

# The Contribution Coach

By Kirk McDow

## Introduction

Who is this book for? This book is for anyone who is interested in being competent as a professional coach, who is *someone who makes their living by having other people win the games that they're playing*. Or it could be for someone who is a manager or a business owner who wants to be able to use coaching techniques or coaching practices in their business. Or it could be for someone who enjoys learning and expanding, for example in using this book as an access to getting a better understanding of how people work, how performance works with people, and how you might be able to use that in your life not only for yourself but also in assisting other people in their performance. What do I mean by performance? *Performance* is, simply, people accomplishing anything that they want to accomplish.

This book has a few different movements if you will, (musical term pointing to the different feels of the same piece of music.)

This is the first movement. Getting oriented and set up to know everything you need to know and feel safe and prepared for the rest of the journey.

Next are my thoughts on how coaching conversations go, from the view of the coach. I'll distinguish as best I can the things I have my attention on and what I am listening for. The idea is to give you an intimate experience of what it's like to be a coach in the heat of the moment.

Then is a list of obstacles people face as part of being a human being. In other words, these are the recurring issues I see and deal with as a coach and workshop leader.

I then have assembled my greatest hits if you will, of my favorite transformational conversations these are the distinctions, (creations in language designed to cause breakthroughs in performance and experience.)

Finally I have some closing thoughts, observations and a suggestion or two!

Enjoy, you're about to be the coach you also wanted to be, or about to seriously improve your game.

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I wrote this book because I've been training to be a coach for about 20 years and while I have gotten a lot of information and a lot of training during that period of time, much of that information and training was not terribly useful and was even a distraction from the *best* practices and *best* training that I've received over the years. I have also noticed that any training that I've participated in has been somewhat mono-focused or limited in some way - too enthusiastic about its own ability to solve everything - and one might even say "enamored with itself." After many years of looking at many different methodologies and approaches to coaching, I've put together a hybrid - or hodge-podge of ideas and conversations about coaching and about human beings that will give you a very quick and powerful access to being a great coach, for *whatever* reason you might want to do that. This book is also based on many thousands of coaching conversations, both one on one and in groups - thus, these are my best thoughts on how to get from 0 to 100 percent effective as a coach...or how to get from 50 to 100 or how to get from 90 to 100, depending on where you are. This book will be equally useful to all those categories. In other words, if you consider yourself a beginner or intermediate or advanced in the world of coaching, this book will be equally valuable. It's something you can return to and work with continuously to refine yourself as a coach. While that may sound kind of crazy, it has to do with how this book is written, and it has to do with my methodology being that this coaching is *distinction* based or *conversation* based. It's also non linear, which ties into my view of how breakthroughs happen. When someone's point of view shifts in one area, giving them a new context, that makes new actions possible, that shift in viewpoint impacts everywhere else - new points of view become immediately available in many different areas. For example: someone notices that they have a *point of view* about something around relationships rather than *knowing the truth* about relationships. They decide to try on a new point of view about relating to others. From this new point of view about relating to others, new actions can take place including new conversations that take place both internally and externally in their personal relationships, in their professional relationships, and in their management of their teams. All of a sudden something new is possible - a new or a different future - in more than one area of life. The reason this book is effective with someone who is a beginner or intermediate or advanced is because it's designed to get you right into the game. This will become clear in just a moment. It's also designed to give you conversations and distinctions to work with that will be *infinite* in terms of *how* you could apply them or how *deeply* you could enquire into them.

This book is a collection of conversations that are designed to empower "coach." I'm here to empower someone pursuing being a coach. In fact, to orbit the intention of this book one stroke more from another angle, this book is designed to be used as a *guide* for someone pursuing being a coach. A guide in terms of "here are some good things to learn and distinguish and inquire into and have your attention on." If you're interested in being a great coach and you want a resource, as in something you could keep coming back to, this is it.

It is also my intention to update this regularly throughout my career and to create other books in the world of coaching that will continue to deepen and widen the conversation - “deepen” meaning taking existing conversations to deeper levels of subtlety and nuance and “widen” meaning as I come across valuable ideas or conversations or distinctions or points of view that I think would assist people interested in being masterful coaches, I will either develop new material that will be easily accessible or simply be adding to this.

## **What is a Coach**

First, let's ask an important question: what am I referring to when I say “coach”? I am referring to a transformational coach. The question then becomes: what is a transformational coach? There are all types of coaches. There are athletic coaches, there are academic coaches... and there are executive coaches, who basically fall into both categories. A *transformational* coach, meanwhile, is someone who is listening for and looking for and standing for and trains for noticing and making available those moments when someone sees something entirely new, like those “Aha!” moments when you realize something profound. My job is literally to create “Aha!” moments on demand and in a specific category - not just a random breakthrough at any particular occasion, but to have a breakthrough in relationship or a breakthrough in business or a breakthrough in expressing oneself or whatever you're trying to have a breakthrough in. And not only do we say what the breakthrough is, but we promise to have it within a specific time-frame, such as “this conversation right here will produce your breakthrough” or “within a week or two you will cause your breakthrough.” Thus, a coach is someone who literally develops themselves to be someone that other people get to win around. That sounds a little strange, the first time you hear it. But *literally*, a coach is someone who could say about themselves: “around me, people get to win in whatever they're committed to.” Mostly, I assume people want to be free and satisfied and content and peaceful and full of abundance. Therefore, I start there and listen for anything specific that someone's committed to.

As a coach, I'm someone who literally trains myself daily. Personally, I write talks about leading and workshops about how human beings can attain whatever freedom and power and results and outcomes and experiences they really want in life. And I will use anything and everything that I can find that works, if it: is available, doesn't hurt anybody, and is effective. I'm all in. I'm very amenable to different paradigms and processes and ideas about coaching and about performance and about human beings. Anything that will have me be more effective at having people win around me is something that I am immediately interested in. Why *I'm* a coach is because I just love being *that person*. I love being someone who people call when they want to have a breakthrough. Oftentimes their breakthrough is from something negative to something positive, but not always. Sometimes it's somebody who's doing well in a certain area and who is just really ready for the next level. Often, it's someone who is having a breakdown or some outcomes and results that they're not pleased with in their business or in their marriage or their finances or in their experience of being alive.

I never thought this would be who I am. I grew up being aloof and tough and cold and very self centered. And then, I had an epiphany at a workshop that I did about 20 plus years ago, and it's just never been the same for me. This book is really the culmination of that 20 years or so of me developing and training myself to be a transformational coach and a transformational leader. leading workshops and seminars and training programs that are transformational in nature.

A clarification on transformation: essentially, transformation is when something becomes available that was not available before, literally *a new future*. That's really exciting for people, especially when it's in regard to something that they're really committed to - something they've been wanting for a long time. I've been coaching for a very long time. I have coached thousands of people. And I've noticed - I always listen for "what's the simplest, most elegant way of articulating and expressing how complicated things work?" I love looking for a simple pattern in the most complicated things. And people are the most complicated things that I've encountered so far. As a coach, I'm always looking for *the elegant answer* - not the answer to a specific problem, but the answer to how do we have people perform at their highest, vibrate at their highest level, or be their best selves. I'm in the job of having people be at their very best, preferably better than they had any idea was possible. Better than they had any idea was possible is my favorite. In that pursuit and in talking to people from all walks of life, I've found that all people have issues, both professional and personal, in *anything* you can imagine. I imagine that I've heard it all, but who really knows?

## Light, Love, and Connection

I have noticed there are some very basic things about what's missing for people when they contact someone like me or if they're really dealing with something. Here's what I've noticed as I have talked to people - and these are mostly referring to people I've talked to in a coaching situation, but I have also observed that this is pretty much true everywhere: there's something missing from most people. If these missing things get brought to bear, then people immediately get stronger, clearer, more courageous, more brave, more willing to take action, and more creative. I would say there are at least three things missing and vital. Those three things are *light, love, and connection*.

What do I mean by light, love and connection? What I mean by *light* is the light (recognition) of "that thing that you really want in your life is actually possible." I've noticed this phenomenon which I call *the dream killer*. The dream killer is usually someone in your life who actually loves you and cares for you. More often than not, it's a family member. The dream killer is the person who, when you come up with your crazy idea about who you want to be in life and what you want to do with your time and energy and efforts, the dream killer is the one who will talk you out of it because it's not the safest, most comfortable, or risk-free option. They'll say things like, "well, don't you think this other thing would be a better idea - this more traditional, safer option?" or "I don't know that I've ever heard of somebody who's succeeded at that and so that must not be a good idea" or "you're going to get hurt" or "you're going to get disappointed." The dream killer - really, out of love and concern - will literally try to talk you out of pursuing your dreams. Therefore, when I say *light* in this context, I mean the light of someone who can see that what you're up to is actually possible, someone who can see that what you're passionate about and what you want to accomplish is actually possible. And it *is* possible. A coach is someone who provides that light. And when I'm providing that light, it's not like I can actually see it. It's not like I can actually add up the math and I come to that conclusion or I can see a clear unbroken path - I'm not saying that necessarily. I'm just saying that *who I am* - the context and frame I embody for you so reliably you would *never* experience otherwise - is that *whatever you're committed to is possible, period*. I don't need to have anything proved to me or explained to me - *whatever you're committed to is possible* is a complete statement. A coach is someone who, once they get what you're committed to, they *are* that it is possible and the game is now not to figure out *if* it's possible or talk about how difficult it is. The game now is to figure out how we are going to win this thing. The light is *the light of it is possible*.

Next is *love*. And what I mean by love is essentially *acceptance*. But I want to break that down further I'm going to add to acceptance: *granting space* and *granting being*. What I mean by *granting space* is that I'm not judging anyone because they got themselves into a crazy situation. I've noticed that I've gotten myself into lots of crazy situations and I've noticed that other people have gotten themselves into lots of crazy situations. Sometimes that happens because we're not paying attention. Sometimes it's because we're being bold and courageous and just trying something different. Sometimes it's because we're not well and not operating in our own best interest. People do get themselves into silly situations.

One way of being loving or accepting, in my view, is to simply not deal with the judgment or the morality of the right or wrong about what anyone is dealing with in their life. So when people come to me, they don't have to deal with me about their circumstances - I just make sure I understand and receive what we are working with so that we can move forward and embody the context of "There's no judgment here." Same story with how people are being. I've noticed that in certain situations, how I was being was probably not the best way for me to be or my highest choice and yet there we are - it happens from time to time. I've also noticed that's true with other people from time to time: they're not being their highest self. Around me, you don't have to deal with that. You don't have to pick me up off the floor and make sure I'm okay or answer a bunch of hostile questions about how you were being with me. As soon as you're good to go, I'm good to go. Let's move forward. Generally being love as in being accepting is what I'm pointing to. Now, I don't accept anything that's not good for me or unsafe for me - behaviors or language that are not good for other people or around me. In other words, I have my attention on safety and appropriateness and relationship in our situation, but beyond that I let people be however they want to be and I let them be up to whatever they want to be up to and I'm just here to offer whatever I have to offer. I call that being accepting or being love.

The third thing is *connection*. I've noticed that people tend to relate to themselves like they're all alone. People have the experience that no one actually understands them or gets them or fully appreciates what they're dealing with or what they're committed to - what they're trying to accomplish or get done - or where they're trying to get to and the obstacles that they're dealing with and so forth. And it could in fact be *true* that no one fully gets what you're dealing with or what you're up to. My commitment as a coach is to be someone who fully connects with you and takes the time and the trouble to see you and to hear you, to understand you and to appreciate you, to fully observe your circumstances and your commitments and the obstacles and the resources and just the whole thing. Literally, when you connect with a coach, you connect with a one person army - you get everything: you get known, you get appreciated, you have someone's attention, and you have connection with another human being. The coach embodies the context of "If you have no one else, you have me and I'm a one person army." You could also view that as intimacy. Intimacy as in "I'm taking the time to know you fully - to observe and appreciate and listen and see you."

Those three are the things to listen for as a coach. This is, as a coach, what I provide. If you're someone who's trying to develop yourself as a coach, you could mix this into what you're doing. You could take this on as created here and just simply listen for where light, love or connection is missing for your clients. And I think you'll find this practice is extraordinarily powerful and useful for both you *and* your client. This is something that very likely could be used with existing paradigms, or methodologies. - in addition to whatever else you're doing with a client, you could be listening for where light, love, or connection is missing. It's my experience that when people feel loved, feel accepted, feel your light, feel your stand for what's possible, feel your connection, and feel *known* by you...When people feel all that, people get exponentially smarter, clearer, more bold, more courageous, more creative, and frankly tend to work out their own issues with the light through their own creativity and power.

## Access

Another thing I'm listening for, beyond those top three, is *access*. For example, I'm not listening for those three things - light, love and connection - plus the *right* thing to say or the *right* move, if you will, or "what direction my conversation should go here," but instead I'm listening for how to give access for this human being to some new view or conversation about what they're dealing with that would open up the whole world for them. To recap: I'm listening for where light, love and connection are missing *and* I'm listening for how to provide access to any number of useful and powerful and effective conversations or distinctions.

## Fear vs. Love

When people experience light, love and connection as missing, *fear* is often present and fear just makes everything worse and more difficult and further away. In fact, what I have often noticed is a continuum of ways people can be between fear and love. Sometimes, people are not well - for example, they're under duress, either physically, financially, emotionally, or under pressure of some sort - and they have fears or they are tired, exhausted, or fatigued. This shows up both temporarily in concerns like "I didn't get enough sleep last night" or more broadly in things like "I've been worrying about money for the last 10 years" - in either case, when people are under duress or exhausted or stressed, I have noticed that fear is more likely to be present. With fear comes a degradation in one's ability to deal with circumstances or to be available for the opportunities of life. I have also noticed that when people are well and happy and fulfilled and safe and taken care of, love is present. When I have noticed love (or for that matter - light, or connection!) is present, there's an abundance of creativity and thinking and adult processing of emotions and a tendency to be generous and forgiving and forward moving and taking action in one's life. People are thinking better, feeling stronger, and much more likely to be able to handle circumstances and take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

## Transformation

Let's talk about transformation and get into how transformation works. I imagine transformation works a number of different ways, but here's a way I've observed that transformation works. And first I'll just say that when I say transformation, I mean *when a new future or a new experience becomes available for a human being that they didn't see before the transformation*.

Transformation can happen in a conversation or in a moment, and then over time extraordinary results and outcomes can occur. Again, transformation happens when the new future or a whole new experience of life is present. How I've observed that transformation happens with other people and how I've learned to create that experience reliably with people is where we'll start.

First thing is - where someone is stopped or where they're wanting more, there's a view that that person has about that thing or about themselves or about life. For example, one might say to themselves: "it's impossible to have a loving, supportive relationship, and I know this because I've tried a bunch of times, I've tried everything and I've read all the books and I've gone to all the courses and I have three failed marriages and a bunch of failed relationships and I know it just doesn't work. It's not possible. I've heard people say similar things. However, what's actually happening here is, a human being had a bad experience and made a decision. The first decision people make about relationships probably happens long before dating is ever even imagined.

In fact, children make up their paradigms or views or make decisions about relationships at a very early age: "People are scary. Life is scary. No one's coming" or, alternatively: "people are wonderful." You have whatever experience you have as a child and then you say to yourself whatever you say to yourself about that experience, and there you go: who you are emerges. What happens is a terrified or upset child makes a decision about something and then forgets they made a decision and then lives out that decision like a certain kind of life sentence. Take me for example - I decided that "people are dangerous and life is scary and no one's coming" - it all has to do with a particular event and an experience I had when I was a terrified child and I just proceeded to live out that sentence for the next 30 years or so, supported by a combination of looking for evidence to support my view - only noticing evidence that supports my conclusion that "people are scary and dangerous and no one's coming" - and then ignoring evidence to the contrary, like when someone's wonderful with me, I just don't even register that. And then also I am putting out the energy of being someone who lives in a world where "people are scary and no one's coming" - when one lives in a world where "people are dangerous and no one's coming," one is very aloof, tough and independent, which are the exact qualities that push wonderful people away from you! This whole process would then exacerbate the experience of "people are dangerous and no one's coming." This is just one example of how a worldview can get started when a person is an upset child and how that leads to them creating a sentence for the rest of one's life until someone cares to turn around and look back and notice what happened - which happens usually in a conversation with someone like a coach or in a course or workshop. You might even begin to apply this process to yourself as you're reading now!

Once someone sees that they made this decision about life or about people or about themselves, they can then reverse engineer that back to a blank slate, where they realize "I made that up. It's not true...I wonder *what* is true?" Well, let's say that we're *standing in* the context that *anything is possible*. By "standing in," we mean that we're choosing to put ourselves and really, *the whole world* inside of that context. We are standing in this context that *anything's possible*, not because we have sufficient evidence for it, but just because that's our stand in the matter. Then we look and see that, "oh...well, I made *this* up about relationships. It's actually not true." I mean it's true when it's true and it's not true when it's not true, just like everything else in the world - and literally something else is now possible. What's possible? Anything! I could alter my view about relationships and I could alter my view about who I am in relationships and I can alter my view about who people are for me in relationships.



I could create something really beautiful - I could create the new view "Life is a playground and we're all children of God. Now I'm looking for someone to play with," That's a whole different experience: all of a sudden you see a bunch of people and they're all children of God and playmates, whereas before they were scary. Do you see you'd have a very different experience in that new context? I came across to people as different when I created that new context for myself: lighter, friendlier, smiling...and, all of a sudden, I'm more approachable, being and acting from that context. And this all reinforces that experience of the context itself.

That's a very simple example of how transformation works. You acknowledge that wherever you're stopped, it's *you* that stopped. It's not the world, it's *you*. It's *always you and your view of whatever you're looking at* - your view of yourself, for example. By setting this view gently aside and creating a new view, literally something else becomes possible. Now the next step after that is some sort of new *participation* - saying yes to something, jumping full into something, getting your hands dirty about something, signing up for a class, apologizing to someone...having that conversation, whatever it is, and then, through all this, you can begin to practice whatever you need to practice to have this new future come true.

