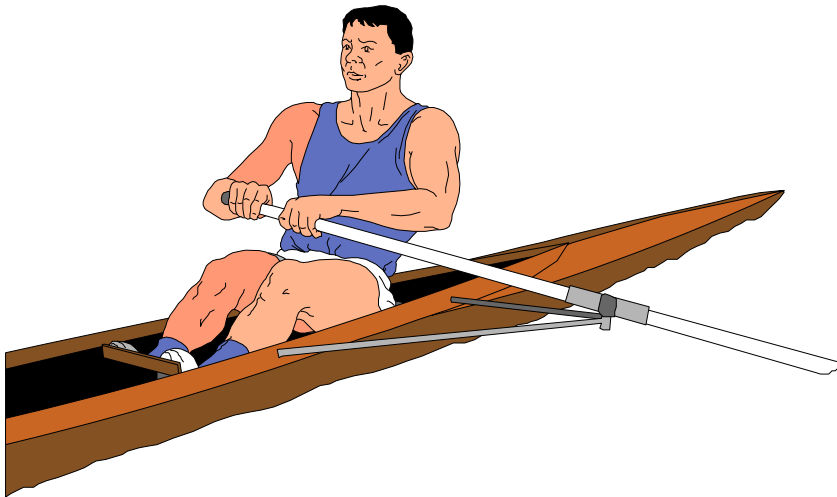


Fundamentals for the Coachee

Emphasis is usually made on the skills of the coach. However, lasting development and personal change in the coachee is partly the result of owning their own work. This is like being taught to row a boat; the learning is quicker and more memorable when the coachee has the oars! The first port of call for the coachee is therefore to take on-board the responsibility for the outcomes of the session.



Mindsets for the Coachee

One way that I take responsibility as coachee is to 'try on' an empowering belief in a form that feels right. For example:

- I believe that the degree of learning from this session is up to me

And there are other empowering beliefs which can be helpful in preparing mentally to work.

- Challenges bring ME opportunities for new perception
- My coach is here to help/facilitate MY process
- Coachees and coaches BOTH learn from sessions

The key elements of learning are openness (to challenge) and flexibility (in thinking and doing). In order for these to flourish in the context of coaching it may be helpful for the coachee to think about permission. There are two parts to this, both self-permission to participate fully and external permission (internally given) to the coach to facilitate. The coachee can embrace these in statements in their own words, for example:

- I permit myself to be open to challenge and learning
- I permit my coach to challenge me and facilitate MY learning

Additional internal permissions may be necessary to let go of needs which may limit the process. For example, I might find it helpful to remind myself that I do not have to understand where the coach's question will lead. For me it is also useful to remind myself to stay with the coach's process rather than work ahead of him/her. Moving ahead may seem to be keeping responsibility but it can also be a manifestation of 'displacement'; a means of getting off a sensitive issue by being logically active rather than attending to emotional information as well. Similarly it may be useful to step away from any need to hide feelings. Suitable affirmations might include:

- I do not need to prove/hide anything
- I allow myself to go with the flow of the process

Values

Affirmations such as the above now lead us to values and a process of acknowledging them. Values, like empowering beliefs, also contribute to the coachee mindset. Some appropriate ones are:

- I (and others) value risk-taking
- I (and others) value challenge and learning
- I (and others) value openness and flexibility

These all widen the scope for learning and accept that these values are not unique. These can be simply affirmed in one's own words to create a healthy mind-set for the session.

Outcome Thinking

The coachee has by now embraced the idea that responsibility for the learning (rather than the process) is their own. It follows that the coachee is also well-advised to think about personal outcomes or goals for the session and to discuss these with the coach. A good coach will check that the coachee has established realistic outcomes for the session and has a good degree of confidence about achieving them.

Getting Centred

Returning to the boating metaphor, if the coachee is not centred then the whole crew may get damp! Traditionally it is the coach who may be expected to take responsibility for the room. However, lets now urge the coachee to take stock of the arrangements including comfort, light, seating, height and distance between coach and coachee, refreshments etc. This also gives the coachee an opportunity to re-establish rapport in the context of the session and to attend to their state.

Before the session begins it may be useful to check out any resistance to working with the coach. Any outstanding issue may limit the quality of the coachee's work. The level of emotional content in such issues may determine the strategy the coachee adopts to prepare for the session. One strategy may be to let go (or mentally set aside) the issue with the coach. Another strategy is to deal with it directly:

“ I am nervous. I feel like I am being judged here. Can we talk about this before we make a start? “

Ignoring the situation is not really an option for quality learning.

First Strokes

The primary aspects of being an excellent coachee have to do with responsibility. And practice makes perfect. The more we engage as coachees in scheduled coaching sessions, the quicker and easier we install a healthy mindset for good work.

Ultimately, in the context of teams, this leads to a coaching culture where the speed and flexibility of individuals creates an environment where the coach/coachee roles can be rapidly reversed several times within a single meeting. That's one oar each and twice the performance!



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This article is adapted from a book to be published by Crown House in 2000, called 'Me, My Self, My Team' by Dr. Angus McLeod.

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