CHAPTER 1

Coaching from the Humanistic Perspective

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COACHING IS ABOVE all about human growth and change. And in recognizing its roots in traditions and disciplines that strive for supporting growth, coaching would miss a substantial source of knowledge if we overlooked the contributions of humanistic psychology. In this chapter, I propose that this perspective is a philosophical foundation for coaching in terms of values and assumptions. As Hedman (2001) notes after drawing parallels between Carl Rogers' humanistic, person-centered approach and literature on the ingredients of executive coaching, "it should be obvious that Rogerian principles are central to the success of an executive coaching program" (p. 73).

The person-centered model is but one of a number of approaches, mainly to psychotherapy, that fall under the humanistic label. Others include Gestalt therapy, experiential therapies, and existential therapies. There are many books detailing the intricacies of concepts and techniques contained in these approaches, and the interested reader may choose to seek these out. I limit the discussion in this chapter to the general concepts and assumptions in humanistic approaches that directly apply to coaching.

Translation is necessary, however, in applying these therapeutic theories and practices to coaching. Where much of therapy is focused on resolving deficits and weaknesses in the direction of restoring a person to functioning, coaching is a process focused on working with a person's needs, wants, goals, or vision for where they want to go, and then designing steps for getting there. What humanistic therapies and coaching share is the idea that positive change is a driving force for clients in ei-

ther modality. I would argue that both share some basic philosophical assumptions. In particular, the humanistic theory of self-actualization is a foundational assumption for coaching with its focus on enhancing growth rather than ameliorating dysfunction. In fact, the assumption of self-actualization is a significant influence in placing coaching into the realm of a *growth process* compared to general encouragement and advice giving. Whether coaches are engaged in personal development, performance, or executive coaching with their clients, the belief in the potential for positive growth as a driving force is required. I would also like to take this opportunity to note that the term *growth* in this discussion is not limited to a grand, overarching view of actualizing one's potential (which encompasses the whole journey of one's life) but rather runs the gamut from self-actualization to small positive changes that are individual steps in our daily lives.

While some might argue that a large portion, if not majority, of coaching is less about general growth and more about the small steps of finding solutions, developing specific skills, or goal attainment, holding a broader framework of helping people make positive change, such as the humanistic view, can enable the coach to handle the full range of initial matters of interest that clients bring to coaching. This humanistic approach to coaching implies that whether the client comes requesting help with getting more organized, improving interpersonal interactions at work, finding a new career, or starting a business, the client is coming to engage in a process of moving forward and making positive changes, and thus is using a process of self-growth, even if that's not "what they came for." And the humanistic approach provides a context and the ingredients necessary to make those positive changes, whether clients keep a narrow, specific focus or move to a broader view of their potential for growth.

In differentiating humanistic therapeutic approaches from a humanistic approach to coaching, there are several key distinctions. An important one is the difference in the *goal* of the process: Humanistic therapy is aimed at helping clients gain a more *functional* life while coaching usually seeks to help clients move a generally functional life to a more *full* life, whether that is related to a particular issue or area, like being a better leader or changing one's career, or is more broadly defined by the client. Another distinction is between the general *focus* of the process: Humanistic therapy is often tilted toward working with the client's *feelings* (as they are often less processed compared to thinking functions), whereas coaching often focuses more specifically on *actions* the client can take to meet their overall goals for the coaching. Both humanistic therapy and coaching aim to increase clients' awareness of their experi-

ence; however, what *purpose* the awareness serves differs. For therapy, the purpose of awareness is seen as an end in itself; that is, by processing one's full experience, one becomes more whole. It is assumed that the main *result*, awareness, will produce changes in behavior. For coaching, the purpose of gaining clarity and fuller awareness (of thoughts, feelings, and sensations in addition to what is in the client's environment) is an initial step toward the desired result of action. So the assumption is that awareness is an *ingredient* for successful action and that the coaching process will harness that in the service of actively making change. These distinctions will show up in how the shared assumptions between coaching and therapy translate to different ways of working with clients.

Returning to these philosophical assumptions shared by coaching and humanistic psychology, Cain (2002) calls the view of the person as self-actualizing "the foundational premise on which humanistic therapies are built" (p. 6). There are several other defining characteristics in humanistic approaches that can be extended to coaching: (1) a relational emphasis as the fundamental source of change, (2) a holistic view of the person as a unique being, and (3) a belief in the possibility of freedom of choice with accompanying responsibility (Cain, 2002). The following section discusses these characteristics, the concepts and theories associated with them, and how they can be applied to our understanding of coaching.

KEY CONCEPTS FROM HUMANISTIC APPROACHES

As we explore the application of humanistic perspectives to the practice of coaching, there are a number of key concepts that bear further elaboration and discussion. Some cut across the different humanistic approaches, and some are more heavily concentrated in one particular system. While these concepts were originally developed for therapists' use in psychotherapy, they are easily extrapolated for relationships such as coaching. I describe each concept as it exists in humanistic therapy and then discuss how it is translated into coaching practice.

Growth-Oriented View of the Person

The humanistic approach is founded on an optimistic view of the person. This is not to say that humanistic therapists deny that dysfunction exists; rather, it is a belief that individuals have the capacity to use their experiences and resources to move forward and grow. Within this view, it is assumed that given the right environment (more on this later), peo-

ple have an internal mechanism, called the self-actualizing tendency, by which growth can occur.

Self-Actualization

Probably the most fundamental proposition of the humanistic view of personality and behavior is the underlying tendency of organisms to self-actualize (Combs, 1999; Maslow, 1970; Rogers, 1951, 1959). Rogers (1951) proposed that human development is directional (forward) and that within the individual framework of the person, people have a basic striving to reach their full capacity. This was a radical notion compared to the formulations given by the psychodynamic and behavioral theorists of the day. Maslow (1970) furthered humanistic theory by studying self-actualizing individuals and describing their achievements and evolution. Both stated that when the context allows, people will choose what is good for them because they then experience satisfaction or pleasure, which results in continuing efforts to evolve and grow. So for humanistic practitioners, developing a contextual climate that supports and nurtures self-actualization is the linchpin for helping clients grow into their potential. This assumption also has a direct implication for how to work with clients: Practitioners are there to *facilitate* the client's *own natural potential* for growth. This view is aptly stated by Cain (2002): "Their faith in the client's potential results in humanistic therapists' disinclination to be directive, but rather to act in ways that free clients to find their own directions, solve their own problems, and evolve in ways that are congruent to them" (p. 6).

TRANSLATION TO COACHING For coaches, then, this foundational assumption of self-actualization and its implications guides a major distinction between coaching and related activities such as consulting or mentoring: The coach's role is that of facilitator, rather than subject matter expert or more experienced guide. Coaches need to be experts at the *process* of coaching but recognize their clients are the experts on the *content* of their own experience. This is not to say that coaches do not provide any information, but rather that by assuming that individuals have an innate capacity for growth, any information provided by the coach should be in the service of the client's unique potential.

PRACTITIONER-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP

Humanistic approaches were on the forefront of describing the fundamental importance of the relationship between practitioner and client as a source of change in psychotherapy. It is through the relationship and the environment set by the practitioner that clients are able to explore

their own experience and choose directions for the future. There are several key qualities to building a productive relationship from the humanistic perspective: collaboration between client and practitioner, and empathy, unconditional positive regard, and authenticity on the part of the practitioner. We will discuss each of these as they relate to a process of growth for the client.

Collaboration in the Practitioner-Client Relationship

Consistent with premises of the self-actualizing tendency, humanistic theorists see collaboration between practitioner and client as a required aspect of a helping relationship. When practitioners approach their clients with the belief that they are inherently capable of positive growth, a natural implication arises of working *with* the client, rather than working *on* the client. This requires an active engagement of the practitioner in facilitating the client's own awareness of how they experience themselves, their situation, what it means, and where they want to go with it. It is a fundamental value in humanistic therapy to approach this engagement by honoring the client's direction (Combs, 1989; Elliott & Greenberg, 2002; Greenberg & Paivio, 1997). So the relationship becomes one of approaching the client as someone to work with in tapping into the client's own sense of unfolding growth and potential.

