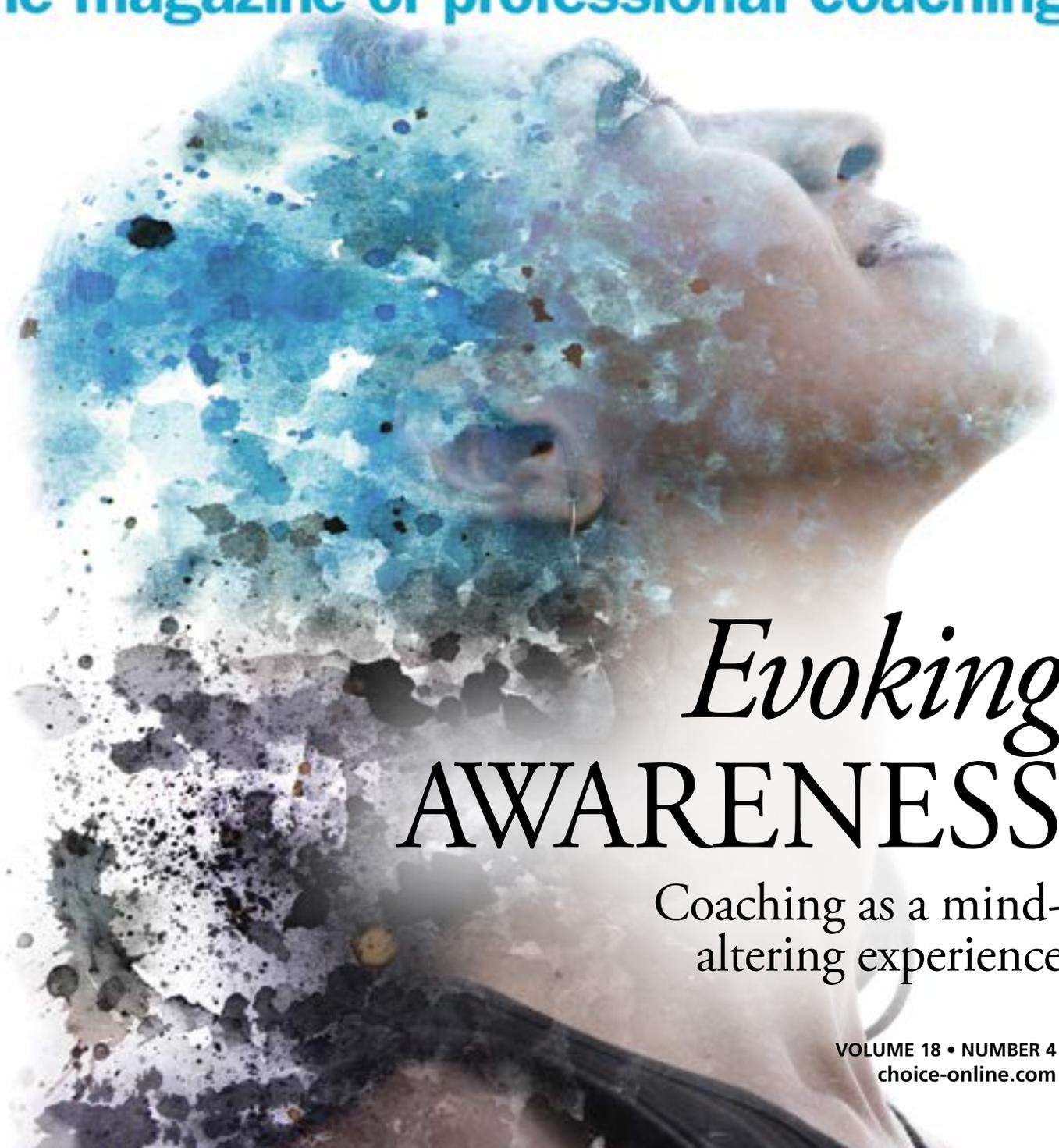


choice

the magazine of professional coaching



Evoking AWARENESS

Coaching as a mind-
altering experience

Evoking **AWARENESS**

Coaching as a mind-altering experience

What does it take to expand and shift your clients' perspective? How does the coach use presence to facilitate the discovery process? What are the mental habits of master coaches? In addition to asking questions, what are the essential practices used in awareness-based coaching? Join us as we explore what elements are needed in a coaching model that goes beyond finding answers to powerfully evoke awareness.



Get Yourself Out of the WAY!

10 mental habits to put you in service to your clients

By Suzi Pomerantz, MT, MCC

At its core, coaching is about evoking awareness and shifting mindsets, reflecting a client's beliefs or limitations, to cause an expanded freedom to choose. The 10 mental habits of master coaches that enable you to get yourself out of the way and be in service to your clients' agenda include:

1 Cultivate & Sustain a Beginner's Mind
The most powerful phrase you can use in coaching is, "I don't know; let's explore it together." If you come to your clients from a place of knowing, even with the best intentions, you are not coaching, you are being an expert. Sharing information is teaching. Sharing benchmarks is

consulting. Sharing models and methodologies is training. Sharing guidance is mentoring. Sharing personal stories is friendship. Don't get me wrong, masterful coaching may at times leverage all of these skills; however, your ability to cultivate and sustain the not knowing will create a more reflective space for your client to step into and grow.

