How to Coach Procrastination Transcript

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**SPEAKERS**

Jo Wheatley, Zoe Hawkins

**Jo Wheatley** 00:03

The Coaching Crowd podcast is for compassionate courageous leaders, HR professionals and high achievers, people who are passionate about helping others to find alignment in their lives through coaching, and do a thinking of training and developing as a coach. Hello, and welcome to the coaching cloud podcast with me, Zoe Hawkins and my friend and co host Jo Wheatley. Welcome, everybody. Today we're focusing on the topic of how to coach procrastination. And the reason that we're covering this topic is, clients often experience procrastination as they think about or working towards achieving their goals and coaches can experience procrastination when they are trying to work out how to support their clients who are experiencing procrastination. And it's a topic that has appeared in our coaching crowd group with coaches looking for support on it. So we thought we'd bring it to the podcast and explore around it. And hopefully that will stimulate some ideas for you.

**Zoe Hawkins** 01:00

Absolutely, and procrastination, I think it's one of those universal human experiences that we can all experience at some particular time. And so having different approaches, tools and strategies to be able to tackle procrastination is really important because what we often encounter around procrastination and coaching is that the default place to go is to support your clients with their actions and creating a plan. So when a client comes to a session and shares that they are procrastinating about a topic, that coaching can often remain at the surface level, and focusing more on the what are your options, and what are you going to do about it. And when you're going to do that, and almost nailing your client to the wall on the when and where they're going to get it done. And then holding that accountability focus to check back in with a client, once they've done those actions. Now, that can be really helpful. So let's not dishonour that approach, because sometimes that is exactly what clients need is they just need somebody in their corner. I remember when I was in the corporate world, if my line manager paid an interest in something that I was doing, and when I was gonna get it done by, I felt more motivated to get that done, because I knew that somebody else was involved in that journey with me and paying attention to that journey. So it felt different as to when I was basically responsible for doing something on my own. So sometimes that accountability partnership is a really important part of helping your clients with procrastination. However, it isn't the only strategy. So we're going to talk around the topic and a few other approaches that you can take. So where would you start with something that you work with Joe?

**Jo Wheatley** 02:44

Well, I think maybe we start just by talking about what is procrastination to check that we're all on the same page and when and how might it occur. And I think what we're talking about is we see procrastination as as a symptom. In our style of coaching, we'd like to get to the cause. And the reason we like to get to the root cause is because we want to help our clients to be able to learn how to self coach moving forward, and to be able to break any cycles that they might be in. So when we think about procrastination, I think what comes to mind is often the idea that somebody wants to do something, but for some reason that they're not doing it, they may have a plan. And they know what they want to do and how to achieve it. But for some reason, they're not doing it, they are remaining in the status quo situation, but actually in remaining in status quo. In many ways. They're also actually, you know, moving backwards, from from where their starting place was. And some people procrastinate because of fear, fear of failure, fear of rejection, fear of success, fear of who they will be or how they will be received. If they achieve the goal that they put their mind to, they might be concerned about what else will change. If I if I make this change here in my life, sometimes people procrastinate because they feel flooded by the choices that they've got in terms of actions, and they don't want to make the wrong choice around it. What other reasons can you think of so

**Zoe Hawkins** 04:21

I think there's probably burnout. You know, sometimes you're procrastinating from a protection place, and that I simply don't have the capacity or the energy to do anything else. So I'm just going to sit here and be stuck because it's safer for me right now to be stuck. So I think there's a burnout piece. I think there's maybe also a piece around clarity. So if I reflect back on times that I've supported clients with procrastination, it's often because they lack the clarity around what they're going to do. So even as you said you they might have the plan, and they might have the objective, but they don't really know how to get started. And so it can be something around the clarity of how they're going to execute on on that particular objective. And I'd also say, there may be something around trust, you know, so when you don't trust in yourself to be able to figure something out, or you're looking ahead at the size of the goal that you have, and, and you're in that place of like, well, I

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don't know how to do it, you sort of forget that, well, if I just take the first step, I have the resources to figure the rest of it out. So I think there's something about the relationship with self and trust that can be coming up when procrastination shows its face. Yeah. And that might be with a client seeking reassurance. And they might ask for reassurance from you as the coach, this is what I'm thinking about doing? What do you think about that? And, you know, there's that invitation for you to give them the answer. But would you truly be serving your client in doing that? Or how else might you handle that situation? And we can, we can talk about, we can talk about that. So how do we coach clients? Where? Well, I guess one thing to say is, the client might not realise that they're procrastinating.

