Group Coaching Transcript

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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** 00:20

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

**Zoe Hawkins** 00:27

we're here for another episode. And this week, we're talking about group coaching. We know that many people that come through our coaching training programmes go on to want to extend their coaching skills, intergroup environments, and naturally, is the progression from one to one coaching intergroup settings. So we wanted to share with you some of our thoughts around what's different some ideas and really provide some inspiration for those of you who are thinking about group coaching, or if that's on your, on your radar. So that is what we're going to bring you today.

**Jo Wheatley** 00:58

Yeah, and I think the thing with group coaching is, it's not totally different from one to one coaching, you're going to draw on all of the knowledge and skills and experience that you have. And then there are naturally some nuances and practicalities to be able to think through. One of the reasons it's a natural progression for coaches is from a business model perspective. So if you've got one client paying you for an hour or an hour and a half of your time, or you've got eight coaches paying you for that it has two benefits. One is you're gonna earn more money in that same amount of time. And the other is it can make the coaching more accessible, because it's often a lower price for coaches wanting to have group coaching. So that is a big draw. And alongside that, of course, is the opportunity to make an even bigger difference in the world by being able to coach many, many, many more people than you can in a one to one coaching session. And of course, that is the driver for people that are drawn to work as coaches is to help and support as many people as possible to live the lives that they desire to live.

**Zoe Hawkins** 02:11

One of the things we hear a lot when bringing groups together for coaching is how empowered they feel just hearing that they are not alone in whatever challenge it is, or whatever struggle it is that they're experiencing at that times a group coaching really has an additional benefit to it beyond the one to one that the people who are participating in group coaching, really get that sense of belonging and not feeling isolated in their challenge. And it helps them to open up even more when obviously the ground is set. So we should probably start by talking a bit about what group coaching is because I know that there's there can be lots of different ideas and formats. And I don't think there is one particular way you do group coaching. But maybe we share a few examples that would be helpful. Some of the earliest group coaching that Joe and I got involved in was actually through some university work where we were engaged on supporting undergraduate students who were looking to gain industrial placements in a number of different coaching workshops to help them to make decisions around where they wanted their undergraduate placement to be. And to help them with the mindset around securing that placement. That particular group coaching setting was about choosing different tools and techniques that met the collective goal of securing this placement, and walking multiple people through coaching activities, that we're going to help them to gain clarity around their decision and how they needed their mindset to be in approaching that placement. So that's one way that you can do it. So that would be about everybody that you're bringing together having a collective shared goal. And you almost providing a process that you help to take people through that you know is going to enable them to build that clarity around the goal that it is that they've got set. So so that's kind of one particular piece that we have done and also that you could think about facilitating for yourself, what other experiences have you had you

**Jo Wheatley** 04:14

so working with a group of people who have a shared identity rather than a shared topic? So I working with groups of senior and executive level females, and they all come they are experiencing similar challenges in different organisations, but the prioritisation of those issues may be different for each of them. So there's definitely a resonance of issues and part of the process with group coaching is obviously there's the forming the group and guiding them through the different natural stages that they might go through as that group, but also in that situation helping to the group to determine what are we going to focus on in the sessions and how are we going to do that would it be one person per Session, will it be a couple of topics per session? You know, and what do they want from each other in that environment? And what is the role that I play as the group coach. There's also Action Learning sets, which are a form of group coaching. And I'm a trained Action Learning set facilitator. And again, there you can have a single set issues, there's something they're all encountering, or you might have multiple issues. And then that situation, each individual would have their opportunity to be the focus of the session, and group and team coaching a different team coaching overseas people that work together in the same team, a group would be people that don't have that relationship together.

