Overcoming barriers to learning final edit

Sun, Jan 22, 2023 7:56PM • 21:53

**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

programmes, learning, barriers, coaching, people, learners, coach, resistance, podcast, beliefs, achieve, engage, enable, feel, building, training, safety, educators, create, experience

**SPEAKERS**

Zoe Hawkins, Jo Wheatley

**Zoe Hawkins** 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.

**Jo Wheatley** 00:19

Hello, and welcome to the coaching crowd podcast with me, Jo Wheatley, and my friend and co host Zoe Hawkins.

**Zoe Hawkins** 00:27

Hi, everybody. Thanks for joining us again today. And this week, we are talking about overcoming barriers to learning. And the reason we're bringing this to you today is because obviously we are educators, we spend a lot of time training people and helping people to overcome their individual barriers to learning through our training programmes. And also coaching is about helping people to overcome the barriers that they may have in their own personal learning journeys. So that they can go on to achieve their coaching outcomes. So we're just going to share with you some of what the barriers are that we see and some thoughts and ideas around supporting people to move through those. So where would you begin, Jo?

**Jo Wheatley** 01:05

Well, when we're talking earlier, we created quite a list of barriers or potential barriers to learning beliefs, I think covers quite a few of those. So people have beliefs about their capability. So whether or not they believe that they have the intellectual capacity or capability to be able to do something, whether they have got the capability to fit it into their lives, what they believe about the safety for them of entering into, for us when we think about our coaching training programmes entering into that learning environment. But if we think about it in the context of a coaching conversation, a coaching conversation, is a space for learning. It's about learning about self, it's about learning about our place in the world, our identity, how we relate to others, how we relate to the wider world, and the idea of shifting our identity in some way can feel very unsafe. So our beliefs about safety will naturally determine whether it's a barrier for our learning or an enabler. And also think our beliefs about whether we fit in whether we belong, or whether whether we perceive ourselves as learners, it's probably a good place to start.

**Zoe Hawkins** 02:29

And I think you've picked off some really meaty ones to start there. And I think you did. And I might rewind a bit and actually say that many of the barriers to learning are invisible. So you know, being able to start with beliefs, there's an assumption there that the learners going to perhaps know that the beliefs they hold, whereas actually many of these are going to be unconscious, it's, it's highly unlikely that everybody coming in to learning or returning to learning will have a very clear idea of the beliefs that they're going to come up against, or what is holding them back from stepping into that learning space in the first place. And I think as practitioners and coaches, we can help our clients to identify what is the resistance, you know, like, I hear that this is important to you, what is it that you're coming up against, that might be in your way, and really helping clients to make contact with those pieces that are in the way because it's be those pieces, which are likely to point to beliefs. And I think that safety that you mentioned, is a really big one, because it might not just be about the safety of learning and belonging, it might also be What does change represent. So if you are in a here, and now it's predictable, you know who you are in this space, you know who you are in the communities that you belong to. And if you desire to make changes, you might want that with every core of your being. And yet, if you are to embark on that goal, and that is going to mean change for you. You may not be able to know who am I in this new reality that I plan to create. And that can be really unsettling. And, you know, it's somewhere in your unconscious be like that doesn't feel safe, I'm not gonna go there. And so as coaches, when we hear clients, you know, talk animatedly about their goals, also acknowledge there's probably resistance in there, you know, on some level, perhaps their goal is isn't as big as what it could be because there's a resistance to making it even bigger, perhaps due to various emotions that that might invoke. So they're talking around the houses, but I think just acknowledging that actually, a lot of the resistance and barriers to learning is likely to be unconscious for our clients.

