

COACHING FOR PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL MASTERY

Article by Herb Rubenstein, President, Sustainable Business Group

“There is no formula to relationships. They have to be negotiated in loving ways, with room for both parties, what they want and what they need, what they can do and what their life is like.”

Morrie Schwartz, Tuesdays With Morrie by Mitch Albon

Introduction

This article is based in part on my participation at an event where Julio Olalla gave an address sponsored by The Georgetown University Certificate Program in Training and The World Bank in Washington, D.C. The contents of this article include many concepts expressed by Mr. Olalla in his presentation combined with many concepts which I have learned over many years of serving as an executive coach to organizational leaders and students at the Universities where I teach entrepreneurship, strategic planning and leadership.

Julio Olalla is a leader in the field of coaching. He is a lawyer from Chile who has changed professions to head up a world-renowned school of coaching operating in North and South America. He has coached over 35,000 people and certified over 1,000 people as Master Coaches through his programs on two continents. His work centers on fostering improved communication, supportive learning environments and improved productivity and satisfaction in the workplace. The goal of this article is to combine the insights that we have discovered at Growth Strategies, Inc. in our executive coaching practice with the insights offered by Mr. Ollala in his presentation.

Improving the Ability to Work Together

A major goal of coaching is to improve one's ability to work successfully with others. One of Olalla's essential ideas in this regard is that an "organization" is a conversational network. In order to work effectively in improving organizations one must become attuned to the conversation that is going on in the organization.

A second idea stressed by Olalla used to help people he coaches become more successful in organizations deals with the biology of cognition. For coaches to be effective, they must know how those they coach learn in a physiological sense as well as how they learn intellectually and emotionally.

A third idea that coaches must master with those they coach is to learn how those they coach, and the organizations in which these people operate daily, view and interpret both the past and the present. Today, with people having more information today than ever before, people without realizing it much more quickly (and possibly more permanently), interpret this information. Sam Donaldson, the news reporter, recently stated in a seminar

that reporters are giving out so many stories, many of which including conflicting facts, that people's and organization's ability to interpret these stories is being pushed to the limit. And as Olalla and many others have documented, people do not react to the facts; they react to their interpretation of the facts. Since interpretation drives behavior and a coach's job is to assist people with improving behavior and the results of behavior, a great coach must understand how people and organizations interpret "reality."

Since many interpretations of past facts are strong barriers to both future action and learning, the coach must be able and willing to assist people and organizations in improving their interpretation skills. Assisting people in improving their ability to "interpret" reality, allows people and organizations to converse more effectively, learn more effectively and ultimately, act more effectively. Today's literature on "learning organizations" often fails to grasp that the purpose of learning is to create wisdom. Learning itself, when it is successful, creates wisdom and we must take as an article of faith that wisdom creates better action and better results. Thus, a coach's road must include aiding clients and their organizations become aligned with the goal of attaining wisdom.

Learning, for many, has been given a role in life today that is inconsistent with the history of its role throughout generations. Today, learning, for many, has been placed outside of the fundamental concerns of our lives and outside of the major concerns of the organizations in which we work. When issues arise, people and organizations seek to devise technical solutions to the issue, and often fail to address the issue and how the issue or problem or challenge arose in the first place. Typically, even when a technical solution solves a "problem," neither the solution nor the process of developing that solution does not create the learning necessary to resolve the issue in a way that improves the individual or organization's capacity to deal with the next set of issues when they arrive. Coaches can guide their clients to consciously use their learning in a cumulative way so that it is generalized to the point of having applicability to tomorrow's problems.

Learning Environments

Today there is a strong emphasis on the learning organization. What will create effective learning in an organization? Olalla and the "learning organization literature" describe the keys to creating a learning organization. They are:

Enthusiasm for learning

Respect and dignity for each individual

Pleasure being derived from work and the relationship with the organization

Attention to all that can be learned from the verbal and body language, mood and culture of organizations and individuals

Undertaking and promoting new conversations

Addressing issues in ways that were previously unthinkable

Creating and supporting a strong demand or hunger for learning and questioning with individuals and organizations

Identifying the barriers, or lack of interest, to creating great questions

Limiting the rewards for explanations and questions

Allowing individuals and organizations to expand the space of "I don't know" as part of the conversation

Olalla emphasizes that learning cannot take place either efficiently or effectively in an environment of fear and uncertainty. Where there is fear and/or distrust, high levels of learning are impossible. Where there is respect and dignity, learning is inevitable. Thus a coach, should inquire and observe with an inquisitive mind the elements of fear and uncertainty within individuals and organizations.

