

KEY COUNSELING SKILLS AND DISTINCTIONS



SOME MUSINGS ON COACHING SKILLS

- What makes for a great coach, counselor, or practitioner is our ability to fully step into the best of what these roles are asking of us
- We are functioning as a very specific archetype
- We are being asked to play a very specific part in the grander play of our client's life
- We are here to be mentors, guides, advocates, cheerleaders, a great friend, a great ally, a wise man or woman, a good listener, a human being who can be present with unconditional acceptance
- Let's look at some of the DNA of a skilled and effective practitioner...



YOUR TASK:

CREATE A CONTAINER

Our clients are asking us for help
in holding their concerns,
containing it, protecting it,
nurturing it

We create an energetic “container”
for them - a space, a metaphoric
vessel, a safe haven

Is the container you create for your
client strong? Does it have leaks?

Are you “big enough” to “contain”
what your client brings to you?

COUNSELING & LISTENING SKILLS

Invite and Invoke the Sacred



INVOKING THE SACRED

- You choose what this means for you
- It's about the assumption that we are conduits, channels, mouthpieces, or step-down transformers for a higher wisdom
- Without this assumption, the pressure is **really** on us to perform and to be superhuman
- How can you create a sacred space for yourself, your clients?
- How can you remember that you are not the one who does the healing and the transforming - you are the one who helps invite in a greater wisdom into the coaching experience...
- If this is not something that comes natural to you, or that feels a little "out there", then please consider how you can invoke something deeper or higher or more sacred into your sessions in a way that works for you...

COUNSELING & LISTENING SKILLS

A pair of vintage scissors with a wooden handle and a small piece of twine tied around the blades is positioned at the top center. Below it, a white rectangular box contains the text "Let Go of Fixing". The background features a green and white striped pattern at the top, transitioning to a solid white surface below. Several spools of thread in various colors (orange, green, pink, and a large one of natural twine) are scattered on the white surface.

Let Go of Fixing

FIXING

- This is a key and core concept for practitioners that can never be spoken and reminded enough times: we are not here to fix
- No one is “broken”
- Yes, we have challenges, issues, symptoms and concerns. But we are not broken humans
- When we walk around thinking we are broken, we will always feel lacking, incomplete, and as if “I am not yet the real me” - we will choose strategies from a place of lack & fear
- The assumption: we are already whole beings who are simply facing the challenges of growth, healing, transformation, and living a life in a challenging world
- Fixing is about ego and performance
- Trying to fix someone takes away their authority and responsibility

FIXING

- So yes, fixing is a bit of a paradox
- We certainly want to help people let go of their unwanted symptoms or behaviors. We want to help them. We want them to be well and free of whatever is holding them back
- The thing is, what's often at the root of our food and body challenges is the core belief, the false belief that "I am not enough, I am not lovable for who I am, I am broken..."
- So trying to "fix" a "broken" person actually reinforces the very issue we are trying to help...
- This is a subtle distinction, bit of utmost importance. Consider this an advanced PhD concept...

RELAXING INTO UNCERTAINTY

KEY COACHING SKILL

One of your most powerful coaching skills is this - your ability to relax in the face of **uncertainty** about how to guide your client

Note the difference between "confusion" and "uncertainty"

In Zen - it's called the wisdom of "don't know"

Clients sense your fear around their needs and problems. If you can relax, they can relax



UNCERTAINTY

- Life is uncertain. When we learn to get comfortable with uncertainty, life becomes far far better
- Relaxing into uncertainty as a practitioner means you get comfortable not knowing, and you have all your energy and wits about you to ask good questions, to listen deeply, to be curious, to explore. From there, good things happen, and wisdom or insight eventually comes through
- If you don't relax into uncertainty, you will be in stress. In the physiologic stress state, we lose our ability to fully tap into the pre-frontal cortex - the executive function of our brain where wisdom, insight, and intelligent decision making is generated...
- Hint: we are also here to help our clients learn to relax more and more into uncertainty...

RESPECT YOUR CLIENT'S JOURNEY

- We are all on a journey
- It's a journey through life, it's an epic story, and it has a wisdom to it
- You are here to witness your client's journey
- You are here to tune into the wisdom of your client's journey - the place where it all makes sense, where their journey is exactly what they need to reach their highest potential
- You are here to be a positive influence on their journey, to bless their journey, and to help make it a better one...
- Sometimes, the journey is just hard, and we simply need to midwife our client through some difficult times
- Our food and body concerns are crucial and necessary parts of our journey. Our clients generally don't know this...