**Jo Wheatley** 04:47

And they're not necessarily facts. So they're not necessarily real. They're often perceived, and that sometimes is about what we believe other people's perceptions of us would be if we were to commit to working with a coach or to train him to be a coach, for example, and would we still be accepted and fit into our social circles, if we were to do this, and I think related to that is the sometimes we have a feeling inside us, which is, and I think, you know, when it comes to doing a coaching training programme, which we know is personally transformational, as well as professionally transformation is, is a underlying belief that I know that if I do this, lots of other things are going to change in my life, because it's quite likely that I will resign from my job, or that I will put greater boundaries in my life and some of my relationships will change. So by making this decision, I'm also making a number of other decisions in the short, medium, and longer term and, and that could feel overwhelming, it could feel really exciting. So again, that that that line between whether something is a barrier or an enabler really depends on what we believe to be the truth and the consequences related to that. And resistance shows up in terms of learning in different ways. So, you know, on our coaching, training programmes, sometimes the resistance shows up in almost like a rejection of the learning that's on offer, because it doesn't feel safe. But that may also be part of the individual's cycle of learning that resistance is for them a part of that process. And there's a whole emotional flow that goes around that for them. And, you know, sometimes resistance might be staying quiet. It might be, you know, actually fitting in making a real effort to fit in and not speaking up with the thoughts or, or the questions and enabling the true potential of the learning to occur. Yeah,

**Zoe Hawkins** 06:51

what you've just left me with there in terms of thinking is that withholding, you know, what resistance can be about withholding, and sometimes that is about not asking for help, you know, so recognising that, okay, so let's say you engage in, in learning, either engaging with a coach or engaging on like a training programme, like we run, recognising that you're struggling, but withholding that information trying to keep up with perhaps the peer learners or expectations that you feel are set upon you. Because if you felt that you were to ask for help, that somehow, you would have failed or you wouldn't belong, or, you know, whatever story that you might tell yourself that fits with that. And that's often about safety and protection and acceptance and things. But I think there's lots of examples that I can think of, on our programmes where when people do you recognise, this is hard, I could really do with some additional support. And they've reached out for that additional support, and it is met by us in a very welcoming way, and with full, unconditional acceptance, that the relief just sort of floods through, you know, that their whole being and finally, they can relax in and enjoy the learning experience in the knowledge that of course, their needs are valid, and their needs can be accepted.

**Jo Wheatley** 08:11

Yeah, sometimes that fear of failure or fear of not being good enough is what stops people from either engaging in the learning or completing the learning, you know, so you might have a client in a coaching relationship, and they, they might actually withdraw from the coaching relationship, because that fear has become so big for them, that, that there's almost a rejection of the learning and all of that that would entail and I think, you know, in our coaching programmes, it's about acknowledging that that's where we spend time creating and building the psychological safety within the group and the understanding of that emotional experience that, that people are going to go through that it's going to be all of the emotions at different points on the programme, and as you said, so they are all valid.

**Zoe Hawkins** 09:03

There's lots of barriers, I think, to learn when I think back, like, I've always been very fortunate in the way that I approach learning, I bet school, you know, academia came easily to me, I didn't have any, you know, additional challenges. And I think that when you when you have that it's easy to forget that not everybody experiences learning in some way. And so as an educator, you know, you and I have had to work very hard to make sure that our programmes are accessible and are adaptable to the needs of the various needs of people. And that can be needs from, you know, neuro divergence through to actually not having been in formal learning for, you know, 40 plus years and that that distance from when you were last in contact with formal study can be a barrier in itself. And I think, you know, for us and all other training providers out there, it's it's a responsibility on us to reduce the barriers and As much as we can to enable people to access learning when they are in a place where they're ready, willing, and able to. And now course, other practical barriers might be around time, and finances, and there's, there's less we can do with those. But I think in terms of the ability to have the opportunity to engage in the learning process in the learning programmes, and to achieve the goals that the learner sets themselves, you know, that's something we're very passionate about in our business.

