

5. Giving constructive feedback

How the coachee thinks and acts in situations outside the coaching sessions is also referred to as the there-and-then; everything that happens during the coaching sessions between coach and coachee can be called the here-and-now. As a coach you can give the coachee new insights into the there-and-then by giving feedback on what happens in the here-and-now.

When you give feedback, you describe the other person's behaviour as objectively as possible. You also look at your own behaviour and at the feelings the coachee evokes in you. What effect does the coachee have on you during the conversation, what are you inclined to do? Do you feel irritation, boredom, confusion or pity, for example? And what exactly causes this? What does the other person do verbally, non-verbally and paralinguistically (use of voice)? What does the other person say?

For example:

- I notice that this is the second time I have heard you say that you are not able to be clear. Incidentally, I have understood everything you have told me so far perfectly well. Is that different at work?
- If you answer the phone several times during our sessions and do not keep to the agreements we have made, it gives me the feeling that you are not taking your own learning question seriously enough. To what extent does what happens during our coaching sessions look familiar to you in other situations?
- If I am to believe you, everyone at work has something against you. In our sessions I find you very pleasant and polite, and it is hard to believe that I am the only one who likes you. If you think back once more to what happened at work this morning, how sure can you be that your colleague's remark was meant as a dig?
- I think it is very good that you indicate where your limits lie and that there are certain questions you do not want to answer. However, in my opinion the way in which you set your limit could be a little less 'harsh'. Instead of saying that it is none of my business, it would be enough to say that you prefer to keep that information to yourself. You would then set your limits just as clearly, but startle me less. Could this work in the same way for people at school or at work?

Exercise 5.1

Write down for yourself how you would give feedback to someone who, during the coaching session...:

- says they are very positive, but describes what is happening at work with a deep frown and arms folded;

- blames others for results not being achieved for which he is responsible himself;
- talks about wanting to be promoted because 'that is what society expects of you';
- comes across as rather insecure by speaking softly and avoiding eye contact, and for the past two sessions has adopted a more confident attitude, made eye contact and been easier to understand.