Episode 113 Transcript

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**SPEAKERS**

Zoe Hawkins, Jo Wheatley

**Jo Wheatley** 00:03

The Coaching Crowd podcast is for compassionate courageous leaders, HR professionals and high achievers,

**Zoe Hawkins** 00:10

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.

**Zoe Hawkins** 00:27

Hi, everybody. Great to be here for another episode today. And this week, we're talking about how do you know when you're coaching? Sounds like a simple question. But let's go and explore some of the different ways that we know if we're coaching and also maybe some of the things when we know we're definitely not coaching. So where should we begin, Jo?

**Jo Wheatley** 00:45

Well, we, we could start anywhere, really, I guess the first one would be not giving advice. So one of the basic premises of a coaching conversation is that it's what's called non directive, rather than being directive where you're giving advice, think more mentoring, drawing on your own experience, sort of making it about you. So a coaching conversation, you're much more objective, you're able to always take a step back from the situation and you're asking open questions, helping the person in front of you to explore the way that they think about their situation and themselves in the situation.

**Zoe Hawkins** 01:28

Yeah, I mean, one of the things that we see a lot, particularly in clients that join our programmes, so learners, if you like who are joining our coaching training programmes, the unlearning phase of coaching is actually really hard. So many people that come to coaching are there because they do have amazing listening skills. They are used to be able to support people to work through the challenges and problems. But there's this unlearning phase where you notice how much you may lead a person in a conversation to a particular outcome, or your own story might pop up, as because you've been there before yourself. Perhaps, in coaching, there isn't really space for your own experiences. It's not about you as the coach, it's all about the client. And I think it's really about stepping into that unlearning zone of recognising that your story is irrelevant. When you come to coaching. That's not the case, when you're in a friendship or in a peer to peer conversation. Your story can be helpful, it can be useful. But I'm sure we've all been in those situations where we've asked for help, or we've been discussing a problem. And somebody has suggested something, and you haven't found it useful, and so you haven't gone and done it. And that can really come through in coaching, we can get very caught up in our own stories and our own great ideas. We need to remember to unlearn that that isn't a coaching conversation. That's great for friendships, and it's great for peer to peer conversations. But that doesn't really have a place in a coaching conversation. Because it's designed to be an empowering situation where you are equals there isn't someone better than the other. And so when you start suggesting your own ideas, the unconscious message there is that I know best. What we really want to do is empower the client to believe in themselves and to really dig deep and find their own solutions, so that they can use that energy to take forward and put things in place to be able to move forward with their outcomes.

**Jo Wheatley** 03:35

Yeah, we're not rescuing. So in a coaching conversation, we are objective. And I think there's something important here about time. So often, in day to day conversations, I think often conversations can feel rushed. There's an awareness that there's limited time, I think about conversations in a workplace, somebody comes they want advice, they want rescuing, because they need to move on to the next thing. There's there's fear of judgement as to what if I don't get this done quick enough. And I think one of the beauties of a coaching conversation is that when you take a coaching approach, it almost has the impact of time standing still, or certainly slowing down. And so that that judgement around, you know, I've got to get to a conclusion quickly is kind of taken away a coaching conversation is one where the person is like, we've got time, it may only be 10 minutes, but there's still time. And there's time to really get to the heart of the issue, rather than constantly caught up dealing with symptoms, surface level stuff. So a coaching conversation is really about helping the person to really make contact with with the real problem so that they can get to a solution for themselves, ultimately quicker. So it's kind of slowing down to speed up.

**Zoe Hawkins** 04:56

Yeah, it's interesting what you were saying there around some people come wanting to be rescued into everyday conversations. And I think it's also true for the flip side, whereas sometimes we feel the need to rescue when we are the ones in a conversation with somebody who is having a having a challenge or a problem with something. So as coaches, people will share in the nature of coaching, they're going to share their challenges, they're going to share their problems, they may even share, like their emotions and how they may be struggling with something. In everyday conversations, that typically leads to the desire to make the person feel better, because many conversations are based out of love. And we don't want the person that we're with to be in a place of struggle. Whereas in a coaching conversation, we still have that, that compassion and that desire to support and help. But we aren't hooked on that person's story and needing to rescue them out of that situation. We trust that they are resourceful, we are there to support them in the process. And we're there to help them to work out what they want to do with it, we don't feel it necessary to save that person from that situation. And that might be just a small thing, or it can be a larger thing. That that I think is really, really important quality of a coaching conversation is that, that you see that client as whole and resourceful and they don't need rescuing. And you're able to sit back from that, and let the conversation unfold as it needs to.