**Jo Wheatley** 10:33

While I think it just underlines the reason that we got into coaching in the in the first place, really, which is around enabling people to be able to design and achieve the lives that they want to achieve, and to have hope, you know, within that, and accessibility is a fundamental part of that. So that's why we're also say passionate about that. And even in that practical sense, we were talking earlier today about me about we've had an inquiry from somebody in New Zealand that wants to do our courses. And when we looked at the timings, the the courses are not available at convenient times. And so we're like, right, okay, what can we do about this to enable somebody to be able to access it? How can we put on a programme? And what would we need to do to make that viable option for us, I think part of is always having that open heart ourselves. And that willingness and, and excitement about learning and growing and developing and, and being able to look inwards at ourselves, as we go through that process, because it enables us to connect with more people as well.

**Zoe Hawkins** 11:39

Yeah, and actually, that it reminds me it was probably midway through this year, maybe early part of last year, where somebody contacted us to say, I your show notes are great, but actually, I'd prefer a transcript of the podcast because the, you know, either hard of hearing, I can't fully access your podcasts or transcript really make it better for me to be able to follow along whilst I'm listening. And so we were able to adapt, get the transcripts. And now the transcripts of the podcasts are available. And I think it comes replace that you know what, there's always more that we and other coaches and other business owners can do to open up accessibility. And it's brilliant when people ask for things. Because yes, we can take a personal responsibility to open up access, and also acknowledge that we don't have full awareness of everybody's needs. So when people really dig in and own their needs and make those requests, as you said, we meet them with an open heart and an open mind. Yeah, and I think as practitioners and coaches, it's useful to have that lens, when we engage in whether that's a group programme that you're running, or it's a one to one session, it's actually what can we do, in order to overcome different the different and varying and vast barriers to learning and for each of us as practitioners that might look different.

**Jo Wheatley** 13:04

trauma can also be something that can be a barrier to learning for people. And that's something that the individual may be aware of, or it might be something that is new for them. And that's about how they've experienced something rather than focusing on on, like the cause of that. And so, if they, if people have had a bad experience, for example, in education, in their, you know, in their upbringing, maybe they've experienced bullying at school, or maybe they've had a teacher that used to pick them out, or they felt exposed, you know, in that kind of setting in that way that can become a barrier. Because when they think about learning, again, that's something that is associated with that. So, you know, being able to identify that. And then whether that's about reassurance, developing a good relationship, lots of contact, you know, with us, let's say as the facilitators and needing more reassurance and contracting and safety building in, or maybe it's something that somebody's like, actually, I want to go away and work on this, this is a goal for me to do this. But I recognise this is something that, you know, I need to work on in order to enable me to come and access this. I remember when I was I mean, I met we met when we were doing our masters, and obviously we had to do a dissertation and, you know, I'm somebody that academically here's to achieved or has achieved, you know, good grades, etc, etc. But when it comes to when it came to doing that dissertation, it was panic. I felt just incapable of doing it complete and utter mental block tearful thinking, How on earth am I going to do this and then when you put that alongside the but but this is what you know, people would expect to view and you know, the inner scripts, maybe our must do well, and what that took for me was to be able to have a conversation with the course tutor which felt like a massive thing to do to be able to say what you have to say, I don't know what to do with this. I can't do it. How do people do it? And knowing that I couldn't say it in any other way, then actually, I'm terrified right now. And then actually just very simple, very kind hearted programme managed to lecture. You don't need to create anything new. And I might put this and she's like, You don't you just need to add one extra thing. I'm like, really? Are you? Sure? So if I did this, would that be enough? Yes, absolutely. Like, oh, okay, fine, I can do that. Off I go.

**Zoe Hawkins** 15:32

Yeah, shout out to the wonderful Beryl Badger, who was a wonderful course leader. And then you went and bagged yourself an award on that master's programme as well. Yeah. But