TRANSLATION TO COACHING The humanistic therapy approach of a collaborative stance with the client translates very directly to coaching. Whether a client is seeking coaching for improved performance in the workplace, work-life balance, or other reasons, a hallmark of coaching is working with the client to construct meaningful choices and actions for the client's specific situation.

Directiveness

As an outgrowth of the collaboration between practitioner and client, the question occurs regarding the degree to which the practitioner directs the process and content of interactions. As is discussed further later, because the client is seen as the expert on his or her own experience, directing *content* is generally not consistent with a humanistic approach. Rather, the practitioner can facilitate the client's growth by engaging the client through the process of the interaction. In Gestalt therapy (Strümpfel & Goldman, 2002); process-experiential therapy (Elliott & Greenberg, 2002); client-centered therapy (Watson, 2002); and other humanistic approaches, the practitioner is highly involved in directing the client toward greater awareness of experience and choice by

using particular techniques developed to help clients explore their "growing edges."

TRANSLATION FOR COACHING For current coaching practice, there is generally an acceptance of the spirit of this concept of process directiveness as opposed to content directiveness from the humanistic tradition, although the balance may vary. In more personal coaching, the aim is often to help clients flesh out their vision of their ideal existence and then develop and enact steps toward that ideal. But it is not up to the coach to direct the content of that ideal; rather, the coach is there to help the client fully describe it and design steps to take them toward it. In executive, organizational, or performance coaching, the balance of directiveness may be somewhat different, depending on the structure of the coaching contract. There are times that the organizational needs or context require the coach to focus on a specific area with the client; however, coaches still will come down on the side of process directiveness in collaborating with the client about what particular actions are best suited for this particular client. When coaching for skills, the line between content and process directiveness may become a bit fuzzy, as often there is particular content the coach provides (e.g., information about listening skills) in the process of facilitating the client's skills development.

The Practitioner's Qualities

For Rogers (1980), it is through an optimal climate (empathy, positive regard, genuineness), in the relationship and provided by the practitioner, that the client's capacity for self-growth is accessed. Likewise, Gestalt therapists have emphasized the importance of genuine contact and warmth between a therapist who does not claim a superior or interpretive position above the client and the client who is actively engaged as an equal expert in his or her own experience (Greenberg & Rice, 1997; Yontef & Simkin, 1989).

One of the greatest strengths of the humanistic perspective, and particularly Rogers' person-centered approach, is the emphasis on a warm, positive relationship between the practitioner and the client. Outcome research and research on the therapeutic, or working, alliance in psychotherapy have all but unanimously shown that the therapist-patient relationship is an essential ingredient to positive growth (see the next main section, on evidence).

EMPATHY Empathy is one of the most basic capacities required for understanding one another (Bohart & Greenberg, 1997; Rogers, 1975). It goes beyond an intellectual or cognitive understanding of another's experience or viewpoint; empathy includes an understanding of their experience on an emotional level. It is by trying to accurately understand

and communicate the client's full reality without adding, subtracting, or changing information that the practitioner demonstrates understanding at both a cognitive and an affective level. This requires practitioners to maintain a stance of hypothesis, always checking with their clients to ascertain whether they have accurately understood the essence of the client's experience. In order to achieve accurate empathy, practitioners must set aside their own feelings, reactions, and thoughts in order to sense the client's world as if it were their own.

In addition, by demonstrating empathy the practitioner is performing several important tasks: allowing clients to become more fully aware of their own construction of reality, demonstrating positive regard for the self of the client, and building trust in the relationship. When this understanding is communicated, clients can then gain another's view to their own experience, which often is then felt as a deeply rewarding sense of being known and at the same time can allow clients to know themselves more fully, too. Empathy builds trust that the practitioner seeks to understand and that this relationship is one in which the client's experience holds the ingredients for future growth.

Unfortunately, accurate empathy has often been taught as a simple reflection of the client's feelings ("You are angry that your boss criticized you in front of others.") when in fact it is a demanding process of trying to enter the private world of the client and accurately capture meaning and experience (Watson, 2002). As one can well imagine, this is a tall order. Accurate empathy entails both emotional and cognitive processes: Understanding another's frame of reference is a cognitive process that is not possible without also attending to the emotional experience of the other (Duan & Hill, 1996; Rogers, 1975; Watson, 2002).

UNCONDITIONAL POSITIVE REGARD In order to engage in the process of empathy, it is necessary to also maintain a stance of unconditional positive regard, or acceptance or "prizing" (Rogers, 1951, 1975). It is an acceptance and valuing of the client for who they are. This acceptance does not mean that the practitioner must agree with or endorse everything the client says or does; rather, it means the practitioner is able to maintain an attitude of refraining from judgment (Rogers, 1959). It would be difficult, if not impossible, to be accurately empathic if a practitioner negatively views his or her client. Unconditional positive regard means the practitioner cultivates a sense of continually "being in the client's corner" without imposing his or her agenda or values on the client.

AUTHENTICITY/GENUINENESS/CONGRUENCE Across different humanistic approaches, there is a recognition that while understanding and accepting clients for who they are is vital, the person and experience of the practi-

tioner in the moment is also important. A number of terms have been used to describe the awareness of practitioners of their own thoughts, feelings, and sensations in the moment of contact: authenticity and genuineness or congruence. By genuineness, or congruence, person-centered approaches mean that the therapist, or practitioner, is able to accurately note his or her experience regarding the client in the present and thus "be himself or herself" therapeutically with the client (Rogers, 1957; Sachse & Elliott, 2002). Authenticity, likewise, in the existentialist tradition, means being open and true to the experience during therapy (Bugental, 1987; Walsh & McElwain, 2002).

This does not mean, however, that the practitioner should be brutally honest in a misguided attempt to be genuine with the client. In fact, there is some suggestion that "excessive genuineness" on the part of the practitioner could be linked to negative outcomes (Sachse & Elliott, 2002). Rather, when authenticity is combined with empathy and unconditional positive regard, clients have a unique opportunity to gain clarity for themselves by hearing another's genuine experience with them given in a context of caring and understanding.

TRANSLATION FOR COACHING As coaches, then, we have the opportunity at the outset of the development of coaching theory, research, and practice to learn from the psychotherapy literature and maintain the importance of focusing on the development and understanding of a trusting relationship between coach and client. Rogers' emphasis on the importance of accurate empathy and unconditional positive regard, along with his and other humanistic theorists' stress on authenticity both between practitioner and client and within each are critical guides for effective coaching practice. Within coaching, as in psychotherapy, there is recognition that without the client feeling understood and accepted, the chances for coach and client to work together for change are pretty slim. Likewise, failure to give any feedback in coaching conversations regarding what the coach experiences in the interaction is withholding an important source of information to the client. The main difference in how these qualities are demonstrated by the coach is that the coach employs them in the service of building rapport such that clients can actively engage in making choices about the actions they will take in their growth. This contrasts with the therapeutic aim of these qualities, providing a context for increasing awareness in the service of healing.

HOLISTIC VIEW OF THE PERSON

Another defining characteristic of the humanistic perspective is the emphasis on viewing people holistically. There is a rejection of a split be-

tween mind and body; rather there is an emphasis on the individual as a dynamic whole. Humanistic theorists would liken descriptions of parts (e.g., cognitive functions, emotional states or traits, etc.) as helpful in understanding the full person like anatomical study is helpful in understanding a living, moving body: It can give a particular view but is not adequate in understanding the whole. When we are functioning at our best, we generally describe this state as feeling "whole," "integrated," or in "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Range of Human Experience

Most humanistic theorists explicitly state that in order to reach full potential, individuals must value the full range of human experience: our physical, cognitive, and affective, or emotional, realities (Cain, 2002). And since there is often an overreliance on intellectual, cognitive processing, many humanistic approaches stress the importance of emotional and physical processing (e.g, Elliott & Greenberg, 2002; Gendlin, 1996; Mahrer, 1996; Rice, 1974). Overall, humanistic approaches share the view that if attention is not paid to all of our experience, growth is interrupted.