We started off on this theme of relationships - I'll continue there. If I began to practice what someone who's masterful in relationships might practice, then guess what? I get to be at some point masterful myself! I could practice listening and being loving and being accepting and being easy to be with and being attentive and paying attention and being interested in what's going on for other people - all of this sort of thing. And then, all of a sudden, I'm now someone who's strong in relationships and it has nothing to do with where I started or the family that I was raised in. Indeed, anybody can move along down the road and get to any point they'd like to be at in any area of life or performance.

I'm committed that you take on *this book* and the conversations in this book fully and completely. How? From time to time, practice setting aside any view you already have or begin to notice where you created a view earlier on and maybe even forgot you created that view. I'm not asking you to give anything up necessarily. Just simply try on the conversations that you receive here and try them on *fully* - much like going to a car dealership which sells your favorite brand of cars. You look at the car and imagine yourself in it cruising down a scenic highway, you look and feel great. You get in the car, drive it if possible... You try it on fully, this new idea of this being your car and part of your image... After you try it on fully, THEN you choose if this is your next ride! That's "trying it on."

I'm suggesting you try these conversations on in the same way, especially the ones that immediately hit you as something you might not agree with. If I were you, I would give those that you don't agree with *extra* attention because I promised nothing here was included casually or willy nilly. *Every conversation in this book is designed to have you be an awesome coach with no exception.*

## The Anatomy of a Coaching Conversation

This is going to be a general discussion about how coaching conversations work in my experience and what to have your attention on that has coaching calls turn out wonderfully every time. And by wonderfully, I mean a *transformation* occurs, a new future gets created with your client in some manner or another - which is why I call this a transformational coaching approach.

We begin where the conversation starts. Begin to notice the other person: there are no throwaway sentences or words. *How people do anything is how people do everything.* And anything or everything they say has their whole world inside of it - therefore, you're listening as closely as possible to them from the first moment. I remember a coaching call with a business executive. We had been working together for about two months and we started our call as usual with me asking him "how are you," to which he replied, "fine." But when I heard him say the word "fine," I heard a lot more than just that he was fine: I heard that he was resigned about something, I heard that he was sad about something, and I heard that he was frustrated about something. And so I began to ask him questions about how he *really* was and I got permission to start with his answer. So as soon as he said "fine," I said, "can we start there?" He had a little bit of trepidation, but generously agreed to let us start there. And I told him that I'd heard sadness and frustration and resignation in his answer. He paused for a little while, agreed, and began to talk to me about aspects of his personal life.

The point of this story is that you start at the beginning - the first word, the tone, the word choice, the volume, the inflection. *You start right at the beginning and start listening for what's going on over there.* When I first got exposed to coaching, I was really surprised at how fluent the speaker was at a seminar that I was at - this gentleman was a transformational speaker and he had a beautiful, subtle, and right to the point *amazing* conversation ready for every single topic that came up. I just couldn't believe it. I was already highly trained in the business world when I was first exposed to this. And I could not tell what he was doing exactly, but I could tell it was a state change from my training, which included everything that was current at the time - this was the late nineties.

In my business world training, everything was linear. I would learn a question and an answer. I could be very subtle in those answers, but it literally was "When this happens, do that," or "When this happens, do this, *etc.*" Over years of hard work, I got very good at that, but that whole style has a certain limitation. In other words, if I get outside of my field of training, then the linear approach breaks down very quickly and what I observed with this speaker was his ability to expertly respond to the *variety* of questions which were coming at him. There is no way a human being could learn all that from a linear point of view, and so I was clear that something else was going on and it took me quite some time to figure out what it was. Here's what it was: In the simplest terms, it is being present with and intention, say, like *transformation*, AND, have a variety of ways to bring distinction to the conversation. Distinctions have the superpower of being applicable to most situations, it's part of their design. So if you are present, really here

and now, with a clear intention to create or cause something AND you're fully prepared with distinguishing conversations at your fingertips, you are free from having to remember hundreds or thousands of details, formula, step by step processes and so forth. These can still be used in service of the intention of the conversation. But the main show is HEARING what there is to hear, to know what to say, to then make the difference you showed up to make.

Again, I have done a lot of training, but I don't use it in a linear format kind of way. I have all these conversations available to me - however, I'm listening for what will make the difference, what will "move the needle," what will actually make a difference beyond a momentary or temporary relief of pressure or frustration - what's actually going to alter the entire world of this individual or their circumstances or their entire view of what they're dealing with in a way that gives them freedom and power and peace? So what I have my attention on is literally what is it that I need to hear that will make the difference and that will let me know what there is to say.

That is kind of vague, so I'm going to break that down more precisely in a way that will make it easier to use. Remember, the whole point here is not to learn lofty ideas, but to be able to access these conversations when needed. Again, we're *listening*. We're at the beginning of a coaching conversation and we're *listening* - so what are we listening for? Well, we listen for the three things that I'll distinguish below (these are three new things, different from those above).

First, listen for the *exact words being used* - that is more subtle than you think it is. By the way, everybody I've ever asked thinks they are a great listener and above average, which is mathematically not possible. Most people think they're much better at tracking the words of another person than they actually are. That actually gets into how the brain works and how we shortcut things whenever possible. Sometimes, you literally shortcut things in your listening where you are distracted at brief moments. You do not track all the words, I guarantee it. One place to have your attention, therefore, is to really listen to every word. And you could even start to notice where choices are made unknowingly - such as: what experience would bring *this* word choice over another? Really get interested in the person's word choices and the actual words being spoken.

The next is - notice and listen for what the *experience* of the person speaking to you is. Are they excited? Are they frustrated? Are they resigned? Are they hopeful? Are they joyful? Are they angry? Really notice the experience. Don't do anything with it. Just notice.

Thirdly, notice what they're committed to or what they're dealing with. People have a specific commitment in a conversation or a communication. A few examples: they're trying to convince you of something. Or they're trying to get something they need. Or they're trying to share something so that you understand it. Or they're trying to solve a problem. Or they're trying to ask for help. Or finally, they're trying to give help. Whatever it is, notice *what they're committed to* - what are they trying to accomplish right here and right now. They might not even be fully conscious of this themselves, so just sharing what you hear could be radical for them.

As you're listening to someone, if you're listening for the actual words being spoken and you're listening for what is the experience of the person and you're listening for what are they committed to and what are they dealing with, as in what are they really trying to accomplish in this communication...You will hear answers to these questions and you will be greatly informed as to what's actually going on for that other person. You'll notice that these facets or some of these facets also exist outside of what's being spoken. Even when focusing on the words, you're also listening to the tonality and if you have an opportunity to observe the body language, that's all part of listening. Absorb it all. Are they moving towards you? Are they moving away from you? Are they speaking quietly? Are they speaking slowly? Are they speaking loudly? Are they speaking with great vigor?

Returning to you listening for the experience - two general experiences would be fear and love. And then, you have everything in between - all the different flavors: anxiety, frustration, excitement, happiness, *etc.* Returning to you listening for what they're actually committed to - what are they trying to accomplish with this communication? If you have all of that information, what there is *for you to say* is going to be really easy to uncover. Additionally, you're still listening for and supplying light, love and connection where appropriate and thus you're creating a background where they're getting supported. The person they're speaking with, is standing in whatever they're up to, is important - meaning, *you're* being accepting, you're connecting with them, you're hearing them, you're seeing them, you're listening for how to know them fully. And then as they're speaking, you're listening to the words and the experience and the commitment of that individual. With all of this, you are going to be greatly informed as to where to go with them.

Then, there are the types of *questions* you ask. The two types of questions are open-ended questions and closed-ended questions. This may sound remedial, but there's a real value in being deft with the types of questions you're using and being aware of when you use them and for what purpose. Initially in the conversation, I'm trying to open up the conversation. People generally start by not revealing everything. There may be shame, there may be a concern, there may be discomfort, there may be shyness...for whatever reason, I need to and am trying to encourage the other person to *open up fully* - to say everything there is to say because *that's* how I can be of the greatest value. Open-ended questions are very valuable in getting people to open up. You want to ask questions that will take some speaking and communicating to answer fully, and then you're listening for their words, experience, and commitment while providing light, love and connection. As you're doing this, you will often hear things like, "wow, I feel so comfortable speaking about this with you," or "I've never said this to anyone, but..." Now, closed-ended questions are equally valuable to confirm what you think you know or what you think you heard and that's important because *even* with your *best* listening at your *best* self, you're still going to miss things. It's important that you circle back around and confirm where you think you're at, what you think you understand, and what you think you heard with enough humbleness and humility to make a correction in your listening. If you uncover something, if you think you've completely heard everything and you come back around, you'd ask: "so this is what I heard is important to you - is that correct?" Or "This is what I heard you saying," or "this is what

I heard, that the obstacle is that...or that is true for you” - make sure you get a full confirmation. This also works towards putting people at ease, letting them know they're working with someone who's going to take the time to actually hear them and understand them fully and completely.

Another aspect about questions is that it's very easy to *lead* people unintentionally and that's not a good idea if you're trying to get an accurate read on something - so, if you asked a question like, “this is really great for you, right?” they're going to lean towards agreeing to whatever direction you're leaning in. If you say “this was really great for you, right?” you're leaning towards “this was really great for you” and they're going to pick up on where you want them to go more than they're going to really look and answer your question. So you want to ask neutral questions. If you're trying to uncover something, for example, a neutral question would be, “How was that for you” or “how is that for you?” I remember a time when someone told me they were getting divorced and I didn't do “Oh, that must be terrible for you,” which is basically a leading question because in it, I'm leaning towards that it “must be terrible for you.” But a neutral question, specifically what I actually used, would be “oh, how is that for you?” And on this occasion, this person was delighted. They were getting divorced and they could not be happier. I initially assumed the wrong direction. I assumed “this person will be upset and would want a sympathetic ear.” But what they wanted was for somebody to rejoice with them. And so, by asking a neutral question such as “oh, how is that for you?” they got to say exactly how it was for them and did not have to deal with which way I was leaning and I got real information: an answer that was surprising. This is all really critical because if I'm trying to uncover what's real for other people, what's so for them, how it is for them, then I don't want to lean at all in my questions. I want to be completely neutral and anything that's surprising just saves me from going down a wrong path. So neutral questions are really critical in the uncovering of where we're at, and particularly critical in the beginning of a conversation because that's when you most want to get situationally aware. You want to understand where someone is - this is you returning to listening to where someone is in terms of their experience and what they're committed to. You can tell a lot about their word choices and you're listening for if they are filled with light, or if they're filled with possibility, or if they're filled with love - meaning they're accepted and known and appreciated - or if they're feeling connection and intimacy - as in they're feeling known and appreciated...if you're doing all this, then you're much more likely to get the full story as you're moving forward.

Another important place to visit in the coaching call structure: let's talk about how to have people experience you being safe and credible. And I'm not interested in these things because they make you feel good or make your life easy in some way. I'm interested in these because people will open up to you if you feel safe to them and you feel credible to them. Therefore, my commitment is that *you are* safe and credible. Note, we're not having a conversation about how to *appear* that way. Just for the record, a lot of this information in the book could be used in different ways - and I'm committed that it's used in the most loving and contributory way possible.

One thing about credibility is an idea called *congruence of being*. When you're coaching someone or you're doing a workshop, when you're leading to a group of people or in any format, generally the people or the person you're speaking to really wants *you* to be the solution. They want *you* to be the real deal because people are lazy and they would rather just assume you have all the answers they need instead of needing to keep talking to other folks or spending more time or money on something else. People want *you* to be the real deal. They want *you* to be what they're looking for. It may not always seem that way to you, but I promise you, people are trying to figure out if you're the real deal or not, or if they can trust you or if they're willing to give you their trust or their business or their confidence. That's where this idea of congruence of being fits in. It starts when people have an immediate experience of you: As soon as they see you, they have an experience: your appearance, your body language, or your demeanor...if you're speaking, your tone of voice and your word choice and your volume, *et cetera*. They have an experience and boom, there you are - you're either congruent or not congruent with that experience. If they have a positive experience of you and your language and your tone of voice and how you move around and how you dress and conduct yourself is congruent with that positive experience - boom, you're in. But if it's incongruent, then you're out - then you look like someone who's trying to be like something that you're not. So if you want to be credible, you need to have people have that positive experience and act aligned with that.

The other thing is I come from the context that people are their own biggest resource. As a human being, you can just look for yourself - what if you brought *everything* that you are to a commitment - every bit of training, every bit of experience, your personal network - everybody you know personally and professionally - to your *deep commitment*? What if you bring everything you are - what if you bring your highest and best self to something? If you apply yourself to something in this way, you're probably going to win. Most people will probably win most things. But that's often not the experience of life. We are often feeling frustrated, thwarted, and like we failed at something. And so people are their own biggest resource *and* their own biggest obstacle. Therefore, as a coach, it's my job to listen for how to have people experience *themselves* as their best self so they can *be* their own greatest resource and let go of experiencing themselves as an obstacle. That informs me about where to go in conversation, when I'm listening from this context that they've got everything they need AND there's some obstacle to that. You need to *embody* that they're their own biggest resource and YET they're not experiencing what they want in life.

I'm not at work out in their life - I'm at work in there where *they are*, their point of view, or what they fundamentally *believe* is true and not true, because that's where the answers are going to be. If you look from the context that "we as human beings are our own biggest resource and our own biggest obstacle," you could also call that the context of "you are 100 percent responsible for everything in your life or you are at *cause* in your life" like "whatever is *in* your life is *yours*."

How to address this all is your belief system - your belief in either what's possible or not possible or your belief in what's possible or not possible *for you* or your belief about *that thing* out there. I did not believe, for example, that writing a book is easy until I've done it a couple of times and all of a sudden it's easy and fun. But the initial view was "it's difficult."

By living that view out unchallenged, writing a book will live on forever as “difficult.” And then, if you tackle it a couple of times or get some other views or listen to other people who have a different view called “it's easy and fun to just do this” and then you take action, all of a sudden this new future called being an author or writing books is possible and even a “probable future,” perhaps even fun and easy, whereas before it really wasn't possible...it actually *was* objectively possible the whole time, but it wasn't *subjectively* possible by virtue of your view that “oh my gosh writing a book is difficult or impossible” or “it's difficult and impossible for me” - that's usually how that belief goes. Therefore, when I see somebody not winning, where I'm looking is right where they are and trying to discern what their view is about that thing that they're not winning because somewhere in *there* is going to be their answer. We are our own biggest resource and our own biggest obstacle and therefore it's incumbent upon *us* to bring our best selves to something if we're committed to succeeding at that thing.

An interesting add-on to this part about anatomy of a coaching conversation - *only speak when being listened to*. What do I mean by that? I mean, when I notice I'm not being listened to, I literally *stop speaking*. If I'm in a conversation and I know someone just stopped listening to me, it's usually really obvious to me. They think they're being really subtle. I can see they're looking at something or they're looking at their phone...or they now are looking right at me and all of a sudden they have a blank look on their face or whatever. I can tell when someone *goes* or when their body is still there but *they* figuratively go away. If you're looking and observing, you'll notice it. And when you notice someone is not listening to you or they're listening to you casually or without the respect that would be appropriate to someone who's having a conversation with you *for you in your life* - like not listening to me with the gravity that the circumstance or the conversation demands - I literally stop speaking even if I'm talking mid sentence or even mid word. There are two reasons.

First, there's no point to exerting any more energy in a conversation where the words are not being received. There's literally no point in speaking if no one's listening. I'm not speaking for myself. When I'm in a coaching relationship or coaching conversation I'm literally speaking with an intention to be heard and with an aim to have a specific intention delivered - for example, I'm intending that they experience freedom or power or an ability to express themselves fully. That's never going to happen if, when I'm speaking, they're not listening to me with a certain amount of interest or gravity or attention and I can actually tell when that's present and when it's not present. When it's not present, I don't pretend like it is - I literally *stop speaking*.

Number two, I notice that when you stop speaking, *they* notice immediately.

They might respond in a sort of surprised manner. But I love that, because now I have their attention again - now, they're listening again. We could talk about how to listen because “how people do anything is how they do everything.” If someone were to get on a call with a coach or enter into a dialogue or a conversation with a coach and then not listen,

I guarantee you it's not personal and they're doing it *everywhere* and *now* is the perfect time to have a conversation where they get to notice that and choose some other course of action the next time this thing happens - in other words, the next time they're in a conversation - perhaps *any* conversation, but at least a conversation where they have some interest in something - they'll actually know to pay attention and know that they have a blind spot or a weakness called "sometimes, I think I'm engaging people in conversation when I'm not." A lot of people do that by the way. And this is coaching to you as a coach and as anybody who's interested in performing with other people - when people stop listening, stop speaking. It will save you some time because people are more than happy to let you talk for five or ten minutes without listening and then they'll make you repeat it. They've got no problem with that. Let's pause, just admitting they are not listening. A side-benefit: I recommend stop speaking and what'll happen very quickly is we'll get into a conversation about the things that *really* have their attention and then you can just start again. Or you could have a conversation about what it is to actually listen in a way that you really value and also listen in a way that you communicate respect to the person speaking because it's also (I mean, I don't take it personally) incredibly disrespectful to engage someone in conversation and then just not listen. That's really absurdly ridiculous and a waste of time and yet people do it all the time - it's very common. Therefore: train the people around you to be the one that they listen to fully.

That's also another aspect.

Start at the beginning, wherever you're at, because it might not be easy - especially in a new relationship with someone or with a client - for you to know they're not really listening and you just kind of step over it and just keep rolling. But note wherever you are and deal with that - if *you're* not listening, (Oh yea, did I mention that you are often the one who is not listening! Just keep noticing and return yourself to listening for what will make the difference NOW.) deal with that. If you hear resignation, deal with that. If you hear excitement, deal with that - just literally respond to what's happening in practice. This may sound silly and obvious but I actually observe that it's very rare and special.

## **Aspects of Human Being**

*These are the issues I have noticed that create the most suffering, loss of power and mischief. Keep an eye on these and you will be a superhero for your clients and friends and family!*

Now, we're going to talk about various aspects of what it is to be a human being - the things that I notice people are dealing with when I talk to them. I have a collection of conversations and observations of what I hear when I talk to people who are either not experiencing being powerful or being able to be successful or they're experiencing failure or they want to take something to the next level. These are the things that I would call the Distinctions or the Conversations or the Paradigms that I have my attention on, that guide me through how to make a difference.



