

Coaching Supervision – Myth & Reality

By Ken Giglio, Principal of Mindful Leadership Consulting

As an executive coach, I've wondered at times if I am doing my best work and making the necessary impact with my coaching clients. There are times when I lose my grounding and feel a bit shaky, even though I've been at this work for over 20 years.

- *Am I taking the right approach with this executive?*
- *What am I missing that leaves me feeling stuck?*
- *Why is the client not seeming to make progress?*
- *Am I trying too hard? Is she/he even coachable?*

It's like taking a wrong turn in a town you know and feeling temporarily disoriented and lost.

During these times I don't have access to my best coach self. My resilience is low and my confidence dips, and, though I may have some sense of what's going on I don't have the full picture. Interestingly, during these times I'm questioning myself, my clients are reporting back to me how much they value and appreciate my coaching. They highlight their new-found insights and the positive shifts in their behavior.

So, during these times of struggle in my coaching practice, what's missing, if anything, and how do I find my way back to my best coach self?

The first acknowledgment is that, like my clients, I am a work in progress. And I am best in service of my clients, and myself, if I consistently invest time in reflective practice. This is the journey, and the responsibility, for all coaches. We can't expect our clients to invest in their continuous learning if we aren't doing so ourselves.

Supervision is the best way to access reflective practice so we can learn from our experiences with coaching clients. Coaches all know from our training that it's wise to take breaks from our client work to reflect and ask ourselves – How do I know I am doing my best work with clients? What is working well that I can expand on and grow? How am I limiting myself or out of alignment in my coaching interactions?

Supervision is defined as a safe space for reflective dialogue with a practicing supervisor, supporting the supervisee's practice, development, and well-being.

— European Mentoring and Coaching Council - EMCC

Partnering with a supervisor, either 1:1 or in a group, is increasingly being seen as a necessary support for any coaching engagement be it 1:1, team, or group. In addition, organizations with internal coaches are investing in supervision to ensure their well-being, development, and ethical maturity.

Supervision is an endless quest to become more present and aware as a coach, so we can offer the best of who we are when with our clients. We simply stay present with an open mind and an embodied presence, and mostly listen and ask questions—a simple way of being. The space of reflective dialogue (aka, supervision) is a primary way coaches can cultivate coaching presence.