Keep yourself in a beginner's mind by sitting in your awareness of your desire to show how knowledgeable and how clever you are, then from that consciousness, shift yourself sideways to the place of being with the client, rather than giving to the client. Remind yourself that clients are the experts on themselves, and you are a beginner, helping them see and connect new dots. Stay in the question of who they are, and what they might need.

You may be surprised what you hear as you observe and reflect from this beginner's mind.

2 Center & Ground Yourself, Then Flip the Switch

Yes, of course it is important to be grounded, and to keep yourself centered so that you can bring forth that which will best serve your client. Do this before the call, so that you can flip the switch of your awareness and your focus onto the client.

If you are paying attention to your own centering and grounding during the call, your attention is on yourself, your awareness is on yourself, your focus is on yourself. Notice this, and shift your focus from self to other. Flip the switch so that your attention is fully on your client, your awareness is on their being, your focus is on their words, their breath, their body language, their facial expressions, their energy, their emotions.

If you become ungrounded during the session, simply feel your feet on the floor, and flip the switch of your focus back to the client. Be present in the moment with your client and your grounding will come from listening beyond yourself.

3 Bring Authentic Curiosity

Part of flipping the switch from a focus on self to a focus on other is about accessing your natural curiosity. Many coach training programs will teach you about specific coaching questions to use; however, master coaches bring an authentic curiosity to their client interactions and from there relevant coaching questions practically generate themselves.

If you are in your own head, trying to figure out what coaching questions to ask, you are in the way. Get out of the way by tapping into your natural curiosity. Use the phrase, "I wonder" and look into the client's experience to determine what it is you wonder that you'd like to ask them to share more about.

Your curiosity will aid you in the reflective inquiry with your client.

4 Provide & Seek Context

Master coaches as well as master leaders know and leverage the power of context-setting. It's a communication strategy that allows you to set the stage, prepare the listening, lay out the road map, and establish purpose. Without it, alignment may be missing, and the coaching can go sideways.

You can set context in the beginning of a conversation, or when there is a topic change, or any time you discover that context is missing. Discern what the client is assuming or hearing or feeling and speak into that. You can also request context.

Don't assume you are supposed to know what clients are talking about or describing. Ask them to provide context. You will learn where your assumptions may have been steering you wrong as the guide in the coaching conversation, and you can correct it in real time.

5 Listen for What's Missing

This is both a leadership mastery skill and a coaching mastery skill. Attune part of your attention to be listening to the conversation from the question, "what's missing here?" and let that run in the background.

Similar to how your computer runs software in the background while you're working on something else in the foreground, set your brain program to run in the background of the conversation so that part of your brain is always seeking what's missing.

Listen for, and inquire about, what may be missing and keep an open mind, unattached to any expected outcome.

6 Inquire Expansively to Generate Divergent Thinking

What's possible? Masterful coaches bring a big-picture inquiry to the conversation for possibility, knowing that it allows clients to expand their self-imposed limitations, and explore safely what might occur.

Clients often come to us contracted in their thinking, and we can help them create divergent thoughts from a mindset of vast, fantastic, idealistic, perhaps outrageous possibilities. Explore with your clients the realm of wild imagination to help them break the shackles of reality.

There is plenty of time later to look at feasibility and actions that are based in reality.

7 Make Connections

As we hold up a mirror to our clients so that they can see their experience through new eyes, we can also help them to make connections they are not able to see on their own.

The mastery mindset here is to always be seeking connections. Like mindset #5 above, this is one of those programs you set to run in the background, trusting your intuition and your deep listening skills to help you navigate

the potential connections to reflect back to your client.

The trick is to train yourself to see the dots that need connecting, and rather than decide what to connect, get yourself out of the way and ask your client. Offer up what you see or hear and ask them if there are connections.

8 Remove Yourself from the Equation

It's not about you! Truly mastering coaching is the art of noticing when you are inserting yourself into the conversational space rather than holding the space for the client.

You know you're adding yourself in when you are compelled to share a personal story, or teach a model, or reveal data or information, or dazzle with your expertly crafted question. Notice when you have this compunction and flip the switch.

Remove yourself from the need to know, the need to share, the need to show up, and shift into being. Be there for your client, be present to your client, listen for their needs and their agenda. If you show up in your field of vision, step aside and let the client reclaim the full space.

Keep it about them. Release your desire to insert yourself and return to fully focusing on the client.

9 Detach from Specific Outcomes

Of course you want your client to succeed. Of course you want them to have the breakthrough. Of course you want them to think you're brilliant. Let it go. Let it all go. Those are your wants, so they are about you.

Flip the switch and get out of the way. Neutral detachment is what allows you to stay in the mindsets of coaching mastery. It's the client's journey, and the outcomes they generate are wholly theirs.

10 Always Be Serving

Masterful coaching is the art of staying in a mindset of service. What will serve your client best? What level of type of support will serve their needs? What does extraordinary service look like?

Even in business development conversations with prospective clients, if you approach it from a mindset of always serving, you will keep yourself out of the equation and have lasting impact.

If you practice these mindsets, you'll have the key to getting out of your own way, flipping your focus from self to other, and evoking the awareness needed to help your clients connect the dots to their ultimate freedom of choice. •

