

Crisis: The Doorway to Transformation

Bryan Smith



Early on a Monday morning, I got a request for an emergency coaching session from my client "Rick," a pastor who had begun working at his church a few months ago. He shared he had just come out of a contentious and embarrassing church board meeting that called into question his leadership skills and crushed his sense of authority in his new position.

When he called a few days later, he began by saying, "I need to spend our time today figuring out how I can be a better moderator of our church board meetings. At our last meeting, we were supposed to approve our annual budget, but during the discussion, one of the elders launched into a tirade on how the board was being fiscally irresponsible to even consider this budget. Other elders got angry at him and the whole meeting degenerated into a contentious mess. I left the meeting ashamed and embarrassed that I let this happen."

I heard Rick saying he wanted to spend our time designing more effective strategies for leading meetings and re-establishing his leadership role. But I felt an intuitive nudge to see whether Rick might be willing to dive deeper into something transformational, something that could foster new capacities, not just in Rick's ministerial repertoire, but in Rick himself.

(continued)

Crisis: The Doorway to Transformation

Bryan Smith.....1

The Seven Steps of Transformation

Debbie Luxton4

Personal Transformation Through Sex Addiction Recovery Coaching

John Doyel.....7

Moving Your Client from a Fixed Mindset to a Growth Mindset

Ireel Harrison, D.Min.....8

Discover the DISC Profile for Transformative Coaching

Carrie Ellis, MA, LPC, CPBA.....10

The Transformative Power of Direct Communication

Rev. Aileen Price, ACC12

A Coaching Devotion: Getting a Second Opinion

Mary Selzer, PCC.....14

Transformational Coaching

Rebecca Sassenrath, BS, ACC15

Take Coaching Below the Surface When It Comes to Fund-raising

Doug Foltz, ACC17

Book Review: Ask More: The Power of Questions to Open Doors, Uncover Solutions, and Spark Change

Bob Dale, PhD18

How to Implement Better Organizational Communication

Katherine Burgus20

Who's Talking?

And so, after a few moments of silence, I asked, "Who's talking right now?" Rick paused for a moment, and then with a bit of laughter in his voice said, "I thought you might ask me that." It was a question that I have asked Rick a few times in the course of the eighteen months we have worked together.

That may seem like an odd question, but I have found it to be one of the most powerful queries in my arsenal, especially when a client has been hijacked by strong afflictive emotions. It helps to free a client from being completely identified with a thought or feeling, invites reflection on what is really going on below the surface, and leads to the possibility of greater self awareness and positive action.

"Well," he said, "I suppose it's my ego feeling bruised from such a public failure." I then asked him if he thought it might be helpful to look at what had happened not from the ego's point of view, but from a larger, more expansive position. "Sure!" he said, "let's do it."

... "Inner Critics," "Escapists and Addicts," "Wounded Children," "Lion Tamers and Loyal Soldiers," and "Shadow Selves." These subs seek to keep us small and safe by encouraging us to avoid taking risks and by counseling us to always choose social acceptability over personal authenticity.

Our Inner Cast of Characters

When I asked Rick, "Who's talking now?" I was inviting him to go on a journey that would lead to greater self-awareness, self-care, and inner freedom. Such possibilities arise when we gain an appreciation for the complexity of our own psyches.

I gained such an appreciation as I have worked with a map of the psyche laid out in Bill Plotkin's book, *Wild Mind: A Field Guide to the Human Psyche*. In his book, Plotkin notes that all of us have within ourselves marvelous facets of wholeness. These facets manifest an innate wisdom, power, and resilience that know how to provide what we need to live in a wise and healthy way. When we as coaches affirm that our clients are creative, resourceful, and whole, we are acknowledging the presence and effectiveness of these facets.

However, as Plotkin notes, our psyches are not simply an amalgam of healthy and wise components but a conglomeration of a vast cast of characters whose health and wisdom are more suspect. He calls these characters "sub-personalities" (subs) or "protective parts." These psychological structures got formed early in our childhood to protect our young psyches from being wounded and damaged from the vicissitudes of life.

Plotkin gives these subs names like "Inner Critics," "Escapists and Addicts," "Wounded Children," "Lion Tamers and Loyal Soldiers," and "Shadow Selves." These subs seek to keep us small and safe by encouraging us to avoid taking risks and by counseling us to always choose social acceptability over personal authenticity.

Plotkin asserts that in times of psychological stress, we get "possessed" by our subs as they implement their protective strategies. These strategies served us well in childhood. They safeguard our vulnerable psyches from damage and helped us navigate through a scary world. But when we mature into creative, resourceful and whole adults, these strategies constrain us from moving into the new possibilities that life offers and our own heart's desire. Learning how to free ourselves from the grip of our subs opens a possibility for living with greater wholeness and satisfaction.

Coach Jesus

In our coaching session, I was inviting Rick to do what Jesus invited people to do over and over in his ministry. For example, Luke shares about a time when Jesus stayed at the home of Mary and Martha. We're told that Mary sat at Jesus' feet while Martha fumed that her sister was letting her do all the work. Martha had gotten hijacked by her wounded child as resentment and anger grew to a crescendo.

When Mary laments how unfairly her sister has treated her, Jesus mirrors her feelings back to her: "Martha, Martha, you're worried and anxious about so many things!" He brings her emotional state to light by naming it and then points her to a better way. He opens her eyes to the possibility before her and invites her into it.

Martha didn't need a family counselor to help her explore her history of sibling rivalry or her performance orientation. She needed a coach to help her see clearly where she was, catch a vision for a better future, and find the path forward.

Jesus does the same thing in his story about two estranged brothers. The younger brother had left home with a pile of money and wasted it all on wild living. Destitute, he comes home to beg his father to take him in as a servant. But instead, his dad decides to throw an extravagant party for him.

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The older brother, the "good son," refuses to come to the party. He's standing out in the field roiling with bitterness, jealousy, and resentment that this good-for-nothing loser was getting such a lavish welcome home. So the father goes out to the field and pleads with his oldest son to come to the party, to be reconciled with his brother, and to step forward into a larger, gracious, and more joyful existence.

Over and over again, Jesus sought to coach people to choose the better portion, to enter a larger story, to step into new possibilities. In my work as a coach, my hope is that my clients can discover doorways to transformation that are always there waiting to be seen and opened. And these doorways are almost always presented in the form of a crisis to be averted or a problem to be solved.

While our clients are indeed creative, resourceful, and whole, taking steps toward transformation requires that we help our clients develop these facets of wholeness even more. For the level of wholeness that might have been sufficient to bring us to a certain place in life will not be sufficient to move us forward.

Remembering Who We Are

In my call with Rick, after we agreed to explore the situation from perspectives other than the ego's, I asked him if he was willing to imagine being back in that church board meeting as the elder was unleashing his angry accusations. When he agreed, I invited him to share what he was feeling as the elder spoke. He said quietly, "I felt completely overwhelmed and unsafe. I felt like a child facing an angry parent. It's like I went from being fifty to being five in a matter of seconds."

While therapy might be useful for exploring what took place in Rick's life when he was five, I simply asked Rick, "What did that five year old need when that elder was letting it fly?" He thought for a few moments and said, "To know that he was safe. That he was okay." I then asked, "Can you think of how you could have let that five year old know he was safe, that he was okay right in the middle of that diatribe?"

Again there was some extended silence before Rick said with a chuckle, "I could have told him, 'You're fine. You're safe. There's no need to be afraid.' Because the truth is he *was* safe. I'm not five years old. I just forgot that for a moment."

In the heat of emotion or in the midst of a crisis, we can, as Rick said, forget who we are. We can forget that we are creative, resourceful, and whole and get hijacked by feelings of fear, anxiety, and helplessness. And when that happens, we can resort to behaviors that don't serve us or others well.

Over the remainder of that coaching session and the two that followed, Rick and I explored ways that he could facilitate a greater capacity to care for himself when he found himself in emotionally charged situations--ways that would remind him who he is in those times he forgets. In the course of this work, Rick shared with me that learning to be a wiser and more compassionate moderator of his own psyche had allowed him not only to be a much better moderator of his church board but to handle all of the responsibilities of his ministry with greater confidence and joy.

