

Out of the Box Coaching Newsletter

The Creative Edge

by Mary Bast

In our chapter on Fours in *Out of the Box: Coaching with the Enneagram*, Clarence and I wrote “You’ll establish more rapport when you witness their pain, show your empathy, honor their unique way of seeing things, and focus your questions on how they feel.” We also suggested that “Twos respond better to *feedback* than to *feedback*.”

Nonetheless, when concrete results aren’t obvious while coaching someone with heightened emotions, I sometimes wonder if I’ve been helpful by simply listening deeply, though my clients have assured me such listening *feels* right.

I try not to be too pushy about moving to solutions (otherwise I can become very Three-ish, wanting both results and evidence of *my* success), but I have often used *Focusing* as a way to help clients move through their kinesthetic experience of emotional pain and into imagery that has the potential to heal symbolically.

So I’m especially pleased to be in contact with Dr. Kathy McGuire and to learn more about her *Creative Edge Focusing*. Dr. McGuire completed her doctoral dissertation under Eugene Gendlin, creator of *Focusing*, and uses the term *Intuitive Focusing* for her application of Gendlin’s approach (where the client is encouraged to focus on “the ‘felt sense,’ the murky, unclear, intuitively– or bodily-sensed ‘feel’ of ‘the whole issue’” and then to move through body sensations to a “felt shift”).

Among the many free articles at The Creative Edge web site, those on grieving have been especially helpful to me when coaching Fours, Twos, and other clients experiencing strong feelings. (continued on page 2)

Some Choice Material

by Clarence Thomson

When the director of a local half-way house I’m involved with explains why people get in trouble, she invariably says “They made some bad choices.” Then, without really intending to make me more uneasy, she admonishes the personnel about their good and bad choices.

No way. Choice is not the place to address behavior that gets us into trouble. Tim Wilson (Harvard University Press, no less) has a slender volume of social experiments that illustrates repeatedly that we have a lot less clarity about our choices than we serenely assume. In *Strangers to Ourselves*, a number of examples illustrate this central thesis (and in doing so, inadvertently underscores the importance of the Enneagram if we want to make changes).

We assume we make choices, for example, on the basis of value. But in an experiment at Duke University, we learn that “value” is not as stable as one might assume. Duke raffles off tickets to their basketball games. (Their gym is small and their passions intense). So would people sell their tickets if they won one, and if so, how much would they charge? And if they had a chance to buy one because they didn’t win one, how much would they be willing to pay?

It turns out the most other students would be willing to pay for a season ticket (rich kids, remember) was \$700. But if they won one, they would not sell it for less than \$2400 (average). Why such a discrepancy? This and other similar experiments show people value what they have much more than what they want to have. Ownership confers an emotional bond of some kind. If you’re a realtor, this is valuable knowledge. If you’re trying to change, you better have strong clear valued rewards for any changes you plan.

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In “Active Grieving” Dr. McGuire writes, “Your body knows how to grieve and will direct the process to a healing conclusion, *if you can stop suppressing it.*” In her “Five Minute Grieving” process, she suggests we:

1. invite the client to cry (“...let’s make room for your tears...”),
2. empathize without trying to “fix” or take away the grief (“It seems bleak right now...”),
3. help the client find words or images for the tears (“It helps to get a handle on the feeling...”),
4. empathize again, often by paraphrasing the client’s words (“So it’s your fear you’ll never be a parent that’s hard...”).
5. continue steps (1) through (4) as long as makes sense, then establish closure and orient the client, if necessary, by doing a “present time” exercise (“You’re welcome to sit here for a minute... let’s make sure you’re back in the world...”),
6. or you may want to continue with other aspects of the session (“Let’s see if we can look for solutions to your situation...”).

I’m also intrigued with her *Focused Listening*, which combines Gendlin’s *Focusing* with Carl Roger’s *Reflective Listening*. In previous newsletters I’ve written about Symbolic Modeling, a right-brain technique where the coach stays within a client’s metaphor landscape without leading the client, by using “clean language”—responses that elicit the client’s own resources to generate healing at a symbolic level.

Now that I’ve had almost a full year of practice with Symbolic Modeling, however, I find the methodology somewhat difficult in contrast to the clarity and simplicity of the four basic responses in *Focused Listening*:

1. **Pure Reflection** of the client’s words, gestures, and metaphorical responses (“So there’s an image... two triangles intersecting, red and white intertwining...”),
2. **Asking for More** (“Can you say more about ‘the pressure’... exactly what is that like?”),
3. **The Focusing Invitation** (“Would it be okay to ‘sit’ at the Edge of that anger for a moment and see what comes?”),

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So what’s the point? The larger point, throughout the book, is that while we are keenly aware of the conscious content of our minds, we are not aware at all of the *processes by which we make our choices.*

The process by which we filter, alter, select, reject and respond to information is the link to the Enneagram. Two Enneagram styles may hold the same conscious opinion about something, but they arrived at that opinion in vividly different ways.