**Zoe Hawkins** 05:45

Yeah, so there's lots of considerations that you need to be thinking about when you're doing group coaching that would differ from one to one coaching. So contracting is important across both one to one and group, but in your group contract, you really need to be concentrating on how are you going to create safety within a group to enable everybody to participate in a way that they need to be able to participate. So when you're entering into group contracting, you need to not only think around, asking people, perhaps what do they bring to the group? What do they need from the group? What do they need from you? Really questioning? So somebody says, I really need support? Okay, what does support look like and feel like? How will we know when we're providing the right level of support? And once you've been able to form a group contract? The other part of it particularly in groups is how do you uphold your group contract? What will happen if somebody veers away from the group contract? Or you feel that the group contract isn't being upheld, collectively? What are the ways that you as the facilitator are going to be able to step in because the last thing you want is to form your group contract? And then you start the work? And something starts to feel off? But you haven't actually had the conversation on? What are you going to do when that situation occurs? So ideally, you would have explicit permission to be able to raise it collectively, do you raise something on a one to one basis, and it's not always easy to have all of the answers up front, but I would say, you know, just being able to air those discussions helps to create safety. So somebody is approached at some point throughout the group, they know that it's coming from a place of service, it's coming from a good heart, they aren't being singled out. It's in the nature of upholding the group contract. And hopefully, you can bring things back together to be able to go smoothly back into the work and bringing everybody back together again,

**Jo Wheatley** 07:38

there was an element of the of that group maturity. So at what stage would you approach things in different ways. So at the start of a group forming, it may be that the contract is that you would you would speak to individuals, either they would ask to speak to you or, or you'd want to speak to them. But as the group matures, you may get to a stage where the contract evolves. And actually, though, anything that comes up like that is discussed in a group forum, because there's the maturity there to understand the wisdom and bring the neutrality and, and the positive intentions, it really depends on where the group is at when you join the group in, you know, with a group coaching programme, and some group coaching may go on for a very long time, other group coaching, interactions might be over a shorter period of time, but generally, the more people, the kind of the long, not necessary, the longer but you often will find that you're together for, you know, six to 12 months, I would say.

**Zoe Hawkins** 08:33

And it's also so people can have all the space that they need to be able to explore their issues, didn't they, I suppose one format of group coaching, we haven't particularly explored as more of a blended approach, where perhaps participants within your group are going through, not not so much a course but you know, some guided some guided learning, if you like, which might be set reflection questions or set coaching activities they're doing behind the scenes, or perhaps it is some education that they're working on. And then the group coaching is in support of the programme that they are doing in the background. And that might be a programme that you have designed. Or it might be a programme that perhaps you're facilitating in in a corporate. So one of my early days, piece of work, when I first stepped out of corporate is there were some leaders going through a leadership development programme. And I was providing peer support calls. So facilitating conversations around I had this challenge. This is how I handled it, you know, who's got some advice for me, you know, so really facilitating a learning environment, which was a form of group coaching. So, you know, you may have people who are going through a shared experience that you are supporting in a group coaching context as well. So I hope what you're getting from this conversation so far is that there is no one format for group coaching. It's really about you as the coach thinking about what is it that I want my experience of group coaching to be and an author, you know, and how do I want the people who come on my group coaching experience to feel and what's the experience I want to be able to give them. So you have this remit to be able to design, what you want your group space to, to look like and be like.

**Jo Wheatley** 10:12

Yeah, and that blended approach might also include one to one coaching to support, you know, the experience in the group, because lots of people find being in a group a difficult experience, it can be challenging, it can experience you know, mirrors being held up to you new things being discovered. Or you might find yourself playing a particular role in a group that you wouldn't normally play. And that's where we get into some more systemic thinking about, you know, that group, that environment B, you create a system together, and that system needs certain roles to be fulfilled. So that can be confusing when even you find almost don't recognise the way that you show up in that particular setting. So you've got all of those kind of systems and connections that every individual has sat behind them, that also comes to play in that situation. So what you need to think about as a group coaches, your energy, what can you hold, and contain. So if we think about the size of a group, usually that generally people would say, no more than 12 people for one person, but you as an individual, facilitating 12 people, that is a lot. So you probably want to have a smaller group than that. Maybe around six people. You know, six to eight people might be a comfortable number, but only you can kind of determine that based on who you are and your experience and the people that are wanting to join a programme.

