

Transcript 1: “I suck at leadership” - Client (C) with beginner coach (F)

Comments for the coach *from both Penny and James*

1	F	And so for today, what would you like to have happen?	Good start.
2	C	[sighs]. I don't know. Can we just go with the flow? I don't know. I actually do not know.	
3	F	Mhm.	Nice to not rescue the client by leaving the question in the air.
4	C	So I think understanding my strengths we sort of addressed this in the last session. Having the courage to take life-changing decisions, I think we also touched on it a little bit. So [pause], showing better leadership. I think that's something we haven't really talked about. Maybe we can look at that.	Key bits of information (mostly metaphors) highlighted, e.g. “Courage” is a Resource that could be referred to later. “talk about” and “look at” hint at an Outcome, no stated desire for anything to be different.
5	F	And showing better leadership. And what kind of leadership is that leadership when it's better leadership?	Nicely formulated question with the “when it's better leadership” tag line.
6	C	I really suck at it. It's not self-flagellation or false modesty. It's really a genuine belief that I think I suck at the job of leading. Mainly because I don't think I'm a very firm person. People have said before that I'm too nice. Sometimes, being a leader means you must be firm when it's needed and you must be tough. And I just don't have that character . And sometimes I question, is it I don't want want people not to like me? But I don't think so because [laughing] I can be very horrible in other ways where I just don't care what people think. Maybe I'm too democratic as well. I don't like to be that bossy person who says, “We have to do this. This is what I think is the best for the organisation. You, you, you, you do this.” I would be more like, “Hey, guys. What do you think?” And if somebody said, “I don't think that I'm capable of doing it” or “I don't want to” and coming up with an excuse, I actually would say, “OK. Fine. If you don't want to do, then it's OK.” So, that's why I think I suck at leadership .	“I just don't have that character” is an identity statement that may have significant entailments about the possibility of change. Most of the client's response is not an answer to your question
7	F	And that's why you think you suck at leadership.	Nice to pick out a salient statement.
8	C	Yes. And I don't want things in a specific way enough to actually make a stand . I'm so flexible – as long as it's not something that is wrong, illegal or bad, you don't have to do things my way.	“enough” (and “better” row C4) indicate a scale - where are they on the scale? “make a stand” and “flexible” are embodied metaphors
9	F	And so, when you think you suck at leadership, then what would you like to have happen?	Great use of the Problem-Remedy-Outcome (PRO) model.
10	C	Be better [laughs]. Be better at it.	First desired Outcome.
11	F	And be better at it. And what kind of better is that better?	
12	C	To be more authoritative ... not completely . I don't think a total authoritarian method of leadership is good but I think that there must be a certain level when it's needed or necessary.	More words indicating scaling.
13	F	OK. And there must be a certain level. When it's needed or necessary And how will you know when it's needed or necessary?	Excellent question that goes to experience.

14	C	When the team I'm kind of leading are sometimes behaving like children [laughs]. When let's say they can't agree with each other and there's a conflict. I should be able to step in and actually say that, "Look, you guys can't reach an agreement. I'm going to make a decision. I'm going to be the one who decides on what's best."	
15	F	And so you'll know when the team you're leading sometimes behave like children. You should be able to step in and say, "I'm the one who decides on what's best." And you want to be better at leadership where you can be more authoritative. And is there anything else about that leadership when it's more authoritative?	Nice recap and starting to develop "more authoritative.
16	C	Confidence. Unapologetic [chuckles]. No second-guessing. And it should be devoid of emotion. When you step in as a leader, sometimes you have to take away emotion. You cannot be guided by emotion. It must be the opposite of being emotional. Being professional, is it? So put aside emotion, put aside personal issues but be driven by the profession.	Attending to the two aspects "step in as a leader (driven by the profession)" and "take away emotion" was a chance to develop a
17	F	And when put aside personal issues and be driven by the profession and what needs to be done, then what happens?	metaphor landscape – rather than moving time on.
18	C	Work becomes actually more focused and efficient. And also I think your team will have more respect for you. I think deep inside human beings tend to have more respect for people who are not mean but have authority. Who can make decisions. People do not like weak leaders. They like leaders who are confident, who are strong, who are able to make decisions, who are able to stand up and say, "This is what's best" and demand action from the team. We all tend to like democracy; people to be consultative, but they seem to give more respect to someone who is more authoritative than democratic.	
19	F	And respect and give more respect to someone who is more authoritative. And what lets you know that you will have more respect?	Nice to ask for experience of a concept.
20	C	When people tend not to abuse your niceness. The line becomes blurred so that your staff feel that, "You're actually not my boss. You're behaving like my friend. So when you ask me to do something, I can actually tell you 'no'." Does it make sense? So people subsequently take advantage because you practise equality, you are inclusive. Then that means there's no boundary anymore.	
21	F	And no boundary anymore. And when no boundary anymore, what would you like to have happen?	Good use of PRO.
22	C	To draw that fine boundary again. [Pause] When you're in an organisation you need to kind of draw boundaries between employer and staff, otherwise things can become messy. If you don't have that level of respect, sometimes you get a lot of excuses. The bottomline , it would help me or help the organisation if when I give an instruction, they just execute it, end of story. So, it's more for the efficiency of the work being done.	Second desired Outcome - in metaphor.
23	F	Efficiency. And so, before we go on any further, let me just check. What's currently happening in terms of boundaries with you? And in your leadership position, what's currently happening?	Did you need to know this? It invites Explanation and misses a chance to "make words physical" (Grove) i.e. for the client to develop a metaphor landscape.