Coaching and Personal Development

People often go into organizations as workers wanting to serve other human beings, but after time this desire to serve others dries up. In order to become effective coaches and to improve the inner workings and productivity of organizations, we need to understand the dynamic behind why this desire to serve others dries up within the individual. Usually the causes of this "drying up" or "burning out" are in the organization, even more than the individual. Thus, as Durkheim the father of sociology repeatedly taught, to understand the individual, one must learn and understand the social and organizational context(s) within which that individual lives and works.

Personal coaching is the discipline designed to promote effective work at the individual level in an organizational context. Effective work is a function of a purpose, a commitment to realize a strategy to recruit, manage, organize and deploy resources efficiently to accomplish the tasks necessary to achieve the purpose.

Teaching differs from coaching in that the typical model of "teaching" is where one person delivers information to another. Training differs from coaching in that the goal of training is usually to impart some skill or system to another person or organization who will master this skill through repetition. The essence of coaching is to guide the client to bring forth the best of his or her skills, knowledge, commitment and to discover his or her talents rather than just get some new skills, talents, information or even knowledge from someone else, like the coach. Coaching leads a person to develop him or herself, not add some new layer onto him or her self through taking some insight from the coach.

Coaching often requires explanations. Explanations can be powerful to take an idea to the next level. A coach must be very aware whether an explanation serves a client as a gateway or barrier to an idea or concept at a higher level. Thus, coaches must be great listeners and must coach their clients to become better and better listeners.

The Model of Coaching

When coaching takes place, there is a coach, an observer (who is the client or “doer”), action and results. At all times in successful coaching, the coach and the doer sees and assesses the results, uses this feedback and through guidance and explanations from the coach, the doer creates a new platform of thinking, reasoning, perception and/or commitment, that allows the doer to revise and improve the doer’s actions.

Thus, to repeat an earlier point when we were discussing interpretations, a critical function of the coach is to understand how the observer (the doer) observes the world and how the organizations in which the doer operates observes the world. In order to address that matter fully, the coach needs to understand "How did the doer become the type of doer that he or she is? And, “How did the organization become the way that it is?"

Coaches need to both understand the world through their eyes and they need to listen carefully so they can understand for the ways that those they coach understand the world. Coaches must be able to cross the bridges of these “understandings” without creating a n in surmountable backlash by the doer or the organization. This requires substantial diplomatic skills on the part of the coach.

Coaching As A Change Process

In order to change the action, the result, coaches must assist the observer/doer in changing in fundamental ways. They must also, in some cases, prepare the doer to change his or her organization, especially its pattern of interpreting reality. Otherwise, coaches are merely working on the symptoms. It is never enough, when coaches want to improve results, merely to give information. If coaches just give information, even if that information is acted on, the change in results is temporary. When there is isolated teaching or training, based primarily on the giving of information, there is often no permanent, useful change, that the doer or organization experiences in a sustainable manner. When there is some change followed by actions that effectively undo the positive changes, resignation sets in, builds its own momentum and becomes a strong predisposition toward no positive action occurring in the future.

Coaching is fundamentally and initially concerned with the observer, the doer, more than with the results. Coaching enlarges the vision of the observer/doer in order to enlarge the things that the doer will be able to see as possible that previously did not seem possible. By seeing something as possible that one, at the individual or organizational level, did not see as possible previously, there is growth of the individual and there is the substantially increased likelihood that what the doer now sees as possible will become a fact in the future.

Innovation

Generally we "explain" phenomena by saying, "This is what happened and why." It can be as simple as I ate a large bag of potato chips and gained a pound. A teacher could explain the large bag of potato chips has 3,500 calories and for every additional 3,500 calories eaten, all other things being equal, a person will gain one pound of weight. That is very useful teaching, but it is not coaching. Coaches need to be able to understand and to coach in a way that allows the observer/doer to understand the observer/doer's relationship with the phenomena of eating the whole bag of potato chips. The doer must be led to understand by the coach that he or she was "cause" (or responsible) in creating that activity in order for the coach's coaching on the subject to be used effectively by the doer.

