



Coach Approach Ministries Podcast

Episode 103: Common Coaching Mistakes

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Brian Miller: Assessments are a lot of fun to use with a client, but it can be confusing about which assessment to use. How can I use an assessment to bring the most awareness to a client? Join us for a free webinar entitled “How We Use Our Favorite Personality Assessment” on Thursday, July 12th, 2018 at 12:30 EST. To register for this free webinar go to <http://www.coachapproachministries.org/freewebinar>. Even if you can’t attend the live event, register now and we’ll send you link to the recording. Again, join us on Thursday, July 12th, 2018 at 12:30 PM EST. Register at <http://www.coachapproachministries.org/freewebinar>.

[Intro Music]

Brian: I’m Brian Miller, Strategic Director for Coach Approach Ministries, CAM for short, and I’m joined here today by the president of Coach Approach Ministries, Mr. Chad Hall. How are you doing today Chad?

Chad Hall: Brian, I was having a good day but now that I’m here with you on this podcast, it’s a great day!

Brian: We’re recording this for June 7th, it is my wife’s birthday today, if you’re listening to it on the day it comes out.

Chad: Wow, happy birthday to Danelle! You know, I’ll put a note in my calendar to make sure to give her a gift on the day that this comes out. It will be the podcast itself, so let’s just be clear about that.

Brian: Well, she is our Projects Manager, so if you communicate with Coach Approach Ministries, you’d probably better hope you communicate with Danelle. She’s one who knows what’s going on. We celebrate her on this podcast day! Our topic today Chad, I like this Common Coaching Mistakes That You’re Probably Making. Is that you Chad? Is that what we meant? Or did you write that with me in mind?

Chad: If it was the common mistakes that you and I are making it would have been Common Mistakes

That We Are Making.

Brian: Ahhh, Common Mistakes That Most Coaches because we hear a lot of coaching because we're coach trainers. We hear a lot of common mistakes.

Chad: I like to encourage sometimes when giving feedback to coaches, "You are not alone." Other people make this mistake, it's common, and it's overcomeable. Hopefully this podcast isn't going to be so much of a finger-pointing, red pen kind of feedback to coaches. Hopefully it's actually going to be more of an encouragement that, "Oh, if I'm making this mistake, others also make it, okay I can overcome it the same way others have."

Brian: Yeah, we don't have a set number of common mistakes, we're just going to talk this through, and see what we come up with. Chad, what would you say, not necessarily in any order, but what do you want to lead off with here as a common coaching mistake?

Chad: I would say one of the first that comes to my mind is not clarifying with the client what they want from the coaching conversation. The common part of this mistake is that coaches confuse the client naming the topic with the client naming the goal for the topic, and then of course the goal for the session itself. If I'm coaching someone and I say, "What do you want to be coached on?" and they say, "I'd like to be coached around time management." Well, that's a topic, that's not a goal, and if you don't paint the bullseye of what the goal we're really aiming for, what do you want to walk away with, man it's hard to do good coaching. What ends up happening is coaches tend to meander and they wander and they just don't even know where they're going because they haven't just explicitly asked the client, "What about time management do you want to figure out today?"

Brian: Or they've made the mistake of deciding, "Oh, we need to fix your calendar." Mentally, the coach is thinking, *How do we get to this fix the calendar thing..?* When that's not what the client said at all.

Chad: That's right, they assume they know what the client wants from the session just based on the topic and you know what they say about assuming.

Brian: I do know. The other mistake that I'd love to get your take on, is it's a mistake in my mind to ask for the topic and then immediately try to determine from the client what they want to take away from the coaching session. They don't know. They know that they need to figure something out about time management, but they don't know in particular what that is. I think that a common mistake that I hear very often is "What do you want to talk about today, and where do you want that to go?" Well I don't know that. I need to warm up a little bit.