24	C	[Chuckle] It's not happening, right. But, I think it has the potential to become like that. So, at the moment, what's happening is a lot of us are working on very equal footing leading different projects. So, there's a change in a dynamic when staff become the leader of a project and the CEO becomes a team member. Which is fine. We want it that way. But it sometimes blurs the boundary . There are instances where I need something done and someone will say, "Why don't you do it?" I'm not able to stand and say, "This is a situation which is concerning the organisation. If I ask you to do this, you do it!" I would very often end up doing it on my own.	"Has the potential" is a small shift from "I don't have the character" (see C6)
25	F	So, is that what you're referring to when you talk about boundaries and being better at leadership?	Question does little but keep it at a "referring to" and "talk about" level. And see comment on F23.
26	C	Yes, but also another aspect. I've read there are very few women who in managerial positions, and one reason is because women tend to put friendships first. Whereas men actually don't care. My instinct is I would rather not want something so much that it would jeopardise my friendship. Should I be emulating men's mean character? It's not something I want to aspire to. So, this is another reason where I find it's very hard for me to be a leader when I'm amongst friends. It becomes very difficult for me to step up as a leader.	And the result of your question was nearly all Explanation until the last sentence.
27	F	And so, it's hard for you to be a leader when you're among friends. And when it's blurred, then it becomes very difficult for you to step up as a leader. And that is a challenge you're currently facing. OK. And so, when it's hard for you to be a leader, when the lines are blurred, the boundary, I guess, is blurred, then what would you like to have happen?	Nice recap and use of PRO with a Problem, "blurred boundary". An alternative would have been: And when it's very difficult to step up, what would you like to have happen?
28	C	When it's blurred [Sigh, pause]. I actually don't know because the best scenario would be for it to be un-blurred . But in reality, it's not like that. It's not a button that you press on and off and it happens because, it's about human relationships, it's emotions.	"to be un-blurred" is a Remedy.
29	F	And it's about human relationships. And emotions. And the best scenario is for it to be un-blurred. And when un-blurred, what needs to happen for it to be un-blurred?	Before asking for a condition for a Remedy, you could return to her 2nd Outcome (C22) or continue with: And when it is <i>not</i> like a button that you press, it's like what?
30	C	I guess, a completely brutally honest heart-to-heart talk for everybody to understand the situation. And to be able to come to an agreement that it's nothing personal, it's business [chuckles].	Possibly new information for the client.
31	F	Nothing personal. It's business. And a completely brutally honest heart-to-heart talk. And is there anything else that needs to happen for it to be un-blurred?	Given you've chosen this direction (vector), excellent to stay on it.
32	C	[Deep breath and pause]. I can't think of anything else.	
33	F	And the best scenario is for it to be un-blurred. And you'd like to draw that fine boundary again. And what kind of boundary is that boundary when it's a fine boundary?	Great to return to developing her desired Outcome.
34	C	It's fine because it's not a completely thick one where "OK, now you're the boss. I'm the staff. Therefore we shall not have lunch together. Therefore we should not have conversations about personal things." It's not as thick as that but it's not completely invisible either	Again, the client describes her experience by what it is <i>not</i> (see rows 6, 8, 12, 16, 18, 20, 24, 26, 28). Still, she is beginning to attend to the attributes of her inner experience.