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

As a coach, I have come to appreciate how fearfully and wonderfully made we truly are. Each of us has an incredibly rich and intricate inner world where thoughts, emotions, and habitual ways of responding can be obstacles to living in the freedom, power, and joy God has in store for us. Helping clients to navigate those obstacles in a healthy way is perhaps the greatest impact a coach can have.

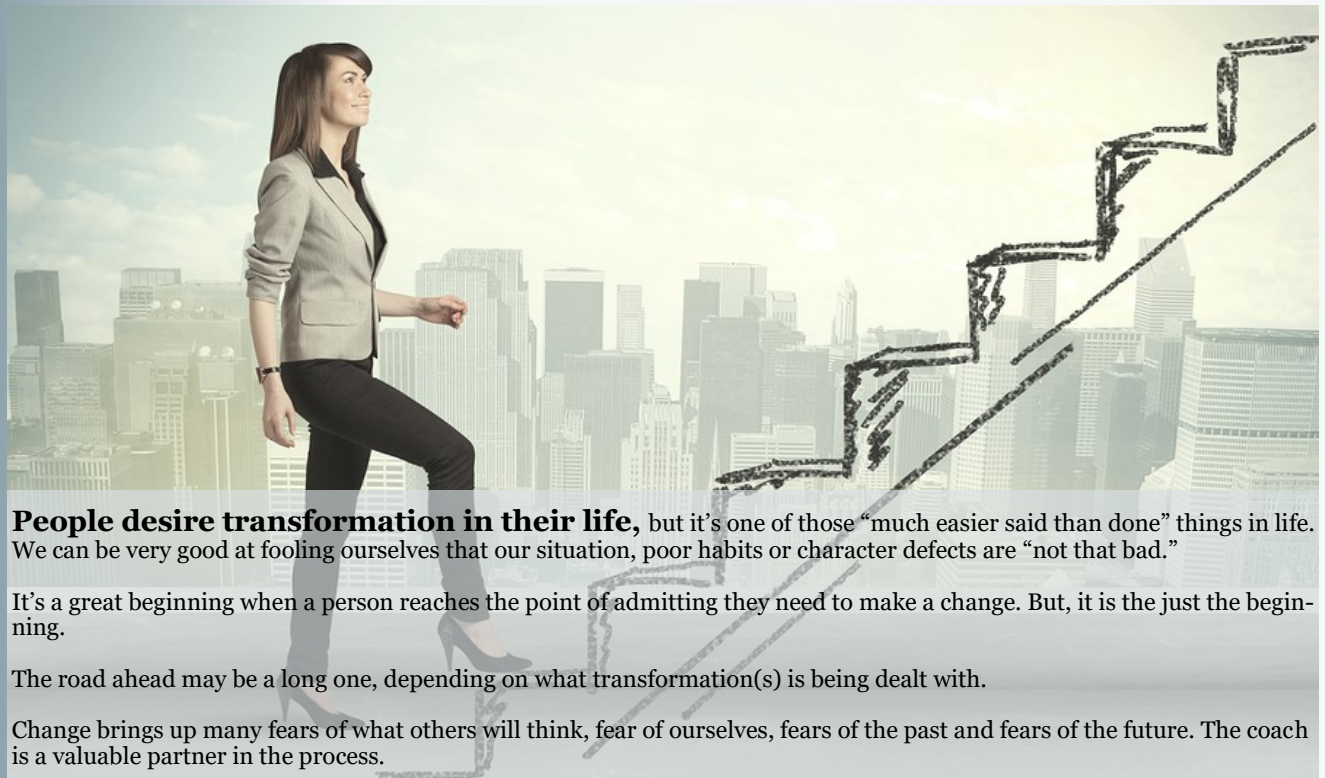


Bryan Smith is a Presbyterian pastor and an ICF certified Clergy Coach. He received his MDiv from Princeton Theological Seminary and his coach training through the Auburn Theological Seminary coach training program. Bryan especially enjoys working with church leaders who are facing "threshold moments" -- times when something new is unfolding, or times when old external or internal structures are no longer working in a life-giving way. These are rich moments when people find themselves caught between yearning for a way of living and serving that comes from a deeper place and settling for old ways that no longer serve them well. In his coaching, Bryan helps church leaders dig deeper to discover, develop, and embody all their facets of wholeness so they can live and minister with greater courage, joy, freedom and impact. Bryan can be contacted by email at coachbryan@outlook.com.



The Seven Steps of Transformation

Debbie Luxton



People desire transformation in their life, but it's one of those "much easier said than done" things in life. We can be very good at fooling ourselves that our situation, poor habits or character defects are "not that bad."

It's a great beginning when a person reaches the point of admitting they need to make a change. But, it is the just the beginning.

The road ahead may be a long one, depending on what transformation(s) is being dealt with.

Change brings up many fears of what others will think, fear of ourselves, fears of the past and fears of the future. The coach is a valuable partner in the process.

Step 1: Release Denial

You would think that if someone comes to you desiring change, they have dealt with their denial. After all, they are asking for help; right?

The first step in coming out of denial is certainly the admission of needing help. Keep in mind, it is one thing to admit help is needed. It is quite another to have the willingness it will take to extract the root.

Many people have lived with their struggles a long time, that's all they know. Even when the clarity begins to come, it can be hard for someone to accept what may be true right in front of them.

1 John 4:18 (ESV) tells us, *"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love."*

This is a great place to discuss the person's relationship to Jesus.

Step 2: The Stark Reality of Powerless

People do not like it when they aren't in control. Truth is, we aren't really in control of anything, but we like to believe we are.

Coming to grips with this truth is tough for most people, especially leaders. Leaders have a great deal of responsibility for projects, people, and assignments. Therefore, that's what they do in their day-to-day; they take control.

The ultimate reality that they are powerless with no real control over a personal stronghold may be hard accept.

Romans 7:18 (NCV) tells us, *"Yes, I know that nothing good lives in me—I mean nothing good lives in the part of me that is earthly and sinful. I want to do the things that are good, but I do not do them."*

Things that get in the way of a person admitting they are powerless include pride, worry, resentments, and any number of other fears. Their coach has a great opportunity to help them see their fears.

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Step 3: Hope for the Future

It may seem very strange that a Christian would have trouble finding hope, but many do. Of course, Christian coaches work with non-Christians as well. Their hope may be in many things that are not of God.

Philippians 2:13 (NLT) tells us, *“For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.”*

As Christian coaches, we are well aware that the hope of our clients, to be the people they desire to be, is found in Jesus. People easily lose sight of the hope they once had through their transformation journey.

When the pain of letting go, the pain of coming clean, the reality of facing consequences is staring someone in the face, hope appears very distant. It can even feel out of reach.

This is where you begin to find out how open a person really is to change. Are they willing to walk through the tough places ahead in order to have the transformation they desire? Do they demonstrate hope in their future?

With the Holy Spirit's help, we help people see that hope is an absolute. Furthermore, the power to change is not something they simply conjure up within themselves. We help people to envision the great future that awaits them.

*Eagerness is good,
but the healthy
boundaries to keep the
eagerness alive are better!*

Step 4: Give it to God

Transformation requires a decision. At some point a person has to decide if they are going to lay the struggle at the feet of Jesus.

We all know the back and forth battle of giving our stuff to God and taking it back. Give it, take it back. This can happen more times than we can count.

The question must be asked, “What is it going to cost you if you don't turn it over to God?” “What's it going to cost you if you don't make this change in your life?”

The bottom line issue when it comes to this part of the process is trust. People want to understand what is going to happen if they make the commitment to change; if they give it to God.

Proverbs 3:5-6 (MSG) tells us, *“Trust God from the bottom of your heart. Don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track. Don't assume that you know it all. Run to God! Run from evil!”*

For many, learning to trust is a long part of the transformation process. People have many reasons not to trust others, not to trust themselves and with this, how can they trust God?

It can be helpful for clients reflect on this truth: it's not God who has given them a reason to lack trust, it's the sinful world in which we live.

Step 5: Boundaries with Accountability

At this point, the person is ready to move forward, they are ready to take action. Let's help them be successful in the action they are ready to take.

Eagerness is good, but healthy boundaries to keep the eagerness alive are better!

Let us help people with their best path to success by asking these questions: “What will help you stay true to your commitments?” “Who will be your best accountability partners?” and “How will your accountability partners assist you?”

