



Coach Approach Ministries Podcast

Episode 144: The GROW Model

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- Brian Miller: I'm Brian Miller, Executive Director of Coach Approach Ministries, CAM for short, and I'm joined here today by my good friend and the president of Coach Approach Ministries, Mr. Chad Hall, how are you doing today Chad?
- Chad Hall: Brian, I'm feeling very good today.
- Brian Miller: You look great.
- Chad Hall: Wow.
- Brian Miller: You've trimmed down the beard, I just now noticed.
- Chad Hall: If people could only see what we see while we're recording these podcasts we would have very few listeners.
- Brian Miller: My gosh, I was wondering how you lost 10 pounds and now that I see your beard's gone, I know where it went.
- Chad Hall: Yeah, that's where nine of it went.
- Brian Miller: Hey, we're going to talk about our theme at CAM this month and March has been *Coaching Models* and we want to go through the GROW model. It's a good model, it's a simple model, it's a helpful model.
- Chad Hall: It's super useful and I'm surprised more coaches don't use models.
- Brian Miller: Yeah, so talk about that for a second, when you see a coach not using a model, what's that stir up inside of you?
- Chad Hall: Well and I'm not saying all coaches should all times use models.
- Brian Miller: Okay.

Chad Hall: So disclaimer, but you and I work with a lot of new coaches, a lot of coaches who are a week, a month, maybe a year into coaching and so they're still really at the beginning of that learning curve of how to coach and especially for coaches who are fairly new, I just think models provide a structure so that you don't have to figure out every time what comes next. In fact, the structure eventually becomes second nature so even when you're more seasoned, you're probably still using a model, you just don't ... you're not as aware of the fact that you're using the model and so just providing that structure and for instance the other day I was listening to some coaching and as soon as the client shared the topic, the coach ... I didn't see them but I'm 99 percent sure they had a deer in the headlights look.

Chad Hall: The look was what do we talk about now, how do we get into this topic, I have no ... oh my goodness this is such a hard issue, I just don't know what to do. So they resorted to the dumbest question ever.

Brian Miller: Okay.

Chad Hall: Tell me more about that.

Brian Miller: What do you have so far?

Chad Hall: Yeah, it's like we could do another podcasts on questions you should probably never ask.

Brian Miller: Yeah, no those are bad questions, so good, a topic comes up and we're going to use the GROW model, it's ... I always think I'm going to get this wrong, it's an acronym, each letter ... I was going to say an 'anacronym', I don't know why, but that's just for the transcription people to throw them off. But an acronym, so G starts with our first part of the model, that's where we start, and it's goals.

Chad Hall: Yeah, and so a client has a topic and they say you know, I really want to talk about the fact that I'm discouraged and you think oh my goodness where do we go with that, what ... you know. You talk about goals, what's a goal, a goal is something you want and so again this is where coaches make a common mistake, especially new coaches. They immediately go to the past and you know, when else have you felt that way, what led to this, blah blah blah, what have you tried before, your question. So what I love about the GROW model and every good coaching model, it starts with "What do you want?", you know, "What's your goal?", "Where do you want to be?", "What's the preferred future?" Coaches, if they just will get the default setting of ask about the future, your coaching is going to improve tremendously if you just ask about the future and so ... and that's where you should always start coaching conversations, is asking the client about what they really want.

Chad Hall: Now by the way, not all goals are in the future, sometimes that goal may be internal to the person, so it's a deep value that they want to express or ... but

there's some kind of goal and so starting there really just helps kind of frame up what they want about the topic, what they want from the conversation to help them get forward on the topic. There's just lots of questions that come with the goal category.

Brian Miller: Does SMART help with the goals, is that a place to put SMART with the goals?
No, that's a mistake.

Chad Hall: No, no, [crosstalk 00:05:17] shaking my head, I just realized that.

Brian Miller: I think they heard it.

Chad Hall: Yeah, probably so. It ... with using the grow model, the SMART goals thing is really not as helpful, later ... it can be, it depends on what the goal is, you know. But for a person to say I'm discouraged, that's my topic, I'm discouraged because of these circumstances, and then if the goal is yeah no, I'd like to have that motivation, I'd like to have that drive and filled with energy and positive leaning forward so I can be productive in doing these things. Talking about the timetable for that, the T of SMART, not that helpful, talking about measuring it.

