

Session 5: Choosing, Not Choosing, Commitment and Habits

Choosing

Are you going to choose the life you live? Are you going to vote with your life energy for what will make you happy? Are you going to treat yourself well?

You are in it for the long haul with your body and your thoughts. If you choose self-awareness you will have that self-awareness and the experience of “being inside your being” as a constant companion from now until you take your last breath.

At age 15 you wonder what everybody is thinking about you, at age 45 you don't much care what other people are thinking about you, and at age 85 you realise they weren't thinking about you in the first place. Even your mother does not spend every minute of the day thinking about how you should live your life. If you go much beyond “where to go to eat tonight” or “what movie to see”, letting others choose for you is a dangerous business.

Besides, letting anyone else choose for you is wasteful. No one else knows you well enough. What would be 100% for you right now? Only you know. Only your client knows for him/herself. What will you say yes to in your life? What will you say not to? Think of yourself as the majority shareholder in your life. What are the strategic decisions that will help you flourish into the next decades?

Coaching Tips

Your clients may at times feel trapped in inaction. They might find it hard to make decisions, to say yes, because that would close off a possibility. But possibility can be a trap if overindulged. Encourage your clients to dwell in actuality. To choose, take action and create a life.

Not Choosing: ‘Have to’, ‘Ought to’, ‘Need to’, ‘Must’, ‘Should’

Pressure words. In NLP we refer to these as Modal Operators of Necessity. Notice when these words find their way into your client’s language. This is not the language of someone who is choosing.

You can offer an assignment to a client who notices and wants to change the pressure words they are living with. Catch every pressure word for a week and turn each of them into “I want to”. As you evaluate having made that statement in your head, wonderful insights are available. Yes, I do want to. No, I don’t want to but I don’t want to disappoint someone and that is more important to me. No, I don’t want to and I’ll find the courage to say so.

Most of us at some time have felt it was easier to be a victim, we may have a habit of bonding with others by commiserating about our impossible circumstances. Those conversations have no place in a coaching relationship. As a coach you can identify with the client i.e. I can tell you feel that way” without identifying with the problem i.e. yes, that is awful”.

When you identify with the client, you are confirming that to the client “it” feels awful. But you are also assuming that the client can change “it” or the way they think about “it” or both. This is a place for the coach to use maximum rapport. It is not about confrontation, rather it is assuming a frame – the client is bigger than this situation, and he/she can choose.

Commitment

Why is it that we want to _____ but we don't take action? Do we not want to; is it a should? Are we lazy or undisciplined? Do we have limiting beliefs? Are we fearful? We think and say we are committed to wanting something for ourselves, but no action follows that voice of commitment.

To learn about commitment, the coach and client search with extreme curiosity – this can be a minefield of self-recrimination for the client, for the truth about how the client commits. When is commitment easy? When has the client committed to something, then the actions that were required to keep the commitment followed easily and naturally? How can clients model themselves to discover their own natural style of commitment?

Often commitments are invisible to us. There is no debate, no question. We don't wonder for a minute about taking an action or not taking it. That is the point! We are so deeply committed that action is, if not automatic, close to it. No doubt, no struggle.

Start looking for where your behaviour demonstrates that you are deeply committed. Do the same as your clients. Discover the underlying structure. We have never met any parents who had to decide whether they felt like feeding their children that day. We're talking about a lot of meals here, a daily (if not hourly at times) commitment. For 18, 20 years or more.

What are some strategies? Filling out a chart, calling a friend, planning a reward, setting a time limit – there are so many ways of getting committed, and sizes of commitment to make. Earnest commitment comes when the client takes time to develop a highly individualised strategy. As a coach, you can offer possibilities, but once again, the client will create a better strategy. Often the client's new strategy sparks from something you have offered, so you don't need to hold back.

At the same time, don't make figuring it out your agenda. Toss options into the mix and let go of them. The client is expert, once again. Action follows thought, and when the thought is rich enough, action follows easily, inevitably.

- Lose weight
- Spend time alone
- Spend time with a child
- Make the phone calls
- Get organised
- Visit friends
- Eat better
- Exercise
- Write
- Learn about
- Read books

Habits

We change our eating habits one meal at a time. We get adequate rest one night and one nap at a time. We find inner peace one moment at a time. Many lifestyle changes can occur by incorporating small habits into our lives. We like to chunk down to five minute habits. Five minutes rarely feels overwhelming. Even on the days we don't feel like it, we will do something for five minutes.

What five-minute habits, what tiny steps, would support your movement toward the way of life you want? Items that have shown up on habits lists include things like spending five minutes holding a pet, writing a postcard, reading something funny, being grateful, getting through the mail, making a phone call, listening to language tapes. You may say one can't make progress at the rate of five minutes a day, but it is movement. Many clients are amazed at the disproportionate result in terms of quality of life as a result of what feels like a tiny time investment.

Session 5: Choosing, Not Choosing, Commitment and Habits / Assignment

Please ensure that you have read Pages 42 - 45 and have listened to the MP3 recording before completing the following exercises

Developing Healthy Habits

Exercise 1

Track your own habits for a week or a month. Use a daily habits sheet and a periodic habits sheet. The periodic sheet will include things that you do regularly, but perhaps only a few times a year.

Please reflect on and write about your findings. What do you want to do less of? What don't you do enough of? What do you want to do more of? In short, what changes do you want to make? (250 - 500 words)

Exercise 2

Start collecting healthy habits – begin a collection of habits that you enjoy and that enrich you in some way. Record your habits and create a menu that you can choose from. You will not be saying yes to all, or even any of these habits at this time. Just concentrate on articulating them, planning them out. When you are in a position to commit to the habit, the “figuring out” work will be done.

Quick Habits – 30 seconds to 5 minutes

- Stop and put on a ½ smile
- Pause for 30 seconds before eating a meal
- Write down 5 things that you are grateful for before going to sleep at night
- B-R-E-A-T-H-E
- Watch 11:11 on the clock
- Take a 5 minute lie down

Periodic Regular Habits – things you may do weekly, monthly, quarterly or yearly

- Go the theatre or a museum
- Walk slowly through a park or garden near where you live
- Play a musical instrument
- Go somewhere where you can dance
- Paint or draw
- Attend a lecture or seminar
- Leave the phone off the hook for an entire day