**Zoe Hawkins** 11:38

I think it's also probably the level of depth of work that you're doing. So you know, people who listen to our podcasts probably understand our style of coaching by now we do like to have deep rooted conversations, we will be digging into identity, beliefs, values, emotions, you know, really taking conversations quite deep. To do that with 12 people in one space takes a huge amount of a huge amount of skill and a huge amount of time. And you don't want to cut people short, if you're working at that depth. And so you might start with smaller groups. And as your confidence and experience grows, you can stretch into either adding more people on your learn, like where, how to hold that space, and the different activities that you might bring. So it's worth thinking around, when it comes to numbers and how many people is what's the experience that you want them to be having, if actually, you're facilitating conversations around different experiences that people are having and learning more people actually might be really valuable because you've got more experiences in the room. So it depends at what level of depth I think you're working out when you're thinking about your group size.

**Jo Wheatley** 12:47

When you think about the number of people and all of the emotions that each of those individuals are going to experience during that time, and how, what your role is, as a facilitator of that group. And that group might need different things from you on different days, but your your container, you're creating that container and holding it and you've got to be vigilant, really in the group around managing those dynamics and thinking making those decisions about around what do you bring into the group's awareness? Or what do you create a space to bring into their awareness? So it's also worth thinking about if you're going to venture into group coaching? What percentage of your portfolio Do you want the group coaching to be? Will you? Will it be 100% of the work that you do? Will you blend it with your one to one where you do some consultancy with it? Do you enjoy variety? Will it be hard for you to come to switch into group coaching and back to One to One coaching, and that's probably going to take some experimentation, you know, on your part to decide what's a good fit for you at a particular point in your career.

**Zoe Hawkins** 13:48

Yeah, and when you were talking there around dynamics, and we were talking about the depth of work, it's worth considering supervision and how you engage in supervision to support you in the group work. It's when you're working with lots of and this is same with it with one to one work, but you need a space to be able to step back from the energy of the work that you're doing, it would be quite easy to burn out if you were coaching all of the time. Or if you're running lots of groups and the dynamics were getting, you know more and more complex, it can be positive complex, like complex doesn't have to mean the group dynamics have gone array and you've got difficulty. But you know, groups can become what's the word like needy, in a sense of like, they really value that space. So they're bringing a lot into the space and they're getting a huge amount of value from and they look forward to the session. And as the coach that's quite a lot to hold, you know, 12 people, potentially, you know, really leaning into this space and doing deep and heavy work that is, you know, empowering and positive. But holding that it's really important that you have a place where you can also step back from that energy and create space to breathe. So your own self care practices. Is become really important with group practice, and having a supervisor that can just help you to, you know, stay in the energy that you want to be in, and the reason why you created it in the first place.

**Jo Wheatley** 15:12

And I'd encourage you to work with a supervisor that specialises in this area, because it requires different skill sets, you know, building on the existing skill set that you have to be a coach, but also as a supervisor. So somebody that that understands the complexity and the nuances of this work is really important to support you in a full way, it might also help you to differentiate between the different areas of your coaching work as well and create a greater opportunity for you to grow.

**Zoe Hawkins** 15:41

Yeah, so I hope the podcast today has given you some ideas. Yeah, and

**Jo Wheatley** 15:46

logistics, you know, we haven't covered logistics yet. So if we think about that, when you're working with a one to one client, you've got one, one discovery call, one contractor designed all the T's and C's, you know, one set of dates to agree with one person's diary. When it comes to group coaching, how do you go about, you know, think about recruiting a group launching a programme attracting people in having chemistry conversations, you need to think about where you accept everybody that wants to join? Will there be a selection criteria as to who joins the group payment plans paying in full? I? Does everybody use the same? If it's online, does everybody use Zoom? Can everybody use whatever it is that you are hoping to use? If you're in person thinking about venue that's going to enable people to access it easily. And, you know, and to be fully present? There's lots and lots of things to think about.

