



This technique draws on Clean Language techniques to invite your coaching client to step outside a challenging relationship and explore wider perspectives. It encourages clients to explore beyond the immediate boundary of the relationship that is problematic or causing them concern. It helps them to reframe the relationship in a continually widening boundary.



When to use it

When you sense:

- A mismatch in expectations between your client and others in their world.
- Your client is narrowly-focused or hung up on a particular aspect of a relationship.
- When your client appears to be okay, however you sense something outside their immediate system might be getting in the way.

These might indicate that your client is struggling to see the bigger picture or put things into a wider context.



What it is

The technique is based on David Grove's Clean Language. The questions are 'clean' in that they use the client's own words to direct their attention to some aspect of their experience. As such, they encourage clients to think for themselves and achieve insightful breakthroughs.

The technique proceeds with a series of repeating questions aimed at continually expanding the frame within which the coaching client experiences their relationship with someone else.



How it fits

Coaches who are unfamiliar with Clean Language may worry that repetitive questioning may be irritating for the client. However, clients typically experience each equation afresh, probably because their thinking is moving outwards (and deepening their reflection and understanding) at each round of questions and so they infer different meaning to what are essentially the same questions repeated over and over.

As the questions require no content, this technique can also be used in group coaching. The coach might pose the questions initially and allow space for silent reflection, and then invite individual group members to share their drawings and reflections with the group.



How to use it

1. Invite your client to share something of the relationship they would like to explore and the coaching question they are holding.
2. Ask your client to draw a representation of the relationship, showing themselves and the other person in the relationship.
3. Explore what is on the paper with up to six clean questions:
 - What kind of relationship is that?
 - Is there anything else about that?
 - And where does that come from?
 - And that is like what?
4. Explore the space around the relationship on the paper:
 - What kind of space is the space around you both?
 - What are the qualities of that space?
 - What kind of boundary does that space have?Invite your client to re-draw and rescale as needed.
5. Ask questions of and beyond the boundary:
 - What kind of boundary is that boundary?
 - Is there anything else about that boundary?
 - And what is beyond that boundary?
 - And what kind of space is that?Continue to explore boundaries (steps 4, 5) until your client has reached an infinite space.
6. Starting with the outermost boundary, ask:
 - From this boundary/space, what do you know about the relationship/the other person/yourself?
 - And what does this space know about the relationship/you?
7. Then move inwards, repeating the questions in step 6, until you both arrive back at the centre. Ask finally:
 - And what do you now know?
 - And how does what you now know make a difference to this relationship and what you might do differently?



More ideas

Further reading

Way, Marian. (2013) *Clean Approaches for Coaches*, London, Clean Publishing.