## Veil of Human Being

The first thing is what I call the *veil of human being*. I notice that people are rarely present - rarely are they right here and right now. They also very rarely have some primary intention in front of them, like a *created* intention. Most people are generally in a reactive state. Most people are reacting to what happens to them, including thoughts and feelings that come and go... People are generally in not so much the present but in the past and in the future. I'll give you a quick example of what I mean: just think for a moment about how much time you spend in the past - things that you're still upset about - a conversation or an event...Something happened at work or something happened with your family or in a relationship or on the street or with a vendor or with a customer. Something happens - say, the friend and you had an harsh conversation. It was very upsetting to you and it never got resolved and you still think about it. Or it's a conversation you wish you'd had with someone or a conversation you did have with someone that didn't go well. Or there's something you tried and failed at which you wish you had done a different way and you think about that. Or there's some person you just keep thinking about and they make you angry and you wish you could say something to them. Or you have complaints about how things are: "I wish my body looked a different way" or "I wish I had a different amount of money in my bank account" or it's just something out of *all* the things we think about - interactions you've had with people and what people think of you...whatever it is, there's some amount of time you spend in the past: you're not *here*, you're living someplace else - your *body's* here but you're not. So you can imagine what percentage of the time you spend in the past - usually when I ask this question, I get anywhere from about 20 percent to 80 percent. Any number is fine - you just think of it for yourself.

Secondly, you could look at how much time you spend in the *future*: planning for the future, for example...oftentimes this looks like being controlling and sometimes controlling looks like being helpful. I'll break this down. Maybe you have a desire to have your way - when you go out for a movie or a restaurant, you're the person who wants to say what restaurant we go to and the movie we go to and basically you want to have your own way. You want to see *this* movie and you want to go to *that* restaurant because it's the right distance away at the right price and you had a good experience. You've got a whole story about it. By the end of the day, you're sure you're not going to be happy until you get things your way - the right restaurant and the right movie. This may not be you, but you've been on one side of the conversation or the other, and probably both. That's all about you trying to be controlling by being *helpful*: "Here's a great review of the movie I was telling you about"... or "Oh I know this really wonderful thing about this restaurant...Remember that restaurant I thought you would really like?" all like you're being helpful, as if you're interested in them or whatever. But really you're lobbying for whatever *you* want. So part of the *veil of human being* is how much time we spend maneuvering for the future - being helpful to control people's reaction or control their choices or what they think - how much time we spend on getting people to think the right thing, getting people to think the right thing *about us*, getting people to make the right decision and getting people to stop making the wrong decision and so forth and so on.

A lot of emphasis is on the future and worrying about the future, on how things are going to go - we are complaining about the future and so forth and so on, complaining about how we think the future is going to be. We're working really hard - like working 80 hours a week - to make enough money to buy the right house someday...

The biggest thing about this is that all that time you're in the past, and all that time you're in the future, you're not actually in the present. You're not actually *right here*. You're not actually *right now*. You're not responding to what's in front of you. If there are any opportunities to make a difference in your life, you're not even noticing them because you're not here - you're in the past or in the future. If there's a conversation to have that will really make a difference in your life, for example, that's not available to you because you're literally working on something else and specifically you're working on either the past or the future which is not a place where anything can happen. The only place something can happen is right here and right now, the only opportunity to move the needle and get anything accomplished is actually right here and right now dealing with what's *actually* happening and you're *not* doing that when you're in the future or in the past. So if you add up whatever percentage of the time you think you're in the past...40 percent, 20 percent...and you add that to how much time you think you're in the future...(I would say, conservatively, 20 percent on both sides, that's 40 percent total) - that means you're literally *not here forty percent of the time*. So that's a good place to get started: *just actually have people get that being present would be of great benefit to them*. That's one of the barriers to accomplishment. That's one of the things that we're going to be dealing with - people are not home, they're on automatic. They're in the past or in the future and they don't even know why they're doing what they're doing anymore. Most of the time, that can make a big difference in a situation or within a person's life - when they start being responsible for being in the present where something could actually happen.

### **Blind-Spots**

Another thing I look at is *blind-spots*. People have blind-spots. This is a pretty simple concept. In short, people just don't see everything that's impacting them. The easiest example of a blind spot is if you're driving a car in the rain and there's a big Mack truck barreling down on you but you literally can't see the truck because they're in a blind spot - where you can't see it in the rearview mirror. Just because you can't see the truck, does that mean it's OK to turn left into that lane?

Just because you can't see it doesn't mean you don't get the full consequence of it. You just don't see it *from your perspective*. So that's a blind spot. People have that in their businesses and in their personal relationships and so forth.

I'll give you a personal example...

I grew up in a loveless home, just the luck of the draw if you will...

I had a complaint growing up that I never had a FAMILY.

What that meant to me was that I never had affection, attention, someone caring for me with tenderness. I used to imagine what it would be like if I had a *real* family.

I imagined that families were full of unconditional love, being celebrated, heard, known, safe, spoken well of, and always though the best of...

I remember starting a new job when I was 19. I was standing next to my boss as he says to me. "See Mr. Joe over there? He can do everything, he is the back bone of my company."

I had a moment of perceived CLARITY. This is family! They are working together, speaking well of each other, and clearly respect one another.

ALL I HAVE TO DO IS: Be the best at everything AND be the backbone!

For the next 4 years, I was on time to work everyday and never took a day off, even holidays or sick days. I was the best at everything, (or killing myself in the attempt), and I was increasingly the backbone of the company.

By the way, before that I was a fairly typical rebellious teenager at the time and there was NO EVIDENCE that I would ever become this super responsible dude. This was not inspirational or joyful or peaceful in anyway. It was dark, desperate, anxious, and scary. I HAD to be the best and the backbone. I would attach myself to jobs and or relationships and desperately hang on no matter what because I NEEDED to have this family experience in my life. I did this without even noticing. I continued this kind of behaviour until recently when I saw all this for myself in a conversation with a coach friend of mine. He pointed out that I have love and family all over my life. I am celebrated by people I respect and I MADE UP the thing about having to be a certain way to be loved. I also forgot that I made it up! I am now free to be me and work and love as I choose.

That is the power of distinguishing a blind spot. You have hundreds of them!

## **Barriers**

Another thing is *barriers*. People have barriers - some people are just not good at some things as they are at others. I seem to have a challenge, for example, with anything that looks routine or monotonous to me. So when I run into something that looks routine or monotonous to me, it's not that I can't do it, but it causes friction - for me, it takes extra effort and I have to work extra hard to be competent at it. It's a barrier for me. So there are lots of ways you can deal with it. I like the work around, so I try to hire people that enjoy doing those things that I don't enjoy doing - which allows me to enjoy the things that I like doing. It's a good way to look at a conversation, as in listening for those things that you might consider barriers in what your client is sharing with you? Listen for how barriers can be distinguished, so that they can be gone over, how they can be gone under, or how they can be gone around - but they first have to be identified as a finite thing that can be worked with rather than an infinite thing that "is the way it is." When problems look big they can look infinite, unsolvable - we want it to be a *barrier* or something that's distinct and finite rather than indistinct. So I listen for barriers. When you get someone to see their own barrier, most of the time they will put in their correction if you give them time to do so!

## **Amygdala Hijack**

The *amygdala hijack* has to do with how the brain works. Essentially, you have the amygdala, the midbrain and the neocortex. The amygdala is the primal, instinctual reptilian brain. The midbrain is the mammalian brain and has to do with processing feelings and your bodily functions. Then, the neocortex is the human brain - that's the higher cognitive center for thinking and reasoning and so forth.

What happens is, when human beings experience being threatened, the amygdala (the reptilian brain) shuts down the other two brains - the mammalian brain and the homosapien brain - because the amygdala wants you to be in a highly reactive state: not processing your feelings, not wondering how you think or how you feel about a thing, or not overthinking the situation. This response pattern is designed to keep you alive. For example, if you notice a lion is running at you, you don't want to really process your feelings or think about it too much - you want to start moving probably in the direction of the nearest tree or wherever your greatest chance is for avoiding lions. In short, people are hijacked when they experience threat. Thus, *hijack* means difficulty in processing one's feelings and emotions and difficulty in thinking and reasoning, or in a highly reactive state by design. If you think about it, that's probably good for avoiding being eaten by a lion and probably not so good in a difficult conversation with your boss or your client or your husband or wife - in fact, it's probably very detrimental for those last few categories. And when you think about it, we often have some of the most important conversations in our lives when we're in a highly stressed situation. In other words, we often tackle the most important and subtle aspects of our life when we're hijacked. Which is kind of crazy, in a way, and not so uncommon. Therefore, one thing I keep my eye on is: is my client hijacked? I'm also often wondering if *I'm* hijacked. I think it's good to keep checking in and making sure all your three brains are working in harmony and, if you listen, you'll notice that clients are often hijacked. You'll even notice that this is the way most people's lives are set up, most of the time. Most people are hijacked some of the time and a lot of people are hijacked most of the time - meaning, people live their lives in such a way that they are constantly experiencing a threat. And by the way, it doesn't matter if there's actually anything threatening happening - it just matters if someone *experiences* being threatened. And that could look like a financial threat, it could look like emotional threat, it could look like a reputation threat. It could be anything. If you look at how we live our lives and the pace at which we live our lives, a lot of people are extended financially or on the edge or concerned about finances. Those are things that can cause stress *all the time* - so many people are hijacked a little bit, a lot of the time. If you're trying to restore a client to their natural power and to handle anything and everything, getting them un-hijacked is a big deal. The initial approach we discussed - light, love, and connection - is extremely valuable for dealing with hijack. You need people to feel safe and comfortable and in good hands with you. And when that occurs, you give people an opportunity to come down from whatever hijack they may be experiencing and again be their best selves with you. This is a great start with someone in any situation, but especially in a coaching conversation.

### **Survival Listening**

The whole hijack thing leads very nicely into this next conversation, called *Survival Listening*. Hand in hand with the hijack conversation, you can imagine that evolutionarily speaking there was a time some tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of years ago when we were not at the top of the food chain and there were animals out there trying to eat us for lunch and so forth. Given that environment, it really worked to be on edge and always listening for and looking out for "what's wrong" or "where's the next threat coming from?" That's really valuable. If you think about it, you can imagine one tribe sitting around a campfire at night and a twig is heard snapping at a distance.

The tribe which had a very relaxed approach to that might be the tribe that got eaten by the lion. But the other tribe, the one that raised a full alarm where everybody jumps up and grabs their spear and gets ready for a possible attack *every time* there's a twig breaking in the distance...that tribe is still here and are in fact your ancestors. We want to acknowledge their alertness and attentiveness to potential threats while not necessarily being constrained by that ourselves.

There are times when it's appropriate to be on the lookout for what's wrong and to be on the lookout for your safety and to be on guard for any threat and to be asking yourself the question "what's wrong here" or "what could go wrong here" or "what do I need to do to prepare for what's wrong here" or anything like that. There are situations where that's appropriate. However, the problem with that is, when you apply that to a relationship, whether it's personal or business, or when you apply that to a situation. If you keep asking yourself questions like "what's wrong here"... or "what's wrong with this person...what's wrong with this relationship" or "what's wrong with this business...what's wrong with this choice," you are going to find some answers and it is going to drive you crazy. A problem with Survival Listening is that it kills any other possibility. You keep asking yourself "what's wrong here" and the conversation is never about what's possible. "What can we create" and "how beautiful can we have it" and "how much fun can we have" and "how big an adventure could we create" and "how much money could we make" - all that kind of stuff - those conversations are the first ones that get killed off when some person or persons are always talking about and thinking about "what's wrong here" and "where's the threat?" Doing what we need to do to protect ourselves and so forth is important, but everything needs to be taken in good measure.

If you have any doubt that we're biologically and evolutionarily designed to constantly be asking the question "what's wrong here," just be quiet for ten seconds. I love doing this in a workshop. Start now. Note ten seconds later - what did you hear in your head? Was it a voice saying "we don't have to stop for ten seconds"? Or was that voice talking about "what a ridiculous exercise this is" or was that voice agreeing with everything or disagreeing with everything or wondering what my credentials are to have this conversation and so forth and so on? You may begin to notice that you're often in a conversation with that voice in your head and not with the people that you're listening to - you may be having a conversation *about* life more than you're actually *in* life.

For example, when you meet somebody for the first time, you'll notice you're in a constant monologue about that person. You're internally commenting on what they look like and what their body language is and how they dress and "what's up with those glasses? Why are they wearing an earring?" There's a flood of all sorts of judgments and assessments and it just never stops.

There's a voice in your head that never stops speaking, but it's not *you thinking*. It's often interpreted as thinking, though - thoughts come and go, but that's not the same thing as thinking. *Thinking* is when you apply yourself to a thing over time and you bring rigor and discipline and actually are *generating* something in your thoughts. This internal dialogue is just chattering all the time. It's always got an opinion about what's going on.

It's got an opinion about the toothpaste you use and the shampoo that you use and it's got an opinion about the shoes that so-and-so is wearing...it just chatters *all the time*. The biggest issues with this Survival-Listening-chattering are that it kills off what's possible and occupies space and energy that could otherwise be utilized for something useful and beneficial and creative and that it pulls for the worst in everyone and everything. If you're looking for the problem in a person or a situation, and you *keep* looking, you're going to find an answer and then another answer and another answer. And then, after a while, whoever you're in a relationship with...

whoever you're working with...whatever situation you're in...is just going to look worse and worse and worse to you. No thing and no person can survive *that* over time. So, for any client to be successful, they have to start to appreciate the double edged sword of the internal dialogue. If you use it to inform you of what's going on around you, that's wonderful...if you relate to it as *you thinking* and stuff you should respond to and react to and build a life based on, that's going to be problematic for anyone.

### **Illusion of Meaning**

The next conversation is *the illusion of meaning*. Something to notice about human beings is *everything means something*. For example, when someone speaks to you with a tone of voice, you wonder what that means. Or more commonly, you *know* what that means. They're upset because that thing happened or someone's late and you have an opinion about what that means or you actually *know* what it means or someone's early and you think *that* means something or someone is dressed a particular way or someone walks a particular way or someone answers a question a little bit too quickly or a little bit too slowly or someone stutters when they speak or whatever...with all this, you will make *anything* mean *something*. In this aspect, human beings are like robots that are always making things mean something. So whatever happens, *you* have a meaning for it and so does everyone else. Now the problem is that there is no inherent meaning for anything. If you think about it, everybody has a slightly different interpretation of everything, everybody has a slightly different vantage point, a slightly different view. Human beings make everything mean something and they forget that they're the ones producing the meaning. So this is a double edged sword. Also, it's a problem in that when you make something up - when you make something mean something - you're literally making something up. Someone comes home five minutes late and you make it mean that they don't care about you. Now you don't remember the part that you made up - over time, what you will remember is "they don't care about me" or the idea that they're being disrespectful to you in some way. That's the part you remember. And it becomes the truth by virtue of the fact that that is the only way you remember it - therefore, it becomes your truth. And more so, you start behaving and acting and speaking in different ways based on this new truth called "they don't care" or "they're being disrespectful." And so it actually starts to mold your experience of the world, where you are taking actions and having conversations and having thoughts that are consistent with this. This "truth" called "they don't care about you" or "they're disrespectful" to you is reality, while you in fact made this whole thing up. You literally made the whole thing up and your future is now getting created from it. This is happening all the time, everywhere - all the time and with everyone. We're literally walking around, making things mean stuff.

When we do this, we create mischief because we remember what we made up we just forget *that* we made it up. And you do that with *everything* over and over again with *everybody* in your life and suddenly, this is *everywhere*! The other problem with the illusion of meaning is that all that time and energy is spent on all of these fictions - beliefs that you literally made up and forgot that you made up - and all that time and energy is *not* being spent being here in the moment present and connected to people and *not* in relating to what's actually going on. It takes you out of the actual game which is being right here, being present. Illusory meanings: if you listen for those with your client, you will hear them. This process is nothing to judge as negative or wrong - it happens with all of us, all the time. I mean literally we are walking around making things mean stuff. However, the beauty of it is when we start to notice what we made up, we get to what's really going on - "he came in five minutes late" is the event that happened versus what I decided, that "he didn't care for me." I made up all those meanings. The other thing we get out of this is - when that first event happens and they come five minutes late you can invent something else like "Oh, they took that extra five minutes out to have a moment to themselves so that when they come at me they could be their best self" - that's *also* made up. But it has a beautiful quality to it! That would be something that you would make up that would actually promote connection between you and this other person. Event: "They raised their voice." Meaning made up: "Wow, they must be really passionate about this. Let me listen more rather than raise my voice." I know that some will say one is right and one is wrong but that's the whole point: at the end of the day, if you follow this thread long enough, I promise you this is where you'll arrive at: it's *all* subjective. Again, nothing means anything inherently - it's all subjective. You'll get that one of the things you do as a human being is, you bring meaning to all that doesn't have meaning in life. You *bring* the meaning, and it's literally *your* meaning: "This is good" and "that's bad" and "that's beautiful" and "I believe it's true." But it's also *not* true - it's true because you *choose* it to be true. It's this mischief-creating thing, it's this possibility-killing thing...but it's also this beautiful possibility called "I get in and create the meaning I bring to things" like for example the meaning to my whole life! Or "is there a right way to go?" Whatever fills me with joy could be a choice you make, a meaning you make up. It's a beautiful distinction, this illusion of meaning. But most people are tangled up in the dark side of it - meaning, they're making up dark stuff. They forget that they made it up, and they're living in this dark paradigm, creating these dark futures and not really noticing that they're making up the whole thing and creating these vicious circles where they create a dark intention and they approach a situation or a person in a particular way and that just makes it worse whereas all that could've gone the other way. You can create beautiful futures and beautiful interpretations and come to people with your best self and come to situations with your best self and have an upward spiral happening all around you. It's probably a lot to tackle with a client, explaining this whole conversation to them, but it's a place to listen from and a place to have conversations from.

## It's All about the Energy

*Bad energy*, first, notice when you're around some people, their energy just feels contracted, as in they have a negative conversation with a complaint about everything. You bring whatever up and there's still a negative story about it.