TRANSLATION TO COACHING For application in coaching, this view is extended to the idea that we cannot see our clients unidimensionally; rather, we tend to look at all areas of our clients' experience. Where humanistic therapists may focus on micro-level experiences, such as "What are you aware of in this very moment?" in order to access immediate experience, the coach may focus on a more macro view of the client's experience and, as needed, inquire about internal states as they impact the broader picture. Thus coaches attempt to understand the client's experience of self (e.g., values, personality, goals, health, etc.); of self-in-relation (e.g., important relationships, interpersonal style, sense of community, networks, etc.); and of environment (e.g., work/career environment, financial situation, physical surroundings, etc.); and each in relation to the other. By approaching our clients in this way, we communicate to our clients that their whole experience is of interest, is important, and is worthy of attention. Of course, this requires the caveat that the focus in coaching also is dependent on what is part of the coaching contract. The aim of coaching may be broader in a personal coaching relationship, while in a performance coaching scenario the focus may be more circumscribed (or not!).

Uniqueness of the Individual

If we accept that we construct reality from our perceptions and make sense of our perceptions in individual ways, then each person is a

unique individual. Humanistic interventions share the view that in order to understand another, practitioners must attempt to understand the phenomenological experience of the other. This requires the practitioner to engage in developing a specific, personalized understanding of the client. It also points to an atmosphere of "hypothesis testing" on the part of the therapist in formulating that understanding: as practitioners draw conclusions or construct a view of the client, they must check out their understanding with the client. This applies not only to understanding the client's experience but also to understanding the choices the client makes regarding intentions, goals, and actions.

So if the client is a unique individual, then the relationship between practitioner and client must also be customized (Cain, 1989; Duncan & Miller, 2000; Hubble, Duncan, & Miller, 1999). There is no one-size-fits-all approach in the humanistic perspective. By recognizing the client as the expert on his or her experience and utilizing their own expertise in facilitating awareness and choice, the practitioner and client together can formulate new understanding and directions for growth. This approach underscores the importance of collaboration and the resulting individuality of each therapeutic relationship. Indeed, this is the spirit of an evidence-based approach: the use of the best available knowledge integrated with the practitioner's expertise in the service of the client's experience and context (Sackett et al., 1996).

TRANSLATION TO COACHING While many coaches generally note that the coaching relationship needs to be tailored to the client (e.g., Dotlich & Cairo, 1999; O'Neill, 2000; Skiffington & Zeus, 2003; Whitworth, Kimsey-House, & Sandahl, 1998; Williams & Davis, 2002), the humanistic approach points out an underlying philosophy of why. This concept of the uniqueness of each individual also plays out in coaching in recognizing that designing action plans and so on must be jointly constructed for the best chance of success. What will work for one client may not for another. By asking clients to not only help design their "homework" but also assess what is likely to get in the way, what supports and resources are available, and how they will recognize success, the coach communicates a customized method as the process.

CHOICE AND RESPONSIBILITY

In the humanistic view, people are seen as having choice in how they respond to their environment. This freedom of choice is not a simplistic notion of complete autonomy; instead it is making choices within each individual's particular context. It is important to note that exercising

choice does not mean that we have ultimate power over any situation; rather "there are always both given and chosen aspects of any particular moment" (Walsh & McElwain, 2002, p. 255).

Availability of Choice

Some humanistic theorists, particularly the existentialists, argue that we are unable to avoid making choices that have a bearing on our current and future selves (Frankl, 1967; Yalom, 1989). So while the idea of choice implies a certain freedom, it comes with a responsibility to recognize that in any moment a choice is being made, whether we are aware of it or not. By cultivating awareness of choice being available, we have power to make choices and responsibility for the choices made rather than viewing our situations and reactions as inevitable or immutable. This gives humanistic practitioners a particular avenue to pursue in helping their clients harness the self-actualization tendency.

TRANSLATION TO COACHING In coaching, there is a basic assumption that change is possible, and that we as human beings have choice both in terms of action and in terms of meaning making. Again, I would argue that these assumptions place coaching in the philosophical tradition of humanistic thought. Many coaches will recognize this humanistic value in the common technique of asking "Who do you want to be in this situation?" and "What do you want to accomplish in this?" and "How do you want to make that happen?" across many models of coaching (e.g., Goodman, 2002; Peterson & Millier, 2005; Skiffington & Zeus, 2003; Whitworth, Kimsey-House, & Sandahl, 1998). In asking our clients to make clear and conscious choices, we ask them to become active architects of their growth. By holding them accountable for those choices, we underscore the responsibility that comes with choice.

EVIDENCE FROM RESEARCH ON HUMANISTIC APPROACHES

Conducting empirical research to better understand the utility and outcome of humanistic psychotherapy has a long tradition, primarily dating back to Rogers' initial investigations (1957) and willingness to submit his theories to research. Rogers held that understanding outcomes and processes that influence client success (or failure) is an important task facing those who would propose theory. However, much of this research has not been acknowledged in psychology's rush toward trying to establish one approach's superiority over another in the past few decades (Elliott, 2002). Contributing to the perception that human-

istic therapies have little data to support their effectiveness is the position traditionally held by some existential and Gestalt therapists who saw objective, nomothetic research methods as flawed approaches given the subjective, ideographic essence of human experience. More recent developments in advancing the utility of qualitative methods have given new directions to exploring humanistic approaches while maintaining the philosophical assumptions regarding the uniqueness of individual experience (Rennie, 2002).

So what evidence is there for the effectiveness of humanistic approaches to human growth and change? Elliott's (2002) most recent meta-analysis of 86 studies looked at humanistic approaches ranging from client-centered therapy to process-experiential therapy, emotion-focused therapy, Gestalt therapy, and focusing-oriented therapies. He concluded that there is substantial evidence that humanistic therapies are effective based on findings that clients generally show large amounts of change over time; they evidence stable gains after therapy (both in early follow-up posttherapy and after 12 months); clients show substantially more change than comparable control (untreated) clients in randomized clinical trials; and when researcher allegiance to a particular therapy approach is controlled for, clients receiving humanistic therapy generally exhibit similar amounts of change as clients in non-humanistic therapies.

In another avenue of research, when the factors involved in successful change in psychotherapy are investigated, evidence substantiates much of the theory on conditions for growth from humanistic approaches. Orlinsky, Grawe, and Parkes (1994) and Sachse and Elliott (2002) reviewed the research on the process of psychotherapy and found evidence for the positive influence on outcome of a number of variables: empathic understanding; unconditional positive regard/acceptance/affirmation; therapist engagement and a collaborative stance with the client in constructing a positive working relationship; and process directiveness by the therapist (directing the process as compared to directing the content). Genuineness on the part of the therapist was more equivocal, and the research points to the need for more research regarding other factors that likely influence whether this quality is helpful (Sachse & Elliott, 2002).

While there is a substantial amount of evidence that humanistic approaches are effective in psychotherapy and that techniques based on humanistic theories and assumptions are related to positive change, research evidence is lacking on their application specifically to coaching. At this point in the emergence of coaching as a distinct discipline, our best available knowledge comes primarily from extrapolating from related areas, which gives us some clear directions for future development. One of the

areas for growth in coaching lies in the investigation of relevant models to coaching and their use as theoretical and research foundations.

HUMANISTIC APPLICATIONS IN COACHING

Some of the key concepts in the humanistic approaches to psychotherapy that directly apply to coaching have been discussed. Now we turn to how they have influenced, both explicitly and indirectly, current thought in coaching and how they can be applied to coaching practice.