Chad: Maybe this is even a second mistake, but they're certainly connected. Coaches don't understand that there's awareness created throughout the conversation, not just awareness like options. If someone comes in and says, "I want to talk about time management." And you follow up and ask, "What specifically about time management do you want to work on?" They might know that because they've thought about it already, but eight times out of ten they need to explore that a bit, find the piece of time management that they want to figure out or focus on, and that's going to be a new

awareness for them. There's a new awareness in the early stages of coaching around just what part of the topic is focused on, what's the real goal for it. We can't just assume that the client knows automatically where they want to go.

Brian: If we were numbering these, I would call the second mistake not creating awareness early enough. I like to get the topic and then immediately try to ask a question that makes the client get new awareness, and a common mistake is to say, "What have you thought about so far?" That is not an awareness question, and it also can take a lot of time out of the question just so they can download. And it also, I think even more than that, trains the client to give me the information that they already know.

Chad: That's right, and it's interesting because sometimes that question, it's not always a terrible question but usually it is, and one of the other reasons that it's not a good question is that it invites the client to dig themselves into the hole they're already in. Which is "I don't have any good ideas. What I've tried hasn't worked. Hey, thanks for the opportunity to remind myself that I suck at time management. I've tried all these things. They didn't work. I'm feeling great about life right now." That's where the "What have you tried so far?" just doesn't move things forward. I would say the other, partner bad question that can come early in a conversation, is just flat out "What are your options?" That may be attempting to get into awareness, but it's the wrong kind of awareness early in a conversation. Early in a conversation, the awareness is what part of the topic do we need to address, not what can you do about it. Trying to push too quickly for options or actions, you have to be aiming for the kind of awareness that fits where you are in the conversation. I don't know what number we're on now Brian, but I think that's another one.

Brian: That's another issue to me. The third mistake, say it again.

Chad: The mistake I'm on is that coaches push for awareness, but it's the wrong kind of awareness given where we are in the conversation. If you're pushing for awareness about options or actions early in the conversation, no bueno.

Brian: My awareness is I don't have many options.

Chad: Right, and that's not new.

Brian: My awareness is I'm stuck and I'm still stuck, thank you.

Chad: Instead, we want to push for awareness around what's important for this issue, what's happening for you on it, what's the most salient aspect of it that you really want to move forward on. When we use that hourglass model that we use in CAM, it's the awareness of what is the pinch point. That can take some time to explore and to discern.

Brian: I think it's a common mistake, and it's within the first three we're talking about, is not spending a good amount of time just asking big awareness questions to get them some new thinking, to get them trained to think some new thoughts. Then the mistake is when you get down to the bottom and you're like "now what are you going to do?", if you haven't created awareness at the beginning, then the coach

is frustrated because “what are you going to do?” I still don’t know. I really haven’t done any thinking so far. It’s not like I just haven’t committed to something. That’s what leads the coach to say, “Have you thought about trying this?” We’re just desperate. There’s no way to fix that at that point. There’s no way to fix having the ability to create good options if you haven’t created good awareness at the top of the session. You can’t just ask a better question.

Chad: One of the things I hear commonly in coaching sessions when I’m observing, is because you haven’t really narrowed the focus and created that awareness, the client ends up coming up with options that don’t really fit what they need. Again, like time management for instance. Maybe they come up with a great calendaring system, except what’s really got them stuck on time management isn’t calendaring, maybe it’s their energy flow. They just don’t have the energy at certain parts of the day. Now, if you aren’t careful, the coaching conversation has created a solution that fits somebody else’s problem on the topic of time management.

Brian: Absolutely. Time management, I often find, is that there’s something else wanting their time that they think is really important, but they’re afraid others won’t. It’s often a personal thing, and they just don’t know what to do with it. Absolutely. The common, common mistakes here. I think a fourth mistake, and maybe we’ve covered it, is not checking in halfway with the client to see where they want to go from here. We, as a coach, say, “I remember the topic, it’s my job to know where to go from here, so I’m going to ask what will sound like a really awkward question.” As opposed to just saying, “Okay, how do you want to finish this, where do you want to go with the rest of the conversation?” Such a simple question. I don’t hear clients asking that simple question very often.