35	F	And when fine boundary that's not a completely thick one and it's not completely invisible either, is there anything else about that boundary?	Great to keep directing attention to her desired Outcome.
36	C	[Long pause] Nope.	
37	F	And draw that fine boundary. And what kind of draw is that draw when you draw a fine boundary?	Excellent to try a different angle.
38	C	[Pause] What kind of draw? [Pause] It's like a professional code. If you can take away that line or that boundary, it's replaced by being professional. Which is why I said it's taking away the emotional aspect but putting back more of the professionalism. I think what's happening now is there is more of the emotional plane than professional. So, I think it needs a balance.	More action metaphors. Client repeats description in C16 with similar action metaphors. Possibly a realisation.
39	F	Between?	
40	C	Between professionalism and being emotional. When I say emotional it really means the connection , the personal touch, the human aspect. While professionalism is more governed by, "Look this is a very task-oriented thing. What I need is your skills, your competency." So, I think now, I care too much about the emotional aspect of things. I think you need to kind of have the wisdom of being able to balance both when you need to be professional yet you need to temper it with a bit of humanity.	
41	F	And wisdom to be able to balance both. And when balance, what kind of balance is that balance?	Excellent to put attention on the relationship metaphor ...
42	C	[Long pause]. A balance which will depend on different situations and scenarios. Because you would have to look at it on a case-by-case basis rather than a balance that fits every scenario.	
43	F	And it's a case-by-case basis and depends on different situations and scenarios. And is there anything else about that balance?	... and to stay developing it
44	C	No.	Same answer to 'ATE?' as C32 & C36. Great to see you (consciously?) spotted this and did not use it again.
45	F	And how will you know when you have that balance?	Again, excellent to come at "balance" from a different angle.
46	C	That's a good question. [Long pause]. I guess I'll know when staff acknowledge that if they ever have any problems or issues or concerns, they can turn to me. But at the same time they would respect me enough to be able to understand that boundary.	
47	F	And so they would come to you if they have any problems and they would respect you enough to be able to understand that boundary. And boundary. And whereabouts is that boundary?	Great to go for location, to start developing a metaphor landscape.
48	C	Whereabouts? Well. At work. It's that boundary of professionalism for me. Because outside work honestly, I don't want to be authoritative, I don't want to be bossy, it doesn't matter anymore because there is no deadlines to fulfil, there's no commitment or duties that we have.	This suggests that with this client, you probably need to put more attention on the embodied metaphors highlighted before asking for location.
49	F	And boundary at work. And you'd like to draw that boundary. And what needs to happen for you to draw that boundary again?	Nice switch to necessary conditions of the desired outcome.