**Jo Wheatley** 15:40

the but it was a real I, you know, I experienced that as a barrier. And sometimes it's also when people have this narrative of being high achievers, that it can be frightening to engage and put yourself into a new field of learning. Because when people come to coaching, often it feels like it's an a bridge, you know, they're going off in a new direction now. So back to not knowing anything. And part of the reassurance we give is that everything that you've done, and that you've learned is relevant to the learning that you're about to engage in now. So I think back to what we talked about before, it's about as an individual being able to really connect into what are your needs. And I think, as adult learners, we need to recognise, we still don't know our own needs many of us as adults, yet, there seems to be an expectation because we are adults, we will know what we need. And I think it's important to say that it's also okay, if you don't know what you need, and if something shows up for you, at any point, whether that's on coaching training with us, or in a coaching relationship with me or you as an individual. Of course, it may be new information for you, maybe new information for us, let's have a conversation about it and see, see what the possibilities are for for us to be able to, to create something new, and then it becomes it goes from being fearful to being exciting.

**Zoe Hawkins** 17:03

Yeah, and I think the other end of the continuum, we see a lot of learners who didn't have brilliant schooling, for whatever reason, and they carry with them the bag of I'm not a good learner, you know, I do not do well, in assessments, I do not write well enough, the quality of my writing isn't of the standard. And, you know, I was working with one of our learners very recently, on their first assignment for our coaching qualification. And when they achieved the path that they needed for that qualified, they were able to shed like a whole history of, of that story that they were telling themselves because who we are, as resourceful adults, is not the same person that we were, as, you know, a struggling teenager, or, you know, or somebody where, you know, we were who we were, but we're in the wrong environment. And now we are who we are, and we're in a different environment, we've chosen to be there. And it's an a topic that we're passionate about, and your, your learning self, if you like, can experience that and perform in a very different way, when you're at choice with how you want to approach that. And it's something you said a few moments ago, Joe around, you know, obviously the the trauma and different barriers that people experienced. And I think, as if we take the commercial aspect back in, so as practitioners when we're looking to tell people about our services, so obviously, a barrier, maybe they don't want to, they don't want to make that engagement in the first place. I think that's where free resources come in. So things like this podcast, free downloads from your website, our YouTube channel, Facebook groups, there, however you build the structure of your business, that is about removing barriers to entry, it's about people being able to develop trust and confidence in you as a coach in us as educators to think yeah, do you know what I think these are the people who can support me, with my goals with my learning journey, I'm building more and more confidence each time I make contact with, you know, their podcast, their Facebook group, their free resources, whatever it might be. So it's not all about marketing and sales funnels. It's not about it's not entirely about that. It's actually about building the relationship from the early outset, giving people the trust and confidence in us that they can overcome the barriers that they might have to making that initial contact.

**Jo Wheatley** 19:30

We don't approach this from a we have all of the answers perspective because we don't each individual is completely unique. So what we what we simply say is it is our job to help you get over the line. You know, when it comes to the coaching qualification, that's our responsibility to help you and to and to be that portal between the accrediting bodies and what they require and you as the learner and we really want to make it as simple as possible, as streamlined as possible, so that it can be the most enjoy people experience that it's not a tick boxing exercise, but actually that what you're doing along the way you understand the purpose of it and how it is supporting you to become a great learner. And we will be side by side with you, as you go along that way, however long it's going to take, you will just break it down bit by bit so that you're feeling you know, that progression and as you so beautifully described, so that in the end, actually, that some things can kind of melt away. So actually, that what the person wants to achieve, and what they do achieve, ultimately ends up representing so more than they ever realised it could be and would be for them in the beginning. And then that's where we've got the beauty of learning because learning is so much more than, than learning the thing or the fact or the skill itself. It's about how we enable learners and people that connect with us on our programmes to find the joy in the learning process itself.

**Zoe Hawkins** 21:01

Yeah, absolutely. So, if any of that reassures you, and you think yeah, let's give some learning ago this year, then come and check out our website where you can find details of our courses at IG company.co.uk. And if you're already a coach thinking that some CPD activity is what you need to ignite your inner learner, then come and take a look at our website again, which is IG company dot code at UK forward slash emotions coaching.

**Zoe Hawkins** 21:26

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 to Facebook and search for the coaching crowd to be in good company with other aspiring

**Jo Wheatley** 21:46

coaches.