**Zoe Hawkins** 16:43

And I guess what you're starting to allude to there is, is there gonna be any matching, you know, when you bring your groups together, so we talked at the start around a common identity, or a common goal. So you've got those things to think about. And then another layer of that would be even with a common identity and a common goal? Will you just let people book online and book onto your programmes? Or as you describe their job? Do you want to be able to speak to them to make sure that you're booking in, you know, a diverse group? Or perhaps you actually want people who are, you know, more on the introverted scale for one group and more on the extroverted scale for another group? So you can think about how you bring those groups together? And what you want that experience to be?

**Jo Wheatley** 17:24

Yeah, whether you have an orientation call before you dive into the work to set their work up for success. What will you do if some people have in the group wants to continue the group coaching beyond the contracted period, but not everybody wants to continue? Is that something that that you will facilitate? Or will will it be a clear ending? And what if the what if it's not part of the programme that you would have it one to one, but the individuals would have one to one coaching, but some of the individuals come to you and say, I'd really love it, if you could coach me, there's been some things coming up for me in this session, do you know me? Well, and you see what's happening? Will you coach me? Is that something that you would do? And if not, how would you respond to the individual? In that case? Would you signpost them to somebody else? Or, you know, how are you going to manage that? And then there's your role? You know, it can be easy to step out of the role? Are you there? As a coach? Are you there as a facilitator? Is there a difference between those roles? When are you going to be, you know, are there gonna be times when you're leading the group? Or are you going to be fading out of the group? You know, are you hoping that the group are going to learn to coach themselves? There's lots and lots of little things for you to consider.

**Zoe Hawkins** 18:40

And that's some of the stuff you explore in supervision. You could even do that in preparation of your groups as well. You know, think about it as dual roles, you know, how do you navigate the dual roles? What are the relationships, perhaps, that you're already bringing into the group coaching space? So maybe you're booking a previous client, onto your group coaching? Yeah, how's that gonna affect the dynamic of the group? It might be great. But if you're going to hinder it in any way, what do you need to be aware of as a coach around, you know, the experience the rest of the group might be having if they come to know that you have coached somebody in the space and supervision is a great place to be able to extract the learning that you need to be able to set your groups up for success.

**Jo Wheatley** 19:20

What about another scenario popping into my mind is you may decide to co facilitate, because it is a group. And so then you've got to think about the relationship and the modelling of relationship between you and your kind of CO coach or CO facilitator. And, you know, that's something to consider is would you get supervision together as a pair on the work that you're doing? And it would that be the first time that you've ever worked with somebody in that way? And so how could you prepare yourselves for that experience within the group where you play different roles within the group so that people know that that you've got differentials or will you Will you naturally, you know, work together in an organic way? And what impact might that have have on the energy and the what you can contain and hold as a group? Because of course, you've got another witness then to the experience you've got somebody to be able to debrief with afterwards say, How do you feel that went, I felt it went a bid like this. And they might give say, Yes, I did, too. Okay, so how should we manage that moving forwards? Or no, that was I didn't think that I thought, and, you know, and getting a new lens on your on the work that you've been doing together? So I think that's another consideration that can come into play with group coaching.

**Zoe Hawkins** 20:34

Yeah, it's you talk there, Jo, I was sort of reflecting on many of our shared experiences in you know, facilitating and group coaching and the team coaching and and elsewhere and actually the dynamic between you and I or, you know, whoever you know, they partner with? is really important, like to invest in that relationship? Do you understand each other's strengths and weaknesses? And when that person is stressed? Or perhaps you're not seeing their best behaviours? How does that gonna affect how you show up in the group together? We could talk endlessly I think about this topic that you've been listening now, you know, for a good while, I hope this has inspired you to be thinking about group coaching and just start to think about the different shapes that you could put around potential group coaching offerings, and if you're yet to train as a coach, I hope this also helps you to know that there is variety and coaching. So one to one is one route and now you know, group coaching can be something that you could also consider. So if you've enjoyed listening to this podcast, and you're thinking of training to be a coach, come and visit our website, IG company.co.uk. If you're thinking about group coaching, come and explore our communities and continue the conversation there. And if you loved today's episode, please rate the podcast and if you can leave us a review

**Zoe Hawkins** 21:58

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**Jo Wheatley** 22:07

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