Brian Miller: Even the specific, it can get you off track because you're not sure ... that may come at the end of the conversation, not at the beginning.

Chad Hall: Yeah, so I tend to think of SMART goals more when you're trying to clarify an objective that you want to be able to measure, so I'm not down on SMART goals, it just tends to not be appropriate here.

Brian Miller: No that's helpful.

Chad Hall: Yeah.

Brian Miller: That's helpful, so it's about the future, it's questions, you know, what's this going to look like in three to five years, that would be goal-oriented. What do you want them to say about you at your funeral, that's very future oriented but it's ... it makes you think what's important, what's really important.

Chad Hall: Yeah, and it's ... it can be even simple questions like "What could be different if you weren't so discouraged?", and you can just use that as the topic, we'll say that's the topic. "What would be different if you weren't so discouraged?", you know, what ... "How would you be interacting with people around you if you were ...?" "How discouraged are you?", "Where do you want to be?", those kinds of things. So I don't want people to think oh I can only ask questions that have the word goal in them, no.

Brian Miller: You may not use the word in fact.

- Chad Hall: Yeah, that's exactly right. It's just telling you to start the conversation by exploring what they really want.
- Brian Miller: What's this look like.
- Chad Hall: How would they like things to be.
- Brian Miller: Does that clean up the topic because the topic a lot of times ... we're talking a lot lately about don't bite on the topic. Don't assume that what they're saying is what they want to do, is what they even want to talk about, it's just a part of it, it's just a glimpse.
- Chad Hall: That's right.
- Brian Miller: And so this goal orientation fleshes out really what the topic's about.
- Chad Hall: Yeah, I've heard you say a lot of times time management is never the topic.
- Brian Miller: Right.
- Chad Hall: And so if someone says "I want to talk about time management", "What's your goal with time management?", "I want to manage my time so I can get everything done I want to get done," blah blah blah blah. Well really exploring that is probably going to get it ... they want time management because it gets them something else and that's what we're doing a lot of times in this first stage. We're peeling back the goals to get to what they truly want, you know, "I want a balanced life", "I want to feel better about the time I'm spending with my kids", "I want to, you know, not feel so out of control", whatever it is that you're digging down to what they really want. It's at the deepest you can get.
- Brian Miller: Yeah, so "If we put two more days in the week, what would you be achieving?", that's trying to get at the goals. "What do you want to happen here?" and ... it might ... yeah, that's a good question. So that's great, that's G, that's the goals, so what's R?
- Chad Hall: R is reality, so if a goal is how you'd like things to be, reality is how are things now, and that includes how far away are you from the goal and so what we're trying to do with these first two kind of steps or stages in the coaching conversation is to create some contrast. So there's a contrast between where you want to be and where you are, contrast between how you want things to be and how they currently are. There's a contrast between what you want and what you have, so creating that contrast is really helpful. Reality is also kind of about the conditions that exist that are preventing you from getting to the goal that you have in mind. So again, it's a little bit ... the reality is more of the now and what's in between you and the goal and again, we're probably never using the word reality in our question.

- Chad Hall: But that's what we're exploring.
- Brian Miller: Yeah, I mean we describe coaching as getting from where you are to where you want to go and that's a model in the sense right there that you're going to say ... but we're going to start with where you want to go, that's where we're going to start. We're not going to start with where you are, we're going to start with where you want to go, and then once we get a clear picture of that, then let's find out where you are and what your situation is.
- Chad Hall: Which sometimes you might think that's counter intuitive, like wouldn't you just start with where you are and then where you want to go, well I don't know, maybe that didn't spell GROW is the reason they're not in the order, I don't know. I really think there's some brilliance behind it and that is if you start with reality you get stuck and you think well this is the way things are, this is way things will be, they're always going to be that way, but if you start with what could be you're already creative, you're possible, you're imagining, you're more conceptual, you're more fluid in your thinking, and then you come back to okay, how are things now. We've already stirred the motivation in you to get to the goal, now we can come back and do that hard work of seeing where you are and what it's going to take to get there.
- Brian Miller: Yeah, the future question opens you up, it expands everything so you can honestly see the real size of the obstacles, they usually look enormous to where you are but once you expand things out, you might not even ... things just look different and it's ... I think you can explore reality a lot better when you have that perspective; you're looking at it from the future in a sense. That's helpful, okay, so boy, GRO, options, it probably should be GROOO because we need three options in there. Options, options, options.
- Chad Hall: That's right, lots of options. Very simple isn't it? Goal, where do you want to be? Reality, where are you now? Options, how could you get from where you are now to where you want to be? And so this is ... this is where a lot of new coaches try to get to, too quickly.
- Brian Miller: Oh absolutely.
- Chad Hall: Somebody says I'm struggling with time management, I'm not getting everything done I want to, what could you do about that. We've just met and you've already got me to the third step. No, you can't start with options, but you do need to get to options and that's the time of kind of brain storming, exploring, now what you don't want to ask here is what have you thought of so far.
- Brian Miller: Right.
- Chad Hall: Again, that's just ... you know, no. In coaching we're creating options, not inventorying options, so ...