Having an accountability team, surrounding yourself with people who will be honest in love, is a great approach. Good accountability partners must be able to share what a person needs to hear; not what they may want to hear.

Proverbs 15:22 (ESV) tells us, *“Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisors they succeed.”*

Step 6: Ready, Set, Go!

It's time to take real action. It's time to submit to the changes God has revealed in this process. One day at a time, with mission critical priorities identified and scheduled.

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It's important to move forward one day at a time. It's important to know those priorities that will make or break the plan. And, it's important to ensure there is time set to execute those priorities.

Taking action that will succeed must include releasing control to God and giving grace to oneself. Likewise, it is important that the person is accepting the changes in their life and yielding to the growth.

A coach is so important here! Self-sabotage through fears and limiting beliefs will likely crop up. When they do, people quickly lose sight of all they've gained.

1 Peter 1:13-14 (GNB) tells us, *"So then, have your minds ready for action. Keep alert and set your hope completely on the blessing which will be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. Be obedient to God, and do not allow your lives to be shaped by those desires you had when you were still ignorant."*

What a great role coaches get to play in helping clients be ready, alert, hopeful, obedient as they persevere.

Step 7: Daily Inventory

Matthew 6:34 (TLB) tells us, *"So don't be anxious about tomorrow, God will take care of your tomorrow too. Live one day at a time."*

Times of reflection for prayer, expression of gratitude, and self-examination are critical.

There are very few overnight transformations. The Holy Spirit reveals many things in the process, things the client had no idea were coming. This often creates anxiety.

Generally speaking, there isn't one issue that stands alone. More often, it's an entanglement of issues that need to be delicately unraveled.

Processing with God daily, making use of wise advisors - accountability partners, a coach, a pastor - equips people for success. The process of true transformation is a deep introspective journey. Coaches are blessed to help people make changes that give them their life back and bring new life to those around them.

Isaiah 43:18-19 (NCV) tells us, *"The Lord says, 'Forget what happened before, and do not think about the past. Look at the new thing I am going to do. It is already happening. Don't you see it? I will make a road in the desert and rivers in the dry land.'"*



Debbie Luxton is a life coach and John C. Maxwell leadership coach. She is a best selling author of *Choose to THRIVE: Conquering Your Inner Conflicts*, and a women's retreat leader. Debbie, along with her husband, serve as the Celebrate Recovery Ministry Leaders at First Christian Church of Washington, MO. Debbie

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Personal Transformation Through Sex Addiction Recovery Coaching

John Doyel

Over twelve years ago I resigned my position as a Senior Pastor after twenty-six years of full-time ministry. Like so many men I was exposed to pornography as a youth, and as the stresses of life, ministry and family increased I began to use it as a quick fix that fixed nothing. When the internet made access free and simple, I became addicted. This led to my moral failures, and I resigned my position, my calling and my career on September 9th, 2005.

For the past nine years, I have been coaching Christian men in how to experience personal transformation in maintaining sexual purity. I began a ministry at Vineyard Columbus called “180 Ministries” and have watched the group grow from nine men to about one hundred men every Monday night. 180 Ministries have been started in three other churches and I have just launched the fourth. We also have six Online Support Teams in addition to my one on one coaching.

In 2016, I decided to become a certified Sex Addiction Coach through Dr. Doug Weiss’s American Association of Sex Addictions Therapists. I do not want to just teach this information to men but to assist them in personal transformation in an area they have been struggling in for years or even decades.

1. The greatest problem for men addicted to sex is the shame that ***drives them into isolation***. That addiction grows as they lose the battle to their flesh and are defeated by their enemy in this fallen world. Porn and sex have made this available continuously and one only needs a private place with their smartphone to get a fix.

2. Recovery and transformation ***happens in community***. I battled alone for over eight years with this issue. I lied to myself thinking that I could stop. It was only when I began meeting with others in a recovery group did lasting transformation begin.

The men I coach begin with a minimum of six individual sessions. Then they move into one of our Online Support Teams where they experience weekly accountability and daily support through group text. In a recent live video-conferencing call, two of the men I have been coaching shared that they each had a growing sobriety for the first time in their lives. One has ninety days of sobriety and the other has gone five months since his last fall.

3. This is a ***multi-dimensional problem***. It is certainly a spiritual battle. However, there are also physiological addiction issues, emotional wounds driving the behavior, and relational issues if they are married that will need to be addressed. God has given us the spiritual answers in Scripture. However, an addict must go through withdrawal which takes, on average, ninety days.

Then, the emotional wounds are felt since they are not being medicated. Is there a father wound, abuse of any kind, personal trauma experienced? It is at this point that I will often refer to a good Christian counselor in my community to deal with the emotional wounds driving their behavior.

Lastly, there is the relational issue if they are married. I coach the husband while a woman coached the wife. Then I will work with them as a couple to coach them through re-building their marriage.

Let me end with two thoughts.

Do not coach people in this area if it is still a struggle in your own life. I believe that 100% of all believers must learn to deal with sexual temptation. Do not present yourself as a coach in this area if you are not working it out and having consistent sobriety. If you need help contact me at doyel@me.com.

I believe that there can be complete healing by God for sexual addiction. Through Christ, we are new creations and the purpose of the Spirit is to transform us. As long as I maintain my community of accountability and am doing the daily things Scripture teaches every believer to do, I will continue to experience the freedom from this addiction through the personal transformation by the Spirit and being honest in my community of support.

Lastly, there is help for you if this is an area in which you struggle. It is a complex issue but there are answers that can be worked out in the Scriptures and being part of a community of recovery. After more than twelve years of working on my own recovery, I believe God has freed me from this addiction as long as I maintain my daily relationship with God and have my weekly personal accountability and daily support.



John Doyel is a former senior pastor living in Columbus, Ohio, who is now in his 13th year of recovery from sexual brokenness and addiction. He ministers as a lay person in his church and helped start many 180 Recover ministries across the country.

If you or someone you know is looking for help with sexual addiction or you would like to start a sexual addiction recovery ministry at your church, visit www.180recover.com.

Moving Your Client from a Fixed Mindset to a Growth Mindset

Ircel Harrison, D.Min.



Henry Ford is reported to have said, “Whether you think you can or you can’t, you’re right.” In other words, your ability to engage in growth and change is primarily determined by your personal inclination or attitude. This is Carol S. Dweck’s approach as well. In *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, she writes, “For thirty years, my research has shown that the view you adopt for yourself profoundly affects the way you lead your life.”

Dweck suggests that one’s ability to grow and change is based on whether a person has a fixed mindset or a growth mindset. People with a fixed mindset believe that one is born with a certain set of abilities and amount of intelligence. No matter what you attempt, there is only so much you can accomplish. This discourages a person from trying new things because he or she fears that their limitations will be exposed.

On the other hand, according to Dweck, a person with a growth mindset believes that “your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts, your strategies, and help from others. Although people may differ in every which way—in their initial talents and aptitudes, interests, or temperaments—everyone can change and grow through application and experience.”

A Biblical Perspective

As people of faith, we affirm that each person is created in the image of God and, especially if one is a follower of Christ, that he or she has the potential to grow and develop in amazing ways. For example, 2 Peter 3:18 admonishes us in this way: “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen” (NIV).

We find similar challenges to “throw off everything that hinders” (Hebrews 12:1, NIV) and that “he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6, NIV). As coaches with a Christian perspective, we bring this value to our coaching clients as we work with them to embrace a growth mindset.

A Positive Psychology Perspective

Positive psychology is a valuable resource for coaches because it addresses strategies for healthy growth and development over against the preoccupation of earlier psychologists with pathology or mental illness. As Mark Tidsworth and I explained in *Disciple Development Coaching*, “Over time, psychologists and therapists and social science researchers became interested in another question: “What makes people mentally well, healthy, balanced, and content? . . . Positive psychology emerged as a concentration within the field of psychology. Researchers and practitioners in this concentration studied wellness, resilience, contentment, and other positive human attributes.” One’s orientation toward growth is another of these attributes.

In his book, *Authentic Happiness*, Martin E. P. Seligman pointed out that positive psychology is based on three pillars: the study of positive emotions; the study of positive traits; and the study of positive institutions. Dweck’s work on mindset is based on the first pillar, the study of positive emotions. Individuals with a growth mindset have a positive attitude about their own potential.

