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Coaching Principles: Clarity, Focus, Ease and Grace

by Maria Nemeth, Ph.D., MCC

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Coaching Principles:

Part 3: Ease

Are your clients working too hard? Do they report being tired and overwhelmed? Does the thought of taking action toward a goal give them the shudders? If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then read on.

The 1960's and 70's saw a less-frenzied, slower pace to life. Our attention span wasn't as short as today. Commercials were a full minute on television that could accommodate jingles. Remember jingles?

What's all this got to do with coaching? In those times it was desirable to support clients to raise the bar, to stretch beyond what they were currently doing. Today many of us have stretch marks from trying to do too much. We've become driven and exhausted. Polls find Americans get 60-90 minutes less sleep than needed. Coffee consumption has risen.

Clients come for coaching to discover how to live



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and enjoy life fully. And for many this may mean slowing down in order to create and attain meaningful goals and dreams with ease.

Our first steps toward a goal are innately devoid of ease. In the beginning, taking action often requires a tremendous amount of energy. This "lift off" phase of goal-attainment is like trying to get a rocket off the launch pad. A rocket burns 90% of its fuel in the first three minutes as it breaks free of Earth's gravity. Starting a project always takes much more energy-in the form of money, time, physical vitality and other resources-than we thought it would. This is true whether the goal is to launch a new web-site, write a book, plant a garden, or open a restaurant.

In addition, doubts, concerns and worries arise. There is that little voice that tells us: "I'd turn back if I were you." The Buddhists call this Monkey Mind: that aspect of the mind that chatters at us as it swings from doubt to worry. Neurophysiologists suggest that Monkey Mind can be found primarily in the amygdale, the seat of the fight/flight/freeze response. The more you activate the amygdale, the louder the self-limiting conversation becomes. This activation often occurs when we try to do something new, different or challenging-or when trying to do too much at once, like raising the bar.

How to incorporate what we're looking at into a coaching strategy?

Example:

This is Todd's fifth session with you. A general contractor who works on small home-improvement jobs, he's good at what he does and now needs more work. He has a list of former clients who he's sure would be happy to refer him to friends. He tells you:

"It scares me to ask for referrals even though I



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know they wouldn't mind. I promise to call ten people a day until I get one or two new jobs." As his coach, what do you say?

One suggestion: "Todd, why don't we have you under promise and over deliver? What about making three calls a day for sure? And, would it be ok to enjoy yourself as you contact these people?"

Tools:

- At the beginning of any project, encourage clients to take action that's small and easy enough to go under the Monkey Mind "radar." This usually means lowering the bar instead of raising it.
- Suggest that your clients practice finding something to enjoy about what they're doing, shifting the focus of attention from being frantic to having fun

Look for Part 4 of this series: *Grace*, in two weeks.

About our Expert:

Maria Nemeth, Ph.D., MCC, a Licensed Clinical Psychologist and Master Certified Coach, is an internationally recognized speaker, author, and seminar leader. She is the founder and Creative Director of the Academy for Coaching Excellence. For more than 20 years, Dr. Nemeth has trained professional coaches, ministers, clinicians, executives, teachers, and private individuals using the coaching methods and skills that she has designed. Her courses and workshops have been taken by thousands of people who report significant, extraordinary changes in their lives as a result of these principles.

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