Influence of Humanistic Models on Coaching

While the warm acceptance of clients for who they are, understanding them as unique individuals, and being authentic in relationship with them seem to be obvious ingredients for successful coaching, it is important to note where these widely held views originated. Rogers was revolutionary in his writings about the centrality of the context and relationship between practitioner and client for helping clients to tap into their own capacity for growth. Many coaching models underscore the importance of a trusting relationship based on empathy and empowering the client (e.g., Diedrich, 1996; Peterson, 1996; Sperry, 1996; Whitworth, Kimsey-House, & Sandahl, 1998; Williams & Davis, 2002). The fact that these factors are often taken as self-evident by coaches is a testament to the acceptance of Rogers' thinking by many.

Likewise, the assumption that individuals have a natural bent to self-actualize and move toward growth is shared among many models of coaching, from executive and business to personal and life coaching. This assumption is demonstrated by the focus on unlocking potential or facilitating growth (e.g., Hargrove, 2003; Hudson, 1999; Whitmore, 1996; Whitworth, Kimsey-House, & Sandahl, 1998; Williams & Davis, 2002; Witherspoon, 2000). Skiffington and Zeus (2003) acknowledge the humanistic philosophical influence by noting that "coaching is humanistic in that it views the human being as the ultimate measure of all things and recognizes that every individual has a capacity, even yearning, for growth and fulfillment" (p. 17).

Humanistic Stance as a Foundation for Coaching

Given the influences from humanistic perspectives that are evident in current coaching models, I would propose that these values and assumptions are foundational characteristics of coaching. It is hard to imagine a method of coaching that does not contain the values of a

warm working relationship, the uniqueness of each individual, choice and responsibility, and the inherent capacity for growth. So regardless of additional techniques or theoretical approaches, the humanistic stance is a shared orientation in coaching. If one considers the evidence from research on humanistic approaches and common factors in therapeutic relationships as pointing to necessary (although not universally sufficient) conditions for processes of human change, then it is essential to build these concepts into any coherent model of coaching.

THE HUMANISTIC GUIDE TO COACHING

In applying the humanistic approach to the process of coaching, there are several guiding principles that provide a framework for the context of coaching: (1) the nature of the coaching relationship is essential; (2) the client is the source and director of change; (3) the client is whole and unique; and (4) the coach is the facilitator of the client's growth. Each of the principles has associated tasks for the coach that will be discussed shortly. In addition, a model of a cycle of change from the humanistic perspective can be described as Awareness-Choice-Execution (ACE) to help clients learn to move through this process themselves.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1: THE NATURE OF THE COACHING RELATIONSHIP IS ESSENTIAL

In coaching from a humanistic stance, it is essential to develop a trusting, collaborative relationship between coach and client. What we know from evidence and theory is that the coach must approach and engage the client with empathy, acceptance, and authenticity in the coaching conversation. By communicating these attitudes and behaviors to the client, the coach provides the platform for safety, trust, and collaborative interaction.

Coaching Tasks

1. *Listen for understanding.* A key task for the coach is to develop active listening skills that allow the coach to "walk in the client's shoes" and see the world from his or her internal frame of reference. To develop accurate empathy, one must spend the time and energy to listen to the client's experience, asking for clarification, summarizing the essence of the client's experience, and then checking out that understanding with the client. A related task is communicating that understanding to the client. These steps are essential to building a relationship that relies on an accurate picture of the client and ex-

hibits trust that the coach "gets" the client. Approaching the client in this way not only enables the coach to understand the client better but it also affords the client the opportunity to reflect on and consciously process more of his or her experience.

2. *Cultivate acceptance and look for positive points of connection.* While a constant state of complete acceptance, or unconditional positive regard, might be reserved for saints, yogis, and other self-actualized beings, it is important for the coach to cultivate this way of viewing others. By actively searching for positive aspects of each client with which the coach resonates, the coach can further develop a prizing and acceptance of clients for who they are as human beings. This requires the coach to look for the positive points of connection as the point of entry and to refrain from an attitude of judgment. As Rogers (1951) notes, it is all but impossible to be accurately empathic if the practitioner cannot find a warm acceptance of the person with whom he or she is working. Another way of saying this is: If you can't find something you love about your clients, then you won't be able to understand them. By focusing on the importance of acceptance of the client as a valued person, the coach also has a decision point: If the coach cannot find a comfortable level of positive feeling and warmth toward the client, the coach would best serve the client and himself or herself by disengaging from a coaching relationship and referring the client on to another who is a better match.
3. *Give honest feedback in the moment.* The concept of authenticity, or genuineness/congruence, in humanistic approaches is an essential aspect of the practitioner-client relationship. For the coach, this means being aware of one's thoughts, feelings, and sensations in interactions with the client and being able to communicate these when helpful in an honest, caring way. In all forms of coaching, this involves expressing support and affirmation, but it also means communicating information that may at times be uncomfortable, disagreeable, or not what the client wants to hear. However, if a coach is to serve as a source of truthful information and as a sounding board for his or her clients, being genuine is vital. Being able to warmly communicate both positive and negative information signals to the client that the coaching relationship is a safe place to deal with the total reality of their experience.
4. *Establish collaboration as the process of the coaching relationship.* Because the client is seen as having the capacity for self-growth, coaching is not something done *to* the client but rather *with* the client. The coach must actively engage the client to participate in

his or her own growth process as a full partner rather than a passive recipient of the coach's wisdom. This is true whether the growth process is "becoming the best person I can be" or "improving my persistence and task focus in my work." This can be done at the outset of coaching when the coach is describing his or her approach, philosophy, and expectations for the process, and then should be carried throughout coaching.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 2: THE CLIENT IS THE SOURCE AND DIRECTOR OF CHANGE

A second guiding principle in the humanistic approach to coaching is the recognition that clients are the source of their own experience and inclination toward growth. Given that they are the experts on their experience, in facilitating a focus toward growth the coach also allows the client to choose the specific direction of the coaching. This is not to say that the coach has no input (remember the coach's task of authenticity); rather the coach's input should be in the service of the client's goals rather than the coach's goals for the client. The coach needs to meet clients where they are and lead from there. In this way the coach not only signals trust in the client's capacities, but also keeps the choice and responsibility for those choices squarely with the client. By doing so, the coach is also reinforcing the client's experience of self-efficacy and self-direction with the day the coaching relationship ends in mind.

Coaching Tasks

1. *Facilitate the client setting the agenda, goals, and direction.* After the coach has gathered sufficient data regarding the person of the client, the coach and client together can engage in fleshing out the client's vision for plans and goals. Setting personally meaningful goals increases the chances that the client will be able to enact and maintain change. Questions like "Where do you want to start?" and "What do you want out of this process?" can help clients in starting out on their own path with the coach right alongside.
2. *Use the self-subject matter expertise of the client as the point of connection.* Remembering that clients are experts on their own experience frees the coach from having to know it all. Familiarity with the context that the client is in is helpful in building the trust of the client but it can sometimes get in the way as there is the potential for coaches to jump ahead to what they see as most important. It is also imperative that coaches maintain an attitude of hypothesis regarding their understanding of the client. It is up to the coach to be

open to, and in fact invite, the client to correct, refine, and elaborate on the coach's understanding and facilitation of the process.

Guiding Principle 3: The Client Is Whole and Unique

A third guiding principle in coaching from the humanistic perspective is that each client is a unique individual who needs to be understood as a complex whole. The client is not only Sue the manager but she is also Sue the wife and mother, Sue the people person, Sue the marathon runner, and many other Sues. And to understand Sue and help her grow, the coach must come to know Sue as a whole person with many interconnected pieces. The coach must also recognize that because Sue is unique, the coach must tailor his or her approach, interactions, and techniques to fit Sue. There are no cookie-cutter clients, nor is there a one-size-fits-all way to coach.