As coaches, one of our roles is to help our clients become aware of the mindset that they bring to the challenges of life. If they have a fixed mindset, we work to create an environment where they can begin the process of choosing and embracing a growth mindset.

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What's the Difference?

What do the two mindsets look like in practice? As you read the chart below, compare the life approach of Jeff, a person with a fixed mindset, and Betty, someone with a growth mindset. How does each person assess his or her abilities, life challenges, and opportunities?

Betty	Jeff
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Believes that her abilities, intelligence and personality are malleable and can be developed over time with effort and work.• Believes that life is a journey of learning; she is driven to develop and grow.• Embraces uncertainty; she seeks out new challenges and responsibilities.• Can spot growth opportunities that others overlook.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Believes that personal attributes such as abilities, intelligence, and personality don't change much over time.• Believes that life is a test; he tries to avoid making mistakes and looking stupid.• Shies away from new experiences and uncertain situations; he sticks to what he does well.• When challenged to find growth, he is not prepared to do so.

(Suggested by Jeanne Liedtka, et. al., *The Catalyst*)

Jeff believes that his potential was determined at birth. It does not change. Betty believes that her potential is unknown and undiscovered. She is willing to try new things. Jeff fears failure; Betty embraces failure as an opportunity to learn.

Coaching for a Growth Mindset

How can your clients become more like Betty and less like Jeff? How can you be the type of coach who encourages others to embrace a growth mindset and achieve their full potential?

Given that coaches want to help their clients lean into opportunities for growth and personal development, how might a coach encourage a client to embrace a growth mindset? The good news is that some of the actions suggested here are probably things that you are already doing as a coach.

First, you want to build trust with the client.

Only when your client trusts you will he or she be willing to stretch self-imposed limits. We build trust by strengthening the relationship with our client--acting out of integrity, believing in the client even when the client may not believe in himself/herself, and seeing potential in the client.

Second, as a coach, you help to create forward movement in your client.

What really motivates your client – acting out of inherent or identified values, seeking the end to distress or discomfort, finding achievement and recognition, or serving others? We help the client to identify and clearly articulate these motivators so that he or she may use them as incentives for action.

As you might expect, we also work with the client to set goals that are clear and achievable, yet also challenging. We sometimes push the client to do a bit more or to step beyond the personal comfort zone and take a risk. Such behavior can provide significant growth opportunities for the person we coach.

Third, you coach for becoming.

In *Mindset*, Carol Dweck writes: “There was a saying in the 1960’s that went: ‘Becoming is better than being.’ The fixed mindset does not allow people the luxury of becoming. They have to already be.”

The growth mindset by contrast celebrates the process of becoming, seeking and pursuing new challenges as opportunities for growth. As coaches, we invite our clients on a journey of becoming. We encourage the client to articulate a vision of a better future. We help the client to understand that a stumble does not end the journey. They have the freedom to fail, learn from their failures, and move on with new knowledge and agility. In the course of our conversations, we also help the client identify his/her strengths and to leverage those for growth.

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Conclusion

Coaching for a growth mindset is not really new for most coaches. As you consider how to coach clients for a growth mindset, you will be reminded of many of the statements in the International Coach Federation's *Core Competencies*. This congruence affirms that effective coaches will facilitate their clients' embrace of a growth mindset in order for the clients to achieve their full potential.

As British churchman John Henry Newman wrote, "Growth is the only evidence of life."

Here's to life!



Irceel Harrison is Coaching Coordinator for *Pinnacle Leadership Associates* (Columbia, SC) and Supplemental Faculty in Contextualization at Central Baptist Theological Seminary (Shawnee, KS). Irceel is an ACC certified coach with the International Coach Federation. He and his wife, Rita, live in Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

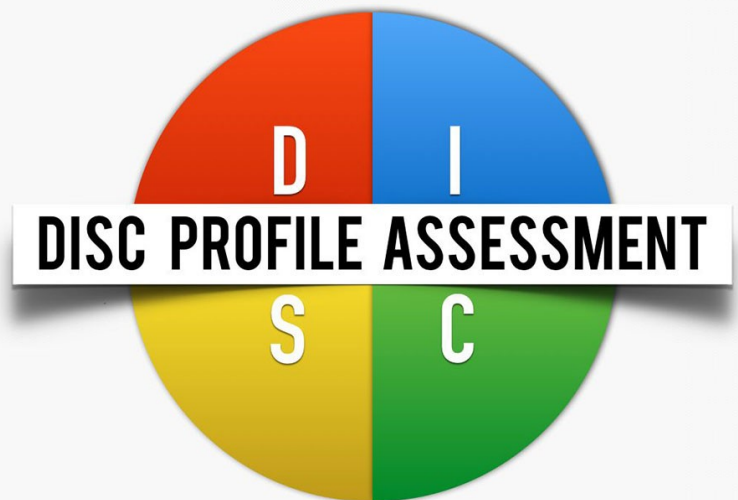
Discover the DISC Profile for Transformative Coaching

Carrie Ellis MA, LPC, CPBA

Sue stated, "I just always thought I was lazy and not motivated enough, but now I realize that it is OK to be content in a position I enjoy." As a twenty-something, soft-spoken, hardworking, and loyal girl, Sue felt discouraged because she loved her job but recently put in her notice. She constantly felt berated by her boss for not trying harder and having no ambition. "Just being a millennial brings enough banter in itself in the work place," she commented. She felt belittled and frustrated because her boss would tell her that she just needed to learn to prioritize. Then she would try to motivate Sue with potential advancements in the company if she would just "apply herself." Feeling overwhelmed and undervalued, she felt quitting was her only option. Sue recently completed a DISC profile and we met to review her results. Things started clicking immediately and she connected powerfully to seeing her behavioral tendencies on paper and was able to understand how her boss thought and acted so differently.

At the end the end of her session, with a spark in her eye and determination on her face, Sue boldly declared that she realized the misunderstanding reflected more on the poor management she'd received instead of her own competency. With these revelations and newfound confidence, she felt empowered to find a new position more suited to her style. Also, she recognized the importance of knowing what type of environment would allow her to thrive and the importance of honoring what type of boss she would work best for. Sadly, Sue lost a job she really enjoyed and this company lost an amazing, dedicated worker over a basic misunderstanding of Sue's core behavioral style. In the end, Sue gained invaluable key information that would lead to fulfillment, honoring who she was created to be, and paving the way to more fulfilling, cohesive relationships.

The DISC is a potent transformative tool. Understanding what it is, how to know if you have a quality assessment and recognizing how it aligns with ICF core competencies will help you determine whether to incorporate it into your coaching process. People have been observing others for thousands of years since the days of Hippocrates. In 1928, the major development of the DISC language appeared in *Emotions of Normal People* by Dr. William Moulton Marston. What many fail to realize is that the **DISC is**



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not actually one assessment but rather a behavioral science. This science is utilized by various companies to create assessments that break down overt behaviors into four continuums.

On the most basic level DISC is the *how* you do *what* you do. The D, I, S, and C typically stand for some variant of:

- “Dominance” measures your approach & response to problems/challenges and how you exercise power
- “Influence” reflects how you interact with and attempt to engage others to your point of view
- “Steadiness” reflects how you respond to change, variation, and the pace of your environment
- “Compliance” demonstrates your response to rules & procedures set by others and to authority

DISC assessments unlock numerous possibilities for growth in self-development, leadership, building relationships, and maximizing corporate functioning.

It is important to note that **each of us measures to some degree on each of the four** continuums, with our primary style identified as the one that shows up most intensely. That style is then categorized by the corresponding initial of the acronym. DISC deals with overt behaviors often easily identified by the naked eye. Therefore, having a basic understanding of the styles personally and professionally sets you apart.

When we know ourselves, we are able to monitor ourselves in new ways that allow us to tap into strengths we may currently underutilize. Also, we may recognize that we expend far too much energy trying to change our weaknesses. As we understand others, it becomes easier to recognize that **most conflict is due to natural style differences** rather than a person trying to make life miserable. Reframing our thinking about differences empowers us to adapt our responses in ways that extend grace and understanding, thereby building relational bridges. As Christ-followers, how we handle relationships, especially when they are difficult, should be a reflection of Christ’s love in action. The world is watching. “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35 NIV).

