

What to Do When you Don't Know What to Do

By Dianne Anderson

Sometimes you find yourself stumped in the middle of a coaching conversation. It's a bit uncomfortable to say the least. Here are a few tried-and-true, practical ways to get things moving forward:

Notice if you're caught: Are you having a reaction to something the other person said? If you are, see if you can shift into a more compassionate perspective. Remember, you don't have to buy into the other person's worldview, you only have to acknowledge it without judgment. Coaching comes to a halt when we judge others.

Are you problem solving? Peppering the other person with options to consider is a sure fire way to bring coaching to a full stop. Don't panic; just shift gears. Ask a question to get the person tuning into his emotions such as, "What's bothering you the most about this situation?" This will reveal the knots right away and shift the focus of the conversation.

Have you bought into a limiting assumption or belief yourself? Often coaching stalls out because neither person in the conversation is able to envision a productive path forward. If you can't find a place where the person can make a choice, then there is no opportunity for coaching. Step back and ask yourself, where does this person have the power to choose? Remember that the goal of coaching is forward momentum, not necessarily completely resolving the issue. There are almost always choices available, even if the choice is simply how to react to a difficult situation.

Check your intuition. Do a quick gut check. What do you want to ask or say? Is there something you see that you want to share? Turning that into an insightful observation may be what's needed. Or is there an edgy question you feel would get to the heart of the situation? Clean up the rough edges if you need to, but put out there what you sense or see. Be courageously compassionate from a place of curiosity. That's where the most powerful coaching originates. Isn't that what you would want from someone you trust to have your best interest at heart?

We all get stuck from time to time. Often that's where our learning edge is as coaches. I hope you'll play with these ideas to push the edge on your coaching capabilities.