Coaching Tasks

1. *Assess thoroughly and check for accuracy.* In order to coach at more than a rudimentary, surface level, the coach must take the time to construct a full picture of the client. Even when the coach is working in a fairly circumscribed manner, such as sometimes happens in organizational or skills coaching, it is important to understand who the client is as a whole rather than just gathering data about their career and job-related experiences. In addition, any assessments used can be most effective if they are chosen in conjunction with the preferences and needs of the client. And finally, it is essential that the coach not assume that he or she has understood the client accurately but rather ask for feedback from the client.
2. *Look for interconnections.* In developing a rich picture of the client, the coach must also look for how different areas of the client's life and experience connect with each other. Are there important influences from one area of the client's experience to another? From the humanistic viewpoint, integrating experience such that we are aware of multiple facets of our individual reality is one way we all grow and develop. In coaching, this means that the coach can point out instances where multiple aspects of the client are involved, ask questions about how they are linked, and encourage the client to pay attention to their full range of experience.
3. *Facilitate integrating/aligning.* As the coach highlights interconnections between various parts of the client's life, the coach can also ask questions of the client regarding how aligned the different aspects are or how they may be in contradiction. For example, if

Jacob tells his coach that he is excited to take on an ambitious new project at work and also is talking about his frustration that he missed his son's first step, the coach can facilitate Jacob's awareness of the trade-offs involved and his conscious choice of how he will handle these potentially competing interests.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 4: THE COACH IS THE FACILITATOR OF THE CLIENT'S GROWTH

Distinct from the role of healer (e.g., psychotherapist), wise elder (e.g., mentor), or outside expert (e.g., consultant), the coach's role is one of facilitation. By building a strong working relationship that is based on a rich understanding of the client and is collaborative in nature, the coach can use the coaching conversation as a means for the client to explore and plan their own direction. Rather than leading the client in any one direction, the coach is a partner and advocate of the client's choices and plans. This also means that the coach can hold the client accountable for the actions the client has chosen to undertake and in so doing provides an honest assessment of the client's growth.

Coaching Tasks

1. *Direct the process, not the content.* If the role for the coach is that of facilitator of the client's internal affinity toward growth, then it is essential that the coach engage actively at the level of assisting the process of identifying and then acting on the client's growing edges. This means that the coach is an active participant, even a leader or catalyst, in using techniques such as active listening, asking open-ended questions, and role-playing or imagining outcomes to help clients expand their experience and potential choices of action. However, if clients are the experts on their experience and can tap into their self-actualizing propensities, then in general it is the client's role to supply the content of the coaching. The exception to this is when the focus of the coaching has already been determined—for example, when a need for learning better communication skills has been identified for a manager. Coaching has its best opportunities for success when the client is the designer of the focus; and even when others have determined some of it, the specific content and the particular solutions or goals should be primarily the conception of the client if they are to fit that particular client's needs and context best.
2. *Maintain an attitude of exploration.* The coach can act as a facilitator also by promoting an attitude of jointly searching for understand-

ing, clarity, and potential answers. By reinforcing openness to experience, the coach models holding options open, recognizing the complexity of people and contexts, and not leaping prematurely to solutions. One way coaches can demonstrate this is by framing their observations of the client and their situation as hypotheses to be tested.

3. *Expand the client's awareness of strengths, resources, challenges.* In facilitating the client's own growth through the coaching relationship, it is an important task for the coach to direct the client to take stock of what qualities, resources, abilities, and so on the client possesses that can support growth and development. It is a strengthening process for clients to consciously assess what they have at their disposal in meeting the reality of their lives (see also Chapter 8 for the contributions of positive psychology in this task). It is also part of increasing awareness of clients to assess what challenges they face. Given that most clients come to coaching with something they want to accomplish, gaining a full picture of the challenges involved is an important task. By focusing attention on what clients bring and what they face, necessary information is processed by the client for the next task, making choices.
4. *Point out choices and help the client make conscious choices.* As the existentialists indicate, as humans we have a certain amount of choice in our moment-to-moment existence. By relating in a warm, accepting, and authentic manner with the client, the coach gains a footing for reflecting choices that are available to the client. By asking open-ended questions and exploring with the client, the coach also provides a context in which the client can take the time, space, and energy to focus on possible choices for themselves. Rather than always reacting to their experience of their context, clients have the opportunity through the coaching conversation to make a conscious choice of action. One framework for exploring choices is using the idea of an experiment. When clients are making new choices about their actions or meanings they are making of events, they are trying out new ways of being. Since these are not proven, well-trod paths, cultivating a sense of trying something out, observing the outcomes (both internally and externally), and then evaluating the new choice for satisfaction or positive change can help make the choice less absolute and more of a trial run.
5. *Facilitate goal-setting and accountability.* In helping clients move forward in their development, the coach can serve the function of facilitator of goal attainment (for a very thorough discussion of goal setting in coaching, see Chapter 6). As clients increase their aware-

ness of their resources, strengths, options, and challenges, and feel both supported by and known by the coach, they can use the coaching relationship as a context for choosing their direction for actions and "playing a big game." The coach can be very active in inviting clients to declare what they want for themselves and to plan how to get there. The coach also reinforces the idea that the client has access to potential directions and the steps needed internally rather than increasing the client's dependence on the coach for the answer. And by maintaining an ongoing relationship and an environment of responsibility for choices made, the coach reinforces the idea of accountability for choices made by the client.

These principles are guideposts to use in navigating the client's world and where the client wants to go. In humanistic coaching, there is no one right way; rather, growth and positive change are an outcome of constructing one's path from the resources and experiences of the client. The coach aids the client in this construction by following these principles and facilitating the client's conscious choices.

THE ACE CYCLE OF CHANGE

The model of Awareness-Choice-Execution (ACE), shown in Figure 1.1, is a tool for the coach to use the principles and tasks just described and to teach clients how to harness their own growth process. In directing the process of coaching for change, the coach can ensure that the client integrates *being* (and awareness of that) with *doing* such that the client comes away with real results.

Awareness

In the humanistic view of change, before one can make a conscious choice, one must be aware. To be fully aware, one must have a view of what has occurred in the past and who one has been. A coaching question might be, "What have you done in the past about X?" But that is only part of the information one must bring into consciousness. It is vitally important to focus on awareness of the present, too. Awareness of the present involves not just what clients think, but also what they feel and physically sense. Full awareness does not come without paying attention to all internal sources of information. Here the coach might ask something like "What do you feel right now as you talk about this?" or "What thoughts are going through your head?" Full awareness in preparation of making choices also means some attention to what the client envisions in the future in terms of hopes, fears, and likely out-

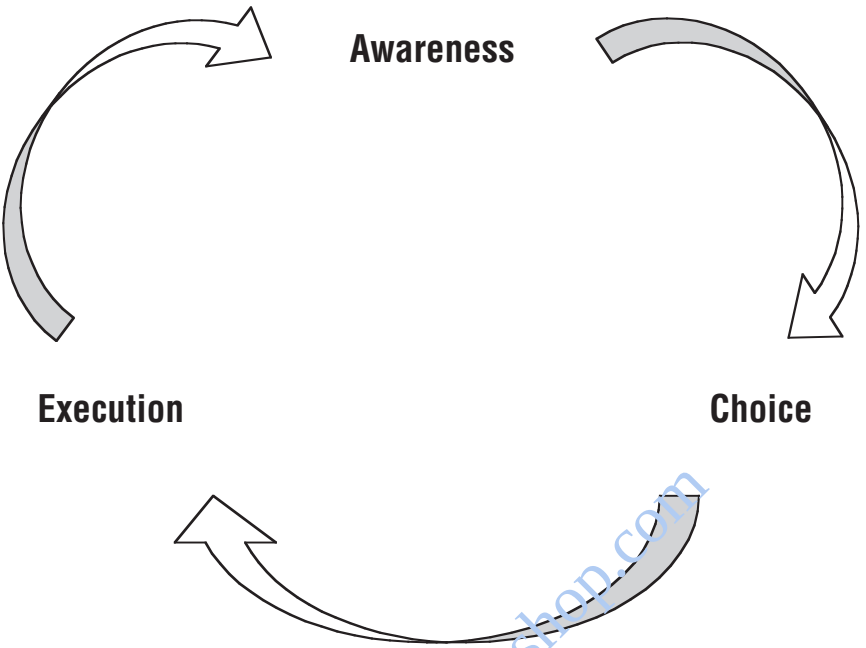

Figure 1.1
The ACE Cycle of Change

comes. So the coach would use the step of Awareness to facilitate clients gaining clarity about the full picture of their experience related to whatever the particular topic might be.

