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7 Tools and Tips for Coaching for Confidence



An issue that coaches are often asked for help with by their coachees is a lack of confidence. 'Imposter Syndrome' – a deep-seated feeling that no matter what someone has achieved, or however well they have proved their capability in the past, they are not really up to their role and will be 'found out' one day – is a term with which a surprising number of successful people identify.

There are a number of skills and techniques which coaches can use to raise confidence and help a coachee overcome their fear of failure:

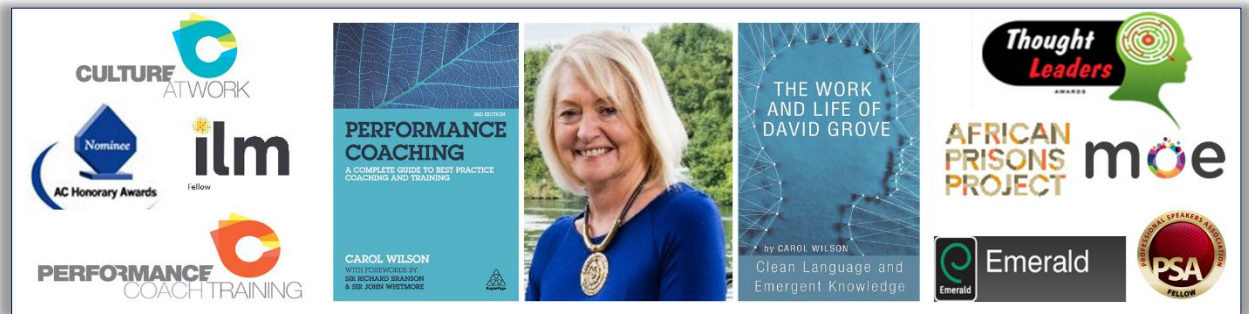
1. Firstly, the whole solution-focused nature of coaching lays the groundwork: when coaches help their coachees to get clear on what the goals are, and then pepper the coaching with goal questions whenever a coachee seems to be flagging or losing their way. This enables coachees to see past obstacles, raises energy, and increases motivation to push them towards a successful outcome. Positive reinforcement throughout is important too – giving the coachee genuine positive feedback wherever it can be delivered authentically and deservedly.

2. Veteran coach Wendy Oliver recommended to me Shirzad Chamine's concept of Positive Intelligence, for which Shirzad coined the term 'PQ'. PQ measures the strength of a person's positive mental muscles (Sage) versus the negative (Saboteur). This method is a useful exploration to implement at the start of the coaching, as it helps people to identify and weaken their internal saboteur while strengthening their positive mindset.
3. This positive/negative mental balance echoes the work of Tim Gallwey's concept of Self 1 and Self 2, which he introduced in his best-selling book 'The Inner Game of Tennis' and which laid the foundations of performance coaching today. Self 1 represents the critical, conscious mind which may sabotage performance through doubt and criticism, while Self 2 is the subconscious self which is always 'in the zone' and knows instinctively how to progress. If these two levels of consciousness can be brought together to work in harmony, great things can be achieved both in tennis and in life.
4. Solution-focused coaching does not mean ignoring the negative doubts and blocks that hold people back. Insightful questions can help people to identify and reduce the impact of self-limiting beliefs that they may hold (and may not even have been aware of) for example, "*I am the wrong age / the wrong sex / come from the wrong culture / have the wrong education*". Those types of beliefs can stop people from starting, but if they rise to the challenge, they may surprise themselves with how irrelevant those barriers become.
5. Working on a conscious level, sometimes a role-playing exercise can help, where the coachee can try out different words and approaches to the situation or person they are afraid of.
6. For deep-seated blocks or phobias, David Grove's Clean Language questions can unravel any limitations which we may have placed on ourselves during our lives and even before our conscious memory began. Clean Language facilitates recovery in people by talking through their traumatic feelings in metaphors. Coaching the metaphor with very neutral questions – hence 'clean questions' which will not contaminate the coachee's own thought processes – can help to resolve previous traumatic experiences and unlock new energy and resources. Visit www.cleancoaching.com for more information on Clean Language.
7. Somatic Coaching, developed by Richard Strozzi-Heckler at the Strozzi Institute, shares some aspects with Clean Language, focusing on what is happening physically, inside one's body, as emotions and perspectives are explored. Somatic Coaching can be a powerful aid in reducing stress and fear.

Building confidence in a coach usually requires a multifaceted approach, drawing on various techniques and philosophies. From the introspective journey encouraged by Clean Language to the empowering strategies of Positive Intelligence, each method offers unique insights into fostering self-belief and competence.

As Sir John Whitmore, the pioneer of coaching as we know it today said, coaching is "unlocking a person's potential to maximize their own performance".

About the author



International speaker, writer and broadcaster Carol Wilson is Managing Director of Culture at Work and a Fellow of the Institute of Leadership & Management, the Professional Speaking Association and the Association for Coaching, where she is a member of the Global Advisory Panel. A cross-cultural expert, she designs and delivers programmes to create coaching cultures for corporate and public sector organisations worldwide and has won awards for coaching and writing. She is the author of *'Performance Coaching: A Complete Guide to Best Practice Coaching and Training'*, now in its third edition and featuring Forewords by Sir Richard Branson and Sir John Whitmore, and *'The Work and Life of David Grove: Clean Language and Emergent Knowledge'*. She has contributed to several other books and published over 70 articles including a monthly column in Training Journal.

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