

Simone Peer, Inc.

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFIED COACH - ICF MENTORING/SUPERVISION

Tips to Enhance Coach's Ability to Listen

Non-Lexical Fillers:

are the sounds (hmm, uh huh, oh, mmm, ahh, okay, etc.) that don't really mean anything, except to "tell" someone that we're "listening." I call Fake News on this! I know the book* says these verbal responses encourage the client to keep talking, but they don't encourage THINK TALKING, i.e. when the client goes really deep in the thinking whilst the client is talking their thoughts, as they think them, out loud. Essentially, when you actively listen, they can tell; you don't have to call attention to yourself, i.e. make them listen to you to prove it; BECAUSE your response** to them is (or should be) the proof you were very engaged and paying attention.

When you make unnecessary or disruptive noises, you are activating an innate safety feature in their brain that must attend to what they are hearing to determine if it's a threat and/or warrants some kind of attention from them. When they ascertain that it doesn't, they go back to where they left off, AND lose momentum in the process. They may not get as deep or far as fast as they could have, if at all because of the disruptions.

*textbook pg 143: Do—Listen with feedback / Don't — Just listen.

**see PCC Marker 4.2

Silence:

has a seat at the coaching table. Imagine you are seated at a Coaching Round Table. There are three chairs: Coach, Coachee, Silence. In the center of the table is a fluid pool with a stretchy membrane on top (think of blowing bubbles ;-); this is the Potential for the coaching conversation. In order for this potential to be maximized, there are certain contributions that have to be made in a proper sequence. In order to know who's turn it is to contribute, there is a bouncing ball that lands and hovers over the contributor. As the coach, you're the conductor of the coaching choir and your goal is to track the ball and honor whose turn it is. Kind of like old-fashioned sing along cartoons with the bouncing ball or karaoke.***

These things will mitigate the potential:

- if the ball is bouncing on someone, and they're not saying anything, i.e. contributing the essential ingredient at the moment, the potential falls, like a cake taken out of the oven too soon.

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- if the ball bounces off someone and they keep taking, the potential falls, like a cake that stayed in the oven too long.
- if it's silence's turn and the coach steps in to fill the silence, the potential will fall, like a cake with too much salt and not enough baking powder (to make it rise).

When you know where the ball is, you don't have to worry about saying the right thing or filling the space, you can trust the process. As you get used to silence being a full-fledged coaching conversation contributor, you may have to train yourself to hold back.

One suggestion is when you feel the anxious urge to say something rising up inside of you, take a breath and 'ask,' "Silence, are you done?" By the time you've asked and breathed and relaxed into your coaching stride, you will know where the ball is because either the room remains silent, the client will begin speaking, or you'll recognize that the ball has bounced on your head and you can contribute from a more relaxed certain place.

Consider this about silence: When coaches rush in to ask questions or speak their thoughts, they are diminishing trust in: themselves, their client and the coaching process. It is actually showing disrespect for your client and their process. It says that the coach does not have confidence in their ability to find their own insights and answers and is a way that coach steps in to rescue clients from the discomfort of exploring and confronting their thoughts, feelings, insights, etc. This is why the way in which we use silence is found in the PCC Markers in several places: 3.3, 4.4, 5.7, 6.5, 7.6

*** Check out [this video](#), you can skip to 3:30 mins ... pay attention to how the ball bounces on some words longer than others.

BLOCK LETTERS vs **OUTLINES** :

This is about what congruency sounds like. When a client speaks and they are fully (consciously AND subconsciously) aligned with what they are saying, their words will have a solidity to them, like **BLOCK LETTERS**. They will fill in the space of what they are saying.

When they are 'lying,' their words will sound like **OUTLINES** because somewhere, either a conscious lie (likely not), a subconscious lie or an unquestioned assumption or belief that is not a truth for them is what they are saying. It's like when someone is

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saying something and you get the sense they are trying to convince you and you don't need convincing, so you deduce that they are trying to convince themselves. It's like that, but often much subtler. This is why we work to distill the agreement and really get to the essence of what they're saying and to reveal what's truly most important to them. We can't always believe what they say because they don't always really know what's going on with them, what they want or what they don't want.

The Bottom Drops Out:

This is another way to listen for the coachable thing. You're listening and tracking and the conversation is following a line. Then suddenly, the bottom falls out and there's a disconnect before it comes back up to the baseline level and they continue. Usually, there's a coachable moment where the bottom fell out. Make a mental note, or jot down a key-word, reminder of this moment then keep listening.

Either the client will circle back around and fill in the gap, OR they won't. Depending upon where things are when they stop speaking, you may point back to the bottom falling out moment and inquire about that; this can happen as your immediate responsiveness, or it could come up later. The important thing is that you've collected a coaching clue that may reveal its need to be included to solve the coaching puzzle.

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LISTENING EXPERIMENTS:

This recording of David Rock speaking about the neuroscience of coaching speaks to why it behooves us to do more listening and less talking ... [have a listen](#): one thing I would invite you to consider is as this coach shares his wisdom, instead of "pushing clients" that we create compelling invitations for them to move toward - i think this is a more powerful way of looking at partnering with the wisdom of our clients.

EXPERIMENT with the information above.

- Listen with NO Lexical fillers (hhmm, uh huh, mmm, ahh, etc.) When you actively listen, they can tell; you don't have to call attention to yourself, i.e. by making them listen to you proving it.

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- Listen with your eyes closed. Consider that blind people can't rely upon their eyes to hear; therefore, you don't have to rely upon your eyes to hear either. Practice listening with the whole rest of you.
- Listen for Congruency and Alignment: **BLOCK LETTERS** vs **OUTLINES**
- How fully does the coachee 'fill' what they're saying with the Truth of WHO they are?
- Notice the Bouncing Ball ... Where is iT bouncing? On You, Coachee, or Silence?
- Notice then how the contributions are E-X-P-A-N-D-I-N-G or *contracting* The Potential in the middle of the conversation table.
- What do the "Bottoms-Out Coachable Moments" sound like to you?

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