Choice

As we have discussed before, an essential concept in humanistic thought is that of the freedom of choice. In the cycle of change, after the client has engaged in the initial data-gathering phase of Awareness, the client is at the point of the availability of conscious choice. Given the client's awareness of the context, desires, and options that are available, it is time for facilitating the client's decision about what action to take. For example, a client has become aware of a conflict between her current job situation and what is truly fulfilling for her. After developing as full a picture as possible with her coach, the coach might ask something along the lines of "So now that we have a working framework for your situation and what you want and need, what do you want to do about it?" The coach is directing the process of intentional choice but is leaving the actual choice itself solidly with the client. Once the client has de-

cided on a course of action, the coach and client can collaborate on detailing the steps involved and often return briefly to awareness in developing a picture of what challenges might exist, what resources they will bring to bear, and so forth.

Execution

Once the client has made a choice, the next step in the cycle is to execute the plan. Enacting choice is the point in which the client moves from being to doing, which is an essential step in coaching. Facilitating awareness alone does not necessarily propel our client forward, but rather by helping clients detail a plan and then follow through, we have the opportunity to witness the full cycle of growth and change.

Recycling

Moving through each step will help a client use the experience to consciously make choices and take action, but to close the circle, the coach should also direct the client to feed the results of the action back into their awareness. It is this reflective action that allows for further refinement and choice. And by discussing the ACE cycle with the client, the coach also fosters the skills clients can use on their own. Coaching from the humanistic perspective follows the metaphor of "give someone a fish and they'll eat for a day, but teach them to fish and they can eat for life."

CASE STUDIES FROM THE HUMANISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Now to illustrate how the principles and tasks of coaching in this way are implemented, I will discuss a humanistic approach to the cases of Bob and Bonita. In the tradition started by Rogers (1942) and his adherents in recording, studying, and publishing transcripts of humanistic interventions, I would like to discuss the two case studies of Bonita and Bob using transcriptions and descriptions of an early coaching session with Bonita and a session in the midst of the coaching relationship with Bob. While the dialogue related here is hypothetical, it is representative of actual coaching conversations. Comments on the dialogue between client and coach delineate how the humanistic concepts and guiding principles and tasks in coaching are applied.

The Case of Bonita

In starting the coaching conversation, I, and most coaches regardless of orientation, would ask Bonita what brings her to coaching and what she wants out of it. In the very first conversation, we would get a sketch of her awareness of the challenges she faces, what her experience has been thus far, and at this point, what she wants to focus on in the coaching context. My goals in that session are for her

to leave feeling like I understand her and her situation, that she has gained some clarity about what she wants, and that we will collaborate in a process that will help. Given the material in the case studies, let us assume that when asked, Bonita has identified a number of goals for herself in coaching: increased comfort and skill in dealing with conflict, a better sense of herself as a leader and player in the organization, and improvement in her abilities to balance the requirements of her new position with those in her personal life. To get to these goals, Bonita will have shared a certain amount of background information, which would also afford me the opportunity to begin the process of building rapport. Along the way, we would have highlighted readily apparent resources and strengths Bonita has: a bright intellect; curiosity and a willingness to try new things; a collaborative, team leader style; the ability to move between different contexts/environments; and strong family support. One other topic I would contribute to the initial conversation would be the ACE cycle of change and how we will use it to help Bonita focus on her goals. Here is a dialogue transcript that follows a likely conversation in a session shortly after our initial meeting.

Coach: It's good to see you, Bonita. How's life been since we last met?

Bonita: It's been pretty good. I felt great after that first meeting with you. When I walked out I thought, "Well, here's someone I can really talk to and who has an idea of how to help me focus on what I can do to be successful."

Coach: I'm glad. Sounds like you walked out feeling like you have a partner to help in drilling down to what you want and how to get it. Since we talked, what have you noticed?

Bonita: Well, that ACE cycle has already helped. I was thinking about how I was going to set up this new program in training help desk personnel. In the past as a program manager I would usually think about what would work, or maybe bring it up in a meeting with my staff and we'd all work on the structure. But now it's not *my* project, it's my project manager's. So my task has changed to leading rather than designing. That ACE thing helped me realize that with the change in position, I need to make some more choices.

Coach: So this ACE thing seems like a good fit for you in how to approach some of your goals, huh?

Bonita: Yes.

Coach: That's great. Now in terms of our time today, do you want to go on with this issue of how to make the transition from designing to leading that came up since last time? It certainly fits with one of your goals of becoming a better leader. Or is there something else that you want to make sure we take time for? This is one of those choice points we've talked about.

Bonita: Hmm. (*Pause*) I think I have some ideas about this particular project, but something that I *really* want to talk about today is dealing with Ken's outbursts.

Coach: Okay. Let's talk about dealing with Ken. We can check in again at some point about how things have gone with your leadership of your project manager, or you can call or e-mail between our meetings if you get stuck anywhere in working through the ACE cycle. So let's focus on what you're aware of when you think about Ken and his scenes.

In this interchange, I am letting Bonita relate her experience since our last session in her own way, without asking for any specific initial direction. This leaves the content direction with Bonita and communicates to her that I am going to meet her wherever she is (Principle 2, Tasks 1 and 2). Bonita notes that she felt understood and valued, indicating that we have built rapport and an initial working relationship (Principle 1). Bonita relates some change in how she's viewing her experience and starting to expand awareness and recognize the possibility of choice (Principle 4, Tasks 3 and 4). I go on to direct the process by asking Bonita to make a conscious choice about the direction of the conversation (Principle 2, Task 1). When Bonita chooses to head in another direction, I follow but mark the topic of leadership as something to return to in the future (Principle 4, Task 5).

Bonita: Well, last time we identified a goal for me is to get more comfortable with conflict and how to handle it. You know, one of the people I have the biggest issue with in this is Ken. When someone like Ken jumps in my face or questions what I said, I just automatically shut down. I'd like to do something different than that. It's like he has all the control with his scary way, but I'd like to have some, too—only in my own way.

Coach: I almost get this image of Pinocchio becoming a real, live boy instead of the puppet he'd been.

Bonita: Oohh, that's a good one! Sometimes when Ken's being his difficult self with me, I feel like I'm being jerked around, just like a puppet on a string. I hate that.

Coach: So what would becoming a real, live person mean in dealing with Ken?

Here I am using my own internal experience in an authentic way to further Bonita's awareness of moving from reaction to choice. This interaction also demonstrates an empathic evocation of Bonita's experience by expanding the picture of her interactions with Ken. The tasks of demonstrating empathy and acceptance while giving authentic responses serve to strengthen the relationship (Principle 1, Tasks 1–3) while also serving to leverage my role as facilitator in exploring Bonita's experience (Principle 4, Task 3). In the ACE cycle, we're still in the Awareness step, trying to get a rich enough picture of what Bonita's experience has been so we can then start looking at choices she might have.

Bonita: (*Sigh*) I'm not sure. I can think more of what it doesn't mean than what it does. It means not being wimpy and just avoiding him. But I also know that getting mad and yelling back is just the other end of reacting.

Coach: It sounds to me like you know that the challenge with Ken is not getting stuck in following his behavior, but the picture isn't so clear yet about who you want to be in dealing with him.

Bonita: You got it. That's were it starts getting fuzzy.

Coach: Are you game to work our way through to coming up with an action plan?

Bonita: You bet.

Coach: So I've heard you say that you feel jerked around, and in the past you've just shut down. And you're aware of not wanting to avoid him or responding just like he does. Is this about right? What else is there?

Bonita: (*Nodding*) I know that others also don't like that behavior from him and would be glad if someone confronted him. I'd like to think that if someone did, the rest of us would stand behind them. But I'm not sure.

Coach: So there is a resource here in terms of potential support. But you don't know if you can count on them.

Bonita: Right.