Everything is just seen in its worst possible light, they make the lowest possible conclusion, and they create meanings from within the lowest trajectory from which to listen to someone. A lot of people who are that way are oblivious to this way of being that they have. I promise you, if they could see how they come across and they could feel how it feels and see what it looks like and hear how it sounds around them, they would probably stop it because it's rough to be around. But this thought of "bad energy" - now, is anyone's energy "really" bad?

They're good *and* really bad; we all are at times. When I say "bad" I don't mean ethically bad, just *inconsistent* with what people actually want. Like people will complain about not having a love of their life and at the same time they complain and gossip every chance they get.

It's "bad energy" in the common language that I'm talking about. So if I were dealing with someone like this, I'm thinking about having a relationship with them and I see how they talk about people...so I decide I'm *out* because I know "that's me they'll talk about that way probably" as I walk out the door. It's a bad energy. People are oblivious to it. People are walking around asleep when it comes to this! There's a perfect example - the person who's wants to be in a relationship and spends time complaining about how difficult relationships are - this would be a great example of a person putting out that bad energy and being completely oblivious to it. And that's a unhelpful practice. Another way you could look at bad energy is to take the energy conversation out and just replace that with "practice" - like "bad practice" would be the activity or action of gossiping. Another bad practice, in a more subtle way, would be thinking the worst about people. No one can catch you doing *that* bad practice. You have to catch yourself. But for me, a bad practice is thinking the worst of someone: if I catch myself thinking badly about someone a little, I stop right now. When I tie this up with energy as I notice when I'm thinking badly about someone, my energy becomes bad and I become angry and I have these physical sensations - dark thoughts and dark feelings, I can feel this dark energy arising from it. And then, if I start thinking about something wonderful or something wonderful *about* this person, all of a sudden it all goes away and something else replaces it - something light and loving. Bad practices and bad energy go together. You could say that a practice would be a high form of energy - because someone could just be a little upset and if you're sensitive you might notice that. But if someone is *acting* upset, like a bad practice, that's a whole different level of energy coming at you. When people are putting out that bad energy or practicing their bad practices, they're generally oblivious to it or for sure oblivious to just how big the impact is or just how much they drive people away with these practices. And the people who practice doing that kind of stuff generally have a really good story about it like "oh well, I had to do that because that person did this or that," but bad energy and bad practices always make a bad situation worse. They are never the right answer. Therefore, if you get that connected with somebody, you could show them this, to where they literally might see that whatever they're upset about or whatever was not working is literally connected to this thing they keep doing, this thing they keep saying, or this way they keep conducting themselves.



If they could make that connection and take away the unconsciousness. If a person can see this for themselves, then it's all downhill from there. Once they can see the connection, then there's something for them to go to work on.

### **Cynicism and Resignation**

*Cynicism and resignation.* I consider this one of the fear-based conversations. Most people are painfully resigned and bitterly cynical and they'll never admit it.

By *cynical*, I mean "doubtful as to whether something will happen or whether it is worthwhile."

By *resigned*, I mean "having accepted that something undesirable and cannot be avoided."

I often see these states of being, these conversations, as reactions of fear and specifically a fear of the future where something might happen again that would cause pain or discomfort or embarrassment or something unpleasant like it did in the past. When people are resigned and cynical, that usually gets them out of taking some action: "Oh that's not going to work" or "I don't need to try that" or "that never works" or "you don't know what you're talking about". What all that has in common is, it gets the offending person out of taking responsibility for something or out of taking some action. This is what I have noticed when a client uses these kinds of phrases. As soon as one starts talking that way, the action stops. When you're listening to most human beings, if you listen for it, you'll hear evidence of cynicism and resignation to some degree. How I deal with that is I relate it to fear - what I might call the fear of getting *heartbroken*.

"Heartbroken" means you really tried something and it turned into disappointment or you've experienced pain or discomfort or embarrassment or shame or humiliation - all people have these experiences or these fears of experiences, whether or not they are grounded in reality. What people really want is the possibility or reality of an awesome future... but cynicism and resignation get them off the hook for all of that and they tend to have a wonderful "reasoned" conversation, an excuse, if you will, It will sound great and make perfect sense. "Oh, no thank you to that beautiful future - I'm clear it's not possible. Thank you very much." This gets you off the hook. All this said, if you listen for it, you'll hear resignation and cynicism and can point it out so the client will notice it for themselves and start to have some freedom to let it go.

### **Being Lost**

The next conversation is *being lost* or *forgetting who you are*. People have an ebb and flow about them, a kind of up and down. Life maybe throws a circumstance at them and they get thrown off their balance for a little bit and then they recover and then maybe something beautiful happens and they're strong and then something *else* happens and they get thrown off their balance a little bit - and so forth and so on. You'll catch people at any point on this continuum of really being clear about who they are and what's possible and what the next move is and what brings them joy and power and expression. Being either unusually insightful about all of that or lethargic and lost and having kind of forgotten who they were and what they were up to and they just seem to be kind of moving from one hour to the next or one day to the next with no particular direction.

I don't judge this ebb and flow harshly, I just notice it because people who are lost are that way because something happened - real or imagined, it makes no difference - and you want to get to what it is and just have them see that it's not all that they think it is, that they're still here & alive. Remind them that we're allowed to play another game - "let's recreate that game or create *another* game" or whatever it is...something happened and they got knocked off their rocker. You can go back to this light, love, and connection thing - it's a really great place to start for everything. Probably that's all that's missing to get everything moving again. And then you start listening for access to what the next conversation might be. Make sure they're loved up and supported and listened to and connected with and that will make a big difference.

## **Righteousness**

This next conversation is *being right* or *righteousness*. You really hear it when people are experiencing no results. They're frustrated about something. There's something they're being right about, meaning they're stuck to a certain view or judgment of themselves, the situation, another person, whatever. They're being right about, for example, "something is difficult" or "something is impossible" or they "have a bad manager" or they "have the wrong job" or "the wrong partner"...they have the wrong whatever.

This basic context or judgment of "something is wrong" goes back to the Survival Listening - where people listen for what's wrong here. On the other hand, people *love* being right. There's even a physiological aspect of this that got revealed to me recently, but it's more than physiological. People actually get addicted to the feeling of the chemicals that get released when they're being right - these chemicals make you *feel good* when you're right. You smile and tell somebody about whatever you're being right about. People can get addicted to that experience just like anything else. Some people are just really dug into having to be right about everything and they can't wait to point it out to you. Some people are just very fearful in life and they have to be right because that's the way that validates them. As with so many of these conversations and facets I've pointed out, it's really common for someone to be right about something and to *not notice* that they're being right. So what being right looks like is when a person is a hundred percent sure about what they're talking about - there's no lack of clarity, there's no lack of surety. Being sure about something is always really suspicious to me. Being right about something is a clear sign they've closed off their thinking on whatever that subject is they're being right about. It's always a red flag for me. Why would you close off your thinking about something? That would be a way to avoid something. Being right is also a way to be dominant with people, or to avoid other people's dominance. It's a way to try and control the future in some way. It's equally deadly because once when a person is right, everyone else is wrong. Everyone else experiences being *made* wrong. People react to this being made wrong in different ways. Some people react hostilely to being made wrong. Some people react submissively to being wrong and they get weaker and smaller - other people being made wrong will just go away. If someone's going around making people wrong, you can feel their righteousness. Being right, by the way, has nothing to do with being correct. You can be correct or incorrect and be *righteous* about it and you can be accepting and peaceful like the *opposite* of righteous and still be correct or incorrect. There's no correlation between the two of them: righteous and correct, or righteous and incorrect.

I'm talking about a way of being or an energy you're putting out called being right in which everyone else around you is wrong because they don't see things just the way you do. And this being right promotes friction and resistance and weakness around the person who has a habit of being right. So if you see that going on, it's got to get distinguished because really, nothing is going to happen and nothing good is going to be possible if someone's being right in their life. Everyone notices when this goes on regularly.

Actual peace in life is available by giving up the permission to be right!

### **Predicting the Future**

*Predicting the future.* Another issue I run into all the time is people thinking that they can predict the future. Now, they'll never say it that way. Here's what it sounds like: "Well if I do this, that's going to happen" and "if I do that, that's not going to happen." People being certain about what is or is not going to happen based on actions that they do or don't take - *that* I call predicting the future. Here's the problem with that.: People's track record of predicting the future is *abysmal*. I've asked people: "what do you think your track record actually is, relating to every decision you have made about the future? if you were to go back and give yourself a win or a loss percentage, what do you think your win loss record would actually be?" Many people give me a bit over 50 percent. Most people fully acknowledge their actual win loss rate as such. Now, if you were to actually go back and check *your* track record, you would know that you're *terrible* at predicting the future. And so to make decisions and make choices in life based on how you think things are going to work out is really problematic. People are not very good at it and we behave as though we are. What's better is to follow your principles and values, follow whatever compass you have about how you want to conduct yourself and how you want to make choices rather than basing what you're going to be deciding to do next on your ability to predict the future.

### **Power Stealing**

Another conversation I see a lot is this idea of *power stealing*. There are four different methods of stealing power from other people. People would not admit this freely, but people steal each other's power when they're not well, when they're under duress or not feeling good, or when they're feeling weak in some way, or when they're powerless in their lives. Some people live their entire lives this way. And then, what people miss in this power stealing conversation is that the power and energy is abundant, infinite - energy is in the universe, energy is in love. And there's a lot I could say about that, but the point here is that we don't need to steal energy or power from each other. It makes us weaker in the long run, and we are MUCH stronger working together. Get everyone rowing in the same direction... It really works!

So this is what people fall into when they're not being powerful. The four basic strategies are - and you'll hear yourself in this - some people are the *intimidator*, some people are the *interrogator*, some people are the *victim*, and some people are *aloof*. The *intimidator* is intimidating with you physically or emotionally or verbally. And then you dance, you know, change your position, you apologize, you do whatever - you give them your energy and you acquiesce to their demand.

The *interrogator* asks you questions and you answer, but your answer is always wrong - and they point out the wrongness of your answer. And then you start dancing. You start changing your position, acquiescing, apologizing, whatever - you give up energy. Then there's the *victim* - for example, when you ask them how their day was like, they go "Oh, this happened...and that happened" as their way of asking for help. They're always the victim in a conversation and you're trying to figure it out and you're dancing for that. You're trying to figure out how to help them out. And that's how they steal energy. You're always trying to help them out and then the *aloof* is the guy that's too cool for school and is hard to reach and that's how they steal energy. Aloofs make people come to them. So, aloof is my primary strategy. You'll probably be able to find yourself in one of those four categories. You have a primary and a secondary strategy. My primary if I'm not well and I'm not thinking or being conscious is to be aloof, and right after that is to be the intimidator. The way I show up is first, you can't reach me, and if someone reaches me then I become intimidating. If you listen, one of these might be what's going on in your client's life. Either they're trying to steal energy from someone because it's not going well, or you'll hear that someone is being a particular way with them.

Now the antidote to the strategies: if someone is consistently trying to steal your energy by being an intimidator and an interrogator or a victim or aloof, the naming of the strategy dispels the power of the strategy. It only has power when it's hidden in the background. But if someone's being an interrogator and you respond: "hey, are you trying to interrogate me right now?" Or "are you being a victim right now?" Or "is this you trying to intimidate me?" Or "are you being aloof right now?" That'll break the spell. Now, it's not going to be necessarily a smooth, light, and fun conversation. People getting caught trying to steal your energy and their strategy being named is not something that they really have on the menu or something that they really care to hear about, generally speaking. But it will get them off you, if that's what's appropriate, or you can just simply observe it and maneuver out of it a little more gracefully, maybe in the next encounter or whatever.

Anyway, when things aren't going well, that's usually floating around in the background. Somebody is being intimidating, interrogating, being a victim, or being aloof with somebody else. Recognizing and getting that out of that space with people being responsible for their own energy and feeling good is going to be a lot better recipe for pretty much anybody and anything.

### **People are Disingenuous**

*Hiding and being inauthentic.* Most people are inauthentic somewhere in their lives almost all of the time, hiding out with part of themselves. What do I mean? If you were to ask 100 people "how are you," you're mostly going to get 100 positive-ish answers anywhere from "fine" to "great" to "feeling good." That sort of thing. Almost 100 out of 100. However, in reality, some percentage of them are dealing with a financial emergency. Some percentage of them are dealing with a medical emergency. Some of them are dealing with an emotional emergency. Someone's having a family crisis. Someone's having a drug crisis. Someone just got some really bad news.

All that's in there, but all you get is "fine." That's a really simple example. But if you just look for yourself, you'll notice that in certain situations and with certain people, in certain environments, and in certain conversations, you give yourself full permission to be inauthentic or evasive or whatever. But it's really just *lying*. It's not that different from deliberately putting something else out there other than what's actually true for you. Let's get real here: when somebody asks you how you are and you're not doing well and you say "fine," you're essentially lying. I'll break that down in case I'm being offensive: you're literally saying something that's not true. That's generally what we call lying, right? So when you do that, you're separating yourself from the world - you're making yourself alone by your own choice in your own actions. You're disconnecting yourself and your truth from the people around you. So if you're not doing well, generally you start getting less authentic, less truthful about what's going on for you because you either don't feel comfortable sharing it or you'd rather not look bad. There's this quality of people hiding out and not being truthful or authentic with each other that has everything to do with a desire to look good. For example: I want to have the right clothes and the right vehicle and the right career and I want to say the right things at parties and I want to have the right looking partner...It's all about looking good to some unspecified unknown "them." And for some people, this is very influential - it's a big drive in life, this looking-good thing. This hiding out, being inauthentic, and presenting some front out there that's not literally who we are, where you're presenting literally a character or something, is pervasive. On social media, everybody's house and wardrobe looks amazing because that's how we do that, right? But it's not actually real. Being nice as an overlay on top of everything else in life, is exactly what I'm talking about. When you're being nice about everything, you're not actually being truthful about how everything looks to you and how everything occurs for you. Therefore, a really powerful thing to open up and get distinguished in a conversation is the degree to which someone might be hiding out or literally putting up some front for everybody in their life, like a character that's literally by design sort of a lie. This sort of inauthenticity is what is causing the aloneness. You see, once you put up this front - this character about who you are and who you're not - that's not actually true and you now have to manage that! You're now no longer even in the game of being real with people. You're now in the game of keeping this front alive with people. So if you get all that out of the way, what's left is just you and people and that's it. They think whatever they think, and you think whatever you think, everybody's going to survive it, and everybody's going to be fine. You can listen for this with your clients - how really true are they being with people in their lives? Like how authentic are we really?

## **Alone**

Another conversation that I have is this idea of *being alone on a blue marble*. So one of the real ironies of being a human being is we have this experience of being alone while we're hiding out and being inauthentic and no one understands us. We have a lack of intimacy and being known and accepted. That's the experience of a lot of people in life. And one of the great ironies here is that the entire race is on this blue marble in the middle of nowhere, a marble literally spinning really fast in some direction, not really going anywhere and not really coming from anywhere. And we're all stuck here for the duration - there is no place that we're going anytime soon and we're all stuck on this thing and our fates are all sealed together.

Literally that's all true. And yet, we have this experience of being alone, and I think that's one of the great absurdities of human being. If you could get people to actually experience themselves as part of this beautiful living, breathing miracle in the middle of space and that we're all part of this thing...we're all one...we're all connected - that can be an answer for some people about some things.

### **Isolation and Loneliness**

I'm always having to look out for isolation - it happens really on a continuum. The expressions I see of that the most are sometimes in younger people. They might be more prone to this - isolation through poor device management and always being on social media. They deal with having forgotten how to connect with people and have conversations and all that, which creates a really profound disconnection to the world. That's no good. Another way isolation shows up is people being busy, especially the single people, but even in families there are isolated people - they're always busy, always moving, never still, never quiet, never connected with people in their lives. It's always moving, moving, moving. And then another type of isolation is really isolation through wealth - people who have money can literally buy solutions to anything that's happening in their lives. So they're not out *in* their lives and *in* their families or *in* their communities, connecting with people and making connections and asking for stuff and giving stuff and just *being* out in the world. And so sometimes that can be a form of isolation.

However it shows up, isolation is bad and dangerous and human beings are not designed to be alone. I recommend: when you see isolation and try to find it in your clients and yourself to whatever degree this applies to you, you get them out into the world with people - it's really critical, and for some people that includes nature. But primarily I am talking about connecting with other human beings, having conversations, and dealing with people.

### **People are Crazy**

This may sound a little irreverent, but my experience is that people are actually crazy. One of the ways that this shows up is that people are often just not connected to reality - they're not connected to how their actions land for other people. Oftentimes when people are upset with other people, it's the stuff that *they're* doing. A person might have a complaint that no one listens. And yet whenever they talk, they complain and of course no one wants to listen to that. "Whenever I meet people I unload my problems on them." Nobody wants to be around that. People are crazy. People will be ways that don't work. They'll say things that don't work. They'll not notice that what they're doing is simply not working - there'll be impacts and consequences everywhere, people getting upset and whatever - but people will keep doing the same things over and over again as though it were working. Clearly, it's not working, and they just keep going. People will routinely make decisions that are not in their best interest. People will be convinced into anything. People are crazy, so don't judge too harshly - just know, people are crazy. You can go ahead and stop being surprised. We may like it or we may not, we may agree or not, we may have a different point of view, but I think we can stop being surprised when we see crazy and just get that people are crazy.

That includes *you and me*. Just notice it - try to get the flavor of it and make sure it's not going to impede you clinically. In other words, if people are crazy enough, they don't need a coach - they need some other form of assistance, so you want to be on the lookout for that. In any case, regular normal healthy people are also crazy. They're disconnected from reality. They'll make the same mistakes over and over again for a lifetime and be indignant that you would point it out. Don't worry about that. Just take it all in stride. And, as I like to say, keep working in a northerly direction, meaning get whatever small improvements you can get and be on the lookout for conversations that will literally transform what's possible for this other human being

## **Shame**

People experience shame for different things. It's a really fascinating topic, and I'm humble enough to know I'm not going to do it justice. But the main thing here is that people can be shameful for all sorts of things: things that you might not anticipate. People can experience shame for not meeting certain business goals, or stuff like that. People can experience shame about things that just happened in life. For the purposes of this conversation, shame is a way that people take themselves out of life, that they take themselves away. And when you notice someone being shameful about something, being small, having taken on undue responsibility or pain or suffering about something that may have been inevitable or something like that, all you need to bring is just light, love and connection. People just need to know that some other future is possible than what they experience. Now that they're fully accepted for who they are and where they're at and know that they've got somebody who sees them, now that they've got an intimacy and connection with another human being who's actually got their back, that shame can go away in a conversation. It can be really beautiful and simple.

