Episode 106 Coaching and Spirituality

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**SPEAKERS**

Jo Wheatley, Zoe Hawkins

**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** 00:22

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. Great to be here again for another episode. And this week, we're talking to you about spirituality and coaching. And one of the reasons we're doing this is I put a post on LinkedIn recently about a psychic development course that I'm starting, which had quite a lot of visibility, lots of comments and support. And it came from a place for me a feeling quite reserved around sharing more around my spiritual journey. And actually, people were asking questions about, let us know how you get on. And so we thought, let's do a podcast episode around spirituality and coaching because it seems like a topic that people are interested in and grabbing people's attention.

**Jo Wheatley** 01:08

Yeah, so So shall we start with? What do we mean by spirituality?

**Zoe Hawkins** 01:12

We can certainly try. We had a go, didn't we, as we brief these episodes in two, and that was our first stumbling block around how actually, do you define spirituality? Because I think it is quite a personal experience. My experience of spirituality, as we know from our conversations is different to your definition of spirituality. But I think where we wanted to start was honouring that spirituality isn't necessarily about religion. There are people who are religious who also recognises that spiritual. For me personally, it's not about religion, it's about a connection to something that exists beyond the current reality that I am aware of. And I don't have all the answers about spirituality, I think that's one of the pieces that is fascinating. For me, it's a it's a place that I go to, to learn and explore, and helps me in my personal development. But as we talk about spirituality, we also want to honour and respect that everybody's definition of spirituality and how they come to either be spiritual or not, is absolutely valid, because that is just the journey that each and every one of us are on.

**Jo Wheatley** 02:24

Yeah, I think spirituality for me is that recognition of being connected or believing that I have this connection to something that's bigger than me, you know, that the world doesn't start and end with me and my everyday experiences, but that there, there are other forces at play other things that I could tap into, and, and how is that relevant to coaching? Well, coaching is very much about beliefs, you know, having a sense of purpose in life, you and I often talk about coaching as having an a healing element to it. And hope, I think, is also key to coaching and successful coaching. And when I think about spirituality, for me, when I, you know, make a conscious effort even to connect into my own sense of spirituality, it's often from an energy of hope, when I'm seeking something more I'm seeking, I'm almost seeking some sort of message, you know, and so clients, some clients will come very connected to a sense of spirituality, or with religious beliefs that inform the goals that they have, or the plans that they have to achieve them. And coaches to obviously have their own sets of beliefs and sources of inspiration ways to engage in the energy needed to be a great coach with our clients. And we know that coaching is very much about how do we build rapport with our clients? How do we honour their values and belief systems? And what does it mean for our own, whilst being in relationship together?

**Zoe Hawkins** 04:06

I kind of want to go back to the beginning of our relationship when spirituality comes up, because I remember the day that we first met, and I think we've talked about this before, but we actually met on our masters. We were studying in Plymouth at the time doing our Personnel and Development masters. And I was late walking into the room. And as I walked into that room, and there were, I can't really remember how many people let's say 20 people all sat around this, you know, fairly beige room with lots of tables. And I remember walking in to that room. And feeling like I knew you already and I might have caught you out of the corner of my eye and it was like a sensation of like, oh, like a familiarity like she's here didn't know who you were never seen you before in my life. And you had the same experience. And then soon as there was a break, we gravitated towards each other. And that was basically the beginning of what you are hearing today. There's something spiritual about that encounter for me that I kind of knew back then was unusual, or special, or strange. But as my connection to spirituality has developed, I would go so far as to say, we've done this work before, like, this is soul work that we do. And in many ways, we are soul partners. And so as I connect into that, obviously, that's relevant to coaching in a sense of the work that we do together, is purpose work. It's weld work, it's life work. And there's almost like a meant to be concept around it. Now, if I took spirituality aside, I could still say all of those things, it just wouldn't be through the lens of spirituality, it would be through the lens of rapport and relationship and fulfilment, and personal growth and all of those things. But so I think for me, when I come to think of spirituality, it's like another layer, it's another lens, or another perspective that I can take on my life, my world. And my reason for being here and doing what I do.