DISC assessments unlock numerous possibilities for growth in self-development, leadership, building relationships, and maximizing corporate functioning. Utilizing the DISC in one-on-one or group coaching leads to months of potential coaching material. According to the ICF, “Coaching is partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.” DISC is a tool that maximizes this process. It directly engages the following competencies outlined by the ICF:

- Powerful Questioning and Empowers Direct Communication (#6, 7): Using results provides a common language and highly reliable data on which to draw for growth opportunities. The coach can utilize data in forming deep questions or offer direct feedback when related to the topic at hand.
- Creates Awareness (#8): Results are specifically designed to stimulate self-awareness. Recognizing one’s style naturally lends itself to new awareness of how that style may be perceived by others and opens an awareness of how others’ styles impact them. It opens up new understanding about how to thrive in our sweet spot.
- Designing Actions, Planning and Goal Setting, & Managing Progress and Accountability (#9, 10, 11) : Clients can choose to focus on specific results which relate to the current felt need and develop related growth initiatives. Results can illuminate “untapped” or underutilized strength resources to assist with managing progress and identifying potential barriers. Some common areas of goal development include personal leadership development, identifying passion and purpose, preventing and resolving conflict, and empowering cohesive teamwork. In organizational settings, the DISC can even be used with other sciences in the hiring process.

From a Christian perspective, coupled with coaching and the movement of the Holy Spirit, DISC can become an instrumental tool in the process of spiritual maturation. How do we offer the world the gift of our natural style without becoming a slave to it? Our greatest gift has the potential to be our greatest liability when over or ill-used. A key to transformation is finding ways to “flip the switch” converting knowledge into beliefs that then align with life changing behavior.

Recognizing the specificity and limitations of an assessment will help you decide if it is the right tool for your current needs. There is not a DISC instrument designed to measure intelligence, motivators, emotional intelligence, experience, acumen world view, education, or training and competency skills although there are many companies who utilize other assessments alongside DISC to provide a more comprehensive overview depending on your needs.

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When choosing an assessment company, there are a few important things to consider and some basic questions to ask. Explore the history of the company and the vigor of statistical studies used to validate the assessment. Ask the following questions:

- How long has the company existed?
- Do they have peer-reviewed statistics and research studies?
- Do they perform test re-test reliability?
- How often are assessments re-validated through internal studies?
- Do they integrate any other social science research?

Most DISC providers use data to categorize people into one of 16-20 DISC graph “profiles”. Comparatively, the most comprehensive DISC tool will have hundreds of DISC graph “profile” options thereby providing a more thoroughly accurate, descriptive, and individualized report. They will also measure and explain the differences between one’s natural and adapted behaviors. In addition, the most comprehensive providers consider both high and low intensity measurements on the four continuum when drawing results instead of just the typical “high” values. I value TTI Success Insights because they perform at exemplary status in all of the above areas and additionally are EEOC compliant when using DISC in conjunction with other sciences in the hiring process. They have concise visual graphics for simplified processing of group data and have an international presence. As well, they are the only assessment company using real-time brain imaging in the validation and improvement of assessments. Other high performance companies include Hogan and Wiley Profiles International.

You want a company that has a proven track record of success and the respect of their industry peers. Figure out what’s most important to you and your client’s needs because finding the right assessment can be the key to your overall success. Once you’ve identified a quality assessment, determining the level of transformation is up to the coach and the client!



Carrie Ellis transitioned to coaching after 20 years in the mental health field and ministry. She specializes helping people thrive in self-awareness, aligning life balance and purpose, and building relational bridges. She most enjoys serving individuals, ministries and non-profits. She is a Value Added Associate with TTI Success Insights and serves her clients and other coaches/counselors through DISC debriefings and is pending certification with Ministry Insights as well. She and her husband Matt wrangle their three lively boys and shepherd a church in Denver, CO. You can find her at www.carrieelliscoaching.com

The Transformative Power of Direct Communication

Rev. Aileen Price, ACC

Several years ago, as I ventured into the transition between training and accumulating coaching hours for certification, my pastor allowed me to advertise coaching during the new membership meetings. One team leader was present at that meeting. She had some knowledge about coaching. She knew how beneficial it was, and she was impressed that I was offering some complimentary coaching to my church.

As we began our coaching relationship, we talked about different goals she had. An ongoing home improvement project was prolonged, and her home was in disarray. All her paintings were off the walls ready for paint, but her painter was having trouble fitting in the job around his day job. She trusted this person and really wanted him to do the job, but she was going to have to wait some more. That’s when a direct communication helped her refocus.



Direct Communication as a Catalyst for Transformation

I said, “There are things that we can control, and there are things we cannot control.” After that comment, she real-

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ized that she really wanted this particular painter to do the job and she needed to stop worrying about the state of her house. Then, she identified another area of her life that was taking over—her job.

It turns out that she was in a supervisory role. She was the type of employee who is good at cleaning up a department. After she gets the department running smoothly, her employer sends her to another area that needs to be pruned. She handled personnel and processes. Due to short staffing and a sizeable workload, she began to work through lunch and to take work home. The skipped lunches were supposed to be a temporary solution; however, they had gone on for over a year.

As she sat in the coaching session, she determined that she would let her superiors know that she would no longer work through lunch. She would no longer bring work home. She did it! There was no fear or hesitation in my client. She just needed to identify what she needed to do for herself, and she needed no accountability to keep on track. I believe that her accountability was an inner desire to reclaim her free time, like evenings. Eventually, her home would receive a fresh coat of paint. She began to lead a small group out of her home.

Making the decision to keep work from invading other parts of her life practically transformed her. She was able to pursue other opportunities within her social life and her church involvement. I believe that direct communication was impetus to refocus from the things we cannot control (i.e. someone's schedule) and mind our own business, which in this case is a very positive thing.

This was one of my first success stories as a coach. Unfortunately, it was so positive that she didn't need me anymore. However, she affectionately continued to call me "her coach". Her co-workers were so impressed with her progress that one colleague asked for my contact details.

Power Lessons for Coaches

1. As a new coach, my greatest temptation was to become a problem-solver. Typically, I would assume that whatever the client talked about first (or the most) was the topic we'd focus on in the conversation. I used to begin asking questions related to their topics. It turned out that I'd start coaching without getting a proper heading. That heading is the agreement. It's allowing to the client to state his or her preferred focus on the conversation. Over the course of a few months, I learned that when I posed the question of focus for the conversation, some clients would state a completely different issue than what they'd been talking about earlier in the conversation. In the example listed above, I may have slipped into leading the client to find a different painter and helping her get her home back in order.
2. Each client is an individual. My client is a woman who majored in engineering. She too is a problem-solver which is why she's good at her job. It didn't take her much time to move focusing on her home painting to her job. Other clients might need to wrap their heads around whatever statement of direct communication. She quickly made the transition. She was in problem-solving mode, and she was able to set aside what was outside of her power to what was in her personal control.
3. This was probably my first memorable experience of the power of direct communication. We always learn that coaching is about moving the client forward. Coaching is about promoting learning and generating awareness. Such awareness doesn't necessarily originate within the client each time. Offering a concise statement as a coach can really help the client shift focus. I watched my client wrestle with how frustrated she was with the disarray in her home, while balancing the tension of wanting to keep that painter. It truly appeared we were going in a circle. She wasn't going to get another painter.
4. One of the bravest things a coach can do is to take risks. Direct communication is one of those risky areas that can truly pay off. The greatest trick to being a coaching and making a mistake is that we preface our relationships letting our clients know we are not the experts. Since we hold our statements lightly, always deferring to the client to either incorporate them or reject something that doesn't fit, we have an outlet to bounce back from an unsuccessful risk. The more coaching risks a coach takes, the greater growth one will experience in his or her coaching. I guarantee that it will take your coaching further, being a blessing to your clients.



Rev. Aileen Price is an author, speaker, coach. *Spring Cleaning Me: A Key to Effectiveness in Your Purpose* is available on <https://www.amazon.com/Spring-Cleaning-Me-Effectiveness-Purpose/dp/1482676176>.

A Coaching Devotion: Getting a Second Opinion

Mary Selzer, PCC

SECOND OPINION

Several months ago, I injured my knee while on a routine run. I nursed the knee for a few weeks but, as the pain increased, I saw my doctor who noted the joint was inflamed. He recommended an orthopedic surgeon. Several ex-rays and one MRI later, the surgeon cautioned that my right knee was “bone-on-bone” and said I needed a partial knee replacement. He gave me a cortisone shot for temporary relief and instructed that I schedule the surgery.