Chad: Yeah, and you can think of those type of questions throughout. In the beginning, it’s the question of where would you like to start? I’m the coach, I’m supposed to know where to start. It’s okay to ask the client where do you want to start? As you said, halfway through, a good process question is where do we need to go from here? Near the end of the conversation, it’s okay to ask what’s a good way to wrap this up? If the coach is always thinking I’m supposed to know how start, where to go from here, how to wrap things up, they exclude the client from helping design the process. That’s not a full partnership with the client. In a full partnership, you want to invite them into the process, into designing the process. If you ask a client where should we go from here and they say “I’m not really sure...”, it’s okay to come up with something. It’s okay to say well let’s try this, as the coach. Let’s try this. Never asking them those sorts of questions, that’s a mistake.

Brian: Yeah, and the more awareness you create at the top, the less likely you’re going to have to say let’s try this. That fixes those problems really quick. I was being mentor coached probably sometime earlier this week. And the top I picked, Chad, was I wanted to talk about framework. You came up with this, this is a different podcast, but I’ll try to get through this quickly. You came up with this great awareness model of how much expertise the coach is bringing from being free range coaching, familiar coaching, framework coaching, formula coaching, and I just thought that was fantastic. I thought I want to do framework coaching, but somewhere in my head I haven’t been able to nail down what the framework looks like. So I said, I just want to think through framework. Now that does not just lend itself immediately to the coach, thinking okay I know what kind of action he’s going to want to take because it

wasn't like that. The coaching was spectacular. I had new awareness, I really enjoyed it, I felt like I knew what I didn't know about frameworks before, and I was so grateful that my client didn't say... I don't know what she said exactly, but it felt like she said, "What do you want to do with it?" And then I thought oh I know what I want to do with it, but she didn't just say, "What are three things you're going to do?" I don't know, she just really left it open to me which allowed my brain to quickly jump someplace I was surprised by.

Chad: That's the difference between a leading, test question and a discovery question that lets you explore and expand. It sounds like you got some really great coaching.

Brian: I did.

Chad: Which is great, because we need you to be a really great at framework coach.

Brian: It really changed my mindset on framework, and that might be a really great podcast we can do.

Chad: We can do that podcast for my birthday, okay?

Brian: Oh man, you have a birthday?

Chad: Every year.

Brian: I thought clones didn't actually celebrate.

Chad: No, we do.

Brian: Very good, very good. I don't know why that's funny, but it struck me a little funny. Chad, let's quickly, before they've gone to look for another podcast by this point, let's quickly jump to a fifth mistake that you're probably making.

Chad: Hopefully not many of our podcast listeners are making this mistake, but we've heard it enough that we know that it's common at least among some coaches, and especially among Christian coaches. The mistake is to confuse, conflate, and combine coaching and counseling. By counseling we don't mean necessarily like wise council, that form, but more like therapeutic counseling. We tend to draw a pretty distinct line between counseling which therapeutic, it's about healing, it's about helping people overcome the hurts and the pains and maybe the trauma of their past. Coaching is about helping people move forward more successfully into the future, but not about healing. I hear a fair number of coaches, especially Christian coaches, who come into coaching and say, "Essentially, what I'm really doing is about healing. I'm about helping people become more whole and to be healed from wounds or trauma that they've experienced." Which is great, except that's not coaching.

Brian: And it's also licensed by the government as well. You want to be very careful. It's like me doing plumbing for my neighbor's house and saying, "I'm not doing plumbing, I'm doing computer work."

Chad: Something you don't need to be licensed in, and telling the law, I'm just practicing something I call "the loo."