COUNSELING & LISTENING SKILLS



Let go of Judgment



LETTING GO OF JUDGMENT

- Your job as a practitioner: approach and be with your client with **unconditional acceptance...**
- Let go of your judgments around weight
- Let go of your judgments around any nutritional approach
- Let go of your judgments around your client's challenge or concern
- Let go of your judgments around men, around women
- Let go of your judgments around anything that comes up with you and your client
- Letting go of judgments is a **practice**

COUNSELING & LISTENING SKILLS

LISTENING

- Listening is everything
- Listening is gold
- Listening is rare in this world
- Listening is a gift we give
- Listening is an art
- Listening has magic



COUNSELING & LISTENING SKILLS

A man and a woman are sitting on a hill, looking out over a city skyline. The man is on the left, wearing a green jacket and blue jeans. The woman is on the right, with long blonde hair, wearing a black top and blue jeans. They are both looking towards the city in the distance. The text is overlaid on a white rectangular box in the center of the image.

Listening is a space we create for our clients to expand into.
The bigger the listening that we offer, the more wisdom is revealed,
and the more powerful and fulfilling is the healing journey

LISTENING

DEEP LISTENING

- Let go of your agenda
- Relax into not knowing
- Catch your wandering mind - be present
- Linger
- Be fascinated by your client
- Listen with compassion
- Breathe through resistance
- Listen for connections



COUNSELING & LISTENING SKILLS

DEEP LISTENING

- Fall in love with your client through listening
- Listen through rather than listen to
- Let go of fixing
- Let listening be enough
- Listen so deeply that nothing else is happening but listening
- Trust the mystery of listening



COUNSELING & LISTENING SKILLS

LANGUAGE

Positive, empowering, life-affirming language is a fundamental key for effective work with your clients

Any diagnosis stated in the negative is toxic to your clients

Likewise, any diagnosis stated in the positive is inspirational and healing

Terms such as, "overweight", "compulsive eater", "overeater", "food addict", are charged with invisible judgment and negativity, and deplete energy and dignity



COUNSELING & LISTENING SKILLS

LANGUAGEING

So, the toxic diagnosis called “you’re overweight” becomes, “you’re on a journey of self discovery, of learning how to nourish yourself, and learning how to love your body into its rightful shape”

The toxic diagnosis called “you’re an overeater” becomes “you’re learning how to be more aware in life, more present and to listen to your body so it can speak its wisdom more”

You are here not to judge your client, but to cheerlead them, inspire them, coach them, and show them the beauty of their journey, even when their journey is difficult or unacceptable to them



LANGUAGE

- Our words create our reality
- We are here to help our clients use language in an empowering and effective way
- The conversation we have inside of our own head is quite often negative, toxic, and demeaning
- We are here to help change that internal conversation
- If your friend said the kinds of things you say to yourself in your own mind, that person would no longer be your friend...

LANGUAGE

- Whenever we say “I am...” we give the thing we are claiming great power, meaning:
- I am an overeater
- I am an emotional eater
- I am a binge eater
- The reality is, we are **not** these things. In fact, there are no such **things**. These are **behaviors**. More accurately: I overeat. I emotionally eat. I binge eat. We can change our behaviors. But it’s far more difficult to change who we are...

LANGUAGE

- As a practitioner, your job is to language your client's challenge or concern in a positive, conscious, growth oriented way
- So for the client who says "I hate my body" - the reframe is - "You're learning to love your body more, and to treat it with some care and respect"
- For the client who says "I can't control myself around food" - the reframe is - "You're learning how to best regulate your appetite and to embrace and enjoy the natural need to eat"

MIRRORS & REFLECTIONS

- Each and every client is in somehow, and in some way, a reflection of some part of you
- This is the law of attraction: We tend to attract who we resonate with
- Every client is here to teach us about ourselves, and to help us improve our craft
- Whatever you like in your client is a reflection of you
- Whatever you dislike about your client is a reflection of you
- Herein lies your work as a coach - the hidden work on self...



MIRRORS & REFLECTIONS

- Make sure to make it a practice to notice how each client who comes your way is somehow perfect for you...
- Even if things don't work out and go south
- Even if they are extremely difficult
- Our clients will magically expose the parts of us that need some work and awareness and more consciousness
- Being a coach, counselor or practitioner is not all glory and fun and ease. It's work. It's a craft. It's a challenge. It's a path. It's a practice. It's an honor. It's powerful and rewarding. It can be crazy making. It can be anything...



