

Fitness to Practice

I am reflecting on a colleague who has entered a new role both for her and the employer, so she was looking for space to talk through challenges and concerns that had been highlighted.

For this coachee, space to talk through her thoughts and feelings was important, and this is something I identified early on with her during contracting for the coaching. I feel this is an asset I bring to my coaching approach, which is why the coachee was keen to progress with the coaching sessions. During the first session with the coachee, I provided the space she needed to talk through, in detail, what was happening at the time for her. Using her own language, I then started to pull out common words that were being repeated throughout the explanation. Two examples that came to mind in this scenario were 'guilt', and 'I should'. Through pulling on these words, the coachee identified that she considers herself a people pleaser, which led onto opening a further conversation regarding her relationships with her colleagues and how this further impacted her current challenge of over-burden and stress.

We also pulled out during the contracting session, that she thrives outdoors, and her relationship with nature is important to her feeling of freedom and creativity. She felt that constant movement helped her feel more able to confront and move through challenges. Considering this, I asked the coachee how she would feel about walking outside through the garden area of the workplace, which elicited a great deal of joy, and I observed her body language lighten. From this, the conversation flowed with less force, leading to a more productive session. As this was a new experience for her, promoting that feeling of confidence and security was key.

On reflection, for this session I felt somewhat out of balance between being more concise and pushing for stretch, or allowing the coachee space. Whilst space was important for this individual at the time, when we came to the end of the session it took a lot of probing to arrive at a tangible outcome of how to move forward. Whilst our contracting session focused a lot on comfort and confidentiality, in doing this I missed the opportunity to really take a hold of the coachee for accountability and what they wanted to get from the session. Talking at length is how this particular coachee likes to communicate, but space was given in too much abundance, missing the opportunity for more progress. Although lightbulb moments were certainly seen, I feel the balance between space and challenge wasn't quite right. I should have asked the coachee in more detail what she wanted from this particular coaching partnership. I feel like my previous working relationship with the coachee affected my contracting; from personal experience I know that the coachee is quick to repress difficult emotions and challenges, so I was cautious about stretching her

too far for her first session. In doing this, however, we may have missed her ability to take more ownership of her direction and goals. On reflection, I should have put more emphasis and responsibility on the coachee to decide where she would like to go, and what she would like to get out of the session. This would have helped me avoid a lot of focus and thinking space going on how to balance the session.

Following on from this, although some outcomes and aims were identified at the end of the session, we didn't spend a lot of time considering a goal-orientated coaching model. This particular session felt very much like one to put the coachee at ease as opposed to working through her challenge. Although we identified at the beginning of the session that 'people pleasing' was causing her stress, the coachee spent a large amount of time circling around her reasoning for this, and it took a while to bring her back. At this point, I could have provided more of a radical candour to provide challenge, which may have yielded a more productive outcome. Although some action points were taken, this particular section of the session could have been more concise.

There were a couple of occasions when I nearly took the coach hat off and gave advice, which I managed to avoid entirely. I was very aware coming into this coaching session that her new role was something I had inhabited before, and therefore felt I could help her navigate through my own experience. I am glad that I managed to avoid giving advice to this coachee, as her style of working and communication differs from my own, and therefore how it would operate and affect her role.

One of the questions I reach for often is 'can you draw that for me?', however in the lead up to this particular coaching session I had run out of the coloured notecards I often give coachees to note down or draw on for reflection. For this individual, I feel like this tool would have been extremely beneficial, as she identified her joy for creativity due to the sense of freedom it gave her. Preparing more for the session and providing the notecards for this individual may have enabled her to synthesise and reflect on the lightbulb moments the session gave her, in a way that is more meaningful for her. For future sessions, I would aim to ensure that these materials were offered and available for her.