## **Confusion**

*Confusion* is one of my favorite conversations. One of the things about confusion is it's not the same as being unclear. Being confused and being unclear are not the same thing at all. Being unclear is just not being clear about something: you may be unclear because you don't quite have all the facts and the facts are on the way, or you're unclear because you haven't thought about something fully yet and you're going to get to it. Unclear is just a lack of being clear about something. On the other hand, confusion is a state of mind. Confusion is a way of being that has a helpless, complaining quality to it. It is a way for people to get themselves off the hook for something: "Oh, I couldn't do that because I was confused." Confusion is always a choice. It's a choice people make to make something easier for themselves, or to avoid some discomfort or embarrassment. If someone was just unclear, they would just *get* clear: "Oh, am I confused about how that works? Great. Well, let me call Fred and learn how that works and then I'll be clear how that works." Notice, the design of the whole thing is just to get someone off the hook for something. Thus, confusion is something that is brought on by choice. It's a habit, actually - because before you see it, it's just a habit. And you think it's an inevitable response to something. But I'm pointing out that it's actually a way of being that's literally generated for an intention - the intention being to get off the hook from something. I have taken on for myself this practice of not giving myself permission to be confused about anything. That's just not part of how I manage myself.

From time to time, I'm unclear about something or maybe even surprised for a moment. And if I desire to be clear, I do whatever I need to do to be clear. If I'm happy with being unclear, then I'm happy being unclear. I don't need to be clear about everything, but I'm not confused about anything. I have no confusion in my life, except maybe for a very brief moment if I'm caught off guard about something and not feeling strong about something - but very quickly, I'll see it as confusion. Do I want to be clear? I contextualize being unclear as a very high state of enquiry and learning and expansion, whereas confusion is a state of mind with a specific intention to get someone off the hook for something. If confusion shows up, I basically have this conversation and create an agreement with myself that "we're going to take confusion off the menu." And what you'll get out of that is a forward movement where appropriate, or just letting something go entirely where appropriate, but there won't be the confusion or swirl about it - all that goes away.

### **Generating a Way of Being**

This conversation has to do with *generating your own way of being versus being lazy*. Most people relate to the way they are, personality, world view, preferences, etc, as just the way we are. Like we came out a certain way and that's it. Conversely the other popular view is that we are the sum of our history's. Neither of these is the Truth, nor the whole story about who you are. It wasn't until I was about 36 years old - I chose to be loving and generous, which was very different for me by the way. I was angry and workaholic and aloof because that's how I survived my childhood. But as a 36 year old man, I really had no use for any of that. I didn't know that I had a choice. Once I saw where I made up being aloof and angry, I can see where I made up being a workaholic. I remember the day - the day *and* the moment. I remember what happened. I remember everything about it. I realized, I don't have a need for those anymore. Now, I can be free to be any way of being that pleases me - any way of being that I say produces the results or outcomes or the experience that I want in life. I have this whole thing around being a contribution - I'm going to talk about that more in the book as part of what makes it okay for you to say you're a coach. And a part of it for me is this idea that *I am who I say I am*. I'm not just a collection of experiences or qualities from my past. Standing in that context of "you are who you say you are in any moment," what you'll notice is in those moments when you're not being some way that's really created and true to yourself, you are really just being *lazy*. "Lazy" like you're not generating your way of being or just sort of coasting. When I coast - me personally - I'm an angry, aloof workaholic. But that's not who I want to be and it's not really what I consciously choose to be anymore. That way of being only shows up in moments when I'm weak or forgetful or whatever - just having a bad day and something like 12 bad things are happening around me. But those are brief moments in time. More, what I practice is being loving and being generous and being a contribution. And that's totally who I am by my word and out of my choice and from my own gratification. The point of this conversation is: you may notice with yourself and with your clients from time to time that you're being lazy in how you are being. When I'm not being true to myself and I'm not being a contribution, I'm being *lazy* because I know it *works* to be a contribution. By the way, being a contribution is not the *right* thing. That was just *my* choice. So you could choose anything. You could choose being loving or being patient or being generous or whatever.



You could use something new every week, but if you're not being true to that which you created, then you're literally just being lazy. And I like to break it down like that because it makes it actionable and pragmatic and nondramatic with no fluffy language here: just *lazy*.

### **Tips and Advice**

Next: on *tips and advice*. People sometimes will engage you to get tips and advice from you. Which is okay. But first, I want to say what the difference is between tips/advice and coaching. As you can probably already determine from how you are hearing the voice of this book - *coaching is a set of conversations or distinctions designed to have people experience their own power, their own freedom, and their own creating of their own life*. Tips and advice is not that. Tips and advice is something else: it may be that you have particular experiences or expertise that this person could benefit from and you can see somebody headed towards a pothole and you may want to just grab him by the shoulder and yank him back real quick. I definitely do that sometimes. Sometimes people do need to “hit the brick wall” at a pretty good velocity to get folks out of their sleepy habitual way of being. “Use this SPARINGLY”

You may need to advise your clients from time to time, but that’s not what your main function is... Your main function is to have your client get for themselves what is stopping them and to have them generate a solution from a blank slate. That is pretty close to your best and highest function... For the most part, tips and advice are not transformational in nature - they will only improve things a little bit. That is, the one little bit that tips or advice will handle. I'm not rigorously against them.

It's not that I will never give tips or advice, but I might go on several coaching calls without a piece of advice or a tip because the emphasis is on *transformation* and the emphasis is on *distinguishing worldviews and paradigms and occurrences in the mind of your client that literally limit what's possible*. And to have to create an environment where they can break through these occurrences through a series of conversations, get these occurrences broken up in a way that they get to access their raw unmitigated talent and ability and their experience of perfection - whatever that is for them. Tips and advice just don't get that done. That's the real knock on tips and advice: it's just a low level improvement. I'm not against it, but too much of that, and there's not enough space for the real goodies, which is true transformational conversations.

### **Coaching is Inherently Uncomfortable**

The next conversation is that *coaching is inherently uncomfortable*. Sometimes I'll find myself speaking to someone who's just not willing to try on anything new: “Oh, I tried that...I did that. I don't agree with this.” Here's the thing: whatever you're looking for that will make the difference in what you're up to or dealing with, *you don't know* what it is. How do we know that? Because you don't have it. Thus, coaching is inherently uncomfortable and oftentimes the discomfort is from getting someone to try on a new view. You'll notice that some aspects of what I have said make you uncomfortable. And if I haven't accomplished that yet, wait for it, because we're only about halfway through - we're not done yet. And I say that as a point of pride because *if nothing I say is challenging to your perception of what's possible or to the world or yourself, then I'm not getting my job done, frankly*. While I'm not out to make people uncomfortable *per se*, I'm also all for people being comfortable in its proper proportion.

Listen, I am fun on coaching calls. I make it a point for people to have fun while really getting high quality work done. *And* I'm okay with discomfort. I'm super okay with someone being uncomfortable. I don't try to fix it, I don't try to shorten it, I don't try to minimize it. I don't change the channel. I don't change the subject. In fact, when I experience discomfort, I slow down and start to dig *in the direction of* the discomfort generally. So coaching is inherently uncomfortable and that's something for you to embrace fully. And when you experience discomfort, slow down and look around - you're close to something. And then, notice when there's discomfort over there with your client - for example, there's something there when sometimes a client will push back on a request or our conversation because it's uncomfortable. Now, I'm also committed to the utmost comfort we can deliver. But what I'm *really and most* committed to is freedom and unleashing your power - you get to be exactly who you're committed to being and have exactly the life you want to have. That's what I'm really committed to, which is going to take precedence over your momentary comfort or discomfort. And so you have to know - sometimes that conversation will for sure come up.

## **Powerful Conversations**

*This is my greatest hits of conversations/creations in language/distinctions that have made the biggest difference for me and the thousands of people I have worked with.*

Now, we'll explore a collection of distinctions. This might be looked at as a toolbox or a source of conversations that will make a difference. Conversations and distinctions are pretty close to interchangeable, and I've really broken them out in this book for variety and because one or more of each type was more associated in my mind with one label rather than another: conversations create or express distinctions which create new views or openings for action, or the conversations themselves leave someone with those new views or openings for action unto themselves. So, let's first start with what I mean by *distinctions*. The *distinction* is a creation in language, a construct in language, or a construct in speaking, if you will. It is a conversation designed to differentiate one thing from another or to separate one thing from another, or to make things that are collapsed and nebulous and undefined be separated and distinguished and actually usable and accessible. What I mean by that is: let's say you wake up in the morning and you're feeling bad and you don't really know why, but you feel bad, and you don't want to do anything and you don't want to talk to anybody and you don't want to spend time with your loved ones or be with your family or go to work or something and you're not sure why you feel bad. You just *feel bad*. It's an undifferentiated mass of not feeling good and so you look a little further and you notice you specifically have anxiety, and then you look a little further and you remember a conversation that was had last night about money and you look a little further and you realize you have this concern about money that you've been setting aside and you look a little further and you see that this has been a theme throughout your life and you're often anxious about money and unclear about where you stand and you look a little further and you can see that your whole upbringing in your family and the culture that you were raised in promotes this idea of "money is scary and anxiety producing and there's never enough and I'm not sure how to get it."

You look a little further and you can see during a specific conversation with your parents, you made a *decision* about money, that it's difficult and inaccessible to you, something like that. Each layer of distinguishing brings new power and new ability to alter the course of a viewpoint in life or a conversation or whatever you're dealing with. Thus, the first distinction that we're going to talk about is *distinction itself* - this idea of looking at something and looking at ways to pull it apart and distinguish all the individual components, not for its own sake, not for sport, not for entertainment, not to be impressive, but to separate each item in a situation so that you can have greater power and access to all those components. If you're a coach, you're literally in the business of distinguishing this thing called human being. As you distinguish human being, as it were - as you have greater mastery and knowledge and more subtle and more deep and more wide understanding of how human beings work - you have greater power and facility as a coach and greater value as a coach. The first distinction is distinction itself, and what follows is a collection of distinctions that I personally rely on and refer to and utilize regularly in my practice. Each one is designed to be a conversation that could make *the* difference with a client or with yourself.

Some of these conversations I use more often than others, but there is no right conversation for a particular issue. In most cases, any distinction will make a big difference in any issue because it's *the act of bringing distinction* that can often make *the* difference - where the act of distinguishing is the act of being responsible for and being at cause of whatever you're dealing with. Part of distinguishing is noticing and looking at and acknowledging your part in something - that's itself very powerful. And as you get better at distinguishing for yourself and distinguishing the human being in the person that you're speaking with, the more power and more value and more usefulness you'll have as a coach and the more useful you'll be to your clients.

Let's start a list of distinctions - in no particular order, just the ones I find the most useful. Some of these distinctions are used actively and some of them are in the background. Some of them are just something that you are aware of and own....some make a difference in what you're dealing with in the foreground. And some of the distinctions are literally conversations you have with people. Now, above we dealt a lot with the category of conversations you have with clients and yourself, and now you understand that conversations and distinctions are very close.

### **Listening For**

The first distinction I want to talk about is *listening and what you're listening for*. Go back to this idea of the internal dialogue or Survival Listening or the human being's incessant drive to look for what's wrong or look for what the threat is. If you refer back to those conversations, you'll notice that there's something specific being listened for - something like a problem or a challenge or a threat or something wrong. Human beings actually listen for that. A human being generally is much more likely to hear something wrong than to hear something right - it's just the way we're wired up. It can be very frustrating, but it's just like gravity: human beings look for what's wrong and gravity pulls things towards the center of the earth. You can be frustrated about it, or you can work with it. My suggestion is for you to be at cause and responsible for what it is you're listening for as a coach.

I listen for things like: “what would be the best contribution here?” I listen for: “where is light or love or connection missing?” Or, I listen for “what conversation could give somebody access to their own power and their own abilities and facilities to manifest anything they want in their lives?” Or I might be listening for what *conversation* would make the biggest difference or move the needle the most in whatever my client is dealing with or interested in or committed to. How to operate with this distinction is - you literally have to be present to what you're automatically listening for, and if you're a human being, which I'm assuming that you are, you're automatically listening for the same thing that all human beings are listening for, which is some flavor of “what's wrong here?” But as a coach and as a professional and as a *transformational* coach, your job is to listen for something specific. You actually get to say what that is. It is in the act of being at cause in what we are listening for where the magic happens. What you specifically listen for is less important, but I choose to listen for things that inspire me.

Listening for the magnificence of the human being that I'm speaking with, for example. Or listening for what can make the biggest difference - where light, love and connection are missing and so forth. Listening is critical and omnipresent and it's something that always needs to be accounted for: what it is you're listening for *automatically*, and what it is you're listening for *on purpose*.

### **The Observer**

*The observer* is the next distinction. One of the key aspects of transformation, in my view, is this idea of being the observer. So if there's this internal dialogue speaking, then that's not you - if you're listening to the internal dialogue, then what's listening to the internal dialogue? What is it that is standing for something above and beyond what's possible when you're listening to the internal dialogue? What is it that is interested in enlightenment or contribution or transformation over there where you are? For now, I'm going to call that the observer. Most people don't have the observer or haven't noticed the observer. They don't have access to being the observer until they notice this whole idea of the observer. By the way, that's part of the power of distinctions and distinguishing - things that were invisible in the background all of a sudden become visible and in the foreground and usable. This is a great example of that.

It's important, by the way, that you can *observe* your humanness in interacting with your clients. Humanness. For example, your client will say things and use a certain tonality sometimes or a certain phrase or have a certain conversation that as a human being annoys you or you don't care for. But when you're inside of being the observer, you can just observe all that and you don't have to have any loss of power or be taken away or distracted by anything that's happening personally.

The observer is the entity or being or awareness that there is something automatic in you as a collection of behaviors and histories and experiences and practices, an entity that notices that there's an automaticity to you. The observer can notice that they observe or also notice there's a desire for something bigger.

That's why you're reading this book and that's why you're either are a coach or thinking about being a coach or you'd like to be able to make a difference for people - because there's something that hungers for that where you are, and then there's this observation of those two phenomena. *That's* who I'm speaking to in this conversation: the observer. Once you get grounded in being the observer in your life and in your conversations, then there is observing what the human being is doing over there where your client is - the automaticity, the beautiful commitments, the desire for expansion, the suffering, and the desire for success. You can observe all of that as the observer, not being personally impacted by it, and thus being available to bring your next highest course of action: a conversation, a thought process, *et cetera*.

With all distinctions as well as the observer distinction, it's highly critical that you practice these distinctions in your life with a hundred percent authenticity and your desire for expansion. It's important that you're either *masterful* or *on your way to becoming masterful* in each of these distinctions because if these distinctions are simply pieces of knowledge that you've come to ingrain and be able to regurgitate, then you yourself simply become one more person who has an opinion about how everybody should live their lives, as opposed to being a *practitioner* having certain ways of being in the world and certain habits and practices and commitments and simply guiding or leading or sharing what you observe is useful and powerful. There are two very different worlds. The world of someone who knows how everyone else should be doing and thinking and acting and speaking is very ordinary, because every person on the planet pretty much has an opinion about how everybody else should be being, acting, speaking and so forth. The coach, however, is somebody who's on their own path, distinguishing what they're up to and what works and what doesn't work and making it available for others so that others can benefit from the deepest and most elegant expression of any of these conversations or distinctions. It's critical that you're out in your life applying and using these, practicing any and all of these distinctions as much as possible. And I promise, it is its own reward. Your life will be magical for it and never the same and you'll be that much more empowered and inspired to be a coach.

### **Outcome Oriented**

Next distinction: *being outcome oriented*. What do I mean by that? It's important not to underestimate a human being's potential and enthusiasm for operating outside of their own best interest. (Remember *people are crazy*?) You see it all the time, you see people doing things that don't work that cause them great suffering, and you see them do it over and over again, and if you try to interact with them or make a suggestion or alleviate their suffering in some way, they'll often react in an aggressive, impatient kind of way. People are generally not connected to the outcomes of their actions or the outcomes of their conversations or the outcomes of the way they interact and be with people. A funny example is: think about Godzilla in the old Godzilla movies - he's walking around in a big city and he looks one way and takes a swipe at something and then he turns around and looks the other way and takes a swipe at something. But as he turns around, his tail knocks out several buildings and Godzilla doesn't notice it because Godzilla is so big. Godzilla is so distracted and busy that he doesn't notice everything that's happening behind him every time he turns around.

Well, that's how a lot of people are, and especially powerful people or people in powerful positions: everything they do has a big impact around them. Most people are disconnected from the outcomes or the impact - the specific consequences, good or bad, of their actions - and the way they approach people, the way they deal with people, especially the way they interact with people in their lives...for example, with the spouse that comes home every day in a bad mood, complaining for 20 minutes when they come home from work, then is confused why his or her partner doesn't want to be there when they get home. I mean, who wants to be complained at for 20 minutes every day? And then, there's confusion about why there's a lack of harmony and connection in the evening - something like that. Whereas putting your attention on just simply observing the outcome of a certain action or tonality or certain speaking - if you just *observe the outcomes*, then the correction is often really obvious and really simple. It may not always be easy because it may not be what you want. You may have this thing like "oh, my partner should want to hear everything I have to say, every time I come home" and I have to let you know - *no, they don't*, they shouldn't have to hear everything. And if you just simply observe that every time you come home and complain for 20 minutes it doesn't go well, then you could make an adjustment.

From there, you can create a new practice or a new view or a new way of expressing yourself that would get an outcome that pleases you. So this idea of being outcome oriented is so much more valuable than dealing with how things should be or shouldn't be, especially when it comes to people - because people just do exactly what they do and they don't do what they don't do and mostly they don't even notice! As a coach, you want to be the one to stand for: "hey, when you do that thing that isn't working for you, what's the outcome you're getting?" This is a very powerful distinction.

