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Why Coaches Need Coaches

By [Elena Aguilar](#) on [January 19, 2016 1:36 PM](#)

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Over the last six months, I've had a series of epiphanies about coaching, *because I've been receiving coaching*. And I suspect, only because I've been receiving coaching have I learned as much as I have about coaching recently.

First, some context. Although I've worked in this field of adult learning for about ten years, I have never had one, consistent, expert coach. As a teacher, I had coaching from someone who was wonderful, but it was inconsistent and sometimes unfocused. As a coach, I received some coaching--and while it was excellent, it only lasted for a few months. I'm now experiencing what can happen when you receive weekly coaching from a master coach. Here are some of my reflections in this process.

1. We all need--and deserve--someone who will listen to us. I do a lot of listening in my work and life--I listen to my clients, I listen to my husband, my son, friends, and family. I listen to them because I care about them and want to understand them and want to hold a space for them to process their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Listening is essential glue for relationships. And often, these same people listen to me.

Being listened to by a coach is a different kind of experience. Having someone whose entire purpose and intent is to listen is a unique and exquisite experience. I do my best sorting-out of thoughts when someone is compassionately listening to me. When someone listens and offers a reflective question for me. When someone listens and makes connections that I can't see. Sometimes when I talk to my coach, I feel like I could talk for two hours without stopping. No one else will listen to me do this every week. Sometimes I need it; and sometimes I don't. But to know that I have a place where I can be heard is essential when I'm doing a lot of listening of others.

Masterful coaches listen masterfully. Being on the receiving end of a masterful coaches' listening has recommitted me to deepen my own listening of my clients. This will be a lifelong journey as listening is really hard.

2. We need to be receiving what we are giving--because it's how we can continue to learn about coaching. There are times when I'm receiving coaching, when I step outside of myself and notice what my coach is doing. I notice the questions she asks me, I notice how she holds silence and space, I notice when she says things like, "I'm not sure of the best way to support you right now. What do you think would be the best way for me to support you?" I notice when she is direct and gives me her opinion or advice. At these same times, I notice how this coaching move works for me--how it makes me feel, or the new insights it generates in me.

Sometimes when I'm coaching someone else, I'll remember a strategy she used with me and try it with the client I'm working with. Being on the receiving end of coaching has helped me see some areas where I can expand my coaching practice and has given me insight into new strategies. I almost always walk away from my coaching sessions with new understandings of myself and new understandings about coaching. Coaches must be engaged in a continuous learning journey around coaching.

3. Receiving coaching is really scary. I'm often aware of how vulnerable I feel when I'm talking to my coach. I notice when I self-monitor, I notice what I hold back. I notice how nervous I feel sharing some thoughts or feelings. Even though I trust my coach--I chose her, she came with great recommendations--I feel nervous. I've only known her for six months. Sometimes I wonder, *what is she thinking about me?*

In these moments I'm humbled and reminded of how scary it can be to engage in transformational coaching. As coaches, we need to be intentionally, consciously, regularly creating a safe space for our clients to learn. This is hard work for coaches! How do we do this? What about when we're working with clients who didn't select us, who don't want coaching, who are at risk of losing their jobs? Then how do we create safe spaces?!

4. Compassion is essential. Because coaching is so scary, because our intent as coaches is to hold a space where a client can explore his or her behaviors, beliefs and ways of being, coaches must be compassionate. Every time I talk to my coach I sense her overwhelming, all-encompassing compassion. I realize that I may not be able to hear the other things she tells me sometimes (the hard feedback--which she does give me at times, the suggestions) if I didn't know, without a doubt, that she cares about me.

I'll leave it there right now. I'm so curious how many coaches have coaches. Do you have a coach? If you care to comment, please do so. If you receive coaching as a coach, what have you learned from it about coaching?

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