**Jo Wheatley** 06:12

Connection seems to be the word that comes up repeatedly, or we talk about spirituality, doesn't it like a connection to things beyond ourselves? And I think it's also relevant to how to empathy relationship building. And obviously, that's part of the fundamental nature of coaching or the competencies, which is around, how do you very quickly build intimacy in your relationship between coach and coachee? Because often, the programmes that Kichi is going to engage with are actually very short in nature, if you take the average programme, let's say six, one hour or six hour and a half sessions, if that was an average, and we know there's lots of different formats, so only about nine hours together. So you're talking about a day. And when we think about the levels of transfer transformation that our clients have experienced or shared with us, it's mind blowing, really to think that that is possible in the equivalent of a day's work, when for many people, they've been on a certain pathway for the whole life up until that point, and desiring a change for for quite a period of time. And so it does feel for me, there's always been that fascination in human behaviour that, you know, it's not, it's not always logical. And so therefore, if it isn't always logical, what is it? And, as you all know, we are, for us, emotions are a big, you know, big part of our universal human experience. And we see them as being a great source of strength, and wisdom. And when you're probably here, like on our courses and content that there is this sense of, of always this sense of connection to something beyond that, but it's about how what we're thinking about today is how, how and why might you explore your own relationship with spirituality? What does it mean for you, and how might it resource you as a coach, in the work that you do, and we think that an obvious area is in terms of your own well being as a coach. So I think that is around how you orientate yourself and prepare for the sessions, like energetically connecting to the clients experience of the world, but also pay session and, you know, think about meditation, or yoga, you know, all sorts of different practices that can help you to process experiences and prevent things from getting trapped, if you like in your body. Sometimes we have very strong experiences with a client in a session. And we hear from coaches that, that we supervise that sometimes they can find it difficult to completely let go of everything that has happened in a session,

**Zoe Hawkins** 08:49

when you talk around spirituality being a connection to something out there, I think that's one version. And part of something, I think there's a big part of spirituality that is also about connection to self. And I think that is essentially what we facilitate as coaches is that igniting of the inner coach that connection to self, who I am, what I need, what I am here for in the context of purpose. And my spiritual journey began when I was doing personal development work, and I felt drawn to do a programme on intuition. At the time, I didn't really even know what intuition was a great deal but I unexpectedly ended up doing some hypnosis work as part of this programme that was around connection to self removal of self doubt and igniting in a trust and things like that. And that is what started a spiritual awakening for me. So shortly after I did that programme, unusual things started happening and that's what kick started this spiritual awareness for me. But I think when we bring that back into coaching, what we Our facilitating with our clients is that connection and peace, I think with who we are. So if we think about it through the context of developing inner peace and working on beliefs that are no longer serving us and coming to know our values, all of which is fairly mainstream coaching, that in itself, if you look through a spiritual lens can be seen as healing and fostering a deeper connection. And I think it can be helpful if you're inclined around spirituality to take a look through that lens to explore what does that mean, as you said, for me, and for my development, and for my ongoing interests and growth.

**Jo Wheatley** 10:45

And I've put spirituality on my wheel of life before, you know, if I come back and revisit, like, what's important to me in my life, how, you know, content or satisfied, am I in those areas? And yeah, there's a lot of areas that stay very similar on that, but there's one or two sections for me that that will swap in and out with different things. And I, you know, like I have this sense that I've put it on there, not even really knowing what it means to me, but knowing that it's important. And, and also knowing that it's not a 10. So, you know, that curiosity around it. And I think also shared the experience before when people say, you know, how do you, you know, Coach your clients? And I think the way that I describe it, perhaps without realising, is that there is that, you know, when I talk about channelling the clients, it's like, well, what is that? What does that really mean? And for me, it's like, spiritual, it's when you can't put it into words, like, you can't see it. I can't, you wouldn't be able to see it. If you were, you know, watching me, I know, I'm doing something. But I, it's hard for me to explain what it is I describe it as channelling clients. But as we say, we talk about the energy, how do you as a coach, how conscious are you of your energy, your clients energy, that energy exchange, the external energetic influences, you know, that might show up? You know, we can all talk about when you almost sense the presence of somebody else in the conversation that you're having that person isn't physically present there. How do you explain that, that is something that perhaps, as coaches or as individuals, we consider our beliefs that, you know, as a filter for our experiences. And you and I were talking earlier about this concept of power, in terms of connecting to spirituality, and that can be quite surprising. I think it was when we were talking about that earlier, like, what about power and spirituality? Oh, is that comfortable? or uncomfortable? Like, can we accept that? Is that okay, what do we do with it? And, you know, some of the work that you do with clients will be about them recognising and stepping into their own power, or recognising the power that they don't have, you know, currently, perhaps with systemic influences on that, and what does that mean for them, and, you know, moving as they move forward towards their goal,