### **Win Loss Record**

In fact, it dovetails very nicely into another distinction I have, called *the win loss record*. This sound be a little familiar from *predicting the future* above, however it bears repeating and coming at from another angle *and* in fact, a side note on distinctions/conversations: once you understand how to distinguish one, that doesn't mean it's the only way to *share* it with people. There are maybe thirty ways to create any distinction for someone in the interest of having it most powerfully land uniquely for them, and I'm going to go ahead and give you a second angle or way of sharing something I spoke of earlier to illustrate this - the win loss record. If you notice, people often predict what'll happen if they do a certain thing: "if I say *this* to that person, they're going to say X...if I take *this* action, Y is going to happen...If I *don't* do this, thing Z is going to happen." People are often very vigorous in declaring their prognosis or predictions about the future if they do or don't do, say or don't say, behave or don't behave in a particular way. However, it is my experience that human beings are abysmal and terrible at predicting the future. How I've come to this observation is I've taken it upon myself to notice when I make a prediction: "If I do this, this is going to happen...If I say this, that's going to happen." Now that comes up quite a bit in my business because I'm a coach and I'm often thinking about things like, "well, if I have *this* conversation right now, will it make *that* difference?" I have a lot of opportunities to try to predict that *that's* what will make the difference for this individual and that it will open up something for them.

Now that's a prediction. It hasn't happened yet and so I'm literally speculating, I'm literally predicting the future. What's important, however, is to let go of the past and what you think it might've taught you, and to have the conversation, give it your best shot and then notice if it's a win or a loss. Declare a win or a loss - I like win or loss, just like in football. And then, what you'll notice is that over time, you'll get an idea of what things work and what things don't work, and you'll be surprised. The biggest thing you'll be surprised about is that your win loss record is nowhere as good as it is in your fantastical imagination. Right now, if you're sitting there thinking, "oh no, I always think things are not going to work out well" - *that's* what I mean to *just notice*! Notice that you think that. Just keep noticing when you make a prediction - which is all the time by the way. If you get into this more subtly and more deeply and give it some thought and some space, you'll notice that you're predicting all of the time. Human beings are literally prediction machines. "If I say this to her, she'll smile...If I say that to her, she'll be upset. If I go to the grocery now and come back, I'll be too tired to work." Just notice what your prediction is and then what the record is. And notice what kinds of things you're good at predicting and what kinds of things you're not good at predicting.

Mostly what's been valuable for me is I noticed that my win loss record in my personal life is much lower than I thought. In my professional life, my win loss record is actually really high - when I make a prediction about what conversation will make a difference, over the years I've gotten very accurate at that. Professionally, my win loss record is very good. In my personal life, I'm just like every other human being. I often make a prediction about something and I'm surprised. By the way, my prediction is often darker than how life actually turns out. And I'm often surprised. That's a loss on the win loss record. That's very interesting and it brings humility to me, right in my life and in my business. The few losses I get, for example "oh, that conversation didn't create the outcome..." are followed by "What's the next conversation that would work?" I regroup with another play. I find great value in bringing humility as a result of getting grounded in the reality of my personal win loss record and my professional win loss record. It's really a valuable conversation for one's self as a coach, and is often just the thing for a client to start dealing with.

### **The Sacred Moment**

Let's talk about *the sacred moment*. Try to notice or remember times when you've been in a coaching conversation, either one-on-one or on the phone or in a seminar or workshop...and there's a moment when someone says something to you or asks you a question and you're in the moment...you're with yourself or you're with your God or connected to the universe or however that looks for you...but there's a sacredness to the moment and no one's interacting with you.

No one's making suggestions, no one's commenting in the background. It's literally just you and your life, and boom, you *see something* and that something that you see is *amazing* for you. That's the sacred moment. Now, why that's important is because as a coach, you want to be *causing* sacred moments as often as possible, and even more importantly, you want to *notice* when they're happening. What I've noticed is, what usually happens instead of a sacred moment coming to fruition is that someone interrupts.

It's usually the speaker or the coach - they get impatient or they get nervous. They don't notice. They've got a script in front of them and they're rolling and they don't see that someone's having a sacred moment. The other thing that happens is other people in the room will want to make suggestions or comments and be helpful. Of course, that'll also interrupt the sacred moment. In conclusion, there's this thing called the sacred moment and I recommend you look for them and when you see them, you put a pause on *everything*. And if it's a room full of 100 people, I don't care, stop everybody and allow that *one* individual to have their sacred moment. It just takes a few moments usually, and it impacts the entire room if you're leading a seminar or workshop or if you're in a one-on-one conversation with the client.

### **Dream Stealers**

Let's talk about *dream stealers*. You may notice this reminds you of the dream killer distinction - it could be viewed, yes, as another way to distinguish that earlier conversation. Your mileage may vary, as we've said elsewhere, in how or from what angle you create each conversation or distinction, and skill comes from being able to powerfully draw each one from multiple angles. Dream stealers are generally the people who love you the most in your life. They're your parents, they're your children, they're your siblings, they're your close friends, they're your husband or wife or lover. And usually it could be just friends or acquaintances, but dream stealers are the ones that will advise you not to pursue your dreams out of the commitment that you don't get disappointed or that you not experience discomfort. Let me repeat that: the dream stealer is the one that will advise you not to pursue your dreams and to pursue a safer course of action, out of a commitment that you don't experience heartbreak or suffering or inconvenience or discomfort or setback or something like that. That's the dream stealer. Dream stealers are not bad people. Again, they're the ones who love you the most. Dream stealers are dangerous to your dreams. They will steal them from you. They'll say a thing and put a doubt in your mind and reinforce that doubt and keep working you over until your dream seems like a bad idea. Be aware of the dream stealer and if you're a coach, listen for the dream stealer in other people's lives. Even more important if you're the coach, look for the dream stealers in your own life. And then, deal with that appropriately. Start working with the dream stealer to have them understand that your life is your own and that you understand you're going to experience the consequences of your choices and you're 100 percent aware of that and ready to accept the responsibility of whatever happens after you make your choice and go pursue your dream. Just let them know that it's not their job to take care of you and you really appreciate them and love them. And you can give them a "thank you for expressing your love in a particular way. However, I am going to pursue my dream and what I really need from you is your full unconditional support." You want to convert that dream stealer, if you can, to an ally - someone who actually is committed to you and there is a conversation that can be had that actually has them be really excited about what you're excited about, or at least neutral, at least not trying to steal your dream. Even if they don't change an iota, having that conversation could create some space for you to be free of the impact of it. That's the dream stealer distinction.



## Energy

Now, on *energy*. There's a lot of scientific research in the realm of quantum physics that points to this idea of human beings being all energy, that all matter is made of energy - everything that we see to be solid, including other people, is literally just vibrations and energy. Looking from there - and by "looking from there," I mean "standing in that context" - I personally am very sensitive to *people's energy*, the feeling that they give off just by being, or the intuitive experience I have of them when they're around me. I personally am very sensitive to people's energy and a lot of people are either expansive or contractive. This idea is for you as the coach first - to notice when your energy is expansive or contractive. I notice this correlates nicely to the love and fear continuum conversation. Another way of being contractive would be being fearful. Being *expansive* would be loving and accepting and forgiving and *contractive* would be fearful and maybe spiteful and protective and defensive and that sort of thing. People in their lives put out different kinds of energy. It often fluctuates and varies - if someone's having a great day, they're putting out great energy, and they're generally more loving and accepting or more pleasant to be around. When people are putting out good energy, it's highly attractive. If you're in this state, you may be able to succeed in conversations that you were unsuccessful in before - it makes a big difference in your experience of yourself, it makes a big difference in your experience of the world, and frankly, it makes a difference in the *world's* experience of you. You're much more fun and easy to be with and interesting and delightful when you're in a good space and your energy is good and your energy is expansive. Conversely, if you're having a bad day and your energy is contractive and you're defensive and reactive and aggressive, it impacts your experience of yourself. People generally like themselves less when they're in that state. It also impacts your experience of the world - everything around you and everyone around you seems more difficult and actually *becomes* more difficult and then it impacts the world's experience of you. When you're in a contractive or fearful or negative state, the energy that you're putting out is contractive. Then you're literally less interesting and less desirable to be around and less interesting to talk to. In fact, you literally bring your negativity *to* other people in your being and in your conversations and in what you choose to talk about and how you choose to talk about it, *et cetera*. It literally impacts *everything* around you. If you accept all this for a moment, then you can also see that you have something to say about whether or not your energy is expansive or contractive. Literally you can drive north or south. It may take practice. It may be uncomfortable. It may seem awkward at first. But you literally can *choose* to be loving or, said another way, you can *choose* to have your energy be expansive and enjoy all the benefits of that, and with practice you can have that be a hundred percent authentic. It's not a positive overlay on how you feel - It's literally *generating*, being *responsible* and *at cause* for how you feel, and then tending to that. By the way, you may notice some similarities with the *you can generate how you're being* conversation from above.

## **Nonresistance**

Let's talk about *nonresistance*. I notice in life there's a lot of resistance. Now, resistance can only come from one place. It can only come from human beings. There's no resistance in the world *per se*. The planet has no resistance. The weather has no resistance. Animals have no resistance. They move away from pain while pain is happening, but beyond that, they have no resistance. They just are simply wherever they are and they're not wherever they're not and they're don't have anything going on about that. Human beings, however, are very different. A joke I think is useful here is: "what's the difference between a rock and a human being rolling down the side of a mountain? The human being will grumble the whole way down." Thus, one thing that I practice for myself is living nonresistance. As a human being, I automatically have opinions and preferences and biases and feelings about things and a natural inclination to talk about those feelings and preferences and opinions and many of them are somewhat dark and negative, just like those of most human beings. However, what I notice is that, when I practice nonresistance, I am literally happier and free of the headwind and the extra weight of having resistance in my life. A good example is: I was driving from New Orleans to Austin recently, which are two of my favorite cities, and I decided to do an experiment. It's about a nine and a half hour drive, so I had plenty of opportunities for my experiment. The experiment was this: every time some driver would do something crazy, I would practice nonresistance. I would practice having whatever opinion I have or whatever feeling I have just simply come and go and not to stick with it or resist it or do anything with it. The question I had was: could I literally practice being okay with everything that happens on the road? And what difference would that make for me? And obviously the bigger intention is, I'm experimenting with different distinctions inside of my commitment to being a coach.

Sure enough, I'm driving down the street and someone cuts in front of me and I have to hit the brakes. Immediately there is a physiological reaction: anger, tension, my heart rate goes up, my breathing goes shallow and fast, and words are emitting in my mind that I won't write here. But I can say, those words were uncomplimentary of the other driver and his or her driving. And that hit me fast and hard. Within about a second, I noticed that I was having all of these reactions, physical and mental and emotional. And then I simply let it go. *Nonresistance*. I returned my thinking to something beautiful and pleasant - something enjoyable that I was thinking about before the event happened. And what I noticed was, all of a sudden, where I had been feeling really bad, angry and uncomfortable and really wanting to express my anger in some way physically and to say angry things...All that went away and I literally began very rapidly to return to a joyful state. Contrast that with how I've often handled that sort of thing - I would go for 5, 10, or 15 minutes or even a couple of hours being upset, maybe even speeding up and chasing the person down the road to make some point. Now, what I notice is that all of that is wasted energy, literally an expense for no return. And so, I practice in my own life nonresistance when a thing happens. I don't deal with whether I prefer something or don't prefer something or like it or don't like it or agree with it or don't agree with it...whatever I'm going to do, I practice dealing with it without the resistance. It's like being outcome oriented: if someone speaks to me in a certain way that I don't like and it brings anxiety and frustration and anger and even hurt, I can notice that, stop the resistance to it, and be free and totally at peace.

I can still interact with them as they do that, and that communication either works for me or it doesn't - but I'm free either way. In the moment I practice nonresistance, I'm literally free. As you practice this as a coach, it's a wonderful thing to listen for, for your clients. You'll notice in your clients - there's something that they're dealing with or some thing in their life that looks like a big problem. Typically, your client will be resisting what's happening in their lives. That's actually what prompted them to call you. I'm saying that if we could take out the resistance and just simply get to work at our highest, most conscious state, that's going to produce the best outcome or give us the best chance at a great outcome.

### **The Volley**

Let's talk about the volley. The volley *is an indication of someone's understanding of what you said* and that can often take a moment and require even a question and an answer. As a coach, you often say something that sounds a little radical. It may sound less radical to you over time because you've said it a few times and you've dealt with it in your life, but often times when you say something that seems kind of normal for a coach, it's mind blowing for someone else. Therefore, you want to be looking for the *volley*, meaning you say a thing and then you pause and you observe your clients or the room of people that you're leading to and you wait a moment to see if they're actually listening and processing and receiving what you said. With very little practice, it's easy to observe and then you wait for them to come back to you. And that *volley* will usually look like when, literally, people will stop looking down and start looking up and give you a big smile or nod and then you're ready to go. You can feel it energetically and you can see it. Now this volley really is valuable for some of the following reasons. For one thing, it demonstrates that you're actually present on location and paying attention to whether or not your communications are being received.

People often talk disparagingly about being lectured to and what people don't like about being lectured to is, there's *nobody home* where the lecturer is. Someone starts at the beginning and talks until the end and you just have to get whatever you get. This putting your attention on the *volley* is the opposite of that. This is when you say a thing, you know it's a big deal, and you give them a minute to process it. The bigger the thing is that you say, it often requires more time for them to process. And then, you patiently and lovingly wait until they're done and they "send the volley back" and then you proceed. Throughout this, you're training them to be with you in that you're actually *there*: you're actually paying attention and noticing when they're listening and getting value or you notice when they're confused, because you can see it all over them. You notice if a big bright light bulb is turned on after receiving your message. If they have come to some dark conclusion, you'll see anxiety all over them. Creating that there is a thing called the volley and then taking the time to notice and to appreciate that people need a moment to process you and what you're saying - especially if you're any good, because then you are saying things that are radical - is what we're in the business of. Being masterful in waiting for the volley is a big part of being effective with people.

## You Impact Everything

You impact everything. This comes from some observational study I have done in the realm of quantum physics. Essentially, the takeaway here is that the observer affects the observed. There are scientific experiments where things actually happened differently in the real world depending on whether or not they're being observed by a human being. Now *that* is radical. That is completely the opposite of how we relate to the world and how we relate to each other. Generally, we relate to the world like it is the way it is and I'm just doing whatever I'm doing and what I'm doing and how I'm doing it has no impact on the world around me or people around me. And that's generally the way we deal with that. And then we generally deal with people in our lives like "they are the way they are and they're going to do what they're going to do and I'm just doing my best and I'm just doing my thing." No, *you* impact *everything* around you. You impact the *people* around you. You impact *circumstances* and you impact the way people *think* and the way people *feel*. And that impacts their behavior. You can just go deeper and deeper into this idea of "you impact everything," but for the purposes of being a coach, here's the important part: you impact your clients' lives through how you operate, what you have your attention on, whether you're fully embracing living a life of distinctions and living powerfully and whether or not you're bringing joy to your life. There's a certain criticalness of living a life that you love and living in a way that you're proud of and being someone who looks into life, steps into life, and accepts the responsibility and accountability of their lives in a way that's delightful for you in order to be a coach and in order to be a *stand* for that for other people. I'm not saying you have to have the circumstances of your life worked out. I have circumstances in my life that are not fully worked out. However, I've been practicing for some time living a life that I love and living a life that I'm proud of and tackling the next thing in a way that's joyful for me and coming up with transformational approaches to things - dealing with my view and what I think about things and dealing with myself and my responses to life and how I tackle life and what I choose to be important to me. All these are critical and are the *you* in the statement "you impact everything." So what's interesting about that to me is - who is the you that I'm referring to when I'm looking at you and I say you impact everything? As a coach, you want to be vigorously at work on having a quality of life that you're proud of having caused. It doesn't matter what the details are. What matters is it's *your* life and you're proud of what you're up to and you're proud of how you're handling it. And you're starting to *dig* yourself and not in an arrogant, conceited way, but you can actually get *moved* by what you're up to and what you had to deal with to be where you're at. All that brings authenticity and unparalleled power to your relationships with your clients. *When you are the butterfly, you literally are what you're talking about.* I've had many clients say to me something to the effect of "there's something about you, Kirk, that just makes me feel stronger." Or "I notice that when I am talking to you regularly, I'm more clear and more powerful." Or "I notice that ever since you started relating to me as a powerful leader, I have started to notice that I'm a powerful leader." And many of those experiences don't happen in what I say. It's literally the fact that my every interaction with a client comes from who the "I" is in "I impact everything." And who the "I" is, in this case, is love and contribution and a stand for the context that "everybody gets to have the life that they want."

Everybody gets to win around me.” *That* is the I that people get to interact with when they interact with me and *just that alone* makes a difference in the quality of my clients' lives and for sure in the quality of *my* life and the people in my life personally.

### **Be Here Now with an Intention**

Now, let's talk about *being here*, or *being here now plus an intention*. The first part is being here and that relates to not having your attention any other place than where you are. So if you're at the grocery, grocery shopping for the week, *be there fully* and enjoy the experience. Find joy and pleasure and the privilege that it is to be in a grocery store with an abundance of choices - choosing what you and your family will be eating for the next week. If you're in a coaching conversation, choose to be *in that conversation and not someplace else* in your imagination and to be here and not someplace else. This will give you the best opportunity to hear what you need to hear, to say what you need to say, and to be who you need to be to make the biggest difference both for your client at that moment. Be here and now, being in the present as opposed to the past or the future. We discussed earlier this phenomena of human beings spending time in the past or spending time in the future. The biggest victim of spending time in the past and spending time in the future is the present - the present doesn't get attended to when you are in the past and when you are in the future. The present gets attended to when you're in the present and the present is the only time when you can take an action that will actually make a difference in your life or the life of someone else. So this idea of being here and now and not someplace else and not in some other time is really critical to giving yourself the best shot at making a transformational difference in another human being's life.

Let's say you've got this presence thing down. Then, the *intention* is the last piece. The intention is “I'm here and I'm now and for X purpose.” I generally have an intention of contribution, but it's absolutely variable - it's whatever I think will make the biggest difference and it almost doesn't matter what intention you choose. When I'm here and now with an attention to contribute, that's very powerful, but if I'm here and now with *any* intention that I create for the moment, that's also very powerful.

