



COACHING THE PERSON VS THE STORY

How-to tips by
Ziv Soferman, PhD, MCC

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Behind every story is the *person*. Coaching the person, vs their story, leads to *transformation*. Transformation means the person naturally *feels differently* regarding their issue, without trying, forcing or effort.

In coaching the *person*, your job is to facilitate transformation. You do not try to solve their issue for them. That's the role of a consultant. Your job is much deeper. With transformation, the person gains clarity, perspective, confidence and peace of mind that allows them to solve not only this problem effectively, but future ones more effectively as well.

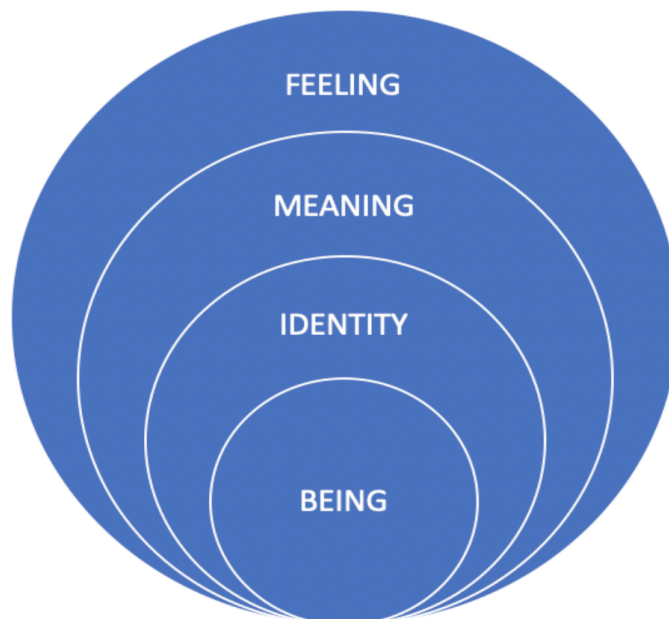
So how to coach to transformation? We must focus on coaching the *person*, not the story.

The Model

For our purposes here, we will define 4 levels at which we coach the person, at the level of:

1) the Story 2) the Feelings, 3) the Meaning and 4) the Identity.

The Story



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Coaching the Story

We first listen to their story, what they say about the issue they are facing. Then, we help them define their issue, and identify their dilemma on the level of the story (the facts of the situation.) What really is the problem?

Coaching the Level of Feelings

For every step of the problem, we inquire about their *feelings, emotions*. Step-by-step, we ask them to name the emotion(s) associated with each aspect of the issue. This brings the start of clarity and beginnings of “distance.”

Coaching the Meaning

What do our feelings result from? They come from the *meaning* that we assign to the situation. The meaning comes from *us*. We assign the meaning. the meaning is NOT in the facts. (i.e. “he doesn’t respect me, I’m disrespected.) We are the *creators* of the meaning we give to it. Once the coachee sees that for themselves, they feel further relief and distance.

Coaching the Identity

What determines the meaning that we give to things? There are a number of factors: our core beliefs (“I am deserving”: “I am unworthy” etc.); our values (a manager should be caring, the earth should be protected); our paradigms about the world (“life is fair; what you give out, you will get back”; or “if you’re good, others will be good to you,” etc) and ultimately, how we see or position ourselves in life (“I am a victim”; “I am a leader”; “I am weak”; “I am strong”).

Coaching the identity involves inquiring into these areas with the coachee. We do not accept anything as a “given” or immutable. If they say, “I am sensitive.” Q. “What makes you see yourself as sensitive?” A. “Some people are sensitive and some people are not. I’ve always been sensitive.” Q. “What makes you *choose* to align yourself with the “sensitive” rather than the bold, the outspoken, the activist?”

Coaching the identity brings the deepest relief, clarity and resolution on the issue. People commonly describe feeling lighter, calm, oddly calm or as if “a weight has been lifted from my chest.” When they think or talk about the issue, they feel “neutral,” and may describe it now as a “non-issue.”

The Level of Being

The Being is the person, the *owner* of the experience, the *chooser* of our choices, and the *thinker* of our thoughts. A basic premise of coaching is that we cannot take ourselves out of the equation. We are the *owner* of our experience and inherently *responsible* for everything in our life, including our thoughts, our feelings, the meaning we give to things and the identity we choose for ourselves. Because we have *agency*, we can transform. We are not our thoughts, our feelings or even our identity. We are the experiencer, and the chooser of everything in our life.

How-to Tips

1. Be curious. We do not *know* ourselves what is the content at each level for that person.
2. Think of “coaching the person” as a “scientific investigation” into their mind, how they think, how they see things, and what is behind that.
3. We use inquiry, and deep listening to unfold deeper layers of self-awareness.
4. We always check our insights or intuitions with the coachee.
5. The strength of their confirmation tells us to what degree the insight resonates with their depth.
6. Be patient, and continue to inquire. It can take quite some time, and repeated inquiry along the same lines for deeper aspects of the person’s feelings, insights and self-awareness to unfold.
7. Explore each of the 4 levels. Inquire thoroughly and as deeply as possible, especially regarding the identity level. This is what will consistently yield results.
8. Keep in mind that an answer they give may emerge from any of the 4 levels.
9. Their first answers are usually from the level of the story. Continue to inquire systematically, level by level, to allow deeper answers, insights, clarity and self-awareness to unfold.
10. Inner “resolution” and transformation results from thorough inquiry, focusing on the deeper levels of meaning and identity.