**Jo Wheatley** 06:12

You know, so a client, you might be supporting them in your coaching questions in the session. And you might get a sense that there's a procrastination, there's a barrier there, the client that might not be in their awareness, or what they identify as doing. So in that situation, if you get the sense of, of that you can, of course, use things like asking, What are you noticing, right now, you could use your skills of observation and ask permission to share an observation. You know, I sense that as we get into the action phase of it, there's some sense of resistance. Is that your experience of that you share more with me about that? Good. Ask them, What patterns? Are you noticing in our conversation? And that then the client might say, Yeah, I've really enjoyed the conversations, were exploring my thinking and my plans. But I don't know if I'm actually going to go and take the action with it. So they again, they still might, might not label it as procrastination.

**Zoe Hawkins** 07:13

Yeah, and, and I know, we've, we've talked before about causes, but something that just came up for me then was around this values, misalignment. You know, I've been reflecting on working with clients that, as you've described, they're sort of talking about the issue. And they're setting some actions, but you've just consents that they aren't fully behind those actions. So what's happening there, you know, and, and that might be where you might do some work around their values. Even if you haven't had that experience, and the conversation with a client is bringing, oh, I am procrastinating about this task. And it's really starting to frustrate me, looking at their values can help the client to maybe explore, perhaps there's a conflict going on around their values, or perhaps what they're trying to achieve is out of sync with their values. And so that would be one of the starting places, you could look when supporting a client with procrastination. And of course, from there that leads on to I think you said in the outset, Joe around, who am I going to be like, if I do this task, and it takes off? Who will I be, so as well as values work, you could do some work on identity, you know, if that is something that has surfaced in, in the midst of your conversation, you can look at, okay, so if you work on this project, and you achieve that project, who will you be as you are achieving the project, or when you have achieved the project, and helping the client to step into that version of themselves, who has successfully achieved what it is that they are procrastinating about.

**Jo Wheatley** 08:46

And you can support them with cognitive behavioural coaching type approach. So, you know, what is it that you're thinking, whilst you're in this phase of procrastination, or, you know, holding back from taking the action however you want to? The client identifies with that feeling? And they'll share that with you. What are you? What are you feeling as a result of thinking that they'll share that with you? And what are you doing? And then for them to say, Well, I'm doing nothing, sometimes that creates a shift because they have to actually, you know, they're witnessed in that and then they're going to do a check. Is that who I am? Is that how I identify with myself that sometimes can unpick it? But then if not, you can move into so in order to achieve your goal of x, what would be a helpful thought for you to have? And if you thought that what would you be feeling and at that point, this feeling might shift from fear into excitement as an example. So if you thought that and you felt that what would you do and they might just say, I'm going to do it, you know, and that and that might be the thing and and then you might want to move into and how are you going to celebrate having taken that action? So it's quite a light touch. When I say light touch I mean you The questions are simple. But the good thing is it can help the client moving forwards because that type of structure, if the client understands what the process is that you've been through together, they can use that for themselves moving forwards when they notice that they're getting stuck, when actually they want to be moving forwards.

**Zoe Hawkins** 10:18

As you were talking there, something else that came up for me was the Gestalt cycle of awareness. And for any coaches, or coaches and training that aren't familiar with that, go and take a look at our YouTube channel, we've got a video walkthrough on the Gestalt cycle of awareness. But ultimately, that's about helping your client to identify where are they getting stuck? You know, so is it in the becoming aware of the fact that they're procrastinating in the first place and the emotions that might be present? So we talked about fear being one of those emotions? Is it in the mobilisation in the kind of gathering of the resources and getting ready to get started with a perhaps getting stuck there? Or is it in the in the taking of the action, you know, in? Is there something about the action that isn't aligned or right for them? So just helping the client to work out? Yes, you're procrastinating about this task, but which bits in particular, you know, where is the procrastination actually showing up for them? And how might they want them to be able to put the strategies in place for dealing with that part. And the piece that comes to mind for me here is, it's like the sensory side of things. Like sometimes you might be procrastinating because you're, you're bored, you've been in the same room for eight hours, you've got this long task list, you haven't stimulated your senses, enough to get yourself mobilised to do the next task. So that might be approaching approaching procrastination from more of a self care anger, like, right, I'm gonna, you know, go what would help your client, they get to decide, but some things your client might come up with would be like, going for a walk, you know, to get some fresh air and get some exercise and then coming back and tackling the task, perhaps their strategy for trying to get the things done that they want to get done, isn't working for them, and doesn't support what they need at that time. So you could look at it from a kind of sensory perspective as well.

