

Lesson 11- Beginning Your Coaching Session

How you begin your coaching sessions creates a strong effect on how the session goes and how it turns out. By analogy, if you are about to start a journey and you change direction by one degree at the outset, you will end up at a far different place miles down the road. So take care to begin your session on the right foot.

Here are some tips to help you start your sessions well:

Begin on Time:

Be ready and in place a few minutes before the session and be sure you have done your inner preparatory work. (Practice the suggestions in our previous lessons 9 and 10.) Start the session at the appointed time. This will set a note of intention and integrity that will carry through the session. If you will have repeated meetings with this client, starting on time will set the practice for both of you to meet and begin as scheduled.

Offer a positive note of welcome to the client:

Help the client feel at ease, relaxed, and confident by offering her some congenial words. Some clients are nervous about their session. When you help them relax you open the door for more successful results together. You might say something like:

"I'm glad we can get together. Thanks for inviting me to share this session with you."

"I've been looking forward to meeting with you. I think we are going to have a productive time together."

"It's my pleasure to be working with you. I am holding the space for you to receive all you want and need."

"Let's get going and have a good time opening doors for you."

Feel free to say what is sincere and spontaneous in the moment. If you can share a brief laugh, that will help. Do not strain to make a joke or say anything that sounds forced or phony. Realness rocks.

Offer an opening centering exercise, affirmation, or prayer:

This will raise the frequency of your interaction before you delve into the material of the session. Most clients like a simple opening exercise, as it relieves some of the tension from the beginning and helps both of you move into energy conducive to productive movement.

The simplest centering exercise is to invite the client to take several long, slow, deep breaths. Join the client if you like. While he is breathing deeply, offer some simple suggestions such as, *“Let’s relax and come into the present moment together. Release any experiences from your day and drop into a sense of openness and allowance for the best possible results of our meeting together.”* Keep this process going for a minute or two until you feel yourself and/or the client dropping into a peaceful space.

An affirmation might take a form such as:

“We now open the door for [Name of client] to receive the most valuable information, inspiration, and direction as a result of our time together. We recognize that the answers you seek are available to you, and we see you manifesting the clarity, peace, and direction you require. We envision and claim positive, practical, observable results from our meeting. We enjoy the journey as we go. And so it is.”

A prayer might take this form:

“Great Spirit, we invite you into our presence today to give [Name of client] all that he needs to move ahead on his journey of personal and spiritual growth. We call forth guides and guidance on all levels to soothe and empower [Name of client]’s inner being and make healthy, successful, rewarding decisions. For this we are grateful. And so it is.”

Use an opening exercise in alignment with your client’s beliefs and comfort level. Some clients do not consider themselves on a spiritual path or might have resistance to anything that sounds “religious,” so a generic opening centering exercise would be more appropriate than an affirmation or prayer.

I have found in my practice that everyone understands and appreciates an affirmative statement. The practice of affirmations has worked its way into our culture so that even conservative business people understand and use them. Practically all businesses, including large corporations, have vision and mission statements, so when you make a vision or mission statement for your coaching session, your client will be aligned with you.

Regarding prayer, consider your client to decide if this is appropriate. Most people believe in prayer (surveys have demonstrated this) and if someone is in pain, she is even more open to prayer. Most of the people I attract in my work have a prayer practice or appreciate its power. If your client is new to you or you do not know what their predilection is, open the session with a more generic exercise.

Give the client a clear invitation to express himself:

“What would you like to talk about?”

“What’s happening in your life that motivated you to have this session?”

“What would make this session really valuable for you?”

“Is there something specific you would like to address?”

Do **not** ask, “*What can I do for you?*” or a similar question that puts you in the driver’s seat as an authority figure. The purpose of the session is to empower the client to find his own answers with your support.

Do **not** ask vague questions like, “*How are you?*” or “*What’s up?*” or “*What’s going on?*” While some clients might use such generic questions as a venue to express themselves, you serve better to invite the client to be as specific as possible regarding her intention for your meeting.

Offer the client a “permission slip” exercise to begin sharing:

A psychotherapist friend of mine keeps a “magic wand” on the table next to the chair where her clients sit. (The one she uses is a long thin clear tube containing viscous liquid filled with lots of colorful little stars, moons, and sequins.)

When a first-time client sits in the chair, she hands him the wand and asks him, “If you could wave a magic wand and change something in your life for the better, what would it be?”

She told me that all of her clients love this exercise, even rigid people, and it always opens the door for the client to share what is troubling them or important to them.

Affirm:

I open my coaching sessions in a way that invites the client to relax and share what is most important to him or her.

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