Embracing Problems

Now that you have a sense of where you can support your coaching clients to be more responsible for creating the results they desire in their lives or business, let’s look at another concept that goes hand-in-hand with responsibility. Problems.

In our culture, we live out of a deeply rooted belief that there ARE problems and that problems are bad and therefore to be avoided. We are blind to the fact that, in reality, labeling something a problem is merely our interpretation of what happened, not an actual event. Also, with the appearance of problems comes the interpretation that something must be wrong with us, the other person, or the situation at hand. With this belief that problems should not be, are unwanted and to be avoided at nearly all cost, our relationship to any person or situation that may prove to be problematic allows us little room to be powerful. As a matter of fact, we typically go out of our way to minimize our discomfort by steering clear of anything that might lead to the generation of a problem. As a result of this orientation to problems, we find ourselves attaching blame, making excuses, complaining, denying, or otherwise hiding or stepping over problems in order to distance ourselves from them. Avoiding problems impacts our relationships, our productivity and our effectiveness in dealing with others. The invisible assumption or paradigm we all operate out of is that good people do not have problems. And if we find out people have problems, the natural thing to do is to get rid of them or avoid them as well. This orientation to problems causes us to deny they exist, or at least to ignore or minimize them. And when they do show up, we tend to attach blame to someone else for them. Of course, all this hinders communication and creates suffering. We typically are unaware of our natural orientation to problems. As a result, by being blind to it, this paradigm controls us - like a puppet on a string. We are so deeply embedded in our belief that problems are bad and to be avoided that we don't even see how this paradigm runs our lives.

Before we re-evaluate our orientation to problems, let's look more closely at exactly what constitutes a problem. Problems only exist when there is an interruption or stop to some prior commitment in place. Without such a commitment, the "problem" appears considerably less in magnitude and may not even be considered a problem at all. For example, if you make a commitment to being the top sales person in your company over the course of the next 6 months, you can bank on challenges coming up that oppose your commitment. To the contrary, if you have no commitment to producing any significant results in your business, and you run into challenges, they would show up more like an inconvenience. Just no big deal.

One drawback to our orientation to problems is that in order to avoid having a potential problem, we are likely to avoid making any commitments that present any likelihood of resulting in a problem. We play small because we can't risk the problems. We don’t point the bat over the fence and declare to the world, watch me hit this one out of the ball park!

In contrast to this widespread interpretation that problems are to be avoided, how would your clients act differently if they actually looked for problems because they wanted the breakthroughs that result from them? Instead of participating in the
conversation that problems infer that something is wrong, challenge them to try taking on 
the empowering belief that problems are the source of their growing and expanding and 
therefore to be both welcomed and sought after. Invite them to embrace problems as the 
opportunity to take them to the next level in their businesses and in their lives. Suggest 
that they create the expectation that they will always encounter problems. Challenge them 
to change their relationship to them to stop running from them. Invite them to embrace 
them instead, looking for the gold that lies within each one.

Remind your clients that the problem is never the problem. Their relationship to the 
problem and the interpretation they create about it, instead, is always the problem.

If your clients seek to avoid problems at all costs, they will stay within their 
comfort zones, taking care not to risk for fear of creating a problem. Instead, they can 
shift to welcome problems as the medium for their creativity. Suggest that they create for 
themselves a powerful relationship to problems as an opportunity to reformulate, look for 
new possibilities and recommit themselves to the original commitment underlying the 
problem.

So let’s look at some exercises that can support your coaching clients to seek out and 
actually start welcoming problems.

-First, ask them to identify at least three situations related to their lives or business that 
they have avoided because they have labeled them as problems. Have them write each 
“problem” down in their journal and clarify just what is most problematic about their 
particular situation. Ask them…What is the underlying commitment behind each 
problem?

Next - Ask your clients to answer the following question honestly, “Are you more 
committed to your comfort and to avoiding any potential problems or to playing full out 
for the worthwhile goal you wish to accomplish?” Request that your clients create an 
empowering interpretation that will allow them to shift how they currently see the 
problems they’re now avoiding.

-And lastly, ask your clients what possibilities do they see with respect to each 
problematic area of their lives or businesses that they will commit to take action on? And 
by when will they act?

Give them homework…Say, for example, As the coming week progresses, see how many 
problems you can identify every day to source new breakthroughs in your life or in your 
business.

Invite your clients to have some fun uncovering the problems in their lives or businesses! 
Remind them that it is always most important to enjoy the process and look for the gifts 
that each problem conceals within it.