

Coaching can be used to help clients in a variety of different scenarios. The Health Services Journal commissioned me to write a series of short articles describing my work with an existing client and brief coaching interventions with individuals who asked for support through their "Working Lives" series. The articles appeared in 2008.

ARTICLE 2

Background and context

I was approached by A, a clinical governance manager in a Midlands PCT as a result of the Working Lives series on coaching. I had an initial telephone conversation with her and we then had two telephone coaching sessions about a month apart. A has been working in Clinical Governance for 5 years although her original career choice after graduation was advocacy. She was clearly interested in leadership but expressed a view that *"it scared me"*.

Starting out

During both our introductory conversation and our first session A expressed a high level of frustration with her current post and lack of opportunity in her current organisation. A indicated that her own reflection and analysis showed that she needed to focus on: self esteem and self worth, being more assertive and self confident and setting more focussed goals for herself.

Some of the challenges

My immediate thought was that dealing with such issues requires several coaching sessions and would benefit from face to face interaction. We did however agree to work on the presenting issues. In the first session we focussed specifically on self presentation skills e.g. speaking up at meetings, putting herself forward for BME development days, observing and learning from others. I particularly got A to reflect on her advocacy work and the skill she had from then to use in her current role. We also agreed that it would be useful for her to consider her skills against job descriptions for other posts so that she could begin to get a measure of what other roles she might be able to do. Clearly for those suffering a lack of confidence it is quite hard to work out what else is achievable and I find working with clients like this it is better to start with where they are now and build from there. Some of the challenges facing A seemed to be tied up with the perceived organisational

culture and being bogged down in process rather than focussing on outcomes. By the end of the first session A was clear that she wanted to be in a role where she could actively contribute and "*make a difference*". For the next session she agreed to do an exercise I regularly use with clients who are feeling stuck: that is to create a list of what you are good at doing and like doing, to move this to a second smaller iteration of what you love doing and a third iteration to an even shorter list of what you are passionate about. This often clarifies for clients what they really want to focus on in their work/life.

In our second session A said she had found this a very useful exercise and it made her realise she was also exercising leadership in other parts of her life such as in her Church and being a School Governor. She realised that her passion is to be purposeful in her work and that her work must be congruent with her values. We used the session then to consider all of this in more detail and although A has recently applied for a National Leadership Development Programme she has concluded that her current role isn't a good platform for the future she wants. We also worked on where she gets her energy from as this is crucial for her to move forward. Finally we worked on removing the limiting assumptions that make her fearful although in doing so she realised that doing nothing would be worse! A then agreed some key goals:

- *Use what I know about myself now to get more fulfilment*
- *Get myself a mentor*
- *Achieve a change of role or job within the next 3 months*

Reflections

As a coach I found working with A quite challenging as I felt she needed a longer time. A herself said the sessions had been useful "*for getting my thinking moving and giving me a push to get started on the next stage of my career.*"