.

Change takes no time at all; it happens in an instant. (Running a race takes time, crossing the finish line does not.) A coaching conversation is a transformational act; by lifting or adding a perceived constraint, what is possible changes, what is perceived (and perceivable) changes, all of which drive subsequent choices and behaviour.

Primary training and influences: ACCT, Co-Active, NLP, ORSC, and Nora Bateson, Nancy Kline, Venkat Rao, James Wilk. If you like labels, try Systems-Centric Humanist.

## The coaching engagement

Contracting is particularly important in a work context where there will be multiple stakeholders. Collectively, we need to balance what is best for the individual and best for the organisation. Everyone involved needs to understand the coaching process and our responsibilities within it.

The agreement may be with the organisation, which sets the overall aims and guardrails for the individual coaching session. People bring (or may bring) their whole selves to work, but the aims of a particular session must be consistent with the aims of the sponsor.

Confidentiality is crucial, especially when coaching members of the same team, or upwards/downwards in the hierarchy. If the sponsor is not the client, then any reporting of progress should be done with the client's permission and input.

Currently most of my engagements are monthly subscriptions rather than per-session fees. Periodically we reflect on the value and adjust the rhythm (frequency, duration, etc) accordingly. Ideally, the engagement comes to a natural end, concluding with a consolidation/reflection session and ideas about how to maintain momentum.

## How do I coach?

Sessions usually have a focus, something the client wants to work on or think about. There's no fixed right or wrong in terms of the content, so long as it's engaged with honestly.

In the absence of a topic, it starts with a 'brain dump', a transient inventory of what's got their attention. The flip side of noticing what has attention is noticing what is neglected, with the aim of closing the gap between what they say and what they do.

We can check the list for completeness; does it cover all the areas of their life, all the formal (and informal) responsibilities in their work, etc.? There's something magical in looking over such a list, articulating what each item is, why it matters, related hopes and fears, and what the concrete next action is.

They're the expert in what they want and need, even if inarticulately so. They've got all the skills and behaviours they need to succeed at this, even if they're sometimes hard to access. My role is to help them usefully surface those things, through conversation, question, and challenge. If we go start to venture beyond the bounds of comfort and competence, our relationship lets us talk about and adjust the guardrails.

I'm getting better at noticing and balancing the client's energy, and ensuring the session ends on a good note. Summarizing their progress, obstacles overcome, insights gained, etc. is usually helpful. If appropriate, I ask them to articulate what activity will occur before our next session.

It's an emergent and adaptive process, in service of making a difference to the things that really matter to them right now, and getting them back on track after periods of distraction or confusion. In short, enabling the client to willingly and joyfully give sufficient attention to what they actually do, in order that it (along with everything else) can be done properly.

## Get in touch

I'm taking on three additional clients at reduced rates, in order to boost my formal coaching hours because I'm finally taking the step to accredit my executive coaching practice. (Hence this essay!) 'Executive' in this case just means 'work-related', though I do coach senior leaders too.

If you'd like a free 'chemistry' session to find out how we can work together, please fill out this quick four-question survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/28M8CBD>