**Zoe Hawkins** 13:09

I remember a client coming to supervision, and they bought a client, who they were working with, you had very strong spiritual beliefs. And as the coach was listening to the client, sharing their spiritual beliefs, they could, or their, their interpretation was that spiritual beliefs were either getting in the way of or being used as an excuse for how they couldn't achieve their goal. It beliefs like, I can't remember the exact ones, but it was in the essence of power, and that the client, it wasn't the client who had the power. It was a you know, I can't remember which faith it was, but let's say it was God that had the power and God would provide and God would do these things. You know, so, um, you know, that was a way that this particular coach was seeing the spiritual beliefs coming up and navigating, do I challenge? Do I not do I honour like, how do I work with that in coaching? And I think where that client got to, was that they wouldn't be doing their role if they didn't observe it to offer back, you know, so they contracted around, is it okay for me to challenge and share what I see from the seat of the coach, in order for you to take a look, and actually the client was receiving of that, and I don't they didn't change their beliefs, but they did find a way to empower themselves without the beliefs kind of being in the way so I think when you when spirituality actually genuinely shows up in a coaching session. As the coach you may need to be able to work with that from a place of deep respect for the client but also in service of, of the client's goals and objectives at that time.

**Jo Wheatley** 14:54

We see some of the language appear when we think about Neuro Linguistic Programming is you know, a psychology that we that coaches can draw from. So if we think about logical levels, so Robert Dilts activity and you've got, you know, identity, higher purpose, you've got beliefs, you have a higher purpose and often clients, like, What do you mean by higher purpose. And so we will then offer a variation. So we might say, you know, the reason that you think you're here in this world or the legacy that you want to create, so language can be a blocker, I think, sometimes, for people in terms of connecting to, like a higher sense. We see it in other fields. So think about Gestalt and the idea of wholeness. You know, foreground and background, and there's a lot I think, present within Gestalt. And I remember when I discovered Gestalt, when I was doing my original coach training, I just felt a sense of coming home. I'm like, this is, I suppose it's a thirst for experience, or, or like new perspective, but also open mindedness is really, when I think about spirituality, for me, I do think about open mindedness. And I think about, you know, it's very much related to values, I think, for lots of people as well. And we know that, you know, as coaches, we help clients to be able to identify that their values, consider how their goals and their plans are aligned to their values. So, you know, we'll see different elements of it in, in things that you might not yet have thought about as being influenced in that way.

**Zoe Hawkins** 16:36

Yeah, and somatic coaching would be another one, the whole concept of energy, you know, and energy being exchanged, you know, between the coach and coachee, and around the coach. And he and I have been in sessions where, typically, if I'm facilitating transformational sessions using NLP techniques and breakthrough, and I'll be working through a process with a client, and they will experience a physical and energetic release of energy. And I have received that, like, I have experienced that too. Now that you don't have to look at it through a spiritual lens, I typically didn't. And don't look at that through a spiritual lens, I look at that through the lens of connection, you know, and energy and emotion. But if you look at that through a spiritual lens, you know, its present, isn't it like spirituality is about energy. We know coaches who are also Reiki healers, and they will be channelling Reiki energy, whilst they are coaching their clients, you know, and there are people who have knishes, around different corners of spirituality like crystal healing or angel communication, you know, you can go to the, to the edges, and find coaches with spiritual practices. And I think I remember being in a community, it may have been our community where spirituality has been talked about as woowoo. And somebody stepped in and was like, let's honour the ancestral linkages around spirituality like woo woo can dishonour cultural heritage that is present in so many different cultures, where it isn't seen as a wacky woowoo throw away thing, it's actually ingrained within how we do life and who we are, and the inherent beliefs that we hold in our culture. And I think that's really important to honour as well that even if you yourself aren't connected to your own spirituality or sense of spirituality, other people will be clients will be and how do we create inclusivity and safety in in our coaching offers and spaces, by just being able to honour the difference that each and every one of us can bring?