The cortisone did alleviate the pain. But, the surgeon’s words “bone-on-bone” haunted me. Concerned that I might make the knee worse, I kept my leg stiff when going up and down stairs. If I had to kneel, I did so on my good knee. I modified my work-out routine, avoiding impact exercises or ones that required bending my knee, like running or bicycling. I was even afraid to cross my legs, fearful—and constantly aware—that I might do more harm if I overused or misused my bad knee.

Someone suggested I get another opinion before opting for surgery. The second doctor spent time hearing my story and answering my questions. He took a few more ex-rays and then sat down to explain his assessment. “You don’t have bone-on-bone,” he began. “You just have a little bone spur causing periodic pain.” I was stunned—and a little miffed at myself that I had almost rushed into an unnecessary surgery. He recommended a few weeks of physical therapy and prescribed medication for inflammation. When I told him how I had modified my exercise routine to avoid bending my knee, he responded, “You *need* to do bending exercises. That will strengthen your knee joint.”

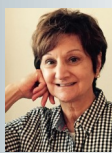
I left his office feeling like a freed prisoner. My knee felt better almost immediately, now that the “bone-on-bone” concern was proven incorrect.

The first doctor’s diagnosis, while inaccurate, impacted the way I walked, thought, and behaved—even creating a phantom pain with a nagging fear that I had to live with limitations. The second doctor’s reassurance that it wasn’t nearly as bad as I believed freed me to walk, talk, and even and think normally! What a difference the truth can make.

Perhaps this is the reason Paul admonished, “*Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think on these things*” Philippians 4:8. How easy it is for us to glom on to the negative with no verifying facts.

Jesus told His followers, “*If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free*” John 8:31-32. The Lord is world-renowned for His truthful expertise. His second opinion puts to rest any false reports we may believe. In fact, if we go to Him first, we’ll never need a second opinion because His Word is final.

- What limiting “misdiagnosis” do you believe that is affecting how you live, walk, talk, and think? If you sought the Lord for a second opinion, what would He tell you?
- How can you become more spiritually sensitive so the Lord’s opinion is the first one you believe?



Mary Selzer is a leadership coach who works with non-profit and business leaders, executives, entrepreneurs, and teams. She holds PCC credentials with the ICF, and served on the board of the ICF Michigan chapter for six years. A certified coach trainer and mentor/coach, she works with aspiring coaches toward receiving their coaching credentials.

For several years, Mary has studied the questions recorded in the Bible. Her book, *25 Questions God Asked*, was published by Barbour Books in 2016 and will become the focus of a weekly podcast beginning in January 2018.

Mary resides in Enid, Oklahoma with her husband, in close proximity to their five absolutely adorable, amazing grandchildren. Contact Mary at mselzer@coachingforward.net

Transformational Coaching

Rebecca Sassenrath, BS, ACC

New Thinking, New Life

“Oh wow! I never thought about *this* like *that*!” Colin, (name changed to protect confidentiality) is a career youth leader on staff with a large church. This has followed his nearly twenty years of experience with a para-church campus ministry for Middle and High School Students. “Hey, someone has to like these kids, and I do! I really do!”, he has proclaimed often.

Colin is a brilliant writer, corners the market on creativity, is loved by the students and has a successful story of discipling and caring for kids that others have cast aside. He also struggles with depression. He would also be the first to admit that he is quite negative about himself and his ability-or lack of it- to stay organized. This frustrates the structured senior staff members of the 1000+ member suburban church he serves. And yet, he remains faithful to the higher, sometimes lonely call to love depressed, disorganized, and messy kids.



“These coaching sessions have changed my life!”, he blurted out in the middle of our conversation a few weeks ago. I had to also admit that “these coaching sessions” had quite the transformational effect in my own life. We, as transformational life coaches, are keenly aware of the life changing way that a coaching conversation can move someone from a “stuck in the mud” place to a place that is thriving and soaring toward meaningful living. This was one of those moments when Colin had the inner shift in thinking and belief to be able to begin to walk forward in ministry regardless of the nagging voices, internal and external, that would try to bog him down again.

Change in the Conversation

“Change happens in the conversation”, chimed one of my previous mentors. Her voice rings in my head when I question if I am even making any difference. After all, I am just listening and talking. I think this is similar to our somewhat faulty view of prayer. I have heard folks say, “Well, *all* I can do is pray”. Jesus, himself has instructed us to “pray without ceasing”. He taught His disciples to pray that God would intervene on our behalf to bring about His Kingdom here on Earth as it is in Heaven! Our Lord sweat drops of blood while praying in the Garden of Gethsemane before his brutal crucifixion. Three days later He rose from the dead to save all mankind for all eternity from their death producing sin. Prayer is powerful! Listening and having meaning conversation is powerful! How so? How does this simple act of listening deeply and following a model or format of “coaching” allow a person to enter into this place of transformation and then miraculously walk, talk and behave in new ways?

The Bible speaks explicitly and implicitly about the relationship between the heart and our behavior. Out of the overflow of our heart, the tongue speaks. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” laments Jeremiah. And the psalmist agrees using words such as foolish, wicked, sick and faulty. What does your heart say? Does our heart have a mouth? Are we like a puppet on strings directed by a little person in our *heart* much like the Wizard of Oz behind the curtain pushing buttons and blowing smoke in the face of those who came for help? Of course not. However, each person has experienced this dynamic of saying and doing things that they wished they had not OR of avoiding to act or speak when they wished that they would have.

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In a transformational coaching conversation, the coach can listen intently for themes, patterns, words, and repetitive interjections that can lead the person who is being coached to explore the deeper meaning and belief behind the behaviors. There is a cascade from Belief to Behavior that is used in the Genesis Process® (a process that has been developed to help addicts and people stuck in self-destructive behaviors to get to the heart of “why they do the very thing they hate”). To help the stuck person understand where the behavior is coming from (always a deeper belief) the process begins with the Behavior and works backward or deeper to the belief that drives the action. The behavior is usually an action that comes from a feeling or emotion; that emotion usually stems out of a thought and the thought is always the product of the deeper belief. Going forward the cascade looks like this:

Belief—Thought—Emotion—Behavior

Belief drives the thought (or thinking). The thought produces the emotion. And the emotion pushes toward the action. Out of the *heart* the mouth speaks. The “heart” is the deepest belief which then creates the thought, which in turn summons up the emotion, which as a final act inspires the tongue to speak. If the belief is true and the thought is noble, then the emotion will drive right and good words. But this is not often the case. Many times false beliefs have simmered since childhood, unchecked. The thoughts have been brutal toward self and others creating emotions such as self-doubt, despair, suspicion, anger and anxiety. These emotions are not evil unto themselves, but without the filter of self-reflection and resolution the actions can be harmful to self and others.

The example in Colin’s case was of the second example. He was having trouble understanding why he was so exhausted and unable to get everything done that the senior staff was requiring. We explored questions around feeling and emotion.

“What is that feeling?” “Name that Emotion”, My voice would interject into the fray of the confusion. As he explored this, we would travel through the maze of his thinking toward the “*Thought*” that could be driving that emotion. “What are the words you are thinking?”

“I don’t know!” He would counter.

I would not give up so quickly. I provided a place for him to take a breath and ponder about the words around this thought, they seem to bubble up from somewhere deeper.

“No one will listen to me anyway.”

“*Woah*”, I thought, then offered, “And what would you have to believe to think that?”

“I don’t matter... I’m no good...I can’t make a difference!” There was the Belief!

Let me pause here to clarify that this is not therapeutic counseling because we are not particularly working on healing the deeper wounds that keep a person stuck in depression, anxiety or other mental distress. This is dropping into a deeper awareness of how *the belief*—the hard drive—is producing the *thought* life and thus *creating emotions* that *drive behaviors* that are unwanted and destructive to a person’s relationships, work, ministry and life. This is where transformation can happen.

The Moment of Transformation - “I’m No Good!”

Colin had an “A-ha!” moment when he verbalized, “I’m no good!” He was able to look at it and listen to it outside the deeper recesses of his inner heart. The Holy Spirit joined in and began to reveal the truth about Colin’s real identity—how God had created him with special gifts and had provided the path to “Good-ness!” “What will be the new thought?”, is a helpful path toward the next practical step to walk in a new way that is consistent with the new belief. Of course, there are other steps along the way and the new belief will need reinforcement and support to bring the new behavior to be a more natural habit, but this is the beginning of the transformation. This is the place where transformation needs to happen.

