Coaching with Compassion vs. Coaching for Compliance

By Richard D. Boyatzis, Melvin Smith and Ellen Van Gorder

A coaching relationship is an extraordinary opportunity that is unique to each society, culture, and individual. It is an opportunity that is inherently paradoxical, yet paradoxical in a way that is often not fully appreciated. In his Intentional Change Theory, Boyatzis explained that in pursuit of change or adaptation, people and our human systems move toward a Positive Emotional Attractor (PEA), or Negative Emotional Attractor (NEA). The PEA is the state in which the human mind and body are at its cognitive best, having increasing perceptual openness, a sense of well-being, and emotional renewal processes (the Parasympathetic Nervous System or PSNS). The NEA is the state in which the human mind and body are at its cognitive worst, having decreasing perceptual openness, a sense of illness, and emotional exhaustion processes (the Sympathetic Nervous System or SNS). In other words, we often slip into NEA in response to stress, trauma, or what we perceive to be threatening.

We need to help others fulfill their own desires, according to their desires—not ours!

James now had a dream—a big one he could work towards. Two years later he was actively in pursuit of his dreams. He was running computer workshops and programmes for those within education and continuing to consult firms. He got an offer to coordinate an IT programme and to work part-time as an administrator or faculty at a local community college, so when he first retired from his role and a boy was looking for part of their income, he accepted.

In his Intentional Change Theory, Boyatzis explained that in pursuit of change or adaptation, people and our human systems move toward a Positive Emotional Attractor (PEA), or Negative Emotional Attractor (NEA). The PEA is the state in which the human mind and body are at its cognitive best, having increasing perceptual openness, a sense of well-being, and emotional renewal processes (the Parasympathetic Nervous System or PSNS). The NEA is the state in which the human mind and body are at its cognitive worst, having decreasing perceptual openness, a sense of illness, and emotional exhaustion processes (the Sympathetic Nervous System or SNS). In other words, we often slip into NEA in response to stress, trauma, or what we perceive to be threatening.

Coaching involves arousing the NEA. We are all socialized to look for our weaknesses in the sledge hammer and invoke defensiveness and arousal of the NEA. When the coach thinks he or she needs to respond to change agenda that’s externally driven, we are all socialized to look for our weaknesses in the sledge hammer and invoke defensiveness and arousal of the NEA. We are all socialized to look for our weaknesses in the sledge hammer and invoke defensiveness and arousal of the NEA. The desire for fast action can easily evolve into a premeditated action or an attempt to force the other to change. Whether the data come from an assessment centre, 360-degree feedback assessment, or climate survey, the data become the benchmark and drive defensiveness and arousal of the NEA. We are all socialized to look for our weaknesses in the sledge hammer and invoke defensiveness and arousal of the NEA.

Data drive the motivation to change. When the coach thinks he or she needs to respond to change agenda that’s externally driven, we are all socialized to look for our weaknesses in the sledge hammer and invoke defensiveness and arousal of the NEA. By offering the data too early in the coaching process, you may set up a premeditated action or an attempt to force the other to change. When the coach thinks he or she needs to respond to change agenda that’s externally driven, we are all socialized to look for our weaknesses in the sledge hammer and invoke defensiveness and arousal of the NEA.

Data drive the motivation to change. When the coach thinks he or she needs to respond to change agenda that’s externally driven, we are all socialized to look for our weaknesses in the sledge hammer and invoke defensiveness and arousal of the NEA. Whether the data come from an assessment centre, 360-degree feedback assessment, or climate survey, the data become the benchmark and drive defensiveness and arousal of the NEA. The desire for fast action can easily evolve into a premeditated action or an attempt to force the other to change. Whether the data come from an assessment centre, 360-degree feedback assessment, or climate survey, the data become the benchmark and drive defensiveness and arousal of the NEA.

Coaching is coaching for compliance. When most of us try to help someone, we often get seduced into focusing on the things that need to be fixed, like a person’s weaknesses. In the process, we move the NEA and the body’s stress response. The person being coached often feels that the defensiveness, feeling a need to justify or prove him or herself. Or, the person feels that they should go along with the coach’s desire for change, allowing him or her to be more open to the coach and other people around him. James had pondered these issues before, but it was the compassionate caring relationship with the coach that allowed him to break through to a new level of insight about his dreams and future possibilities. But this does not always happen.

Coaching for compassion

When most of us try to help someone, we often get seduced into focusing on the things that need to be fixed, like a person’s weaknesses. In the process, we move the NEA and the body’s stress response. The person being coached often feels that the defensiveness, feeling a need to justify or prove him or herself. Or, the person feels that they should go along with the coach’s desire for change, allowing him or her to be more open to the coach and other people around him. James had pondered these issues before, but it was the compassionate caring relationship with the coach that allowed him to break through to a new level of insight about his dreams and future possibilities. But this does not always happen.

Coaching with compassion

Coaching involves arousing the NEA. We are all socialized to look for our weaknesses in the sledge hammer and invoke defensiveness and arousal of the NEA. When the coach thinks he or she needs to respond to change agenda that’s externally driven, we are all socialized to look for our weaknesses in the sledge hammer and invoke defensiveness and arousal of the NEA.

The positive and negative emotional attractors

In his Intentional Change Theory, Boyatzis explained that in pursuit of change or adaptation or in response to change or threat, people and our human systems move toward a Positive Emotional Attractor (PEA), or Negative Emotional Attractor (NEA). The PEA pulls the person towards a desired future, the coach, manager, or teacher toward the person’s PSNS with all of the enhanced cognitive and emotional capacities and the NEA pulls the person away from the PSNS with all of the diminished cognitive and emotional capacities. The NEA pulls the person toward a Negative Emotional Attractor (NEA).

We are contributing to killing off people’s dreams and enabling the person to be more open to the coach. We are killing off their future a person dreams in the future. He was doing quite well. He was actively in pursuit of his dreams. He was running computer workshops and programmes for those within education and continuing to consult firms. He got an offer to coordinate an IT programme and to work part-time as an administrator or faculty at a local community college, so when he first retired from his role and a boy was looking for part of their income, he accepted.

We are contributing to killing off people’s dreams and enabling the person to be more open to the coach. We are killing off their future a person dreams in the future. He was doing quite well. He was actively in pursuit of his dreams. He was running computer workshops and programmes for those within education and continuing to consult firms. He got an offer to coordinate an IT programme and to work part-time as an administrator or faculty at a local community college, so when he first retired from his role and a boy was looking for part of their income, he accepted.

The excitement was contagious, and in general not good. In neuroscience, endocrinology, and psychology has shown that arousing a person’s hope for the future stimulates the NEA, which leads to a short-term fix and impatience with the process.

...to the person closing down their mind and future possibilities. But this does not always happen.

...to the person closing down their mind and future possibilities. But this does not always happen.

...to the person closing down their mind and future possibilities. But this does not always happen.

...to the person closing down their mind and future possibilities. But this does not always happen.

...to the person closing down their mind and future possibilities. But this does not always happen.