

Strengths-Based Coaching: Episode 291

Elena: If you've ever walked away from a coaching conversation wondering, why didn't that land, or Why did my client shut down? 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 you can lead conversations.

That build connection and spark change. Today we are talking about one of the most powerful shifts that you can make in your coaching practice, which is coaching from strengths. So let's get into it. I wanna start by telling you about a conversation that I had early in my coaching career. One that changed how I support what it means to support someone else's growth.

So I was working with a teacher who had just finished a really challenging lesson, and as we sat down, I went straight into problem solving mode. What didn't go well? What could you try next time? What didn't work for your students? I thought I was being helpful. I thought I was being efficient and focused, but I watched this teacher's body language and her shoulder sank.

Her responses got shorter, and eventually she said, honestly, I feel like I can't do anything right. And. My heart broke a little bit. That moment was a turning point because I realized that I had completely missed the opportunity to see her, to recognize what she had tried, and to help her reflect on the courage that it took just to get through that lesson.

And that was the moment that I began to shift. So I didn't become. Really good at strength-based coaching overnight, but I did commit to figuring out what I could do to prevent this kind of interaction from happening again. Here's what I learned. Every person you coach already holds the seeds of their own transformation.

Your job is not to fix them. It's to help them see what's already there and build from that place. That's what strength-based coaching is all about. Now, let me be really clear. This does not mean that we ignore problems. This is not about pretending that things are fine when they're not. So this is not toxic positivity.

This is about choosing where to begin the conversation. And when you start with strengths, you build the safety, the motivation, and the trust that allows

people to stretch. So how do you actually do this? Here is a simple three-part structure to help you bring more of a strength-based stance into your coaching.

So step one is to observe and name strengths. And you wanna start by getting really specific, be precise, and be genuine. So instead of saying, you did a good job. Try saying, you stayed calm when that student escalated and your composure helped to deescalate the whole class. Or you made a bold move when you paused and gave space for student voices that took courage and trust in yourself and your students.

This kind of feedback builds confidence and clarity. Alright, step two is ask strengths-oriented reflection questions. So instead of asking what do you think went wrong, ask instead, what are you proud of from that lesson, or. What strengths did you draw on in that moment, or what part of that lesson felt most aligned with who you want to be as an educator?

So these questions help clients connect to their values and their identity, and that builds resilience. Step three is to use strengths as a bridge to growth. Once someone can see their own strengths, then they're more open to change. That's when you can say, you are so skilled at building relationships.

How might you use that strength to try a new approach to group work? Or you could say. Your clarity and instructions really stood out. Could you apply that same clarity to how you give feedback? So now what you're doing is anchoring new learning in something that they already trust about themselves. Let me give you one more example.

I worked with a coach recently who said she had a client who always showed up with a list of what was going wrong, and the coach said that she felt like every session turned into a spiral of stress and self-doubt, so I challenged her. What strengths do you see in this client? She might not see yet. And the coach said, oh, she's incredibly reflective and she wants to grow, and she notices everything.

So in their next session, the coach started with that. She said, I just wanna name how deeply you reflect on your practice. That's a real strength. Let's build from there. And the tone of the session shifted immediately. The client sat up and smiled and said, thank you. I needed that today. It can be that simple and that impactful.

So here is your challenge for this week in every coaching conversation that you have. Name at least one strength that you observe. Start there and just notice what shifts, and if you want to explore this approach in more depth. We've got a

full strength-based coaching session in the Coach Learning Library, along with downloadable resources and examples.

And the Coach Learning Library and the PLC are the single best next step for continuing to learn with me and building a trusting coaching practice. You'll also find a link to our upcoming free community webinars in the show notes. Thank you for being here with me today. If you have appreciated this episode, and if you are listening to it via podcast, then please share it with a colleague or hop over to Apple Podcasts and leave us a five star review.

That really helps other people discover the show. And if you are watching on YouTube and this sparked something for you, then give it a like. Maybe share it with someone who supports educators. And if you're not watching us on YouTube, then come and join us. There is a link in the show notes to do that.

Alright, LesLee Bickford is the podcast producer and Stacey Goodman does the sound engineering. Take care and be well everyone.