

FINE POINT

Title

Thinking Environment

Nancy Kline

THE GREATER COURAGE

Why, I wonder, does there seem to be a huge drop off rate in the use of Parts III and IV of the Thinking Session by Time To Think coaches who use Parts I and II?

Over the past three years during Collegiate and Faculty gatherings and through conversations I have asked coaches whether or not they regularly go on (if the further goal requires it) to Parts III and IV of the Session in their coaching. Only about 10% have said yes. Relatively few of them use the full Thinking Session as their first and core coaching expertise.

I deduce from this that few coaches let the following key question guide them after Part I has done all it can:

How much more of their own good thinking can my client now generate before they need mine?

I am curious about why there is this drop off rate in the systematic creation and use of Incisive Questions.

Perhaps the answer lies in the need for an additional dimension of courage to go on past Parts I and II. We have recognised that it takes courage for a coach to do Part I. We also have recognised that the client will be the best judge about what more they want to achieve from the session. We have spoken of this courage as 'the courage to

trust the intelligence of the client'. We have noticed that the coach has to trust that the client's own independent thinking can be generated by attention and by the 'What more...?' question, sometimes only and stunningly.

But maybe it takes another league of courage to recognise that the client's own thinking, after coming to a full stop in Part I, and after determining in Part II that they now want something other than our input, can go to new heights if they can experience an Incisive Question to replace an untrue limiting assumption.

If this is right, if it does take even more, or maybe a different kind of, courage to go on to Parts III and IV, I am curious about about why – why so many qualified Time To Think coaches step back from this life-changing edge of the unknowable, turn away from fully independent thinking and start down a known path of exchange thinking.

Maybe it is that this additional courage is different from that of trusting the intelligence of the client. Maybe it is our courage as coaches to abandon the potential for praise for our amazing input, our take, our cleverness.

Maybe giving up the chance for those conventional accolades is just too much. Maybe we would rather risk the destruction of our clients' fully independent thinking than the destruction of their recognition of ourselves as the ones with the good ideas.

In other words, maybe coaches turn away from that last powerful act of the Thinking Session because they are in a sense addicted to the notion that coach input = coach value. And they want to be seen, conventionally, as valuable.

If so, those of us who teach the Thinking Session to coaches may need to address this issue. We may need to ask, 'How would it feel not to be praised by your client for your thinking, perhaps ever again?'