Brian Miller: Yeah, don't ask me a question I already know the answer to, I even ... because it's not going to be helpful to me. I already know the answer to that. What's interesting, I was watching some coaching the other day, it was very beginner coaching and the coach asked a question and a client ... it was about kind of like options, some of that, maybe it was probably about reality and the client said I don't know, I haven't thought about that. I was so proud of the coach, they said "Well this is a good place to explore that right now."

Chad Hall: Yeah, this often and I guess it's true of all four of the stages but this one I think maybe especially is a ton ... you've got to make the client work, this is ... option, again. We are not creating an inventory list of the options they already know about, we're helping them find, discover, expand, you know, there's work involved in digging for some new options and so I think that's ... as coaches we want to challenge our clients to really work hard here and how ... this is where I think it's important how we ask questions because this is one of those places if you ask a close ended question you'll get a 'no' or a 'none' or a whatever. So if you ask "Have you thought of any options?", probably not, that's why I'm talking to you, you know.

Chad Hall: Again, if you think about just the past, you know, well what options have you thought about so far, again, that's not helpful, it's not asking them to create an option, it's just asking them to inventory the options they already have. So asking it in a different way of... that invites them to do that exploring, I think is really important here.

Brian Miller: Yeah you can't ... I can't say how much ... how important it is to get through goals and reality to get options, they almost ... they start to fall out you know. If you go straight to options you just ... it's like trying to pull teeth that are soldered in, they're not coming out. But if you do goals and reality, the options are almost like, "oh now I kind of even know what they are, I didn't ... they were in there but I didn't realize they were there." So we do a lot of ... because we do training, we do a lot of 15 minute coaching and what happens is the coach will say, "What's the topic?" and then there's only 15 minutes and the client will talk for 5 minutes, 6 minutes, 7 minutes about the issue and I can just see the coach's head about to explode in thinking "I'm never going to make it. We've just got to go right to the options" and I'm thinking "Don't do it" because it won't work.

Chad Hall: Yeah.

Brian Miller: Spend another 7 minutes on goals and reality and then the options will probably just be like "oh, I know what I need to do." We find that's true a lot, but anyway, what would be a great options question?

Chad Hall: Well one that's not a great question is "What options do you have?". Now let me say that differently, sometimes that's a very appropriate question but I've seen coaches get frustrated: "I asked him what options he had and he just

wouldn't come up with any." Well you know, that's a very blunt question, it ... it's not that creative, okay.

Brian Miller: Right.

Chad Hall: You're asking what options do you have, so sometimes there's a place to create some ... or to employ some creativity. "If you had all the money in the world how would you handle this?" and the super logical Spock type person is going to say "now wait a minute, nobody has all the money in the world, so why's that a good question?" We're not ... it's because it gets them thinking, you know, and if you can think of something that you could do if you had all the money in the world, it's going to have a sibling that requires less money. Okay, so we're just expanding options. "Let's brainstorm" is often times a great thing to do to get to some options, some of my other favorite questions, if they talk about some people they really admire, just asking them how they would handle it can begin to generate some options.

Chad Hall: Then sometimes I like to create little boundaries, little ... I think of them as like picture frames and I ask them to describe an option that has to fit in that picture frame and so if you only had two hours to deal with this, what would you do, you know. That creates a very tight frame, again, I'm not saying that they should do something that only requires two hours is just a way to spur their thinking. It tends to be with options, the more general you create it, the less helpful it is, so again that's why what option you have is not really that helpful.