50	C	What needs to happen? [Big sigh, long pause]. For me to be able to just say it. To make it clear in a way where nobody would subsequently feel, “Oh, yeh, now we have this person who is so authoritative. Forget about me coming to her to confide in her if there’s an issue or there’s a problem.” To be honest, I don’t want people to come to me and tell me their sob stories. Actually, that’s a boundary I want to draw. I don’t want that but I want them to have that reassurance that if you’re really in deep trouble, if you have an issue at work, you can trust that I will be there for you.	No “sob stories” only “deep trouble” potentially puts her staff in a bit of a bind. Client is now stating her values and wants clearly.
51	F	And trust that you will be there for them? And that’s the boundary you want to draw. You don’t want to hear all the sob stories.	
52	C	Sounds so bad of me to say sob stories [laughs] but you get what I mean. I don’t need people to be chummy and I don’t want it.	
53	F	And what needs to happen for them to have reassurance that if they have trouble at work, they can trust you will be there for them?	Great to not get diverted by the Explanation but to stay with necessary conditions.
54	C	I’ll spend a bit of time trying to know them and actually [pause]. Sorry. That’s it.	
55	F	And so, spend a bit of time trying to know them. And you think that will reassure them. And in the next five minutes that’s left of our session, what do you know now about be a better leader or be better at leadership?	Excellent to check back with original desired Outcome.
56	C	I think leadership is still not clear. I feel very shy when I talk to people outside and staff. It was worse before, now I’m actually getting more comfortable but initially it’s very difficult for me to verbalise that. And I’m very reluctant to call people my staff. I’ve never, ever said that. Now, I think the problem is I want to get things done without asserting authority. But when I don’t do that, it seems it’s very hard to get things done. Using that authority is like taking advantage of my position. “Look, just do it. Because I say so.” Then, I’m conflicted. [Laughs] I think at the end of the story, I think I know what it is. Bottom line is, I cannot be a leader. It’s too difficult.	First “I feel” statement. This whole response seems to have a different quality. It might seem the client has come right back to where she started but I think with a much deeper understanding of herself. Her own bind which results in “conflicted”. “Too difficult” to handle the internal “conflicted”, I wonder?
57	F	So, what did you like about what I did today that was useful for you?	Shame you run out of time, client has accessed something deeper.
58	C	The way you managed to point out things without actually pointing it out. You ask very thought-provoking questions. So, then it made me think about things a little bit more deeper and I need to justify what I’m talking about. I think that’s the most valuable thing about this Clean Coaching. I need to backup what exactly is it I’m saying. And that helps a lot because then it’s not a sweeping statement I’m making. It’s my own perception of things. So, I think that’s really helpful.	Great feedback.
59	F	OK. And is there anything I did that you didn’t like or that wasn’t useful for you?	
60	C	No. ... Actually, yes. I just wish that you would give me answers. [Laughs] Instead of making me work, think so hard.	This would be an opportunity to give her some take-away questions to consider after the session.

Summary comments

Evidence of high-quality clean coaching:

- Stayed clean throughout.
- Excellent use of [Problem-Remedy-Outcome model](#).
- Stayed with the process when there were plenty of opportunities to be diverted by explanations.
- Kept returning to client's experience – when much of her early description was couched in conceptual and “not [experience]” terms.
- Stayed close to client's desired Outcome even though many Problems were presented.
- Tracked client's logic well.
- Not phased by the client's “don't know” and “None” etc.
- Put attention on key metaphors “line”, “boundary” and “balance”.

Areas for development:

- Put more attention on **embodied metaphors** (highlighted in the transcript), especially when there is a pattern such as:

Make a stand (8), step in (14, 16), stand up (18), stand (24), equal footing (24), step up (26).

As a result we would expect the client to have developed a more embodied metaphor landscape. However, given this client's level of self-awareness and her propensity for the conceptual explanation, this would probably have required a good number of questions which invited her to stay with the symbolic-metaphoric domain of her experience.

- Offer the client some **questions to take-away** to consider after the session. In this case, you could have selected a few from these:
 - And when using authority is like taking advantage of your position, and then you're conflicted, what would you like to have happen, when you are conflicted like that?
 - And when it's too difficult to be a leader, what would you like to have happen?
 - And when you feel very shy talking to people, what would you like to have happen?
 - And when leaders need to have the wisdom of being able to balance being professional with humanity, what kind of wisdom is that, and where does wisdom like that come from?
 - And is there anything else that needs to happen for you to draw that fine boundary again?
 - Also, I suggest taking pens and paper and physically drawing the boundary and the fine line and anything else you now know about being a better leader.

Our comments to the coach are based on five frames that point out:

1. Coach's good practice.
2. What client seems to be getting out of the session (especially apparent shifts).
3. What coach did that might be unconscious competence.
4. Salient client information the coach might have missed:
 - Was not aware of at all
 - Was not aware of the significance
 - Seemed aware of but did not utilise.
5. What coach could have done that would have been at a higher skill level.

In this case, the number of comments per frame were:

Frame 1: 20

Frame 2: 6

Frame 3: 2

Frame 4: 9

Frame 5: 6

43 comments in total

Frame 1: 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, 13, 15, 19, 21, 27, 31, 35, 37, 41, 43, 45, 47, 49, 53, 55

Frame 2: 24, 30, 34, 38, 50, 56

Frame 3: 3 (?), 44

Frame 4: 4, 6, 8, 12, 16, 28, 34, 38, 50

Frame 5: 23, 25, 27, 29, 48, 60