

SURFACE TO SOUL

Live Well | Lead Well | Coach Well

Develop Your Coaching Presence

Professional coaches know the importance of being skilled at coaching presence—being fully present. This fundamental and powerful skill can make or break a coach/client relationship. The International Coach Federation describes presence as the “ability to be fully conscious and create spontaneous relationship with the client, employing a style that is open, flexible, and confident.”

Being present is about being in the moment with a laser focus on the client. To do this, eliminate any potential distractions and filters—including your own preconceived thoughts and judgments. Being fully present means listening to understand and asking open-ended questions to help your client explore himself or herself more deeply.

1 | Remember, it's not about you as a coach but rather the people YOU coach!

The coach is confident about not knowing or identifying the solution—their focus is on shifting perspective and exploring possibilities. The client is in the lead with the coach as a solid support partner.

2 | Silence is okay, in fact it's rather powerful!

Often we feel the need to fill in the gaps during a conversation. But truly being present may involve periods of silence, which a coach will often do intentionally. This allows clients more space to share what's on their mind.

3 | Seek to understand rather than be understood.

This habit, highlighted in Stephen Covey's *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, is an essential element in developing a coaching presence. Too often, people listen only enough to respond. Instead of really hearing what the other person is saying, energy is spent preparing an answer or response. Effective coaches practice active listening—listening with the expectation of hearing something new or surprising.

4 | Tell your truth through thoughtfully crafted questions.

Coaching presence means the coach calls out what they are observing and trusts their intuition to support the client in gaining clarity, increasing self-awareness, and finding the right solutions. Try using phrases to the ones below:

- "I've noticed that _____ and I'm curious how you came to that conclusion."
- "You've mentioned that you've been _____. I'm wondering how that approach is working for you."

5 | Be curious, be present, and be positive.

One of the most important thing a coach can do in any coaching or personal relationship is to be fully present and in the moment. Your coaching presence shines through when you show that you care and that you're listening to understand. Listen to truly understand the other person's perspective—what they are saying and feeling—without quickly forming a judgment or jumping to share your thoughts. Through their words and actions, effective coaches create settings that lead to new insights, ideas, and possibilities.



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