Coach: Has anyone confronted him before?

Bonita: Well, before I was promoted, I heard about what happened when Pam, who's no longer here (*eyebrows raised*), yelled back. Ken basically put her back in her place and then within a year she was gone. I didn't know her well, but I think she was just sick of some of the politics. Other people said they wished they could have yelled back, but they saw what happened.

Coach: So Pam's choice didn't work so well, huh? Even though others have the fantasy of doing the same thing, they recognized it backfired?

Bonita: Right, so I can learn from that! It has to be something constructive, I think, but also something that I could actually do.

Coach: So for you, the choice of joining him in his game isn't attractive, which is great, because you're right: Going the constructive route is more likely to get you what you want. And it needs to be something you can see yourself doing. So what does that look like?

Bonita comes up with a fair amount of experience that gives a pretty good picture of the situation and Bonita's experience in the past. I have used active listening, feedback skills, and a collaborative stance (Principle 1, Tasks 1, 3, 4), and have facilitated Bonita's gaining clarity and expanded awareness (Principle 4, Tasks 2, 3) as I move Bonita toward identifying choices.

Bonita: Being strong, cool, and not flustered.

Coach: Now there's an image. When we first met, you talked some about how you struggle with trying to keep people from being angry by pleasing them. Bonita the Strong, Bonita the Cool, Bonita the Unflappable is a pretty different person! As the Cool Bonita have you ever dealt with someone who's mad?

Bonita: Hmm. (*Thinking*) About the only time I can think that I've done that is with my kids. Now my son, Will, he could throw a temper tantrum with the best of them when he was younger! (*Laughs*) But seriously, it was a real test of my patience, keeping my cool, and not playing into it.

Coach: How did you do it?

Bonita: I would just breathe, remember that giving him any attention would just encourage him, and pretty soon he saw that it wasn't going to work. Okay (smiling), I think I see some possibilities here!

I am asking Bonita to use the whole of her experience in looking for choices (Principle 3). There are interconnections between her experience as a mother and her situation at work, and compartmentalizing the different aspects of herself would limit her available knowledge and choices. While bringing awareness of her whole self into play, Bonita can capitalize on her life experience. She's now moved from Awareness to Choice in the ACE cycle.

Coach: Got some choices in mind?

Bonita: First, remember to breathe! And then, I am going to have to remove myself from the game Ken plays.

Coach: How?

Bonita: What about saying I'll come back later when it's a better time? I used to use that with Will. I'd just walk away with him yelling and screaming.

Coach: Sounds like a good possibility for the one-on-one situation.

Bonita: You bet. It's going to take a lot of practice for me!

Coach: How do you want to get some practice?

Bonita: Maybe we could practice here? Or maybe I can also practice at home with Martin. He knows the whole deal with Ken. Or heck, Nicole and Will try to get me into power struggles or talk back plenty. I can practice how to stay out of it and have a strong but respectful way to talk with them!

Coach: So you have plenty of ideas of how to get a little practice in before confronting Ken. Want to make a commitment to any of them?

Bonita: Hmm. Maybe we could do a role-play—and I can put it into practice on my own with the kids, too.

Coach: (*Smiling*) Way to multitask, Bonita—you might as well get two for the price of one! Seriously, you've made some important connections between Ken's behavior and some of what you face as a parent, so why not tackle both? Now, how about we set up the situation to practice here. . . .

I ask Bonita to now explore the action plan she's come up with. Bonita comes up with her own next step in Execution. Note that I am nondirective in telling Bonita what to do, that remains her responsibility and choice (Principle 2, Task 1 and 2).

This coaching conversation would go on to use role-play as a way to try out new ways of interacting and practicing these behaviors. While many approaches might use role-plays for practice, I would point out that from a humanistic perspective, there would be a substantial amount of energy also put into expanding awareness in the moment ("What thoughts, feelings, or sensations are you aware of as you tell me that you will come back when we can talk productively?"), reflecting on the specific choices being made and whether there are more to be explored ("Are there any other strengths you want to bring into play here?" or "Do you have any other ways you want to say this?"), and giving feedback ("When you said that to me, I felt stopped in my tracks and kind of stunned."). And we would also discuss how to feed back this information into the next cycle of ACE as she refines her comfort and skill in dealing with conflict. Bonita would also leave this

coaching session with some specific actions to take that we have designed together along with the homework to note outcomes, thoughts, feelings, and so on to further process her experience in this area.

As the coaching progresses, I would continue to ask Bonita to drive the direction of our work. This reinforces her ability to make conscious choices and her responsibility to do so. By having established her goals from the start of coaching, and by continuing to check in with Bonita about their continued utility and whether there are additional goals, I would also underscore Bonita's accountability to herself and to our coaching.

I would anticipate that with Bonita's willingness to explore and learn, we would find at the end of our formal coaching relationship that she had made substantial progress on her goals. And given her ability and experience in moving from one environment, such as her blue-collar family background, to another, such as a white-collar career and environment, Bonita can be expected to leverage the coaching context to facilitate her transition to an executive position. I would leave the door open for future collaboration and might anticipate occasional recontact for specific issues or another round of coaching should she face another major challenge such as this transition in her career.

The Case of Bob

Bob comes with a broad focus for coaching: the issue of legacy. And while Bob has seen the results of coaching with others, he has not used it for himself. So in the initial conversation with Bob, I would make sure that in addition to gathering information about Bob and his goals for the coaching, I would ask him to articulate his assumptions about coaching and give him a very clear statement about my framework and style of coaching. My aim for that first meeting is to get enough information from Bob about who he is and what he wants so that we both have a clear articulation of what the focus and territory of the coaching will be. As with all my clients, I would want to make sure that Bob leaves feeling understood and accepted, and that he can trust me to give him straight feedback. Given the material from the case studies, we will assume that the following goals were determined: using the coaching as an opportunity to reflect on and refine his strategy for merging XYZ into AMM effectively; leverage his strengths of vision, charisma, and recruiting others to his vision to the merger task; and laying out a plan for his eventual retirement, including succession planning.

One of the challenges in working from a humanistic model with Bob would likely be the focus on awareness. From information in the case study background, feedback from others indicates that Bob does not currently reflect on his experience much and tends to stay on the surface of issues. That said, by meeting Bob in his element in terms of language and staying true to the principle of allowing the client to lead in terms of content and designing his own solutions, I would anticipate that it is possible to work with Bob in moving toward his goals. It would also be crucial for the coach to use feedback in an empathetic but very straightforward manner to give Bob a reflection of his experience and an accurate picture of his effect on others.

One of the strengths of the humanistic approach that would be important to rely on in working with Bob is trying to work from *within* Bob's frame of reference as a starting point. This is in contrast to the coach deciding where Bob needs to go. The first approach would capitalize on Bob's own, self-defined growth process rather than trying to use the coach's to influence Bob. The challenge of this approach is to find those points of connection where the coach can really appreciate Bob (acceptance and positive regard) without yielding to the temptation to want to "fix" Bob.

As a collaborative relationship is built and I reinforce the concept that Bob is the driver for where change takes him and what that looks like in relation to his specific goals, a number of particular topics might likely arise. Bob has seen coaching as primarily a strategic tool for him and has noted that he does not see a need for the "soft side" of coaching. However, when filling out the picture of his goals, it is likely that interactions with others will become a part of his assessment of either the resources or the challenges involved. And his skills and style of interacting will become part of his increasing awareness.

A likely scenario for the issue of Bob's people skills is in discussing his plans for integrating XYZ with his company. In persuading others to support his vision, something Bob prides himself on, it is quite likely that Bob will describe his executives in fairly strategic terms, rather than as real people. A possible opening for feedback and further exploration for me as his coach might be a statement like "When you describe your people, I get the feeling of something like cogs in the wheel of your plan. I wonder if they ever feel this way?" This opens the door for Bob to explore both the strengths (e.g., his approach moves things along) and the challenges (e.g., people might feel they are not valued as people) of his interpersonal style. These types of exploration of awareness bring Bob the opportunity to see more possible conscious choices of action.

