POSITIVE COACHING SOLUTIONS

Tips for Successful ICF Client Recordings

Here are some brief guidelines, basics, and suggested language that I hope will be helpful as you conduct your recorded sessions and then go back and listen to them on your own.

1. CURATE A GOOD RECORDING CLIENT! Be intentional and specific about choosing the "right" client to work with for your recording. If your "normal" coaching involves some amount of consulting, mentoring, or training (as I believe we all do), you will want to carefully **recruit someone** to coach for these sessions which will free you up to stay in "pure" coaching mode. One of your buddy coaches or an ICF Peer Coach might be just right.

2. We recommend you shoot for **35 – 45 minutes** so that you have enough time to fully explore the client's topic, demonstrate a broad range of competencies, and complete a thorough, unhurried wrap up.

3. Do not spend your time on the recording going over the full initial agreement elements (e.g. confidentiality, what coaching is, how it compares to therapy, etc.). All the assessor needs to hear is a simple confirmation at the beginning of the recording that <u>you have the client's permission to record the session and share it with their mentor coach.</u>

4. Do NOT use the client's last name—not on the recording or the transcript. First name only.

5. **Start the session with a "goal-specific" question**, such as:
   a. What do you want to work on today?
   b. What would you like to accomplish in our session today?
   c. What would you like to take away from our time together?
   d. What would you like to get out of this session that would feel like your time and energy was well spent?

   Make your opening coaching question productive and effective. Come up with a question you are most comfortable with and ask it every single time! Make is a habit.

   Please do NOT start with vague, story-telling invitations: What would you like to talk about? or What's on your mind? or What's going on with you? If you ask the opening question well, you can get started on something <u>specific</u> right away rather than spending 5 – 10 minutes wandering in the back-story wilderness.

6. Spend plenty of time **clarifying the goal for the session**. Don't get impatient and give up if it's too vague or if your client doesn't know. Even just the process of clarifying a goal can demonstrate numerous coaching skills—listening, coaching presence, establishing trust and intimacy, and most of all, establishing the coaching agreement. When you have a reasonably clear goal, you might ask the client what they need to address to go forward. What do they need to solve. You probably can't spend too much time on goal setting. And it's always a good idea to repeat the GOAL back for client confirmation. There should also be a question about how they will be able to know they have it.

Something like, "When we finish, what will be present for you to know you have what you want out of this session?"

If your client is struggling to state a clear objective after you have made several attempts to nail something down, then don't hesitate to offer up a "hypothetical", such as "I'm hearing that you are upset and don't really know where to go from here. In our time together, it sounds like it might be helpful for you to just talk it out, download it, and if we came up with a 2 -3 specific items that you can work on, that would be a good use of our session? Then if we have time, we can choose a couple of next steps?" You are reflecting what you client is offering up, and you have to be UNATTACHED to the response. Most likely they will take it as their own or may tweak it a bit, in which case you still have a specific, observable and measurable outcome for the session.

7. About **halfway** into the session, **check in with your client**. Look for a good time to offer up something like "This might be a good point to just check in on how we are doing on your goal for today." If you've gotten off track, you and the client have a chance to make a course correction. If you're right on track, they will appreciate that you are paying attention to the process. This is not done abruptly or robotically. Just a smooth touch base is all you need. If the topic has changed, this is the opportunity to confirm the new goal and verify how they will validate it (re-contract).

8. **Leave at least 7 – 10 minutes for a proper wrap up.** Signal to your client that the session is coming to an end. Imagine when you're on a plane, you hear the landing gear being deployed. That instantly signals that you are not too far away from the runway. For your client to feel supported and that you are managing the process and the time well, they will appreciate the advance notice that you are close to wrapping up—you are expected to "**partner with the client to close the session**." You might say something like, "We're going to be wrapping up in a few minutes, so let's start to think about . . ." The rest of the sentence is going to depend on what your client is saying and where you are in the discussion.

9. **A proper wrap up should include 5 essential ingredients—TAABS. D**o NOT shortchange the wrap up! That's why you must leave enough time to do this well.

    a. **Invite the CLIENT to sum up the session—**"What are your **takeaways** from our session today?" After they have given you their summation, if you believe they left out something important, you should feel free to offer it up. "I also remember that you said earlier _______________ was important. What would you like to do with that at this point?" No taking over, just clean and effective partnership with your client.

    b. **Ask the client what their next action steps are going be.** If they are too vague, help them be specific. When? How? What resources do they need?

    c. **Ask the client how they will hold themselves accountable for completing their action steps.** I would avoid using the word "accountable". Who are the people in their lives they can turn to who can support them to take action? What process or tools do they need to put in place to make it easier and ensure they will meet their action commitments?

    d. **Explore any barriers they might encounter.** Discuss what might get in their way and what strategies they could deploy if that happens.

e. **Ask the client what <u>support</u> they might need as they implement their plan.** I recommend you avoid taking on any other responsibility for your clients. Remember, we are NOT their supervisor, project manager, or parent. Certainly, if there is something *reasonable* that they request from you (and you are agreeable to doing it), then this is a good demonstration of partnership. Examples might include sharing a reference resource (book, video, podcast), sending a sample document or form you mentioned, or keeping track of ancillary topics (parking lot items) until the client is ready to address them.

Remember above all that real coaching sessions are for exploration, **curiosity,** insight, new discoveries, new perspectives, etc. It is NOT about problem solving—if you allow yourself to get hooked into needing to help your client "fix" their situation or "solve" their problem, then you are headed into the abyss of consulting, advising, teaching, or just being a smart aleck. Great coaching comes from NOT KNOWING answers but instead partnering with your client in creating a safe and trusting space for them to look inside themselves and open up new understandings that lead to their personal growth and success.

> *Coaches open up a space inside the coachee in which there is room to look around, see what is no longer required, what might be rearranged and where there are gaps that could be filled. A good coach will support, listen, and direct the coachee's focus forward to the future. The result for coachees is that they make decisions with conviction and are more likely to stick to plans which they have come up with themselves.*
>
> *Carol Wilson, <u>Best Practice in Performance Coaching</u>*