Innovation or change is impossible when we believe that we had no part in making something the way it is. Yet, we often tell the story of what happened in a way that is designed to shield ourselves of being cause and of being responsible for what took place. How many car accident stories start out, "I was running late and had to get to..." when a person being coached on how to not drive into car accidents surely needs to start off the story as to why he or she was running late or believed he or she "had to" get somewhere by a certain time. To the extent people are stuck in the explanations, "this is the way it is", that shield them from being "cause" or being responsible for all of their actions and the results of their actions, innovation is not possible. Coaching must also get at the source of why change or innovation is not occurring before a coach can effectively coach another person to change, innovate or be more successful.

Risk

A key to financial success is the ability and willingness to take intelligent, calculated, entrepreneurial type risk. An individual or organization's view toward risk and their predisposition toward risk will be a great factor in determining its ultimate level of success. In the K-12 educational sector, there is very little risk tolerance and the results of this sector have been very disappointing for some time. Administrators will not risk letting teachers teach subjects in ways the teachers think best. And schools are not willing to allow students to be very innovative in their approaches to the subject matter. The new era of "accountability" in schools is likely to further reduce a school's willingness to take risks.

The Role of Language/Linguistics in Coaching and the Change Process

Language has several important dimensions:

Language as the creator and documenter of distinctions

Language as commitment, the speech act

Requests

Demands

Offers

Declarations

Assertions

Assessments

Questions

Etiquette

An assessment is not an assertion. An assessment is an interpretation. An assertion is a reporting of what one believes are the facts.

An assessment is a judgment. Often that judgment is concealed to the speaker who believes he or she is making an assertion, especially when the speaker tries to make their judgments and opinions sound like facts. Assertions often retard new ways of thinking about something and this, in turn, will have the effect of retarding change.

An important tool of coaching is to constantly bring in distinctions that challenge the current assessments that an individual, or a collective organization, holds. These distinctions must be introduced diplomatically and in the weight example, a simple distinction, like for each large bag of potato chips (the 3,500 calorie per bag variety) that you do not eat that you would have otherwise eaten, (all other things being equal), you will save yourself 3,500 calories and you will weigh one less pound. And one less pound to you is valuable to you because..... where the doer fills in the rest of the sentence.

The effective use of linguistics is essential in coaching. Language gives us the ability to make distinctions. The distinctions we make create or limit our ability to make observations. Our language creates or limits our ability to listen (listening is an audible observation that impacts on the individual or organization). The distinctions and observations we make create our culture, since culture is defined by the common set of distinctions and observations made within an organization and society. Culture results from a sharing of distinctions in a manner so a group of people experience the same observations and listening and look at and see the world in the same way. This is why when someone yells "Fire" in a crowded night club, everyone goes to the doors as fast as possible. We all know what someone yelling "Fire" means in a crowded nightclub and it means exactly the same thing to everyone there sober enough to understand.

Coaches must be aware that their clients and the organizations where their clients live and work often lack many of distinctions that exist in others and in other organizations. Coaches must assist their clients create and expand their ability to make distinctions.

Language with a broad range of distinctions reveals. But language with only a few distinctions, often conceals.

Effect of Language and Physiology on Emotion/Moods

There are emotional levels within individuals and organizations. Coaches and doers must learn to read and understand them. Emotion is a basic building block to behavior and helps guide and control each individual's and each organization's fundamental predisposition toward action/inaction.

Some emotions, just as some words in a language, do not work in support of some actions. Some emotions even prevent some actions from taking place at all or cause the action to be "half-hearted" or destined to fail right from the beginning. Below are several emotions explained as distinctions:

Resentment-a secret promise of revenge

Fear-a concern regarding an anticipated loss

Sadness-concern over actual or perceived loss

Fear predisposes people not to take action because of the doubt that fear causes. Often, people are afraid of their fear, afraid to act in the face of fear. Some people fear quitting smoking cigarettes to such a great extent they don't even try or take more time between their cigarettes. Then, sometimes these same people, one day, just stop and do not have the results they feared and wondered why they did not quit long ago. Similarly, people are often fearful of leaving their job or city only to find, with some real glee, that the next job or city is a real delight. Fear is very powerful and coaches must recognize it even if the doer does not. It takes substantial coaching and diplomatic skills to educate a client/doer that he or she is not acting due to fear when that person is not ready, willing or able to notice or acknowledge this fear. The ability of a person through coaching to begin to recognize his or her own fear or sadness (which also depresses one's predisposition) opens up great pathways to learning, to becoming a better observer and becoming a more successful doer.

