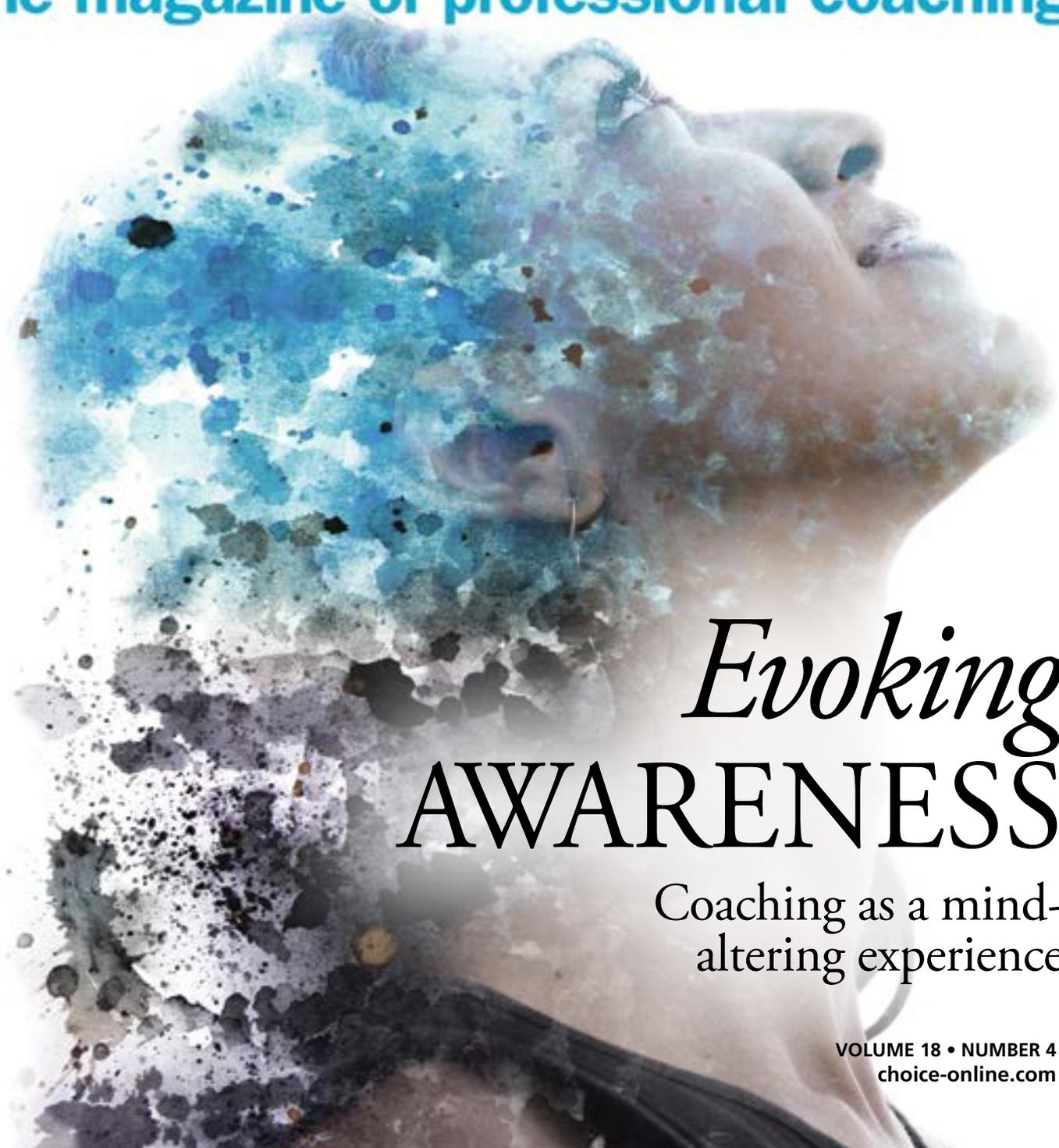


choice

the magazine of professional coaching



Evoking AWARENESS

Coaching as a mind-
altering experience

Evoking **AWARENESS**

Coaching as a mind-altering experience

What does it take to expand and shift your clients' perspective? How does the coach use presence to facilitate the discovery process? What are the mental habits of master coaches? In addition to asking questions, what are the essential practices used in awareness-based coaching? Join us as we explore what elements are needed in a coaching model that goes beyond finding answers to powerfully evoke awareness.

COACHING *Presence*

How being present evokes client awareness

By Patrick Chapman, Esq., PCC, CPCC

Asigh. A nervous laugh. A subtle sign of excitement or suppressed anger. Some coaches are attuned to their client's mannerisms and energy level during coaching sessions, while other coaches ignore them. What is the difference? Their level of coaching presence. This article discusses how coaching presence is defined, how coaching presence evokes client awareness, and how you can cultivate coaching presence.

HOW COACHING PRESENCE IS DEFINED

Coaching presence is a core competency defined by the International Coaching Federation (ICF) as “the ability to be fully conscious and create spontaneous relationship with the client, employing a style that is open, flexible, and confident.”¹ ICF highlights specific characteristics that demonstrate coaching presence. They require you to have a certain orientation; a way of being.