So being here and now with an intention is access to extraordinary power and making the difference I feel confident you really want to make with your coaching conversations and with the people in your life. Having the distinction *here and now with an intention* available for your client can be magical for them and that'll be really useful when you're in a very pristine state with your client, like you just had a breakthrough or there's peace present for the first time in a long while or it's one of those moments of victory and peace where your client can hear something very subtle. This idea of being here and now with an intention is a life altering distinction. It certainly has been for me, and I look for opportunities of a deep and rich space in which to plant this seed of beaming power. This is a distinction I've been using for a few years. It's generally something I simply use rather than distinguish with a client, but anything's up for grabs if I think it'll make a difference. This goes along with the idea that you impact everything.

## **The Love Beam**

When someone is weak or suffering or distracted or upset or trying to communicate something that you're having difficulty communicating, I literally imagine a beam of light coming out of my head going straight to this other person and this beam of light is love and positive energy and clarity and courage. I literally imagine this person being bathed and encapsulated in this beam that's coming from me. When I first heard about this, I thought it was crazy. So if you think this is crazy, I understand. However, I decided to practice it anyway, with my commitment to being coachable, trying on the jacket fully (sound familiar from earlier?). I noticed it makes a difference and I can do it with a whole room full of people - I can do it with an individual who's in a room full of people - I can do it with someone in person or on the phone. It really makes no difference. It has nothing to do with the physical location of me and the other person. I use that when I notice people could use an extra hand in being their highest selves, and for me it occurs as somewhat situational and momentary. While they're dealing with something, I can literally give them my energy, and I find that to be very effective.

## **Reality and Compassion**

Let's look at a conversation called *reality and compassion*. I notice that human beings are typically highly disconnected from reality. Human beings generally won't admit this and they don't like hearing it. / don't like hearing it. However, if you just observe dispassionately, it's pretty hard to argue against. First of all, let's start with the idea of someone "not being able to see the forest for the trees." That speaks to the idea that you're in a forest and there's three or four trees in front of you that literally stop you from seeing the hundreds or thousands or millions of trees in your immediate vicinity right in front of you. People are often distracted by their feelings and thoughts and when I say distracted by feelings and thoughts, I don't mean the feelings and thoughts of someone who's resonating highly and peacefully, contemplating how they feel about something or what they think about something. I'm not talking about contemplatively feeling into something or contemplatively thinking through something. I'm talking about the thoughts and feelings that come and go and don't come and don't go. I'm talking about the thoughts and feelings that randomly show up or don't show up. And what I notice is, *those* thoughts and feelings are highly distracting to people. It will literally have somebody not hear something that's being said right in front of them and right to them.

It will literally have somebody not see something. It will literally have somebody continuously see situations and people at their worst rather than being open to the view that "something is actually possible here." *Reality is hard to come by*. There are billions of people on the planet and you discuss an idea with billions of people and you'll literally have billions of interpretations of that idea. So which one is real? Do you see? Reality's a little trickier than most people give it credit for. Most people see a thing, have a thought about that thing, and they just are comfortable with "it's real" and they move on. But I'm suggesting that very little of what we think and feel - within this idea of thoughts and feelings that come and go - very little of what we think and feel has any reality to it. What we think and feel is simply generated from within and has a random nature to it. The problem with this is that people are generally in life *randomly responding* to what's going on around them - randomly as opposed to responding in a thoughtful, conscious way, created in a moment of contemplation and resonance. Choosing to

respond to the world in a way that is a high contribution is different than choosing to respond to the world from however I think or however I feel at any given moment. An example would be: you're having a conversation with someone and you have a general commitment to be a nice person, but they say something really rude and upsetting to you, and so you say something bad with them, acting in a certain way that's not consistent with who you are. And you speak in a certain way that's not consistent with who you are. But do you think that's fine because they did something first? The reality is, in this conversation they did whatever they did and it has nothing to do with what you do. In a sense, you just decided to be bad with somebody. The reality is, there kind of *is* no reality to this idea that "people do a certain thing and now you have permission to be any way you want" or "life dishes up something and you have a thought or a feeling about it and you go with that thought or feeling" like somebody says to you, "wow, I really like your work," and then *you* hear sarcasm and then you're thinking to yourself, "oh, they don't like my work." And then you're thinking to yourself, "oh, am I going to get fired?" And then you're thinking, "oh my God, what's going to happen if I get fired?" And then you think to yourself, "oh my God, if I get fired, I'm going to get divorced" and "oh my God, if I get divorced, I'm going to die lonely and under a bridge!!" And in fact, what someone said to you is, "hey, I like your work." In this case, what they meant was, "hey, I like your work." There's a certain reality to "somebody just said they like your work" and there's a unreality or disconnection to all the rest of it: "Oh, they may like my work, but I may get fired, I may lose my marriage, I may die literally under a bridge"...All that never happened. So that's the difference between reality and unreality in this case. And then the compassion part is, whenever you uncover something really crazy in your pursuit of reality, just respond to it with love and patience and acceptance and compassion. As we said earlier, people are crazy. People do crazy stuff. People say crazy stuff. People get themselves into crazy situations. I recommend you fight for reality, like the simple no meaning attached to it, no drama, *simple reality* of situations as you encounter them and then immediately follow that up with compassion. And this is a wonderful thing for clients to start practicing. The client who is always upset, who is always drawing up dark conclusions, having dark feelings, and thinking that that's real thinking and real feeling. "Real feeling" might *actually* be: I'm intuitively picking up something really bad that's happening.

They're really different. Sometimes the distinguishing of thoughts and feelings that come and go from real thinking and real feeling is difficult. What you want to do is be bringing compassion to whatever they uncover.

### **Possibility**

Time to talk about *possibility*. First, for most people there's a real clarity and certainty about many things. Many of the things your clients are really interested in or really want in life are simply "not possible." Now this is a difficult conversation for a lot of people to hear because what people don't think is possible, they generally don't even see anymore. And they for sure don't see that it is possible.

They made a decision many years earlier. They for sure don't see that decision and they don't see that the way that they hold the context of "something is impossible" is in and of itself problematic. It's not logic-based. It's not reality-based. If you look for examples and if you need to prove it to yourself, you can look and you can find examples of people accomplishing extraordinary things all over the planet through all time in ways that would be impossible to predict, right? Human beings are capable of the most extraordinary things. In my coaching and in my life, I remember all of this.

### **At Cause**

None of these distinctions are tactics to "use on" people - these are *distinctions to live from*. And then to coach from but mainly *to live from* first. So in my life and in my coaching, I literally practice living from and embodying the context of "Anything's possible." Namely, whatever we're talking about is possible. So whatever feelings I have or whatever thoughts I have about something, I acknowledge them to myself - I don't freak out or get upset about it because I'm a human being and human beings have thoughts and feelings, and a lot of them have sort of a dark quality. And that's just how that is - no problem. But what follows from me in my practicing that "it's possible...whatever it is, whatever we're talking about: a certain quality of relationship, a certain quality of a business, a certain quality of ability as a coach...I have a certain experience of abundance in my life"...just *whatever* is I'm up to. I'm also a musician and I practice playing at a very high level. I literally practice within "it is possible for me to be world class as a musician." And I just practice that. So it's possible, *whatever* it is for your client. And this is a way of being at cause at something or at cause in life. It's different from cause and effect - cause and effect is "I see that's possible because if I do this and I do that, that works out and I can see that I can accomplish that." That's beautiful, *and* that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about being *at cause*. I'm talking about you just saying to yourself and your God or to The Universe, you literally *being* that "anything is possible" and you *practicing* it with yourself and with others. So if someone talks about something and you can hear that they are resigned and cynical about it, that they don't really think it's possible...I'm playing for the other team, *knowing* that it is possible. You want to move to San Francisco and create a business? Great, let's figure out how to do it. I'm never the guy that's going to say "oh man, that's not a good idea," because what do I know? And hey it's *possible*, so let's take a look at it. That's a great way to be as a coach: *be* that you're always playing for the team "that is possible."

Just practice that and start with yourself and in your life. This can be very confronting. Because what will immediately come up is all those things that are deeply rooted that you don't think are possible. Right? And that's what there is to deal with and it's how you respond to *that* challenge that makes you a coach or not a coach. If you come across the impossible conversation in yourself and stop, well that's not actually the business that we're in. It's not that you have to have an answer or you have to magically come up with a solution. I'm not saying that. I'm saying who you are choosing to be is literally that "it's possible." What's it? Whatever it is you're looking at.



## **The A-Team**

Here's a great practice. I call it *the A-Team*. A lot of people have the experience of resonating at their highest selves from time to time. For me, my highest self is being loving or being a contribution or being a coach - something of that nature. A lot of people experience themselves at their highest resonance or highest self from time to time and a lot of people experience themselves as something *other* than that from time to time when they're not feeling good, when they're scared or anxious, angry, upset, *whatever* it is. The A-Team is this idea where you literally pick 5 to 10 people in your life who will *only* hear you at your highest resonance. For me, it was people who would only hear me as a powerful coach, as a powerful contribution, and as a loving person. When I was dealing with something that was a big deal for me about three years ago, I didn't have a lot of support around me. So what I did - because this is how transformation works - I knew that for me personally, I needed to be connected with people who actually could get who I am at my highest self and not who I am as my weak and afraid Self dealing with circumstances, feeling embattled and not having as many answers as I would like to for the challenges of life at that particular moment. There was a handful of people at that time that I was in regular communication with or had been connected to where they see me as a powerful leader. And I would get about 10 of them set up with a conversation like this: "This is what I'm doing. I'm building a coaching company and I have declared myself as being a contribution in the world. I'm dealing with a bunch of circumstances and I want to have you and about nine other people please be ready to receive my call when I need to talk to you and my promise is that I'll make it totally worth your while. I won't call you with complaints and darkness. I'll call you with 'I'm in the middle of working something out - here's my big circumstance, here's what I'm upset about today, here's how I'm approaching it and here's how I'm dealing with it'...and let's have a conversation for what's possible for victory and for success." And then, I would make sure that those conversations only lasted about 5, 10, or 15 minutes. I'm not trying to blow up somebody's whole day and I make sure they're literally inspired and left with some new distinction or some new future or something beautiful and awesome for *them* in addition to getting what I need. It's a *symbiotic* relationship by design. I call it the A-Team because they're the people who you can count on when the going gets tough. And what I mean by that going getting tough in this conversation is when you literally *forget* who you are at your highest self, like we discussed earlier.

## **Courage**

*Possibility takes courage and love.* People are often resigned and people are often cynical and afraid and really wanting to minimize the risk of being hurt further or having their heart broken or being disappointed again. And so, to embrace that something that you really want is possible can be a very scary thing. It takes a lot of courage. And where courage comes from is love. Courage is the being afraid and acting anyway in a loving environment - in other words, an environment where everyone is accepted and known and appreciated and celebrated. It's much easier to be courageous, to take action when you're afraid, in a loving environment.

Thus, one of the real opportunities of being a coach, first of all, is being someone who understands that standing for what's possible and in any situation or in a conversation or in a relationship is a very bold and courageous thing to do. And that it can be risky in some cases. Sometimes people don't appreciate it when you stand for something as possible, if they're committed to the context of "something is difficult" or even "something is impossible." And so, it requires courage. And the space of love and acceptance is a great breeding ground for courage. As a coach, you want to practice that for yourself, and then be the stand for love and courage for people that is required to be someone who's out in the world standing for what's possible in their life because oftentimes what they're standing for is something where there's some risk or where there's a lot at stake or there's a big concern of having one's heart broken, where there's a real chance of failure.

Standing for what's possible, especially if someone has failed before, can really take a lot of courage - as a coach, you can supply that loving environment and even lend some of your courage for a little bit to help someone get on the track of standing for what's possible for themselves in the next conversation.

### **Your Highest Self**

Often, when somebody is dealing with something, there's a question: should I do this or should I do that? Should I have this conversation or should I have that conversation? And there are always lots of details and sometimes it's complicated and there are variables and some opinions and predictions and that sort of thing. A great way to slice through all of that from time to time is to have someone ask themselves this question: "What would your highest self do here?" And as a coach, when you're faced with a difficult question, one way to approach it is, "what would my highest self do here?" My example I've embraced is this thing called being a contribution. One way I phrase the question to myself is: "what would contribution do here?" I often find the answer is very simple - not always easy, but very simple. That can just be a very simple way to get present for oneself how one's highest commitment might get demonstrated in this particular situation.

### **Being Neutral**

Let's talk about *being neutral*. When you're a coach, do you know who you are, what position it is that you play on the team? It's the position of advisor and observer and listener, and the village elder, perhaps the wise one in a relationship. You have a great amount of influence in the way people see and think about things. And so, there's this thing called neutral that I put to good use when someone is speaking to me about a thing.

I might have a personal opinion about whether this is good or bad or a good idea or a bad idea, or "is this going to work out?" or whatever. I have personal opinions. I'm a person, so I have personal opinions. However, in my thinking and in my communication, I make it a point to stay neutral because I don't want myself to get into tips and advice (like we discussed earlier) on the one hand, or into telling people how to live their lives on the other.

## **Mind Mapping**

The *mind map* is an incredibly useful tool which alleviates stress, helps you see patterns in complicated situations or complicated ideas, and helps you discern the most elegant iteration of ideas or the clearest pathway through a situation. The way I do it is, I get a white piece of paper, normal size 8 ½ x 11 and a four color pen. This works for any idea I'm working on, like a book idea or a new distinction or decision that I'm looking at right now in an organic fashion. I'll write a word or a short phrase to represent every idea that I have about this topic. If it's a book I'm thinking about, the subject matter and the key aspects that make this a good idea get written out. Every possible format or structure for the book gets written out. Just whatever: 5, 10, 20, 30 different things that pop into my head when I think about the subject - in this example, a book. And then, once I'm satisfied, all of my ideas are now captured on the paper. I don't have to remember them anymore. I can just let them go, which gives me more space to then play with the ideas that I already have and then, as I look at all my ideas, organic and laid out, I put a word in a circle or a phrase in a circle and another word in the circle and I use the colors in a way that helps me separate things out and keep it highly visual, but the idea is to work in a way that the brain normally works, which isn't a linear fashion. The brain just has a thought and another thought and another thought. It doesn't really take the time to work out the most logical linear sequence of something. It just spits out thoughts and so you can work with that by just simply being ready to catch the thoughts that it spits out about a topic and then, once you get all the thoughts out, you can look at it and spend a moment with all the thoughts at the same time and you'll notice some things that become obvious, some things that were difficult to see before - a certain way to lay out the situation or a certain way to think about it or look at it. You notice all these things are pretty similar and then you start to see a way through it and then you do the map a couple of different times until it's really obvious whatever it is that you're trying to sort out. It suddenly becomes simple and obvious. Every time you redo the map, it becomes more simple and more organized. My map is a really essential tool for customers, for people who are trying to sort out something that occurs as complicated in their head or for people who're "full" thinking about this topic. This is a great way to get the mind emptied out and to be able to visually see the issue rather than playing around with it in your head. And also, it brings peace in the sense that you can stop trying to remember all the different aspects of it, all the moving parts. I use the mind map regularly. In fact, I keep a sketch pad with me at all times with a four color pen stuck in the spiral of it for just that purpose. That's how I make all of my notes for everything.

## Training Wheels

Next distinction is the *training wheels*, which is one way that I look at some conversations or a certain aspect of the relationship between a coach and a client. Oftentimes, the client comes to the coach for something that the client is not particularly good at and the coach is very experienced at. One of the ways I look at that with my clients in particular is, I'll give them an extraordinary amount of support and then begin to have them get balanced. I relate to myself as training wheels. In the beginning, I do the heavy lifting, if you will, for the clients - I'm more assistive in helping them in thinking things through and being more assistive in helping them with distinguishing. As time goes on, I'm training *them* to do the work that I was doing for them. I'm literally training my clients to distinguish for themselves whatever they need to distinguish, and to restore their own power and ability to whatever they're dealing with. In one sense, all of these conversations and the whole existence of the coach could be looked at as training wheels - you're literally using you yourself and the whole structure of having a coach as an extra quantity of support that won't necessarily always be there. But the point of it is to get people in the habit of using distinctions and distinguishing and being able to bring their highest self to something whenever it serves them - *being a stand for themselves*.

## Being an Interruption

I would also call this being *an interruption*. One of the things I take on in being a coach is that who I am is a stand for something, *and* I'm an interruption. The standard situation where this occurs is mostly when I say that I'm a stand for whatever's possible in the general sense. Somebody says, "oh, I want to do the thing but I don't know if I can do it." Well, I'm automatically on the team that says "yes, you can do it. We just need to sort out the details." I'm going to embody the context that *whatever* somebody is up to can be accomplished and I'm an interruption against the tendency of human beings becoming lazy or becoming lost or succumbing to previous patterns and habits and ways of looking at things. What I mean by that is - you can have an insight or an inspiration about something and feel extraordinarily powerful for some amount of time and then, over time, that power seems to dissipate or disappear altogether. And then the experience of fear and anxiety and weakness returns and it's confusing and "it kind of seems almost hard to remember when I felt powerful about that thing." I call that the *drift*. Human beings will gradually return to however they used to do things, unless they really develop a new habit or a new pattern, a new *practice*, and practice it *for awhile* until it becomes natural and intuitive. I'm an interruption to that phenomena where humans just kind of tend to drift off if you don't have their attention or even if they don't have *their own* attention on something that's bigger and brighter and more interesting than the drift. I recommend you practice *being a stand* in your life. For what? For whatever's going down - whatever you're up to, be a stand for it. If you want to be a powerful coach and you want to make a big difference in the world, don't give up on that. You be the stand. Never back down off of that. Don't let what people tell you, think about you, or what you deal with thwart you in any way. One way I heard that said in a historical reference is that one warrior says to another on an ancient battlefield: "Today, I will stand my ground." And that was at a time when battles were primarily centered around getting the other army to leave the battlefield.

And so this idea of *I will stand my ground* was the most sacred promise one warrior could make to another, and if every warrior made and kept that promise, we're going to win the day because we're now moving. *Here is where we stay at*. In the transformational sense, the "I will stand my ground" has more to do with "I will stand my ground that anything is possible...that that thing that I want is possible...and I'm going to stand my ground *against the drift*." I'm actually an interruption in the drift of human being and the drift of life, which is reverting back to any old patterns or habitual ways of meeting and talking and acting.