Brian Miller: Yeah, sometimes if they're thinking about two directions and they kind of have to decide a direction, I'll just ... I'll say "Well if you had to decide right now, what would you decide, and not that I'm going to hold you to it."

Chad Hall: Right.

Brian Miller: Not that I'm going to hold you to it but it's ... a lot of times it's like "I know what decision I need to make" but they just need to say it out loud. That can be in there as well and then there's the times "I just don't have any idea", so being more creative is a great part and not necessarily starting every question with "how can you" or what ... but you know, putting it into a creative ... I like the picture frame, just something, it's just a different visual.

Chad Hall: Another version of that would be "What's the worst way to handle this?"

Brian Miller: Yeah.

Chad Hall: And that begins ... people can really come up with ideas there ...

Brian Miller: Oh I'm good at that.

- Chad Hall: To a degree it's safe because they know you're not going to hold them to it, it's already determined it's a bad idea, but it's funny how often how a bad idea kind of propels them towards a good idea. Now in the options section we're also not just generating options, we're also discerning which options. So we're exploring, we're expanding, we're also picking some options, so then we kind of have to help them move into that ... which options fit best and so just to know that's part of the options phase of using this model.
- Brian Miller: Okay, so that's GRO, so if this is HORSE we've got to finish the game, we've got to get the E on the end here, the W. Now the W is not as clear to me because it's G is goals, R is reality, O is options, W is who, W is what, W is when, W is the will to do it. Lot's of W's.
- Chad Hall: You know I think Wisconsin is in ...
- Brian Miller: Wisconsin, some type of cheese.
- Chad Hall: [crosstalk 00:20:07] a lot of W words.
- Brian Miller: I don't know.
- Chad Hall: But this is ... this is one where if you're too much of a literalist, you know, you're going to struggle but it's basically ...
- Brian Miller: You've called me Spock and now you've called me a literalist, okay.
- Chad Hall: But at least you own it, at least you own it. But this is where you're basically designing the actions and "What are you going to do?", "When are you going to do it?", "Who's going to help you?", "How are you going to get it done?", "When are you going to start?", "What's accountability look like?". All of those designing action pieces go here and I actually love the fact that they often include the will to do it, so it's the commitment part, the "Am I truly motivated to do this?" because sometimes the best option in the world is actually one we don't want to do and so that makes it not such a great option.
- Brian Miller: No, it's good... I liked what you said, designing actions, and that's when you ask ... you can definitely ask these questions actually. "Who can help with this?", "When are you going to have this done by?", "What's the first step you need to take?", "what's" ... you know, the will to do it goes the accountability. "What's going to ensure this happens?", that's my go to question, the insurance. Yeah.
- Chad Hall: Yeah, and this is where you land the plane and you know, whereas the G, the R, the O is really about generating awareness and all that, this is where we're turning awareness into action. Nothing is going to change if you don't do something different, so this is all about that.

Brian Miller: But if you don't clarify what some goals are in number one, number four is not going to work.

Chad Hall: No, no, why would I take a step when I don't know where I want to go?

Brian Miller: Yeah, no that's not going to work. All right Chad man, that's helpful, I really appreciate you walking us through this grow model and we hope that people will be able to use this in a stronger way.

Chad Hall: Yeah and just in case anybody is wondering, we did not come up with this, we probably want to be clear about that. We didn't invent the GROW model, this is from Sir John Whitmore. Brian, I'm still waiting for the Queen to call about me becoming a knight and [crosstalk 00:22:35] ...

Brian Miller: Oh absolutely.

Chad Hall: Maybe that's who was calling in the other podcast that we did, but you know ... but anyway, Sir John Whitmore.

Brian Miller: No way, you've already got a doctorate and you won't let me call you Dr. Chad Hall because you're too humble, would you make me call you Sir Chad Hall in these?

Chad Hall: I wouldn't make you, I'd let you.

Brian Miller: You need to get some counseling Chad, that's ...

Chad Hall: That's for the next podcast.

Brian Miller: Hey thanks everybody for listening to this week's podcast, Coach Approach Ministries is a nonprofit coach training school with over 15 years of experience training more than 2,000 coaches. Let us know how we can help you start or further your coaching career by visiting us at CoachApproachMinistries.org or email me at BMiller@CA-Ministries.com. We'll see you next week.