Coaching presence entails being present and flexible; accessing and trusting intuition; being open to not knowing; risk taking; identifying multiple ways and making effective choices to support your clients; using humor to create lightness and

energy for your clients; confidently working with the strong emotions of your clients; and confidently shifting perspectives and experimenting with new possibilities for your clients.

Coaching presence enhances all other ICF coaching competencies, such as building trust and intimacy, active listening, powerful questioning, and creating awareness.

HOW COACHING PRESENCE EVOKES CLIENT AWARENESS

Your clients gain awareness not solely based on your coaching skills. Your disposition – how you “show up” – is a key ingredient for client awareness. Typically, your clients do not think about what they need to build a positive partnership with you when starting coaching engagements.

Your clients are usually immersed in their challenges. If you are present in the moment, you will notice this dynamic and invite your clients to pause and reflect on principles (e.g., trust and nonjudgment) to govern your client-coach relationship. This leads to your clients slowing down, being vulnerable, discovering values and needs, and being deliberate about your relationship and coaching engagement.

If you are flexible, you are free of personal agendas. You can be wherever your clients are and follow them into the unknown. Your clients are often not very present at the start of coaching sessions. They frequently are distracted by events that happened before coaching.

Welcome your clients to vent whatever they need to get off their chest to be present. Invite your clients to pause, take a breath, and notice their thoughts, feelings and physical sensations. This helps them become aware about their lack of presence and what caused it, so they can become more attentive to the moment.

Sometimes during coaching sessions your clients get lost in their thoughts and travel into tangents unrelated to their coaching topic. Maintain your openness and curiosity. See this occurrence as an opportunity to help your clients cultivate awareness. Make observations about your clients' behavior and ask powerful questions to assist with exploring the deviation to unveil its meaning and relation to your clients' session goals.

Your clients will deepen understanding about themselves and their situations, while making conscious choices about how to proceed in the coaching session.

When you are present, you listen to your clients at a deeper level. You hear their perspectives, desires, values, needs, emotions, challenges and strengths.

When you are present, you listen to your clients at a deeper level. You hear their perspectives, desires, values, needs, emotions, challenges and strengths. You attend to the demeanor and tone of your clients.

When they display strong emotions, encourage your clients to explore them. Tune into the limiting beliefs your clients are carrying and excuses they make. For example, a client might raise their voice in a coaching session and state they do not have time to meet with their subordinate. Yet, they expect the subordinate to deliver a good-quality product. If you are present, you will be empathetic while also inquiring about your client's tone and exploring the limiting belief your client is holding.

Access, trust, and share your intuition with your clients without attachment to your intuition being accurate. For instance, your client explains that his new staff is not performing well and ponders the reasons for their lack of motivation. As you listen, the word "mistrust" pops into your mind. You ask permission to share your intuition. If your client grants permission, you inquire if the staff lacks motivation because they mistrust your client.

Your clients benefit from your attentiveness and intuition. They often pay more attention inward to their thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, words, and intuition. They extract new information about themselves which leads to new insights, possibilities, and solutions.

HOW TO CULTIVATE COACHING PRESENCE

Intentionality, practice and reflection cultivate your coaching presence. Your mind may get distracted every day by stressful situations and thoughts about past events, current challenges, and the future you desire.

The widespread use of social media and the uncertainties related to the current pandemic and social crisis can magnify your distractions and stress. These realities make it vital for you to be intentional about developing coaching presence. You must make coaching presence a deliberate habit through daily practice.

- Mindfulness practices such as meditation, breathing techniques, movement exercises and body scanning train you to pay attention in the moment to your thoughts, emotions and body. These practices can be incorporated into your daily activities, such as eating, walking and listening. Mindfulness apps and online classes are now extensive and easily accessible. Mindfulness practices do not require a lot of time. However, these practices do require patience, compassion, and discipline.
- Center yourself by pausing and attending to your breath, thoughts, emotions, and body before coaching your clients. Invite your clients to get centered at the beginning of coaching and check-in with your clients during coaching to see if they need to re-center.
- Practice active listening and notice your intuition in life and during coaching. Sense the energy and emotion your clients share. Share your observations and intuition with your clients. Encourage your clients to share their intuition. Reflect on your listening and intuition experiences. Track how you access intuition. Journal how your active listening and intuition help your clients build awareness.
- Hire a mentor coach to enhance your coaching presence. A mentor coach helps you reflect on your coaching sessions and pinpoint opportunities to expand your coaching presence. Obtain client permission to record coaching sessions and review recordings with your mentor coach.
- Study coaching presence by reading articles and books, attending coaching workshops, journaling, and self-reflection.

Coaching presence is a paramount ICF core competency that enhances all ICF core competencies. Coaching presence requires you to be focused in the moment with your clients during coaching sessions.

If you are proficient in coaching presence, you will produce the possibility of inspiring your clients to attain greater presence, self-awareness, learning, and solutions. You gain coaching presence competency by committing to daily mindfulness practice, reflection, and study. •

NOTES

¹ coachfederation.org/core-competencies