This conversation was not an instant magic formula and there was not immediate movement on the part of the church staff, but Colin knew deep in his *heart* that he was good in God’s eyes and he would now be able to keep fighting for the kids so that they too would be able to exchange the old belief “*I’m Not Good*” for the truth that God has made *me* Good and I *can* live a new life in Him.



Rebecca Sassenrath is a Certified Transformational Coach through Western Seminary in Rocklin, CA. Her growing family include 3 adult children, 3 wonderful “in-loves” and 6 granddaughters. She lives in beautiful Northern California with her husband, Paul.

Take Coaching Below the Surface When It Comes to Fundraising

Doug Foltz, ACC



an achiever, I decided I needed to go all in and get to the deeper identity issues that were preventing my church planter from succeeding.

Design Actions

The first loop is all about designing actions. We had done that previously and the church planter had determined the following:

1. Spend half of his time on fundraising.
2. Meet face to face with at least 7 people a week making an ask for support with each.
3. Meet monthly with the management team for accountability.

Examine Obstacles

Actions alone weren't working so it was time to go to the second loop and examine any thinking or strategies that were getting in the way. I began the coaching conversation by asking about how he was feeling about raising funds. He answered bluntly that he hated it and he wasn't a fundraiser. I hit him with a direct statement:

"God called you to plant a church and fundraising is a part of that."

He agreed but said he could do without the fundraising part. He was consistently missing the mark of meeting face to face with people. We talked through the last person he had tried to meet with. It had fallen apart because he had a miscommunication about when the meeting was to take place. As we walked through other failures and successes, he discovered a pattern that when he succeeded someone else had set up the meeting and when he failed he had tried to do it himself.

This was a huge breakthrough. I asked the obvious question.

"Who would thrive at doing your scheduling for you?"

The light bulb went off. His wife was great at that. She knew all his contacts and it would be easy for her to run his calendar and set those appointments. A new strategy was born from the second loop.

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My path to coaching was a skeptic's journey.

If you had told me that personal transformation was possible through coaching, I would have thought you were crazy. I found myself thrust into a coaching role with Stadia: New Church Strategies. So as an avid learner, I dove in and gave it a shot.

My initial results were intriguing. I found that by using a coaching process, I could help church planters design action steps that they were more likely to accomplish. The consultant in me was challenged. I began to move away from telling church planters what to do all the time and leaned on a coaching mindset.

I hit a wall with a church planter that was struggling with fundraising. My coaching was yielding very practical action steps for the planter, but very few dollars were being raised. What happened next was a coaching conversation that not only brought transformation in my church planter but also led to a significant shift of thinking for me.

Triple Loop Coaching

I reviewed my notes from coach training and came across triple loop coaching. I had obviously only been doing a single loop designed to get action steps. Being



Reframe Identity

The third loop deals with identity. He still saw himself as a bad fundraiser. A new strategy, no matter how good, wasn't going to get results if he still believed he couldn't raise funds. Another direct statement got us started.

"Fundraising is really about vision casting." "What are some other vision casting opportunities in church planting?"

Now we were cooking. He saw himself as a great communicator, he excelled at building teams and rallying his launch team behind the vision. I asked him what that revealed about who he is as a fundraiser. The transformation happened. He said, "I can do this. I know I can cast the vision to people and inspire them to support this church."

And he did. Three months later, with the help of his wife scheduling meetings, he had raised 100% of his financial need. And as a coach, I was sold. Coaching brings about transformation.



Doug Foltz is a self-proclaimed church planting junkie and has been involved with church planting most of his adult life. He helped plant LifePointe Christian Church in Charlotte, NC in 2004 and has served as a project manager since 2008. His passion is to help church planters accelerate their vision to reach the lost. Doug is an ACC certified coach since 2016. In his spare time, Doug enjoys gardening, traveling, Illinois basketball and coaching his kids' sports teams. His greatest supporter is his wife, Amanda. Together they live in Illinois, where they have two kids, Will and Kate.

Book Review

Ask More: The Power of Questions to Open Doors, Uncover Solutions, and Spark Change

Bob Dale, PhD

You may know Frank Sesno as an Emmy Award-winning news anchor, White House correspondent, and top-flight journalist from his days on the then-new CNN. You may recall how deftly he interviewed world leaders in the midst of global challenges. You may not know that he's now the director of the School of Media and Public Affairs at George Washington University in the District of Columbia.

With this book, you'll understand and appreciate the class he teaches at GWU on the art of interviewing. You'll learn much about asking clear and well-timed questions and just as much about focused listening.

Ask More introduces us to 11 types or families of questions --- diagnostic, strategy, empathy, bridging, confrontational, creativity, mission, scientific, interview, entertaining, and legacy inquiries.

In this well-written conversation, Sesno defines each kind of question clearly, provides samples of questions that advance conversations in each category, and reminds us to listen to the words and the cues between the answers. He demonstrates each question type by taking us into many of his most powerful interviews with leaders like Colin Powell, Terry Gross, Ben and Jerry, Anderson Cooper, and Anthony Fauci. The precision of Sesno's language and explanations shows why he was and is a world-class interviewer.

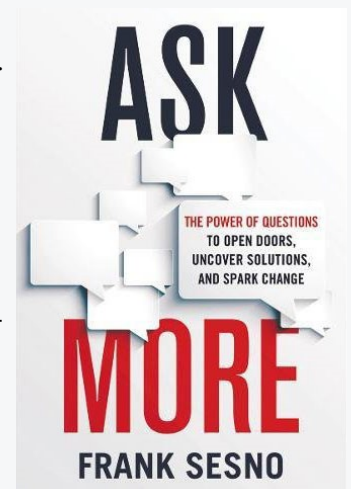
Coaches will be especially interested in the chapters on mission, creativity, strategy, and legacy. As you know, these themes arise over and over again in coaching conversations.

Mission Questions

Mission questions, according to Sesno, revolve not just about where we're going but who is going with us. Mission is about direction and collaboration.

Mission questions include:

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- What do you care about?
- Where is your true north?
- What are others prepared to do about the problem?
- How can we partner?
- How will we change the world?

Mission questions serve solvable problems. They uncover what matters most and whose interests overlap with ours.

Creativity Questions

Creativity questions invite us to daydream, set our sights unreasonably high, look beyond limits, step over thresholds, get out of our own way, and peek into the future. Creativity is about imagining possibilities, about asking and exploring our “what if...?” options without imposing limits.

Creativity questions include:

- What if there were no limits?
- What would you do if you knew you couldn’t fail?
- Who knows what’s next?
- What can you do differently now?

Creativity questions move our minds into the clouds to imagine how to make our life on earth immeasurably better. These questions stretch us and point to how far we can go.

Strategic Questions

Strategic questions focus on our biggest challenges and carefully examine our long-term goals. They help us aim precisely, clarify our exact objectives, and identify obstacles that block our way forward. Strategic questions ask and explore which option to choose, when to act, and how to proceed.

Strategic questions include:

- Where are we going?
- Is this goal vital to us?
- What risks are we facing?
- Who’s with us?
- What will it cost to succeed? Or fail?

Strategic questions challenge us deeply because they often position us at the crossroads of major decisions. They press us to align our actions with our deep purposes. They force us to look at the consequences of following or not following our calling.

Legacy Questions

Legacy questions look at what we’ve accomplished, what we’ve contributed to the world, and whose lives we’re touched. In our search for meaning, legacy tell us what we’ve learned, how we’re grateful, which relationships have blessed us, and what regrets we still carry with us. Legacy traces our past and present, while opening doors to our futures.

Legacy questions include:

- How do you want people to remember you?
- What brings meaning to you now?
- What is God asking you to do now?

Legacy questions help us look long and then back-cast to the present for action.

The Quest for Better Questions

If you, as a coach, are ready to stretch your question-asking abilities, reading *Ask More* is a great refresher. Frank Sesno is, after all, a master asker.



Bob Dale is a coach and writer living in Richmond, VA. Certified as a leader coach by Valwood, affiliated with Coach Approach Ministries, Executive Career Hub, and International Coach Federation. He’s the author of over thirty books, including his most recent, *Growing Agile Leaders*.