Emotions give individuals and organizations pain and cause individual and organizational suffering. Coaches must seek to get to the root cause of the pain and suffering and the emotions that accompany them before a coach and a doer can identify the best approach to improvements.

Emotions are the shift in one's mood that people experience in association with a certain event. Most people blame the event for the emotion. Many "explanations" are stories that people tell about an event with a subplot that the thing that happened made them feel a certain way and that feeling or emotion caused them to act in a certain way. This is a very common story and a coach must often encourage his or her client to accept the distinction that no event or outside source, per se, causes any emotion or shift in mood. It is our interpretation of that event, the meaning that we attach to the event, or even the way we choose to describe or not describe that event (the "I can't talk about it syndrome") that affects our mood or the moods of our organizations dealing with situations. Once people can separate out the factual situation from their reaction, they are much more powerful in dealing effectively with a situation. One good example is that when people see a police car come up from behind them with their lights flashing and they are speeding, they often get very scared, tense, their breathing changes or stops and they grip the steering wheel tightly which further tenses up their body, maybe for the entire rest of the day. One does have the power in that situation to observe that they might be "getting a ticket" and it might cost them some time and some money and they will be just fine afterwards so there is really not much to get twisted into knots about when the police car comes up from behind you.

Coaching a person to react more consciously to situations rather than letting their emotions get gripped by facts of a situation is a great strength of good coaches. It opens up tremendous possibilities for action, improved action and results on the part of the doer. These are some of the reasons why it is so important for coaches to know how individuals and organizations interpret events.

Emotion is a fundamental basis of relationships. Coaches and doers need to deal with emotion at the individual and the organizational level because before learning can take place, the emotions of an individual or organization must be assessed and addressed. And if found, not to be supportive of the desired learning, action or results sought by the doer or the doer's organization, the coach's role must be to elicit from the doer and the organization the fundamental causes and contributors to the state of the emotion. This is not a step in coaching that can be skipped. Getting to this deep level of uncovering emotions need not be a long and drawn out process, like psychotherapy, but it must be done adequately to allow the doer and the organization to see the emotion and to see its negative impacts and to see that the doer and the organization can create new and different emotions that will foster better results.

People develop over time regular or consistent moods, regular dispositions toward life, and behavior patters which predispose them toward certain behaviors and away from other behaviors. Coaches must be able to see these patters very quickly and guide their clients to seeing these patterns. Coaches help people "catch" themselves by transforming a non-thinking doer, into an observer/doer. Once someone is able to observe not only the language, body and verbal, the distinctions that others make, the culture that exists, but also observe the emotions that lead and guide all of these "things," then the observer/doer is much better equipped with taking the actions and changing the emotions quickly enough to produce better results.

One's physical body is an important part of their environment for many reasons. How we stand, how we walk, posture, etc. all affect our mood(s) and our ability to learn. There is a coherence/congruence between our ability to formulate certain concepts (our conceptual territory), our physiology, our mood and our use of language. A coach must be a careful enough observer of the client to know how the positioning and posture (and physical condition) of a client's body effects the doer. Often the doer will be clueless about this and may reject out of hand any suggestion of a relationship of body position and ability to think and act. Each coach must observe the client's receptiveness to this new set of distinctions and guide the doer to testing these distinctions out for him or herself in a manner that allows the doer to learn the truth of these interrelationships. The ultimate teaching of this line of understanding is that very often, In order to change results, we need to change our behavior, which means we need to change our ideas and learning and in order to do that, we must change our body position and body conditioning. This is not easy for many people to accept since changing one's "normal" body position, much less one's body conditioning, requires a huge amount of vigilance, determination, observation skills and intentionality on the part of the person who want to change their behavior and achieve better results. But, like the conversation we just had on emotion, this is a step that can not be skipped in the coaching process if maximum results are going to be achieved by the doer in a reasonable amount of time.

Coaching and Leadership

The art of leadership is to align the predispositions of all participants in support of reaching the vision/goal. When one helps improve the doer's capacity to direct their emotions in given situations, rather than be at the effect of them, great energy and great results are often unleashed.

In distinguishing between the ways things are (the unchangeable things in the short run) and possibilities, Olalla uses the words "facticity" and possibility. Often people and organizations oppose what is, oppose facticity. They say, it should not be that way, and by doing so use up some of the precious energy they could be using by saying, "This is the way it is, and we are going to change it."