Brian: I'm studying history. I'm just doing history here. You do need to be careful. There's a great need for what you just described, but I do think we need to be careful not to confuse coaching. I've seen it happen just in your questions. I remember I was being coached on an issue; it was just something I was thinking, "Gosh, why do I tend to go down this avenue?" That was my topic. Rightly so, I think, one of the first questions was "When did you first notice that direction?" I thought back to when I was twenty, and I thought I know a time that I feel like there was a shift. I started acting in that way. My coach got hot for counseling, and he said "Go back farther, go back farther, when you were a child." You know, I just remember thinking, "Nope. That's not where I want to go and two I can't think of anything. I think we could really take some action. I don't need healing, I just need awareness on this issue." He got hot, go back, go back, back into time.

Chad: It feels so good. There are things about coaching and counseling that are similar. It's okay to deal with emotions in coaching, it's okay to notice patterns that aren't working for you, and to establish new patterns. For me, the metaphor that helps it really sink in is the metaphor of a physical therapist versus a physical trainer. One of my boys, he injured his elbow pitching baseball, and so for a long time, they've said just don't pitch. We're going to heal what's wrong. Then he went to a physical trainer who made him stronger, and the coach is the trainer. The coach is the one who helps build on a strength and helps people learn new form, new technique, strengthen a muscle that's already there. But we're not physical therapists who would go in and help repair something that's broken or injured. That is not to say that counseling is not helpful and important; it certainly is. That's actually why we would want to make the distinction between the two.

Brian: In that analogy, the counselor knows where all the blood vessels and all the bones and the tendons, they know a lot more about that arm than the coach does. They know about healing in that way, but as the coach, you want to be careful messing around with somebody's heart because you may not be trained enough to handle that.

Chad: What's another mistake that some coaches make?

Brian: I think not educating the client. I tell people that even a trained coach like me is going to assume when I'm being coached that you're going to tell people the answer. It's the dumbest thing. Of course I don't expect them to tell me the answer, but there's something in me even as a trained coach that says, "Well, you're going to solve my problem." We constantly need to be educating the client on how coaching works, what we expect from them, what they can expect from us. It's not just a one-time thing.

Chad: Yeah, and it's interesting, one of the mistakes I see coaches make around this mistake is they think, "Oh I need to do that in my sales literature. I need to go deep into how coaching works. It's not this. It's not that." Not really. Your sale stuff is really about the benefits that they can get from coaching. It's later in the sales process, and they're in the intake process that you should begin to introduce them to how it works, so that they can effectively show up as a client. Then, I like the way you put that Brian, it's also throughout the coaching relationship, we're constantly reinforcing how to be a good client because the rest of life doesn't work the way that it works in a coaching relationship. We have to remind our clients to think hard, to prepare. To not look to us for answers but to dig deep, formulating their

own solutions. We can't blame the client for not being a good client. It's up to us to educate and prepare them and support them in being a good client.

Brian: I find with my longer term clients, I hesitate to say a number, but maybe after five or six sessions, awhile, I need to sit down with them and say, "Here's how you need to be thinking about bringing a topic. Here's how you need to be thinking about walking through the conversation. Here's what I'm trying to accomplish." I'm sure you can do that at the beginning, and I'm sure I do, but just in longer term, I think you could get to five or six and think, "This isn't working. They're a lousy client." I find that it just should be part of our practice to give them a little education piece after four or five sessions.

Chad: Yeah, and reinforce it. By the way, some coaches confuse this and say, "The client's the expert, you aren't supposed to tell them anything." Well you are supposed to tell them how coaching works. You can't say, "What would you like coaching to be?" That's not a well designed relationship. "I want coaching to be you tell me what to do." "Well, ok." No! You're the expert when it comes to what coaching is and how it works, so you do some introduction on that.

Brian: That leads me to think about it another way. I don't know what number we're on; I'll try to go back and figure it out. This is not in the coaching conversation, this is on the outside. I find a common mistake, going from what you just said, is I've got a potential client, and the client is interested in coaching. I'll ask the client, "How many sessions would work for you? How many sessions do you think we should do?" My potential client has no clue; they have no idea. That is an area where I should competently say, "Let's do six sessions." Even an insight, I'm not positive that it's exactly six sessions, but I do want to communicate to my client that I feel pretty confident in that number.

