

Coaching Individuals Within Systems

Helping clients regulate emotions while navigating workplace dynamics

Quick recap

This meeting was a coaching discussion focused on helping Alex, an electrical engineer working in corporate settings, address challenges with client overwhelm and emotional expression in coaching situations. Annie provided guidance on systems thinking approaches, explaining how to coach at a systems level rather than focusing only on individual clients, and offered strategies for working with both the client directly and the client's management (specifically a VP) indirectly. The conversation also covered how to handle clients who use coaching sessions to regulate their emotions rather than developing independent coping skills, and included discussions about balancing practical, measurable outcomes with emotional development work. Annie emphasized the importance of tracking both visible progress and invisible internal shifts, while Alex shared insights about applying systems thinking principles from his engineering background to corporate coaching scenarios.

Summary

Coaching Session for Immigration Advice

Ali discussed a coaching session he provided to a digital friend from Jordan or Lebanon who was seeking immigration advice to Canada. During their conversation, the friend revealed she had been trying to find a significant partner for about 4 years and connected this to trauma from her relationship with her father. Ali offered to help her with coaching exercises and mentioned his coaching rate of 180 USD, though he was considering converting it to Canadian dollars.

Client Expectations and Pricing Strategy

Annie and Ali discussed strategies for managing client expectations and pricing for coaching sessions. Annie advised Ali to set clear boundaries with session duration and pricing, suggesting offering 60-90 minutes while keeping 90 minutes as a private edge to avoid over-delivering. They also discussed Ali's approach to offering a 30-minute initial session with a guided audio exercise, with Annie cautioning against providing temporary relief that might distract from addressing the root issue.

Client Communication and Feedback Strategies

Annie advised Ali to listen to his recordings both as a creator and as a customer, suggesting he share them with his girlfriend to create intimacy and get feedback. Annie recommended checking in with clients about their understanding and comfort level during sessions, using a scale of 1-10 to gauge if they're being overloaded with information. She emphasized the importance of simplifying complex concepts and focusing on the core message of believing in the client, while also normalizing challenges to help clients feel less alone in their experiences.

Creating Safe Client Expression Spaces

Annie and Ali discussed strategies for helping clients feel safe expressing difficult emotions, particularly around topics like dating and relationships. Annie shared her approach of creating a safe space where clients can admit feelings they might be ashamed of, using a 49-51% framework to validate both their current satisfaction and desire for improvement. Alex then joined the conversation, mentioning his challenge of helping clients transition from a state of calm to working on actual solutions, noting this as a more difficult aspect of his coaching process.

Coaching Strategies for Dissociation Management

Annie and Alex discussed strategies for working with clients who experience dissociation during coaching sessions. Annie explained that when clients dissociate, it's important to slow down, normalize the experience, and reconnect with them by attending to their nervous system rather than just their words. She shared a framework for recognizing choice points in stressful situations and choosing breath and presence over automatic stress responses. Alex acknowledged the value of this approach but expressed concern about the potential impact on session progress when frequent slowing down is required, particularly when working through multiple issues between sessions.

Coaching Philosophy and Outcomes Discussion

Annie and Alex discussed coaching approaches, with Annie explaining her philosophy of teaching clients to regulate themselves independently rather than creating dependency. Annie emphasized the importance of focusing on invisible emotional progress rather than just measurable 3D outcomes, noting that while physical actions can be tracked, internal regulatory skills create lasting tectonic changes that may not be immediately visible. The conversation concluded with Alex reflecting on the challenge of aligning with client values while also meeting the demands of their organizational hierarchy, which tends to focus on measurable outcomes.

VP Team Expectations Alignment Strategies

Alex discussed challenges in managing expectations between a VP and team members, where the VP isn't seeing measurable progress despite reconditioning work. Annie advised Alex on strategies to align both the VP's and team's interests, suggesting ways to market long-term progress (using metaphors like bamboo growth) while managing expectations. She recommended framing developmental opportunities as ways to execute the VP's vision rather than as standalone coaching needs, and suggested creating alignment by finding shared values between the VP and team. The group also discussed approaches for engaging the VP, including framing requests for input as needing their "genius" rather than coaching, though they noted caution about emphasizing similarities with the VP.

Coaching and Systems Thinking Approach

Annie and Alex discussed Alex's approach to coaching and emotional expression. Annie explained how childhood experiences can shape beliefs about feelings, suggesting that Alex's past experiences with bullying led to a pattern of hiding emotions. They explored how Alex could apply systems thinking to his coaching practice, with Annie describing how to view clients within the context of their broader systems, including family and work environments. Alex shared his background in electrical engineering and system theory, acknowledging that optimizing for the entire system rather than individual components resonated with his expertise.

Systems Thinking Applications Discussion

The group discussed systems thinking and its application in different contexts, including corporate environments and family systems. Annie emphasized the importance of understanding and working with systems rather than trying to control them, and shared insights about using intuition and pattern recognition to navigate complex situations. Alex and Gloria shared their experiences with systems thinking in corporate and family settings, highlighting the challenges and opportunities in each realm. The conversation also touched on the differences between masculine and feminine approaches to leadership and the importance of balancing different skills for personal and professional growth.