If we oppose what "is" we create resentment and if we create resentment we are predisposed to not being able to "see" possibilities that exist or us in changing the current situation. If we accept what is, accept this "facticity," in Olalla's terminology and endorse it, (not as what is right, but as what is true or real), then we should experience the emotion of inner peace, which is a very strong place or perch from which to view the world of possibilities. The emotion or mood of peace is the inner sense of acceptance and a great promoter of creativity. Coaches must work with their clients to achieve this very strong position of accepting what is, only for the purpose of using what is as the proper place from which to commence change to improve actions and results. If the map on the wall says, "You are here," (assuming the map is accurate and you are really there), and you either don't like it, you get mad at this fact or you reject this truth and believe it is

false, you have made it much more difficult to get to where you really want to go. Coaches are “you are here” signs at every moment for their clients.

If we oppose or reject possibilities, our resultant mood is resignation. Coaches facilitate acceptance of facticity (I prefer the word “reality”) in their clients. Only when facticity or reality is accepted as being true, can real learning, learning for possibilities and improved actions take place. The coach creates the context for the doer’s increasing willingness to quickly see, understand and accept what is and by doing this goes a long way toward assisting the observer/doer promoting success in the doer’s life and in the organizations in which the doer operates. The coach does not define success for the observer/doer. That is the doer’s job. The entire process of the doer defining success for him or herself or for the organization to define for its self, is essential to the effort to insure that the observer/doer does not become dependent on the coach. By creating the success goal, the doer not only owns the goal as his or her own, he or she begins to “identify with” and “bond with” that goal. The more that goal becomes intertwined with the identity of the doer, the more likely success becomes. For example, when the “smoker” who has smoked a pack of day for 20 years, begins the process to quitting smoking and goes without a cigarette for two whole days, if the smoker can say with certainty and confidence, “I am not a smoker!” or “I would never smoke a cigarette!” then the person is very well along their way to never having a cigarette again. On the other hand, if the most the person can say after two days is, “I am trying to quit smoking,” then, this type of statement can only come from someone who identifies themselves as a “smoker,” because a non-smoker never has to “try to quit smoking.” So, it is more than just good etiquette for the coach to insist that the client/doer create the goals for the client. It is an essential element of the client developing a new identity which supports the actions and emotions that will lead to the desired result of the client.

Certainly, there must be alignment between the coach and the observer/doer as to what constitutes success, because if the coach thinks the client can do either a lot more or a lot less in the time frame or budget/resources/capability of the client, the coach must help the client explore the feasibility of reaching the client’s goals. Coaches do have a responsibility should someone say, I will not eat anything for two weeks and will lose 20 pounds to inform them that this strategy is often tried, but rarely successful over the long run. Suggesting to the client that 20 pounds over 10 to 20 weeks may be a more feasible approach, still allows the client to create the goal with some advice from the coach..

Context

Context provides meaning to language and actions. If an organization punishes mistakes or teaches people not to act when in doubt, it will create a context of fear, a context that heightens the focus on the potential negative consequences over and above the potential positive consequences. Coaches should advise their clients on how to see context, even when the clients are acting at full speed within the organization and generally impervious to the context in which they are operating.

Diversity

Olalla suggests that we must go beyond tolerance of others who are different from ourselves. He says “tolerance” is simply delayed rejection. The goal in organizations, per Olalla, should be to promote full acceptance of those who are in some ways are different from others. In order to do this, differences must be viewed as possibilities and benefits and not problems or challenges. In order to transform one’s view of someone as being a problem because they are different, to the view that differences constitute a strength, people must recognize that the way we see things (different as bad, inherently inferior) is not the way they are, they are merely an interpretation. Each person has a different set of eyes, a different lens through which they observe the world. (Einstein's Theory of Relativity applied to every day life). We must ask each other to "lend me your eyes so I can see the world as you see it?" This is essential for effective coaching. Coaches must see the world through the eyes of those they coach and ultimately, clients should be able to see the world through the coach’s eyes, as well.

Differences can create energy, which can be turned into creativity if there is dignity and trust. Different people and different types of people bring different “assets” to life, to organizations. The tensions created through differences can energize and need not create conflict.

However, if we hold the point of view that differences are the causes of our problems, then, we will try to live life according to that maxim and cut ourselves off from the much more powerful paradigm that there are differences, there will always be differences among people and we should use those differences to the best advantage of all individuals and all of our organizations.