So when we coach people, we are polite about our suspicion of their motives, but we really focus on the processes by which their values are arrived at. We say strange things like “bringing a gift of flowers may mean nine things.” When a One gives flowers it may be out of duty, a Two may be currying favor, a Three might be showing off etc.

So while teachers, preachers and cognitive coaches may encourage us to make good choices, an Enneagram coach will be more interested in the underlying dynamics that created the choice. These dynamisms are where the power for lasting change happens.

So when we talk about “pattern interrupting,” we are talking about the patterns that underlie our conscious choices. And here’s the good part. When we indulge in inappropriate behavior, it is because of these underlying dynamisms, it isn’t “because we made a bad choice.” We made a bad choice because our underlying processes made our bad choice seem like a good choice. I may be consciously on a diet. The process I use to evaluate food is based on pleasure, not virtue. Guess what I eat? Our experience is that if our eating changes mesh well with our Enneagram desires, we can be successful. If they don’t, we’re in trouble. If a Three wants to lose weight to look better, that’s apt to work. If it is for a lower cholesterol level to please the doctor, lots of luck!

A certain amount of sophisticated cynicism combined with a dose of humility is called for. We do not know why we make many of our choices, and if our motives are pure and idealistic, they just might be suspect. And if our motives are simple and unexamined, they may be largely rationalization.

For example, a group of women were asked to evaluate what they thought were four different brands of hose. They

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4. **The Personal Sharing** — for which Dr. McGuire provides the caveat, “It’s hard to even mention the possibility of personal sharings, because they can include all the typical responses outlawed when the listener sets aside personal assumptions,” but sometimes you may have a strong intuition, to be offered only if the client gives the go-ahead and only to return immediately to pure reflection.

Finally, I am touched by her discussion of “The Focusing Attitude.” After summarizing this attitude as one of empathy, respect, and non-judgmental acceptance, she shares the metaphor used by Fathers Pete Campbell and Ed McMahon, creators of Bio-Spiritual Focusing, to convey the “Caring, Feeling Presence”:

Imagine you have found an abandoned infant on the steps of your hospital. Imagine how you would, through your bodily attention, convey complete acceptance and love and safety to this infant: “You are totally wanted in this world and safe with me.” Now, turn this same kind of loving attention toward your inner experiencing.

I’m convinced the creative edge of change involves working with metaphors and—lovingly and with trust in our clients’ innate healing capacity—following the trail through kinesthetic, auditory, and visual imagery to those metaphors.

The Land of AND

**Building Presence
Through Improvisation and Metaphor
For Consultants, Coaches
and Creative Communicators
with Mary Bast and Tim Flood**

Featured at the 2008 IEA Conference

Inquiries about presence-building workshops
can be addressed to either
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made their evaluations on color, texture, predicted wear, comfort etc. They ranked them. The four samples were identical. The determining factor was which sample they experienced last. If you call them A, B, C and D, then sample D was picked as best more than half of the time.

Is this important? Yes. If your boss asks for opinions, and he is not too bright or ill-informed so he can’t really distinguish among the ideas, there may be a 50% chance he might just go with the last one. When do you want to make your pitch? How disconcerting to know that all your preparation and persuasion was less powerful than when you gave it?

I tell stories. I know my listener will almost invariably identify with the first person I mention, regardless of the profiles or actions of the various *dramatic personae*.

Every Enneagram style is a synthesis of information filters, sorting patterns, preferred communication styles and energetic patterns of response. When you examine your conscious beliefs, values and behaviors, you can find out the means by which you arrived at and maintain these. If you would like to change any of those beliefs, values or behaviors, it would behoove you to learn these. That’s where the power to really change resides. That’s why we call it Transformational Coaching.

Help for Coaches

Are you an Enneagram coach? Are you struggling to find a client’s Enneagram style? I can help.

The Ennea-Key is my 12-question system that almost always reveals an individual’s Enneagram style. Send an e-mail requesting the 12 symbolic Ennea-Key questions. Have your client answer them, then send me the responses.

Make sure you tell me the presenting problem, too. I’ll identify the style, and as a bonus, offer you an hour’s “meta-coaching” for \$50.

Clarence