How to Implement Better Organizational Communication

Katherine Burgus

Why is Communication Important?

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines communication as “a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior.” But is it really just a transmission of information? Just a transactional process?

Communication can be so much more than that! It can be transformational not just for the follower but for the leader too! Yehuda Berg once stated that “Words have energy and power with the ability to help, to heal, to hinder, to hurt, to harm, to humiliate and to humble.” As a leader, we must never take the power of our words for granted as words can build up our followers just as quickly as they can break them down.



Good communication can foster camaraderie, create more engaged staff, and improve organizational outcomes. If we want the most out of our teams, we must learn the best way to communicate with them.

The Impact of Poor Organizational Communication

A way to convey the importance of good leader-follower communication is to explain what poor organizational communication can do.

Lack of communication or poor communication can result in low employee morale, low efficiency and productivity, and decreased innovation. It can also increase the amount of conflict and tension experienced in the workplace. Conflict can include conflict between the leader and follower, conflict between coworkers, and even inner conflict of the employee which leads to stress. All of these things result in negative impacts on the organization.

Evaluating Your Communication

As leaders, it is important that we always strive to improve our leadership capabilities. To improve your communication with your staff, there are a number of ways to evaluate your communication with them.

1. Ask them! Be open to honest feedback and willing to adjust your communication style depending on the answers. Surveys are great tools to receive responses from staff and can even be given anonymously to encourage even more honesty. It is important to have two way communication especially to ensure the team members feel respected and heard.
2. Introduce different methods and styles of communication to your team. How do they respond? Are they able to understand more clearly?
3. When using different styles of communication, measure the progress of projects and outcomes. Do certain styles improve performance?
4. Self-evaluate your communication styles. When you think back to the way you communicated with a staff member on any given situation, would you go back and change it? Is it the way you want to be communicated to? What would you do to improve?

Developing Better Communication

There are several techniques that will help to improve your abilities to communicate with your team. By working on each of these areas, your communication skills should improve making you a more effective leader.

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Understand your followers. Every individual has their own background, their own personality, their own perceptions and their own worldviews. Developing a relationship with the individual helps to solidify how you need to communicate with them.

Do you know your staff's love language? Gary Chapman wrote in his book "The Five Love Languages" that every person has a different primary love language. Each of these love languages also has a form of communication that the person best responds to. Do your staff need affirmations or personal one on one conversations to be communicated with the best? Knowing your team on a more individual level can significantly increase your communication effectiveness.

Be Clear. It is very important to clearly define what you are trying to communicate to the other person. Have you ever had a person that you were so in tune with that you felt you could read each other's minds? Often times that comes with tenure and maturity of a relationship; however, in the workplace it is imperative to ensure you are removing any ambiguity from your communication. Clear expectations eliminate uncertainty and give the follower a distinct roadmap of what you are telling them.

It is also important to ensure that the communication was not only received but also that it was understood. Ask yourself: "Was I clear enough to convey exactly what I want them to know, do or understand?"

Give Explanations. No one ever liked hearing "because I said so" from their parents growing up. Everyone appreciates knowing the why behind a request or an answer. This will also create buy-in from the follower and establish credibility on your part as the leader.

Use verbal and non-verbal communication. Have you ever heard the phrase, "you said it with your eyes" or "it's not what you said but it was the way you said it." There are dozens of non-verbal cues we give to our followers as we speak, intentionally and unintentionally. Facial expressions, eye contact or lack thereof, postures, the tone and pitch of your voice and gestures all communicate messages to our followers. People are intuitive. They are reading and reacting to our non-verbal cues all of the time. Be self-aware of these non-verbal cues and what you are projecting to others. It is also important to ensure that your non-verbal cues align with your verbal cues. At times your non-verbal cues may speak more volumes than the words you are actually saying.

Create a strategy for communication. Each individual has their own preferred method of communication. For some people face to face interaction is essential. For others, it may be necessary for the communication to be written down for better understanding or for the ability to reference the information at a later time. Email or instant messages may be acceptable as well. Generational differences may play a part in what form of communication is best for your team members. Work directly with your team to develop a strategy of what will work best for each of them and for the team as a whole.

Be inspirational. Find out what motivates your staff! It is much easier to follow a leader who is passionate, knowledgeable and a believer in what they are communicating. Be a role model and driving force to your staff and prove to them that the communication is important through your enthusiasm. Your communication must be impactful and something your followers will trust and support.

Repetition. It is important to follow up with all people involved in the communication. Asking them to repeat it back to you can help ensure their full understanding. It is also important to reinforce the most important details of the communication through follow up and reminders.

Everyone is an individual. When working with a team, remember each person is different and what works for one may not work for all. Although a team may have its own dynamic, each individual also has their own dynamic.

Change when necessary. The way you communicate with your team members will always be evolving. As the team develops, grows, ages, changes members, etc, the way you must communicate with them will also change. Communication is not something that is static, it changes with the people, the situation, the environment, and especially the content.

Be conscientious of what you don't say. Similar to the non-verbal cues, people pick up on things that aren't said. Staff members may notice that certain things they feel are important weren't communicated and may speculate as to why. Try to offer opportunity for open dialogue including the opportunity for questions.

Chose to communicate with a Christian worldview. We know that communications of a leader can have an impact on the follower in several different ways. But can your communications have an impact on them spiritually? Can it have an impact on you?

If you communicate with your staff using a Christian worldview, you will treat them as God intends us to treat each other with love and respect. By communicating with a Christian worldview, the communication could move from being simply transactional to being transformational with your team. Speak with mindfulness and not only use the Christian values we are taught but also exemplify them. If you do so, your team will positively change.

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Global and Cross-Cultural Communication

As the business world becomes more globalized, remember there are vast differences in communication across our world of cultures and ethnicities. Globally there are different languages, different beliefs, different customs, different working habits and different lifestyles. Some cultures regard different genders, races, and religions more highly.

It is important to keep in mind our differences when communicating across cultures. For instance, in France their work-week is only thirty-five hours. When communicating with someone working hourly in France, remember they may not be working the hours we do here in America.

Language barriers can be a significant issue when it comes to communication and working globally. It is again important to use the same techniques listed above to ensure understanding.

Make a Difference through Communication

Remember, as a leader you have the ability to change your follower's performance. By having good communication skills you can increase their chances of success which will ultimately increase your success. Respect is always key with any type of communication and following the Golden Rule is an important Christian motto. If you make a conscious effort to incorporate your Christian worldview into your communication style, you can be furthering God's plan for each of us.



Katherine Burgus serves as a District Vice President and the Director of Association Aquatics for the YMCA of South Hampton Roads in Chesapeake, VA. She is currently studying at Regent University to obtain a Masters of Business Administration with a concentration in Leadership.

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Bill drives many of the coaching and training programs within Coach Approach Ministries and provides much of the day-to-day management of the ministry. Bill has received certification for the National Association of Church Business Administration as well as the Professional Certified Coach credential from the Internal Coach Federation, and frequently writes, speaks, and coaches around areas of business management for non-profits. He also provides coach training for churches, judicatories and various organizations. Bill lives in Daytona Beach, FL.

Editor: Chad Hall, MCC



Chad has been coaching leaders in ministry and business since 2002 and currently serves on faculty and as Director of Coaching at Western Seminary in Portland, OR. He has applied coaching first as a denominational leader with the Baptist State Convention of NC and later as an internal coach with software leader SAS Institute. He has also served as a pastor and church planter. His publications include *Coaching for Christian Leaders: A Practical Guide* (2007, Chalice Press) and *Faith Coaching: A Conversational Approach to Helping Others Move Forward in Faith* (Coach Approach Ministries, 2009). He has also written frequently for *Leadership Journal*. He lives with his wife, Holly, and three children in Hickory, NC.

Acquisitions Editor: Michael Cheuk, ACC



Michael serves as the acquisitions editor of *Christian Coaching Magazine*. He also has the privilege of working with inspirational individuals, leaders, entrepreneurs and organizations as a coach and a consultant. Having served in churches for over twenty years, as well as earning a Ph.D. in ethics at the University of Virginia, Michael brings a compassionate, thoughtful approach to his practice. To learn more about Michael's work, visit his website: michaelkcheuk.com.