## **Empowered**

The next distinction is being *empowered*. First, what does *empowered* mean? This word gets thrown around all the time: "That empowers me. That doesn't empower me. I don't feel empowered..." *et cetera*. Let's just break it down. In my world, *empowered* means that you are and that you have everything you need, that you're fully resourced, fully informed, and fully prepared to take whatever action or to fulfill whatever commitment you have. If I'm empowered as a coach, that means my heart is good, my brain is clear, I know who I am, and I'm ready to play. I'm not cluttered or confused or upset or distracted. I'm not in the past. I'm not in the future. I'm literally *here, here and now with a beautiful intention* and in a great space, ready to rumble - *that's empowered*. *Not empowered* would be "I'm ready to go except I don't have some questions that I need to have answered" or "I'm ready to go except I don't feel good...I feel anxious and distracted and something is in my space and I haven't quite distinguished what it is and been able to deal with it yet" or "I'm not really sure exactly what's the first conversation to have" or something like that. Not empowered or *disempowered* means there's something missing that would slow you down or prevent you from having that *all here and ready to go* vibe. Empowered is something tangible for me - it's not just a feeling, it's literally "do you have what you need?" You have your questions answered - is there anything in-between you and performing at your highest self? It's a conversation to take a snapshot as to where someone is or if something that's being provided is really working or not, such as if support is being provided and is the support really working - like is the person who's receiving this support actually empowered to actually perform and fulfill what they're actually committed to? It's all very specific, this thing of being empowered.

## **Acknowledgement**

One of my favorite all time conversations is *acknowledgment*. First of all, acknowledgement isn't just a compliment. It also isn't superficial, at least in the way I'm creating it today. It's not even an observation necessarily. An acknowledgement is - "I'm bringing attention to something that is noteworthy and that I would like to see more of." For example, if you come home and your partner cleaned the house and you like having a clean house, you might want to acknowledge your partner in a way that they really feel good about how happy *you* are about how they have cleaned the house. If your partner sends you an email in the middle of the day that just makes you smile and feel good, make sure you've acknowledged that and say, "hey, that was beautiful. It made me feel so good." Here's the thing: whatever you acknowledge grows, so if you get the email in the middle of the day, it makes you feel good, and then you acknowledge the person and make them feel so wonderful about having done that...

I would guess it's about 10 times more likely to happen in the very near future. It creates an upward spiral: they do something beautiful, you acknowledge them, they love being acknowledged, they love feeling good, they love making you feel good, and then they want to do it again and then you've acknowledged them again and it's this beautiful cycle. Conversely, how most people do it: they use exactly the same rule but in the wrong direction, so instead of acknowledging my partner for the email I got, I would complain about something that she did or didn't do...she comes home and instead of getting a beautiful acknowledgement for the beautiful email, she gets a complaint such as "oh, you didn't bring the coffee home after work. Oh my gosh, what are you doing?" Thus, instead of the beautiful, warm feeling that would make her want to do more for you, that pattern would give her this dark, negative feeling of shame and so forth that really makes her want to pull away from me. Look for yourself and see what you think is the best mood you want your partner in. Everybody's free to make those choices for themselves, but I am on the team, "I want to have more stuff that delights me coming at me." And I want people to feel good and feel known and appreciated when they do something good for me. It's both selfless *and* selfish. When anybody does something that you want to see more of, this is really valuable as a coach - every little movement forward you see in your client, you want to acknowledge the heck out of it and you'll get that thing moving in even quicker. Acknowledgement is a very, very, very powerful tool, especially in relationships and in relationship coaching. And again, it's way far from being something inauthentic. It's just the *opposite* of that. It's not complimenting - it's really giving some thought to what you would like to see more of in another human being: "hey, I love how hardworking you are and how you dedicate yourself to your work so much...I see how beautiful you are with your clients and it just makes me feel so proud to be on your team" - something like that. You have to think that through a little bit and once you have, it's beautiful for people. So I recommend that you notice opportunities to acknowledge people, which is noticing something good that you want to see more of. I recommend you get really good at heartfelt, authentic *off the chart acknowledgements* to where people will come two years later and acknowledge you for your acknowledgement of them! It's a really beautiful thing.

### **Perspective**

Another aspect of coaching that is really valuable to clients is this idea of *you're not inside the box that they're inside of* - you're literally *outside the box*. We are back to that the saying of not being able to see the forest for the trees! Imagine yourself in the forest and there's a big tree in front of you and there's a whole forest after the tree that's in front of you and very close to you, but you literally can't see the forest because the tree is blocking your entire view. The one tree is blocking the view of a 100,000 trees. Life is a lot like that. People are distracted by being up close and personally impacted by all the things that they're looking at and all the things they're experiencing. One of the values of being a coach is you are outside of the situation, outside of the problem, if you will, and are able to offer a perspective that is literally impossible to see from where they're standing, "right in front of the tree." Let's say someone came to you with a box over their head and there are instructions on how to get the box off your head on the outside of the box.

And the person literally can't get the box off their head, because they can't see the instructions about how to get the box off their head because the instructions are on the outside of their box and their head's on the inside of the box. A coach can very easily say, "hey, here are the instructions" and then *Voilà*, the client or the individual has power with the box over their head. That's one of the ways that coaching works. It's useful to be aware of the power of perspective and just see what you can notice that your client can't notice from where you are. And then conversely, as a coach, you want to be looking for people in your life that you can ally with to help you see things about *yourself* - what works and what doesn't work - that you literally can't see from the box that you're in, given your human being: looking from the perspective and looking at your life from the perspective of being *inside* your life.

### **Creating and Fulfilling Intentions**

*Creating and fulfilling intentions.* I notice a lot of times when I observe public speakers and when I listen to other coaches, I can tell when they're articulating something that they've articulated before. I call that a *set piece*. You could say that these distinctions that we're working on right now are set pieces - they're conversations that get repeated in more or less the same way with some variations that are situational and personal to the situation and the person. And for the most part, I would say they are set pieces. They're conversations that have a beginning and a middle and an end and so forth. Now this idea I'm talking about right now is - in every conversation, you have an *intention*. For example, you bring up the conversation about the mind map and when you start the conversation, the whole point of having a conversation about the mind map is to have the mind map exist as a real and valuable option in the eyes of the person that you're speaking with. And so, you might have a five minute conversation set up for how to create the value of a mind map and it might take every minute of those five minutes. However, in many cases the person you're speaking with gets your intention before you're finished your five minute "presentation." It's important that you notice when the *intention* of a conversation is fulfilled and then *stop the conversation when the intention is fulfilled* rather than going through your set piece. When you are responsive to what's actually happening and you notice when your intention gets fulfilled, it's really valuable in that the client can notice and appreciate that you're actually paying attention to where they're at and where they're not. I'm not demanding that they sit there silently while I'm finishing my presentation. One way to public speak or coach is a *conversation* and the other is a *presentation*. One is an *intimate interaction between human beings* and the other is a *transactional experience between a superior and a subordinate*. It's really important that you stay connected in the conversations that you're in, such that you notice when your intention is fulfilled, which then points to the value of having an intention for each conversation so that people are left with something valuable at every minute they spend with you and you notice when that value got delivered or not.

## The Real Deal

What does it mean, being *the real deal*? It has to do with being *reliable* - "being reliable at what?" you might ask. Being the real deal *is* being reliable at being the one to make *the* difference in *any* conversation - it's being the one who's not looking around in the room to see who's going to say the thing that makes a difference.

Being the real deal is being the one that people look at to say the thing to make the difference and it's an experience that is earned over time by demonstrating a commitment and a facility to be someone who makes the difference. What do I mean by *the difference*? I mean when people interact with you, they're literally left with something they didn't have before, like a new future or a new clarity or an un-stuckness or a freedom or a piece that didn't exist before you interacted with them. That's being the real deal. Being reliable is how you interact with people and how you leave people. For me, it's almost as though I'm speaking with *the Voice of God*. And I don't mean that in a religious way or a disrespectful way. I mean, literally something more powerful than me, something I do not fully understand, is speaking through me and what's getting said is beautiful, elegant, and clearly has tremendous value, is *undeniably of value*. And so I notice, the more I embrace myself as the real deal and the more I take on being reliable, the more I have the experience of literally speaking with the voice of God.



**Those are all the active distinctions.**

**I've got a handful of distinctions that are "in the background."**

### **Your Ticket In**

Let's talk about *your ticket in* to being a coach. Why is it that you feel like you can be a coach or what is your credibility for being a coach? Here's what I say about that. You're literally in the game of being a *created* human being. Who you are fundamentally is no longer a collection of your history and past and habits that you were brought up with by virtue of your culture or family or the era in which you were raised. Who you are and what you practice and what you stand for and what you give your word to is literally being and speaking and acting in ways that are conscious and of your own creation. So again, the example for me is that I'm practicing being a contribution. That's actually who I am at the end of the day and I have that character run the meetings at my round table if you will - I have *contribution* be the final arbiter of any disputes I'm having or any issues I'm having about what to choose about something, i.e. whether or not I'm going to be forgiving or whether or not I'm going to issue an apology or whether I'm going to do something for someone or return someone's call or whatever it is I'm dealing with. Where I go to is, "what would *contribution* do here?" Because fundamentally when I'm practicing, *contribution* is who I am. I'm no longer Kirk the grumpy, angry workaholic drummer from New Orleans. I am a masterful coach, committed to making a difference in the world, and I'm a contribution, and I declare that that's who I am, and I declare that my declaration actually is what makes the difference. And I practice it day by day. So I say *that's your ticket in*.

### **Living a Created Life**

In addition, there's this idea I just pointed to of *living a created life*. What kind of life would a created human being live? A created human being would live a created life. What does that look like? Well, *you get to say. It's your life*. What it looks like for me is I live in a home that's very peaceful for me. I have a relationship that I'm celebrated and loved in where I get to contribute fully and be myself and delight another human being. I get to have a business that I love. I get to play music and I've got a great little place to practice here and it's very peaceful and joyful for me. In the summer, I jet ski regularly on the lake that I live nearby and I just go out of my way to make a difference for the world. I lead workshops and seminars and I write books and these are all things that for me are joyful and many of those things for me are things I thought I would never have. For me, those are expressions of *a created life* and really, that's your ticket: being a created human being, living a created life, and just dealing with all the whatever you're dealing with to keep that going. And that's what people will deal with in creating their lives. So that's what you're dealing with. You don't have to have anything figured out, you just need to be fully in the game, fully committed, fully practicing, fully bringing consciousness to who you are and what kind of life you're living.

## **Practices - Habits - and Views... Oh My!**

After being a created human being and living a created life, what I deal with to keep that rolling is *I monitor my practices, my habits, and my views*. If who I am as a human being is fundamentally a blank slate from which I can create anything, then one of the things that I want to keep my attention on is my practices and my habits and my views. Practices are: what do I do when I get up in the morning? What do I do to feed myself? Do I have a dinner every night or do I go to bed at a certain time? What kind of stuff do I let myself watch on TV? What kind of stuff do I read? That kind of thing. And habits are the same thing. Habits are - let's ask: what are my conversational habits, for example "when somebody says this, I do that" or "when someone gets upset, I do that." I just notice what my natural tendencies are and what I've done from the past. And then my views - what do I think is possible? What do I think is difficult? What do I think about other people? How do I talk about other people I know? How do I talk about situations - all that kind of stuff. The reason I monitor all that stuff and pay attention to all that stuff is what I'm looking for - our habitual ways of being, habitual practices, and self-limiting views that are under the radar. I want to keep catching stuff that I've been missing because that's where the low hanging fruit is! I practice being the real deal and part of how I do that is I'm on the lookout for, on the hunt for, practices and habits and views that are not working for me, that are outside of my best interest.

## **Always Learning**

I also have something I call *always learning*. I don't know if I could say that I'm always learning, but I have a daily practice, a daily commitment. And for me that's an Audible book and YouTube - there are certain channels that I follow that are pertinent to my fields of inquiry: coaching, romance, leadership, performance, books, *etc*. I look for things that are nourishing, that are educational, that make me feel good, that make me feel confident, that inspire me into deeper thinking or more profound action. In my daily practice of learning, I've noticed that information has never been more available than it is right now. Really, it's more about curating and delineating and choosing fields of study. On YouTube for example, you can dial out the world expert on pretty much any topic within a couple of minutes and listen to that world expert speak directly to you about something that's important to you. Whereas a decade or two ago that just was not possible, you can really use that to your advantage by picking something you'd like to be masterful at - an aspect of coaching, for example, and just dig in and listen to the best in the world who either have live footage or have taken the time to actually create videos for people like you. *Always learning* is really critical. It's part of your ticket in and has you be a better coach every year, which is important for you and your clients and your experience of yourself.

## **Maintenance**

Your own *self-care and maintenance* are what's next, and they're *paramount*. If you look from the conversation that you are your own biggest resource and you are your own biggest obstacle, then you want to start noticing what care or maintenance you require to be at your highest self and to be your own greatest resource: what do you do to avoid being your own greatest obstacle?

It's simple things like getting enough sleep and staying hydrated and getting some exercise and doing whatever you can do to affect how your body works and feels and taking pride in your appearance, presenting yourself in a professional and respectful way, whatever you need to be at the top of your game. For you as a coach, it's critical that you're at the top of your game - the phone's going to ring and someone's going to be at the other end of that line and then they're going to need a *coach*, not a tired, exhausted, and confused collection of selfish concerns. What they need is a *coach*. Therefore, I recommend you create your daily and weekly routine in such a way that you're *available* when called upon. That's, for me, part of being the real deal. It's part of being reliable. It's very rare when I'm not actually available to be the one that makes a difference. It almost never happens and it's always three or four big time circumstances were going on right at the same moment or something like that. Generally, I conduct my life and make choices and have relationships and spend time with people and have hobbies and a self care routine that supports me being available and ready to roll at a moment's notice.

## **Allies**

The last thing we're talking about is *having allies*. It's really important as a coach to manage and attend to the reputation that you have out in the world. It's not okay to have enemies. It's not okay to have detractors. You want to have as *few* people out there as possible who would say anything negative about you when you're not there. And you want to have as *many* people as possible saying wonderful things about you when you're not there. This is a specific little game - as some people call it, "branding." I like to make a little fun game out of everything, so I call it "Detractors and Allies." I'm interested in the ratio of how many people would be my detractors versus how many people would be my allies? If there's one person out there who might say something negative about me, I want at least 10 or 20 who are out there singing my praises...and not singing my praises because it makes me feel better or I need to have adoration or I have any concern about how that's going to impact me personally...but rather, it's because my *access to making a difference for people* is actually is related to how people perceive me. So if people perceive me as the real deal as a coach, it's much easier for me to dig right in and make a big difference for people. If people perceive me as something other than a coach or something inauthentic or underhanded in some way, it's very difficult for me to make a difference with them. It's really night and day. Part of what I manage is what my reputation is out in the world, so I definitely go out of my way to do extra kindness for people. Even if I dispute something, I'll often acquiesce just to maintain the goodwill of my community. I'm much less interested in my own pride or ego and much more interested in: what does the community think of me by virtue of what people say about me once they've interacted with me? It's important to me for the purposes of maintaining a robust access with people so that I can make the biggest difference that I can, which is the whole reason of my existence.

## Be the Coach

One thing you'll probably notice at this point is there's a lot of emphasis in this book about being - the being of human being, and the being that you choose to be in the world. And I already know who you are - if you've gotten this far in this book, you're a human being who wants to make a difference in the world with other human beings, so I know this about you already, that your biggest access to being someone who makes a difference is *you being a coach*. I don't mean being the title coach. I mean being *the being* of coach. I recommend that you create for yourself what a coach is. I will simply share with you that for me, a *coach* is someone who says, "*I shall be the person that is someone everybody gets to win around.*" *A coach is someone around whom everyone gets to be brilliant and smart and their best selves.* For me, a coach is someone who dedicates their lives to having other people win and having their own lives be magnificent by virtue of having other people's lives be magnificent.

## Epilogue

There's a lot I just gave you, I know. But the journey of a thousand miles always starts with a single step.

There's a story told that I've always resonated with, and if you were to take nothing else from this book, this is the place to start:

"An old Cherokee is teaching his grandson about life. 'A fight is going on inside me,' he said to the boy. 'It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil – he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.' He continued, 'The other is good – he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. The same fight is going on inside you – and inside every other person, too.' The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, 'Which wolf will win?' The old Cherokee simply replied, 'The one you feed.'"

Anything you or your clients want is available through ongoing transformation **and** practice.

Your good habits and bad hadits, empowering thoughts and disempowering thoughts, helpful views and unhelpful views...these are the two wolves. Which will **you** feed?

Let's keep it easy and simple: pick one thing from this book to practice. Just one. And give everything that you are to that practice. One way of being or one set of actions...and sooner or later, you'll find that you will be the real deal, reliable, and an amazing coach.

## The Drift

Before we conclude, I want to talk about the drift for a moment - this is a good reason to return to this book on a regular basis, the innate tendency of human being to get distracted and move away from what empowers them, especially because most of the conversations and distinctions in this book are threatening to the ego, an ego that would do anything to have you not see where it grips you through views you think are real. There's, thus, a kind of half-life with these distinctions such that, no matter how recently you've been exposed to them or how rigorously you've been trained in them, you have to keep practicing because the ego innately resists having them there in your brain, or applying them to new areas of your life. Indeed, as well - it may be merely the simple fact that you haven't turned the flashlight of your attention onto this or that area of life that has you not applying them there!

In fact, it often takes a coach to bring you and your brain back to these distinctions enough times or to shine them into areas you haven't thought to bring them yet. It's really like with the *training wheels* distinction, to get them on autopilot enough where they're who you are rather than something you're just practicing. If you have decided that I'm the one to help you in that way, I do very powerful initial conversations - just go to [KirkMcDow.com](http://KirkMcDow.com) and schedule your Challenge Call today!

No matter what you do with that invitation, or with this book, *thank you for reading*. Contribution and coach are who I am, and without you there's nobody to contribute to or write this book to - thus, *you* are why I wrote this book.

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