**Jo Wheatley** 18:56

Yeah, it's so important. And when I think about reflective practice, so our own reflective practice, as coaches, really what we do in coaching is we help our clients to reflect as well on their experiences and so on. And to make sense of them ever thinking about like, Carol, I think it's Carol's zones of reflection. And the sixth one, I think it is, is about this transcendental zone of reflection. And when we share these kinds of concepts with our coaches in training with us, it feels very, very stretchy to them, you know, so they can recognise, you know, the first layer, they can recognise, it can make contact with the second layer, but as we start to get up into third, fourth, fifth and sixth, it's kind of like, whoa, that's, that's just so far out. What does that even mean? And I think our role is to hold a space for the conversation about that. What does it mean? What could it mean? How might that be helpful to you, as a coach, how might it be helpful? to your clients that you're in service of, in the coaching relationship, and I think about you and I are both coaching supervisors. And you know, how is coaching different to supervision? You know, there's, that's a big question in itself. And I think there is a space within supervision, to be able to help coaches to connect more to these maybe more unexplored parts of themselves and, and how that might be in, in service of their clients. And you and I've signed up to supervision as a spiritual practice course, because we are interested in, we're always interested in developing ourselves, because we believe that in continuing to develop ourselves, we can hold or create bigger spaces for our clients, which can create the opportunity for a greater transformation if our clients, you know, wish to within within that space, whereas you say, we can honour or that they are or that they can be or that they have been, and also all those before them. And I think I put on a post recently about the ebb and flow of trainee coaches that we have coming into, like our spaces, you know, we kind of metaphorically wrap our arms around them, and they finish their coaching training. And they're off out into doing the coaching practice supported by supervision, and we're welcoming in new cohorts. And I think I wrote something about it, because I really felt it is that all of our previous cohorts are present in the next cohort. And I really do feel that again, it's hard to explain how that is. But for me, that's partly because I am open to being changed by the contact that I have with other people. And I feel a responsibility to honour their experience in and kind of like, you know, pay things forward. Maybe not very articulate way of describing it. But there is a I think there is an element of spirituality in in that and we can talk about it as coaching through a systemic lens. And I think it, it is connected to that, because I believe that everything is interconnected. And I'm an open to exploring that. But I also think that they are distinct as well,

**Zoe Hawkins** 22:12

on my journey of learning around spirituality. One of the people who I have come to align with is a spiritual practitioner called Kyle grey. He's all about angels and angelic communication. But one of the things that comes to mind as you were talking there is that he essentially would describe spirituality, I think, as the energy of love. And I think that is ultimately what what many coaches come to coaching for, in different clouds, right, you come to make an impact, you come to help others, you come to create a legacy, you come to make a difference. But ultimately, that is in the energy of love, and gratitude. And I think that's probably a nice way to summarise what spirituality and coaching and where that comes together, is in the place of service, you know, service of others. And I think that comes from a place of love and appreciation.

**Jo Wheatley** 23:09

Yeah, and we're continuing our exploration of that. And I think what's new for us baby is that we're starting to explore it together, you know, by like, we love to engage in CPD together, don't we, because we feel that when we do that, actually, it's the conversations that come out of that in, you know, just in time and afterwards that that you can only really have by somebody else's had a similar experience by being in the same place. And I remember you sharing some of your experiences in this area with me for the first time not that long ago, when we were on a business, like on a retreat, a business retreat. And so I think that just reflects how emergent, it is still for you and I and I think it's important to share that with those of you that are listening to us today.

**Zoe Hawkins** 23:56

I'm absolutely no expert on the topic of spirituality. You know, as a learner, I'm really enjoying exploring a new avenue of, of spirituality and what that means for me and what that means for my practice and where that might show up in coaching. And that's an unexpected journey. You know, that's not something I expected to come into my path, but it has done and it's bought a new a new fascination. And for anybody who wants to hear more about my spiritual journey, I do share more snippets over on Instagram. So you can find me at Zoe Hawkins coach on Instagram, where I share more of that. So you're welcome to come and be nosy in more of the personal angles of my life over there. So if you've enjoyed this particular podcast, please stay tuned, do like and subscribe to the podcast. We'll be back every single Monday with new episodes and new topics for you to learn from. So thanks for being here and see you again soon. Thank you for listening to the coaching call. Are podcast with Sally Hawkins and Joe Wheatley. We'd love for you to join our inclusive community to learn and grow in the coaching space.

**Jo Wheatley** 25:06

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