

Helping to 'Generate' Thinking – Nancy Kline - March 2009

And I am thinking about one of the distinguishing characteristics of our Coaching process. I am most engaged with the difference between these descriptive phrases:

The coach's job is to help the client find their own answers.

vs.

The coach's job is to help the client generate their own answers.

'Generate' is different from 'find'.

And I think that one of the reasons some coaches and coaching experts are initially poor at the Time To Think Coaching approach is that they construe it as the passive experience of shutting up and doing nothing while the client finally runs free to look under all the Rhubarb leaves in their mind to find their already-constructed answers that have been hiding from overly directive coaches and advisers and friends and everyone else on the planet for most of their lives. Most coaches embrace the coaching mantra that they are to get out of the way so that the client can find their own answers. But in doing that, they miss the point. And when they reduce the Thinking Environment coaching process to just getting out of the way, they default to 'busier' forms of coaching.

They miss the point because, actually, The Thinking Environment process is much more sophisticated than that; and, thus, much more powerful. We don't just shut up so that clients can look under the leaves. We are profoundly present with the client, and we ask a few particular, particularly powerful, questions, so that they can generate, create, ignite, bring into being ideas and perspectives and ways forward they had not yet conceived.

Helping to generate someone's thinking (by being so present we become invisible) is very different from just getting out of their way. And much, much more demanding.