The Big Picture & Big Questions

People and significant organizations are now beginning to look at the big picture and ask big questions. This is in direct response to a current crisis in meaning as we have more and more things and know less and less what makes us happy and what makes organizations work in this commodity filled world.

Vision/Realism

“Vision” means to see and by the word we mean in the business or coaching context the ability to imagine possible worlds. Our ability to imagine these possible worlds is an aligning force to making the “possible” or “potential” world become a world in fact. The "ground" or infrastructure to make vision a reality is strategy. Strategy is the link between what we want the world to be and making it that way.

We can not be so pessimistic or “realistic” as to kill off people’s dreams. The only way to be the author of our own lives and the author of the future of the organizations in which we work is to share our dreams, enroll others in our vision and be enrolled in others’ visions of a better world. In order to enlarge your vision and sense of possibility in this world, the key strategy is to share meaningful distinctions.

Effective Action

Effective action is the result of good coordination, communication, consideration and conversation between people. We must focus on the ontological, the foundation of effective thinking. Positive thinking is not particularly helpful if it denies actual reality and sugarcoats it with wishful thinking about what is and what will be. To improve coaching and improve the world, we do not need to change reality immediately, we need to change our view of reality to emphasize potential rather than barriers. We must bring to this thought process the right emotions, the right body and body posture, the right set of lenses through which we see the world and, most importantly, we must develop realistic strategies to achieve the world that we want to exist in the future.

Effective action will result when through coaching we bring into being a new kind of observer/doer. In order to promote effective action there must be an ease of conversation about everything in an organization. Truth must be told easily and often and believed. An organization's inability to achieve effective action is often a function of its inability to have a successful conversation.

"Conversation" means to change together. When one engages in a real conversation, one does not know in advance where it will arrive or where it will conclude. Today, we are full of answers and information. What is needed for effective action and for learning environments is that the participants be full of questions. Effective action is the result of living out of both creativity and certainty (vs. fear and scarcity).

Leading is partnering. Effective action requires completion of tasks. When we in an organization state that we will complete a task, others have a right and duty to rely on us carrying out that task in a timely manner. For many people, doing this on a consistent basis will require us as individuals changing our views of and our relationship to the tasks we say we will do. Telling someone you will do something and doing it without fail, must rise to the level of "sacred honor" or at least to the level of "giving one's word."

Trust

Trust operates at two levels:

Assessment of sincerity, truthfulness--the ethical side

Assessment of capacity--the management side

People fail the trust test in the area of sincerity when we believe the public conversation they have (what they tell others) and the private conversation they have (what they are really telling themselves) is neither consistent nor congruent. Credibility is a key element

of trust on both the ethical and the management sides. Without trust there can not be an effective learning environment nor can there be an effective organization.

We must not confuse trust with being naïve. Prudence must not be confused with distrust. At the organizational level, we must find ways to overcome distrust and resignation. The best way of doing this is to emphasize the importance of doing what you say you are going to do in every situation. Coaches can play a large part in assisting people transform their willingness to back up what they say they will do with the action necessary to actually do it.

Failure

Understanding a person or organization's relationship with/attitude toward failure is critical in coaching. If a person or organization blames some external event or force, if a person or organization blames some form of differences between people or if a person relies on "excuses" as the explanation for failure, then the person is attempting to make themselves superior to their failure "for free," without taking responsibility for their actions and the results (or lack of results) of their actions. These types of explanations serve as a dodge. These explanations use language to hide rather than reveal. These explanations stop learning. They negate effective coaching.

Conclusion

Throughout this journey, this journey of coaching and being coached, we conclude where we began. This article provides insights to guide the coaching process. The most important insight is that each coaching relationship is different. While there is much to be gleaned from strategies designed to achieve:

learning how to promote trust

improving observation and listening skills

assisting someone in creating an empowering vision

working with people on setting goals

aiding others in developing robust plans to achieve these goals

helping open the observer/doer's eyes to new and greater possibilities

There will always remain Morrie Schwartz's dictum – "There is no formula to relationships."

Coaching is the ultimate relationship. It requires skill, knowledge, friendship, patience, devotion, caring, investment, consistency, creativity, passion, strength and even love, as Morrie defines it. He says, "Love is when you are as concerned about someone else's situation as you are about your own."

Finally, all coaching relationships should have one thing in common: a strong feeling of mutual respect between the coach and the observer/doer. Mitch Albom got it right. Coaching begins and ends with the framework:

Dear Coach...

And the coach's reply –

Dear Player...

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