**Jo Wheatley** 06:28

Yeah, and you know, often you'll find in a coaching conversation, you need a balance of support and challenge that comes from that objectivity that comes from having that time. And in a coaching conversation, there's usually a goal. So there's usually a destination that the individual wants to get to, and that the person that is facilitating that conversation is aware of or has inquired about. And so whilst that conversation may explore different aspects of of, of that goal, it's always the conversation. And the questions are always about relating their learning back to that end goal. Now, sometimes the goal comes at the start of the conversation. And as, as we've talked on, I think on previous podcast episodes, sometimes the goal might come at the end. But there's always a clear purpose to the conversation. And if you're having conversations with somebody on a regular basis, a coach is able to hold that that larger goal, that overarching goal, while simultaneously able to support the client in the mini goal, that is part of that bigger picture, rather than in our everyday conversations may be very, you know, piecemeal conversation here conversation there, not necessarily a clear purpose to it.

**Zoe Hawkins** 07:52

Yeah. And I think what that looks like from a simplistic perspective is let's say, somebody walks in to their line manager's office, and they're like, Oh, I'm really struggling with this project. And they may have a great coaching style to their leadership. And what that will look like is they start there. So I've got this challenge with this project. Oh, tell me more about that. And then they're off, they're out of the blocks, and they're talking about the project. In coaching, you would pause and say, so we've got, you know, 15 minutes, half an hour, an hour and a half, however long you've got, what would you like to get out of this session. And as you said, Jo, it's not necessarily the goal. So they're not going to say, Oh, I would like to explain the solution that they have, because they may not have the solution. So it might just be I'd really like to spend some space, have some space to be able to talk through this challenge to help me unfold my thoughts. That's a goal. It might be I'd like to get really clear on what my options are for moving forward. Great. That's a goal. Or it might be that they simply want to explore how they feel about that particular situation. There's no assumption made by the coach on what the client wants to get out of that conversation. You don't just start walking together down this path without knowing where your where your client wants to go. And I think that's a real differentiation between what a coaching conversation looks like, and what perhaps an everyday conversation can look like.

**Jo Wheatley** 09:21

I think that relates to what we in coaching, well call contracting, like, how are we going to be together in this conversation, which you can also relate to that goal, and the contract can also be around asking permission. So in a coaching conversation, rather than just blurting out, whatever we feel in the moment, will often ask for permission. So if we notice something and we think it might be useful for the other person, we would ask permission to share it checking out with the client, would it be useful, you know, I'm, you know, can I share an observation or be an exam All of us asking for permission and the client, or the person, the other person in the conversation can get to choose and say, yeah, that will be really helpful. Or they might say, No, I think I've got what I need from this conversation, you know, and they're trying to hold on to that bit that they've got from self, they don't need your observation that's maybe more about you than it is about them, or the timing of that just may not be helpful to them. So a coaching conversation is about the client is client led, rather than in lots of everyday conversations, our own egos might get caught up, and we might want to share something, if it's somebody sharing something, we might want to share something of our own, or, or just simply make it about us, because that that can happen is as humans in our everyday conversation. So contracting is a key part of a coaching conversation, asking for permission, and making sure that it's client led, there are three things that may be indicators that you are coaching,

**Zoe Hawkins** 10:59

what you reminded me of there is something that we talk about on the course, which is not to coach the story, but to coach the person. So story coaching would be, and then what happened? And what did he say? And what did you say back, and then you know, and so you're picking up the details, and you're extracting the story. And when we see people first come into coaching training, we see a lot of story coaching, because we feel like we need all the information that the client has in order to support them. So it comes from a good heart. You know, it comes from the desire to help to really understand the client. The fact is, you don't really need a lot of story to be able to coach a client. Now sometimes the story is really important. So where somebody feels there's been a sense of injustice, it's can be really important to give space to that story to hear and witness where that client is coming from. But we don't need to coach the story. What we do is coach the person. So we're asking questions like, and what impact has that had on you? How do you feel about that? You know, how would you like to feel in this situation? We're working with the person that is in front of us, not the story and the whys and wherefores of what happened. And that can take some skill, I think when people first come into coaching training, because it's not necessarily all that they're used to. We see people doing coaching activities. And they're really interested, let's take the wheel of life. If we did a podcast on that recently, we see many coaches that say, so what's what scores have you put for each of the segments of your wheel of life? And can you just hold it up on the screen and show me the shape of your wheel, you don't actually need that information to be able to coach somebody effectively, much coaching is content free. So you can work with the client on simply what they are saying and how they are replying by asking those impact questions. You don't need the details and the backstory of how the client has arrived at where they are.