CREATING EQUALITY

EQUALITY

- Great coaches and counselors create equality
- This means - you experience that you and your clients are 100% equals
- No matter your client's age, race, sex, income, social standing, personal problems or health challenges - we are all equal in the eyes of the universe
- Believing in the illusion of inequality hinders our effectiveness
- What stops you from being true equals with your client?



CREATING EQUALITY

- Sometimes we feel superior to our client for whatever reason
- Sometimes we are more uncomfortable around men
- Sometimes we are more uncomfortable around women
- Sometimes we are intimidated by a client who is smarter, more successful or has more money
- We can also feel superior or inferior to someone relative to their body weight or shape
- Creating a sense of equality is a great practice, and a necessary one when it comes to practitioner effectiveness...

COUNSELING & LISTENING SKILLS

Curiosity

"Can you say more about that?"

CURIOSITY & CONVERSATION

- Your job as the practitioner is to elicit conversation, information, thoughts, stories and details from your client
- Your job is to bring your client out of their shell
- Or if your client loves to talk and talk, your job is to effectively direct the conversation and elegantly manage their participation
- One word answers from your client will generally not do
- Your natural interest in them and your enthusiasm to be of service will eventually win out
- Be curious, and fall in love with the details...

COUNSELING & LISTENING SKILLS



Respect Your Intuition

YOUR INTUITION

- Oh so important...
- Sometimes as practitioners, our intuition is our lifeline
- Trusting our intuition is a **practice**
- Intuition is a real phenomenon, it's a skill, a power, an ability
- Sometimes, our intuition is off - and that's perfectly okay...
- Sometimes, our intuition is talking very loudly
- Intuition is something you listen for
- It's best heard with a quiet, open, curious, trusting and patient mind...

BE AUTHENTICALLY YOU

- Practitioners often adopt a voice, a way of speaking and being that's not actually who they truly are, but who they think they should be
- We often have pre-programmed ideas of what a coach, counselor or practitioner should sound like
- The bottom line: just be you
- Let your authentic voice come out
- Take risks with being the real you
- Trust what wants to come out of you

COUNSELING & LISTENING SKILLS

USE BOLD IMAGINATION

- Creative homework
- Edgy suggestions
- Each client is beautifully unique. Can you tap into that uniqueness in a more radical, authentic and uplifting way?



COUNSELING & LISTENING SKILLS

Feel the fear
Do it anyways...



METABOLIZING FEAR

- As practitioners, we ought to expect to experience some fears
- It may be fear of failure, fear with certain clients, fear about not knowing what to do, fear about money, fear about losing a client...
- Let's remember to embrace fear and not resist it. Whatever we resist will tend to persist
- Fear is natural
- It simply doesn't need to stop us, to rule us, to own us
- Fear is energy, and it can turn into excitement, motivation, power...



COUNSELING & LISTENING SKILLS

ELICIT AND CULTIVATE YOUR CLIENT'S WISDOM

- "What do you think?"
- "What insights did you have?"
- "What would you tell you, if you were me"?



YOUR CLIENT'S WISDOM

- As practitioners, our job is to help bring out our client's own inner resource, their sense of authority, their wisdom
- This is far different than just telling people what to do
- Be constantly vigilant to elicit your client's inner resources
- Use their own experience to prove the point you're trying to make
- Put some questions back in their court
- Acknowledge your trust in their inner knowing

COUNSELING & LISTENING SKILLS



Create the end results
in the Beginning...

CREATE THE END RESULTS IN THE BEGINNING

- So many people think happiness is in the future when we lose weight, change our shape, eat a certain way, look a certain way, have a certain job, make the right amount of money, have the right relationship...
- So we take happiness and wholeness out of the now and into some day down the road
- Our job as practitioners is to understand that people want to lose weight so they can love themselves and be happy. They want to stop overeating or binge eating so they can love themselves and be happy. But instead of making happiness and self love dependent on these outcomes, determine the baby steps and assignments your client can do right now that indeed brings happiness and self love into the equation **now...**
- We are here to love our clients into transformation, and to invite them into the same strategy. From there, success is assured...



COUNSELING & LISTENING SKILLS

Brief & Powerful
Scientific Mind Cookies



COUNSELING & LISTENING SKILLS

PLEASE DON'T SAVE THE WORLD

- The world is what it is
- Trust in the divine play
- Save yourself, help others
- Stay positive as you do your part
- Believe in the goodness of humankind
- Create the kind of world you want to live in



COUNSELING & LISTENING SKILLS

THIS IS THE END OF
Counseling & Listening Skills

PLEASE GO TO
Architecture of Healing - Part 1