Chad: That's one of several examples we could come up with where the client needs you, as the coach, to have a confident, tangible response. Another one would be the coaching rate. By the way, that doesn't mean you can't be flexible on the coaching rate, but when the client says, "What's your rate?", the first words out of your mouth shouldn't be "Well, it's flexible." No, your first words out of your mouth should be "My rate is 235 dollars a session" or whatever your rate is.

Brian: Yes.

Chad: We typically do ten sessions or whatever you typically do and give them something specific. You can always flex off of the specifics if you need to. According to a client's budget or whatever else might be going on, but the key ones to me are your rate, how many sessions, how frequently you're going to talk, those kinds of things, you just want to be clear on those. It creates a feeling of certainty and trust and confidence. The client's able to lean into it and say, "Now I know what to expect. Brian's done this before. He's not making this up on me." Client's don't want to feel like your guinea pig, and they don't want to feel like they have to come up with things they shouldn't have to come up with, like rate. Can you imagine saying, "I don't know, what would you like my rate to be?" No!

Brian: I've heard that done. I'll throw in a bonus, this will be the last common mistake, we'll call this a bonus. I don't know why, but we'll call it a bonus.

Chad: It feels like a bonus.

Brian: It feels like a bonus! This is something I've talked to coaches about very recently. I hear this a lot, a common mistake, that if you coach with me, my rate's a hundred dollars an hour, a hundred dollars a session, but if you'll buy ten sessions, I'll do it for seventy five. I'll tell you why that's a mistake: because ten sessions times a hundred dollars is a thousand dollars. Ten sessions times seventy five dollars is seven hundred and fifty dollars. There is not a potential client out there that's thinking "I would never do this for a thousand but for seven fifty, absolutely!" There is no distinction whatsoever. The only thing you are doing is putting two hundred fifty dollars in your client's pocket as opposed to your own. Whether it's about confidence or graciousness, it is just confusing and a common mistake. I think what I would do instead would be to say, "My rate's, whatever it is, a hundred dollars a session, and if you have one session it's a hundred dollars and if you have five sessions it's five hundred dollars." It's easy, they don't have to do a lot of calculation, they don't get confused, and you're not going to lose anybody.

Chad: I think we make the mistake as coaches in thinking that the driving force behind the client's decision to hire us is the cost.

Brian: Yep, it's not.

Chad: Cost is a factor, but the difference between a thousand and seven fifty, whatever, that's not a factor typically. Now, I've met clients where it's a good fit, everything's great, it's lined up, and when it comes to the total cost for the coaching, typically they're in an organization with a budget, and they say, "Honestly, our budget just won't let me do that." My response is, "What will your budget allow you to do?" And now we can negotiate. But I don't go in assuming, "I bet if I sweeten the deal a little bit by discounting..." They aren't looking for a discount, but sometimes they are looking for a way to make it work. That's fine. You can give it away if you want to, if there's something in it for you as a coach. We're not saying don't be flexible on your rate. The mistake is going in thinking that's the number one factor for somebody. They're not buying bananas, it's not a commodity they're looking to buy. It's a relationship they're looking to enter.

Brian: It is a common mistake. You're spending way too much time thinking about it. Pick an amount and that's your amount. Give it no more thought. Communicate your amount, period. Chad, that's been a lot of fun, talking with you today about common mistakes.

Chad: We should hang out next time and come up with common positive things that coaches do. Well that's probably every other coaching podcast. Every other episode of this podcast I mean.

Brian: I want to thank our listeners for listening to Chad and I talk about this. We certainly hope it's helpful. Don't miss any of our podcasts, subscribe to our podcast at iTunes, Overcast, Stitcher or Google Play by searching for Coach Approach Ministries Podcast. We'll see you next week!

[Outro Music]

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