

How to ACE Your Coaching Conversations

Elena: If you've ever thought, I don't know what to say, when someone gets emotional, then this episode is for you. Hello friends and welcome to the Bright Morning Podcast. I'm your host Elena Aguilar, and in each episode you will learn how to lead conversations that build connection and spark change. So today we are talking about a powerful tool for coaching through emotion because let's be real, this work is emotional.

And the sooner we accept that, the better we can show up for ourselves and for others. So let's get into it. I wanna tell you about a coaching conversation that I had some years ago. It was February, it was cold out. February was a long month. The teacher I was coaching had just come from a difficult parent conference.

Her shoulders were tight, her eyes looked heavy, and before I could even ask how she was doing, she said, I'm trying so hard, and it never feels like enough. And then she sat down and she started to cry. Now, that moment could have gone a lot of ways. I could have changed the subject. I could have tried to fix it.

I could have panicked and filled the silence with platitudes, but I took a breath. I grounded myself. And then I used the three steps that I'm gonna share with you today. These steps are a tool that I call Ace. And it helps you to navigate emotions with presence and care. So ACE stands for acknowledge and accept emotions, cultivate compassion, and expand the story.

So let me walk you through each of these elements, their steps, what it means, what it sounds like, and how to use each step. So step one is the A of Ace. Acknowledge and accept, and this is where we begin. So when someone is sharing an intense emotion, your first move is not to fix or interpret or redirect.

It's just to honor what is there. And you might say it makes sense that you're feeling that way, or I hear how hard this is, or simply. That's a lot. This step is about presence and it's about saying, I see you, I hear you, and this is a safe space for all of it. If someone is struggling to name their feelings, then you can offer tools like the core emotions list.

Sometimes just putting a name to what you're feeling brings tremendous relief. So that's step one that's acknowledge and accept. Step two is to cultivate compassion, and in this step we invite our clients to meet themselves and others with kindness. You can ask things like, what would you say to a friend who was feeling this way?

Or What could it look like to be gentle with yourself right now? And this part is actually just as much for you, the coach, as it is for them, because you might be feeling unsure, you might be worried about saying the wrong thing, and that is totally normal. And so in this moment, you take a breath and you offer yourself compassion.

Also, you can remind yourself, I don't have to get this perfect, I just have to stay present. This is how we become the kind of coach who can hold space for hard things. Now, step three is to expand the story. So once someone feels seen and safe, then and only then can you help them explore what else might be true.

You might ask what story are you telling yourself about this situation? Or is there another story that might also be true? So let me go back to that teacher that I mentioned earlier. Once she had a chance to cry and to be heard, then I said, it sounds like you're carrying a lot. Can I ask what story are you telling yourself right now?

And she said. I am not a good teacher. No matter how hard I try, I'm failing. And I asked, is there another story that could also be true that she paused for quite a while and then she said maybe that I care deeply. Maybe I'm learning, maybe I'm doing the best I can with a really hard situation. And that's the shift.

That's what makes this framework possible. Not because you forced it, but because you created the conditions for a shift to emerge. So here's your tool for the week. Write Ace, a CE on a sticky note. Acknowledge and accept, cultivate compassion and expand the story. Keep it somewhere visible. And then here's your challenge.

The next time you're in a coaching conversation and strong emotions come up, slow things down. Stay longer in the acknowledgement phase than you think. You need to soften into compassion, and when you think they're ready, invite a broader story to unfold. If this resonates with you and you want more strategies for navigating these kinds of moments, then join us for our coaching, retention and resilience workshop.



We practice these moves, we model them, and we build your capacity to show up as a coach with presence and humility. And you can also check out our coach learning library for a video demonstration of this exact framework in action. Thank you for being here with me today. If you found this episode helpful, then share it with a friend or colleague.

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And if you're not yet watching us on YouTube, then come and check it out. There's a link in the show notes. All right, friends. This podcast is produced by LesLee Bickford and Stacey Goodman does the sound engineering and take care and be well, and I'll see you next time.