**Jo Wheatley** 12:13

Yeah, in some ways, I think the procrastination is like the what somebody is, is doing. And then there's the the why are they why are they doing that? And how are they doing that? What is the strategy, and what is the outcome that they're achieving as a result of that, I want to spin it a little bit now. And consider what we touched upon at the start of this conversation, which is, a coach might come to supervision, and be bringing a dynamic with it with a client, where they don't recognise as a coach, that they are procrastinating in, you know, adjusting their approach with a client. But actually, maybe what they're doing is holding back from sharing something or flexing their approach in a way, which might be really helpful for the client. And they might sense that shift is needed, but they're holding back. And so I'd encourage those of you that are listening that are coaches to think about when does when and how does procrastination show up in my coaching sessions? And is there a pattern there? And what about those situations where clients might not describe that they're procrastinating? But you know, sometimes clients take a while to step into action? And there could be a whole load of reasons for that. But if they are, if there's an element or feeling of procrastination, does that ever leak into you? And you know, and your approach and those sessions and how could you use that information? So that's what we would call using your whole self. So if you start to notice that or a feeling of that yourself, and you're checking in, is this something that I normally feel in coaching sessions? Or is this this distinct to this particular coaching session? And then how might you bring that dynamic into your clients awareness, and to be able to work with it in your relationship with the client, which then helps them to deal with the procrastination or overcome the procrastination in the situation that's occurring outside of the coaching? conversation?

**Zoe Hawkins** 14:13

Yeah. So I guess one of the ways if you look at back to what we're talking about here, how would you support your client with procrastination is to be in supervision, and be able to talk through the dynamics in a safe space? Yeah, absolutely. And I think ultimately, what we're saying around procrastination is take the time to work through with your client, what they believe the real challenge is, what is the gap? So if their goal is to get the thing done? What is the thing that is in the way because yes, it looks like it's procrastination. Procrastination is just like the smoke screen. That's not That's not the thing that is in the way. You're looking for the root cause what is causing the procrastination in the first place? And that's the piece that you would do some coaching around. And so that might be belief work you either beliefs about the task in hand or beliefs about self. You know, we talked about failure, like fear of failure or fear of success, you might need to support the client with doing that. And I think the other piece that comes to mind is, is it procrastination about the task? Or is procrastination actually a theme? Like in your clients, life career, you know, awareness, because if it's a theme, that could be something totally different. So if they're procrastinating about everything, then what is that about? Because procrastinating about one task is different from procrastinating about everything that comes up in life. And that can lead you into lots of different places. But ultimately, your conversations need to be client LED. So this isn't about you suggesting the reasons why they might be procrastinating, it's about supporting your client in building their awareness through the power of your questioning.

**Jo Wheatley** 16:03

Yeah, and it could be that the client is focused so much on a particular thing to do that they're procrastinating on that what they've what they don't have is the how does this fit into the bigger picture. Because while somebody might not be meeting, motivated to make a phone call, because for a whole load of reasons, if they actually could link it to a goal that they really were super motivated to, then all of a sudden making that phone call might be something that they stop procrastinating on actually take the action around it. So it's worth exploring about, you know, zooming in and zooming out to be able to see the relationship to it. And the other thing I would encourage you to do is sit in the procrastination with your client. Because it's so easy as a coach when the client says, I just want to get on and do X, and I just keep procrastinating about it. I just want to do that. And it's easy to get caught up in their frustrated energy and also for it to provoke that right, we need to solve this quick. Right? So have you got a plan? Oh, no, not really, okay, well, let's create a plan. And that's what you were talking about at the beginning of the conversation. So and there is a there is a time and a place for that if it's something that the client wants to work on. But we would encourage you as a coach to to kind of just do a 360 You know, check around all of the different things that we have talked about in this conversation. And it's almost in a way the antithesis of procrastination is almost the thing itself is taking the time having the patience to explore and to not clued into the fear of procrastination, but actually to engage with it as a clue as a piece of information, something to get curious and fascinated by.

**Zoe Hawkins** 17:46

Yeah, and asking the procrastination. What are you here for? What is it that you need? You know, what can I learn from you?

**Jo Wheatley** 17:54

Who who are you friends with?

**Zoe Hawkins** 17:57

Hmm, yeah, so some fascinating stuff that you can do. So if you've enjoyed today's episode, please do rate and subscribe to the podcast if that's possible from where you're listening from. And please leave us a review. I think you can do that on Apple or possibly even Spotify now. So thanks for listening, and we'll be back next week with another episode. Thank you for listening to the coaching crowd podcast with Zoe Hawkins and Jo Wheatley. We'd love for you to join our inclusive community to learn and grow in the coaching space. Go over

**Jo Wheatley** 18:31

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