



How to Close a Coaching Session

by Marcia Reynolds

"A new awareness must be clearly spoken for clients to build on it with actions."

Coaches often miss the opportunity to confirm clients will define and commit to an action at the best time – when a slight smile, gasp, or look of shock indicates they have landed on a truth or solution they had not seen before. A door has opened to a new way of seeing. The coach still needs to inquire how they will walk through the door.

Insights Must Be Spoken To Make Them Real

Insights can trigger guilt, embarrassment, or anger. Don't sympathize with or diminish the experience. They will breathe again. If they try to change the subject, share the emotion you noticed and asked what it meant to them. They may have trouble finding the words. Give them space with silence. Compassionately summarize what you hear. If you paraphrase their statements, invite them to accept, confirm, or change the statement so you can agree to what they mean.

They may need to talk about this new way of seeing themselves and the world around them, adjusting their perception to what they now see and know.

Once they indicate they are ready to move forward, ask if they want to look at what actions to take now or if they want to redefine what they want to achieve based on the insight they shared. The coaching may take on a new direction.

Ensuring Progress at the End

Without formally wrapping up the coaching session with a verbalized commitment to action, clients may forget what they thought they knew to do after the session ends. They might even lose the insight they had. They need to state the steps they will take and explore what could get in the way of implementing their plan to ensure progress.

Turn insights into action with these questions:

1. What will you do now?
2. By when?
3. What could get in the way of your commitment (which may lead to Plan B)?
4. What other support or resources will help?
5. What will you do if the results turn out differently than you planned?
6. Who do you see yourself being when you take the steps you are committing to now?

End by acknowledging the work the client did no matter their level of sharing. If they showed up and were willing to talk, they are still showing some willingness to find a way forward.

If this is an ongoing relationship, acknowledge the progress they have made. Appreciate them for sticking with coaching even when they are busy.

Ask if they feel complete to end the session.

THREE TIPS FOR ENSURING GROWTH AT THE END OF THE SESSION

1

When you notice a shift that indicates they just had an insight, Ask, "Would you share what just came to mind?" Use silence to allow them to form their thoughts. Follow up by asking, "What does this insight mean to what you said you wanted to change?" Make sure they clearly articulate their new awareness before moving on.

2

Insights could lead to defining a new outcome to achieve. Insights can also lead straight to actions. Ask clients to state what they are learning and how this impacts their desired outcome. Then invite them to choose what they want to do next. If they say they now know what they need to do, be sure they state the action, when they will do it, and what they will do if it doesn't turn out as planned.

3

Don't summarize action plans for your client. Ask them to state everything they said they wanted to do, one sentence for each commitment. You can fill in what they forgot. Always ask, "By when will you do this?" Wrapping up the session with a promise to do at least one thing, even to take time to think about it, strengthens their conviction to act when doubts or busyness creep in.