As with Bonita, I would use the mnemonic of the ACE cycle to give Bob a tool for reflecting as broadly as possible on his experience and use that awareness to identify choices and plan the steps to implement them. For Bob, exploring his experience widely is not his general style, so asking him if he has a full enough picture is likely to be an essential process-directive aspect of coaching Bob. The following dialogue illustrates how directing the development of a fuller awareness can be successful with a client such as Bob:

Coach: It's good to see you again, Bob. How are you?
Bob: Fine. It's been busy as ever around here.
Coach: So where would you like to start today?
Bob: I guess I'd like to update you on what's been up since last time we talked and then get down to business. So first item, I've brought in one of my best VPs to liaise with the executives over at XYZ. He's a smart cookie and he gets what I'm trying to do in linking up AMM's manufacturing lines with what XYZ has done. And he's one of those guys who can get to the heart of the matter with anyone, no matter where they're from. So like we talked about last time, I put Jim in position to do the relationship building with XYZ along with our strategy goals.

Coach: Sounds like you're feeling pretty comfortable with that situation now. How'd you decide between Jim and Terry?

Bob: Both of them have great strategy and mission skills, but last time we talked, I got clear that one thing I was missing was someone who can really pull two different sets of people together. Jim is great at that back and forth between people stuff and with him there I can leave that to him. He'll give me the language I need to use to lay out the vision with the XYZ folks.

Coach: So you're well on your way in your plans about merging the two leadership teams. That must feel good.

Bob: Yep. It feels good to know I'm getting my bases covered. So that's where I am with the merger. It's one more piece to put together to have this place shipshape before I'm ready to step away.

Here I ask Bob to generate the agenda for the session (Principle 2, Task 1) and am also continuing to build the relationship through listening and feedback (Principle 1, Tasks 1 and 3). Next I ask Bob to connect his experience of dealing with the merger to his plans for succession (Principle 3, Task 2) and expand his awareness (Principle 4, Tasks 2 and 3).

Coach: So what other pieces to do you need to fit into the puzzle?

Bob: Hmm. Well, obviously I need to see this merger gel. Now that I have my full team together, I'm feeling better about it. But will it hold in the long run, especially once I'm gone?

Coach: Sounds like you're not sure about AMM's stability without you.

Bob: Well, I have been the one to rally the troops for each challenge. It sounds kind of arrogant like that, but I guess it's hard for me to imagine anyone else doing it.

Coach: It must be pretty hard to contemplate leaving something that you've worked at for so long and trust someone else to take over. So what would have to be there for you to feel good about handing AMM over?

Bob: (*Pause*) That's a hard one. I'd have to know that whoever it is gets the business we're in and can motivate all these people to keep moving ahead. It's going to take someone who can make everyone else want to succeed as badly as he does.

Coach: So I hear someone with experience in the business, a motivator, and someone who's hungry. Does that bring anyone to mind?

Bob: Yeah, me. (*Grins*) But I can see the day when I'm not as hungry anymore. And that will be the day to start getting out.

Coach: So you have a pretty good idea about what signals that the time has come. That's important. What else?

Bob: When it's time, I want to already know who I'll be handing things over to. I don't like leaving things up in the air for something that important.

Coach: So another vital piece is having someone already in the wings so you'll feel as comfortable as you can.

Throughout this set of interchanges, I am directing Bob to further develop his conscious awareness of his eventual retirement and his desire to leave the

company in good hands (Principle 4, Tasks 1–3). While I am not using the terms "awareness" and "exploration," but rather am matching Bob's language style, the process is still firmly rooted in the Awareness step in the ACE cycle.

Bob: Yeah. Now Jim, he could be a real possibility. What do you think?

Coach: Hmm . . . could be, but do you want to make your choice right now? (*Smiles*)

Bob: (*Chuckles*) Caught me. Sometimes I can jump so fast. I like to think I have a good gut instinct.

Coach: Good instincts are important to have. But part of my job as your coach is to help you flesh out the whole picture whenever possible. Do you have the requirements clear enough to start making choices?

While it is important to allow Bob to direct the content (Principle 2, Tasks 1 and 2), the coach's role is to direct the process (Principle 4, Task 1). So I bring Bob back to the process of expanding his awareness around what qualities his successor will need before Bob jumps to the Choice step of the ACE cycle.

Bob: Probably not. So I guess it's time to sit down and make a list.

Coach: Sounds good. So what do we add to experience, motivating, hungry?

Bob: High energy. Someone who wants results and knows how to get them. Now that we've added XYZ, the next CEO has to be comfortable internationally, especially with Asian cultures.

Coach: Okay, let's add those to the list. Any more?

Bob: Yeah, they have to be able to build a team and then let them do their job. No micromanagers. And ultimately, they have to be able to sell their vision. That's about it right now.

Coach: All right. I'm guessing more will come, so I'm going to leave some more space here. And as we work on refining this picture, we can add some more. This project will take a few iterations before we get to implementation. We have an emerging picture of who your successor needs to be, but now I'd like to shift your focus to another aspect of succession—who are you in this process?

I am pointing out that there is likely more here to assess while acknowledging that Bob feels fairly complete at the moment. So I shift to looking for related areas of experience for Bob, such as his role in succession planning (Principle 3, Task 2), and will move the process toward integrating and aligning these different pieces (Principle 3, Task 3). All of these remain in the Awareness step and will be used by Bob and the coach to design choices.

Bob: Okay. I want to be the one to identify who'll take over, so first I'd say I'm the evaluator of potential candidates. And after I settle on one, I'd say I'm their mentor.

Coach: So you have two roles to fill: evaluator and mentor. Which one do you want to focus on now?

Bob: Well, the mentor side of it will be the longer haul. How about we start there. . . .

We would go on to as fully as possible, flesh out what it means to Bob to be a mentor: what he sees as necessary for success; what experiences he has had both being mentored and mentoring others (it is likely that more conversation will arise here regarding his interpersonal style); what resources he has for this role; what challenges exist; and what steps he needs to take to become a successful mentor for his successor. Again, for me as a humanistic coach, it is Bob who is supplying the content while I focus on directing his exploration of his experience and facilitate his design of actions he will take.

In addition to discussing Bob's role in grooming a successor, another topic likely to come up in pursuit of his goal of "leaving on a high note" is what he envisions for himself after he retires. This is an expansion of his initially more focused goal of leaving AMM running "perfectly," and reflects the likely outcome of Bob engaging in the reflective act of focusing on his own experience and awareness of that.

In summary, Bob's interpersonal style might challenge me as a coach to refrain from trying to convince him of the need for the "soft side." But by meeting Bob where he is and facilitating his own pattern of growth, I would anticipate that our chances of Bob experiencing success in coaching would be increased as we found positive changes that fit his unique person. I would anticipate that many of Bob's choices of action might reflect his more strategic view of life, but using coaching as a springboard, Bob would likely expand his abilities to incorporate more of his experience. As we moved toward terminating our formal coaching engagement, I would talk with Bob about how he will carry on the processes he has learned in our work together.

CONCLUSION

In summarizing the contributions to coaching from the humanistic psychotherapy tradition, I would like to underscore that the values of a belief in people's inherent capacity for growth, the importance of a collaborative relationship, the appreciation of the whole person, and a belief in the possibility of choice are values that are consonant with the practice of coaching as it is today. These humanistic philosophical assumptions are generally in operation for coaches, regardless of specific orientation or techniques.

I hope that in the course of this discussion despite the criticisms of the humanistic approach as wishy-washy in terms of "leaving it all up to the client," readers come away with a sense of how a humanistic stance involves a deep involvement and active engagement with the client to facilitate growth. And by leaving the direction of the course and content of change to the client, the coach increases the likelihood of facilitating growth and actions that will actually stick for that particular client. And finally, even if a coach is operating from a different theoretical framework, the evidence from humanistic research on the necessary ingredi-

ents for an effective relationship and the common values on human growth are takeaways to be used.

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