

Article Teaching Network Ireland

Coaching

How coaching can make your life more rewarding and fulfilling

For some years now I have been working as a professional coach, along with my teaching and performing career as a clarinettist. People often ask me '*what is coaching,*' as it is such a ubiquitous term. Most of us have heard about sports coaching, chamber music coaching, and life coaching, to name but a few and yet we have very little idea of what it means to be coached or be a coach. Hopefully this short article may shed some light on this area.

The first thing to say is, there are as many different styles of coaching as there are styles and approaches to teaching or playing the piano. Indeed some forms of coaching that are practiced are quite contradictory. One form of coaching may be quite directive, whilst another will be completely facilitative. That said, there are some clear differences between what is generally understood as coaching and other forms of human interaction. I have various definitions I use in relation to coaching depending on the context. For now I will offer this phrase on the role of a coach...*a coach serves the learning, growth and change of another–this requires mindfulness on the part of the coach.* Coaching fundamentally is about change. As human beings we are *hard-wired* for growth and change throughout our lives.

Often people involved in coaching refer to setting and achieving goals and whilst this can be a part of coaching it is by no means the whole story. Coaching is a developmental process where we gain, amongst other things, understanding through improving our self-awareness. Awareness precedes clarity and clarity precedes change and choice. Ultimately we learn to be self-generative, make better choices and are more successful. In fact when I work with clients, goals evolve and

emerge out of the work we do together, it is an organic process. Here is a very short list of fundamental approaches one finds in coaching:

- Holding conversations
- Eliciting discussion
- Providing feedback
- Asking for options
- Asking questions
- Working with
- Making suggestions
- Exploring together
- Being curious together

Contrast this with the following (again brief list), which would not be considered coaching:

- Invoking authority
- Assessing
- Outlining a strategy to follow
- Grading a test
- Lecturing
- Disciplining
- Telling
- Prescribing
- Making expert diagnosis

Perhaps having read these lists you may find that you as a teacher favour a coaching or non-coaching approach. That is not to say, one is better than the other-it is simply to make some clear distinctions.

There are many teachers who use the best of coaching methodology in their teaching and many coaches who also have significant pedagogical competencies. Coaching is a highly skilled and nuanced capacity that can take many years to refine, if one wants to work as a professional coach. That said, one could introduce more of a coaching

approach to the various relationships we have, both professional and personal and in doing so find our interactions are more rewarding in a variety of ways. When we let go of our expert mode and relate more fundamentally to people many of the communication difficulties that stifle creativity and growth disappear. There is no better way to improve what it is we do by working with an empathic and insightful coach. We get to see ourselves in a whole new light, in an environment that is nourishing, supportive and transformative. It is worth bearing in mind, any personal growth we gain will in turn assist those we work with and represents a positive model of life long learning. Shunryu Suzuki encourages us to cultivate a beginner's mind from which point we can seek to learn something new. This is the antithesis of the expert mind where we can hypnotise ourselves into believing we have all the answers.

Coaching is a role fundamentally dedicated to the service of others and in order to earn the right to coach, one needs to engage in a very meaningful way with ones own growth, learning and change. It is a very fulfilling and personally enlightening journey. I welcome any queries and thoughts. Please don't hesitate to get in touch with me if I can assist should you wish to find out more.

Paul Roe

Further information:

www.paulroe.org

www.paulroecoaching.com