

6. Encouraging self-reflection

Self-reflection means that someone holds up a mirror to themselves in order to consider how they have approached certain matters. The degree of self-reflective ability determines to what extent someone can learn from their own experiences in order to do better in the future. As a coach, you appeal to the coachee's self-reflective ability as much as possible. As a coach, you can encourage self-reflection in the coachee in various ways:

Learning to look from different perspectives

- a. Reflection from the first person: ask the coachee to assess, from their own perspective, how they think they reacted and/or dealt with something.
- b. Reflection from the second person: ask the coachee to put themselves in the position of the second person who was present in the situation and, from this position, to assess the reaction and/or the way of acting.
- c. Reflection from the third person: ask the coachee to imagine that, as an outsider, he sees another person reacting and acting as he himself has done, and have the coachee assess what he or she thinks of this way of reacting/acting.

Working with metaphors

Working with metaphors during a coaching conversation can give the coachee new insights and food for thought, helping them deal better with challenges, questions and problems. Metaphors are comparisons between the unknown or abstract and something more specific and easier to understand. By drawing a comparison between, for example, the coachee's challenge and a quote from a famous person, a story, a fact or a personal anecdote, you can encourage self-reflection in a powerful way.

A few examples:

- Someone who is afraid of making mistakes. 'If you don't try, you won't learn: we have all learned new skills through trial and error.'
- Someone who is down in the dumps and no longer knows how to get out of it. 'After rain comes sunshine, and fortunately we all know that what goes up must come down, and vice versa!'
- Someone who does not like change. 'If you do what you always did, you'll get what you always got' - Albert Einstein.
- Someone who finds it difficult to make a decision. 'You can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to

trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something - your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever. This approach has never let me down, and it has made all the difference in my life.' - Steve Jobs.

- Someone leading a team that is not very motivated. 'If you want to build a ship, don't drum up men to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea.' - Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

Video 6.1

Learn more about metaphors by watching the following video: http://www.ted.com/talks/james_geary_metaphorically_speaking.html

Exercise 6.2

Find or think of three different metaphors (anecdotes, quotes, stories, etc.) that could come in useful during your coaching conversations.

Exercise 6.3

The film director (do this exercise with a friend, family member or colleague):

1. Ask the coachee to recall a situation in which they were not happy with the result or the way

in which he achieved the result.

2. Give the coachee the following instructions: 'Close your eyes. Imagine a large television screen. On the screen you see yourself. Observe yourself as you actually are: observe your facial expressions, posture, clothing, way of breathing, looking and perhaps also speaking. Now you see yourself in the situation you have chosen. As a television viewer, you can see what happens from beginning to end. Pay attention to what you do, say and radiate.'

3. Ask the coachee to open their eyes and blink ten times.

4. Give the following instructions: 'Close your eyes. This time you are a film-maker. The actor you saw earlier on the television screen is standing in front of you on the film set. The actor is called (say the coachee's name) and is so good at acting that they can perform any role or instruction perfectly. You are very successful and talented. You are known for your creativity. You have the actor play the situation you have chosen in various ways until it is perfect for you. Keep refining it until you are genuinely satisfied; remember that it is your film and that you have all the time you need to work on it.'

5. Have the coachee open their eyes and blink ten times.

6. Ask the coachee how the last scene went and whether they are satisfied with it.
7. Give the following instructions: 'Close your eyes. This time you are the actor. You are asked to play the last scene once more. Carry out the instructions and experience what this way of acting is like and how it feels.'
8. Have the coachee open their eyes and blink ten times.
9. Ask the coachee how it was to approach the situation in that particular way and whether they are satisfied with it. If the coachee is not entirely satisfied with the result, work out together why and go through steps 4 to 9 again.
10. Give the following instructions: 'Close your eyes and relive the situation as you have now designed it, once more from beginning to end.'
11. Ask the coachee to open their eyes and blink ten times. Ask in which future situation(s) this new set of skills could come in useful.
12. Give the following instructions: 'Close your eyes, imagine the future situation with your new set of skills and explain what happens.'
13. Close the exercise by asking the coachee what they have learned from it.