**Jo Wheatley** 13:03

And I think another way that you might know that your coaching is having a cute levels of self awareness, like knowing there's this balance between being able to, like work consciously, but also unconsciously in a coaching style. So if somebody has been through coaching, training, and they've got many years of coaching experience, they may not even themselves feel like they're coaching sometimes because it has become such a part of the way that they are, who they are and how they are in the world, rather than a thing that they do. If we take an example of somebody that hasn't done training, maybe they have got quite a natural coaching style or people comment on it. They may not be aware of what they're doing, because they're just being themselves, but there's maybe an opportunity for them to grow and develop those skills, develop higher levels of self awareness and hone their coaching abilities. So I don't think in answer to the question, how do you know if you're coaching, it's not like you're either coaching or you're not, you know, you may be incorporating some of the coaching style into your approach naturally already. Or maybe you've done an introductory coaching course. And perhaps you started to use a semi structure of growth, for example, that is maybe a little bit of coaching, but it's not. It's not the whole coaching picture. But all coaches and people that develop as coaches, one of the main competencies is developing that self awareness, knowing what you're doing, and the reason that you're doing it in in a conversation and making sure that it is in service of what the client wants to get out of that coaching conversation. So that would be a core part of of knowing that your coaching.

**Zoe Hawkins** 14:49

I think sometimes the question is what is the quality of my coaching? Rather than, you know, how do I know if I'm coaching, but something else that comes to mind is about detaching from the outcome. So I think when you when you're not coaching, so let's take, you know, in conversation with friends and you're just relaxed and you're having a helping conversation, often you can get hooked on what that person does with either the conversation or the advice that you're sharing. Or even just listening to their scenario, you may get hooked on what you think is a good approach for them. Whereas in coaching, we can be very detached from the outcome. So we can be there and we can share observations, as you said, Joe, we ask for permission, we share an observation, but we're not attached to it. So if I'm observing in my client, that this is perhaps a pattern of thinking that is emerging, it doesn't mean I'm right. It just means that's what I've noticed. And if the client's like, No, I don't see it, then I can let that go. Because I'm not attached to whether the client chooses to do something with that or not. It's merely like, here's some information, would you like to use it? And if the client says, No, then that's fine. You, you sort of step away from it, and you carry on working together. So I think, ultimately, what we're talking about when, in many of these things is ego. As you've mentioned earlier, Joe, like your ego, isn't really in the room, it's not part of the conversation when you're working with a client. And that takes a lot of inner work, I think as a coach to be able to get to a point where you can leave your ego at the door. Now, of course, we all have ego. And there may be clients and situations where it pops up. But coaches have a level of self awareness where they're like, ah, that's not helpful right now. Let that go and carry on in the conversation. I think when you're not coaching, you just don't have that level of self awareness around, you know, when your own ego is coming into the space and disrupting the conversation.

**Jo Wheatley** 16:45

Yeah, something else is popping into my mind is that? How do you know if you're coaching? Well, often, it's about making sure that you're covering lots of the core elements, so you're not just focusing on one dimension. So in a coaching conversation, you're helping the other person to identify what it is that they're thinking, you're helping them to identify what they're feeling, you're helping them to identify? How are they behaving like putting them getting the missing pieces together so that they can see the full picture, helping them to explore how does all of this relate to the things that are most important to them in their life, they're kind of guiding compass, we call them values in coaching. But in everyday life, you probably just call them the things that are important to you. What's getting in the way for the individual to achieve what it is that they want to achieve? What impact will their plan of action have on those around them? And even perhaps the wider world? So a coaching conversation is quite a holistic conversation. Whereas in our everyday conversations, we I think people often get get bogged down in one particular aspect of whatever it is that they've brought to the conversation. So something else to consider

**Zoe Hawkins** 18:03

is often solution focused, isn't it? I think everyday conversation, like what are you going to do about it? It's doo doo doo versus, you know, the B side of things as well. And I think ultimately kind of to summarise a conversation coaching is about future focus, moving forward, taking action. So every coaching conversation will end with some takeaways. And now those takeaways might be reflections that the client is taking from the conversation. Or it may be specific actions that they're committing to to help themselves move forward. It can be a blend, as I just said, they're of the doing. But sometimes it's also the thinking and reflecting so more of the being coming into the coaching space. But ultimately, every coaching conversation does have that piece around moving forward.

**Jo Wheatley** 18:52

So if you've been listening, and you've been thinking, I think I do these things, but sounds like there's more to this than than what I'm currently doing, and you're thinking I'd like to learn more about this. Maybe go and take our quiz, get an idea of what might be helpful in terms of your next steps. And you can take our quiz at my coaching calls.com

**Zoe Hawkins** 19:16

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.

**Jo Wheatley** 19:25

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