

# Coaching Through Core Values

**Elena:** If you are looking for a way to start the year with depth and clarity in your conversations, 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 one of the most powerful tools that you can use to start the year strong, which is coaching through core values. So this time of year can feel full of goal setting and fresh starts. And yes, that can be energizing, but it can also feel overwhelming or sometimes just surface level.

So what I have found is that the most grounded goals are the ones that are rooted in values. When we reconnect with what really matters to us, it becomes easier to lead. To coach and to stay aligned through all the ups and downs. So let's get into how you do this. A few years ago I was working with a principal who I will call Theo, and he was about five years into the role, and he was leading a large elementary school with a lot of needs, and he came into our January coaching session looking tired.

And uninspired, and he told me I made a plan over winter break. I've got our semester goals. I've mapped out the PD calendar, but I don't feel excited about any of it. Feels like I'm just surviving. And I asked him, before we get into the logistics, could we take five minutes and go back to your core values?

And he looked at me and he kind of smiled like, yeah, that'd be good. So I pulled out the values list that we'd worked through in the beginning of that school year, and I asked him, which of these values feels most important to you right now? And he skimmed the list and he said, hope that's the one that I'm missing.

I've been operating out of fear and urgency and I need to reconnect to hope. And in that moment, something started to shift in him and we spent the rest of that session reworking the PD calendar that he had created, and it was oriented towards building a hopeful staff culture. And he walked away from that session feeling energized.

And later that week he sent me an email and he said, that conversation reminded me of why I wanted to be a school leader in the first place. And that's what can happen when we re-anchor in our values. We reconnect to why we do what we do and how we wanna show up. So, whether you are working with someone who feels off track or just as a way to start off the calendar year in a meaningful way, having a conversation around core values can be transformational.

So let me tell you how to begin. If your client identified their core values earlier in the year, then start by revisiting them and ask questions like, which of these values feels most alive to you right now? Which one feels furthest away? And how do you want to live into your values even more this year?

Now, if your client hasn't done this activity yet, hasn't identified their core values yet, then now is a great time to start. So you could just ask what really matters to you or which of the principles you wanna live by this year, or when you think about your best moments at work. Which values are you embodying?

So doing this helps someone excavate their internal compass. Once they have that compass, then it's so much easier to navigate hard feedback or competing practices, or even burnout. So let me tell you another story about a teacher named Maya. So Maya came into our session upset because a parent had complained to the principal that she was too strict and Maya felt hurt.

She felt embarrassed; she felt unsure of herself. Now, I held off on trying to jump to solutions, and I asked her if we could go back to her core values. She had previously identified these three core values: family responsibility, and excellence, so I reminded her of those and then I asked, which of your core values feels most relevant right now or most pertinent to this conversation?

And without hesitating, she said, excellence. That's why I push my students. I believe in them. I believe in their ability to be excellent. And then I said, okay, and how about family? How might your value of family fit in? And she paused. She thought, and then she said, maybe I've lost touch with that value. I want my students and their families to feel like I'm on their side, like I care.

And that helped her center. It grounded her. It didn't. Eliminate the sting from that feedback, but it gave her a way to make meaning of it, and her reflections gave her a way to respond to that feedback from a place of integrity.

So I wanna offer you an opportunity for reflection this week. Consider these questions. Which of your core values do you want to live into more fully in this



calendar year? And how could revisiting core values with a client who is struggling with self-doubt or disconnection be helpful? And what's one question that you could ask this week to bring values into your coaching conversations?

And then here's your challenge. Bring core values into a coaching conversation this week. This could be during a coaching session or could even be just during a quick hallway check-in, and you could just try asking what matters most to you right now or what's most important about how you lead this semester?

And if you're not sure where to start or you want more support, you want a structured process, then come and join us in the Coach Learning library. You will find a full core values activity with all the prompts and all the tools that you need, and you will also find a community of coaches who are practicing these skills every day.

Thank you for being with me, and if this episode helped you reconnect with what matters most, then consider sharing it with a friend or colleague. And if you're listening to us on Apple Podcast, then please rate and review the show and give us a five star rating that helps people find us. Now, if you're watching on YouTube, then hit the like button and make sure to subscribe so that you never miss an episode.

All right, friends. This show is produced by LesLee Bickford and Stacey Goodman does the sound engineering. Take care, be well, and I'll see you next time.

