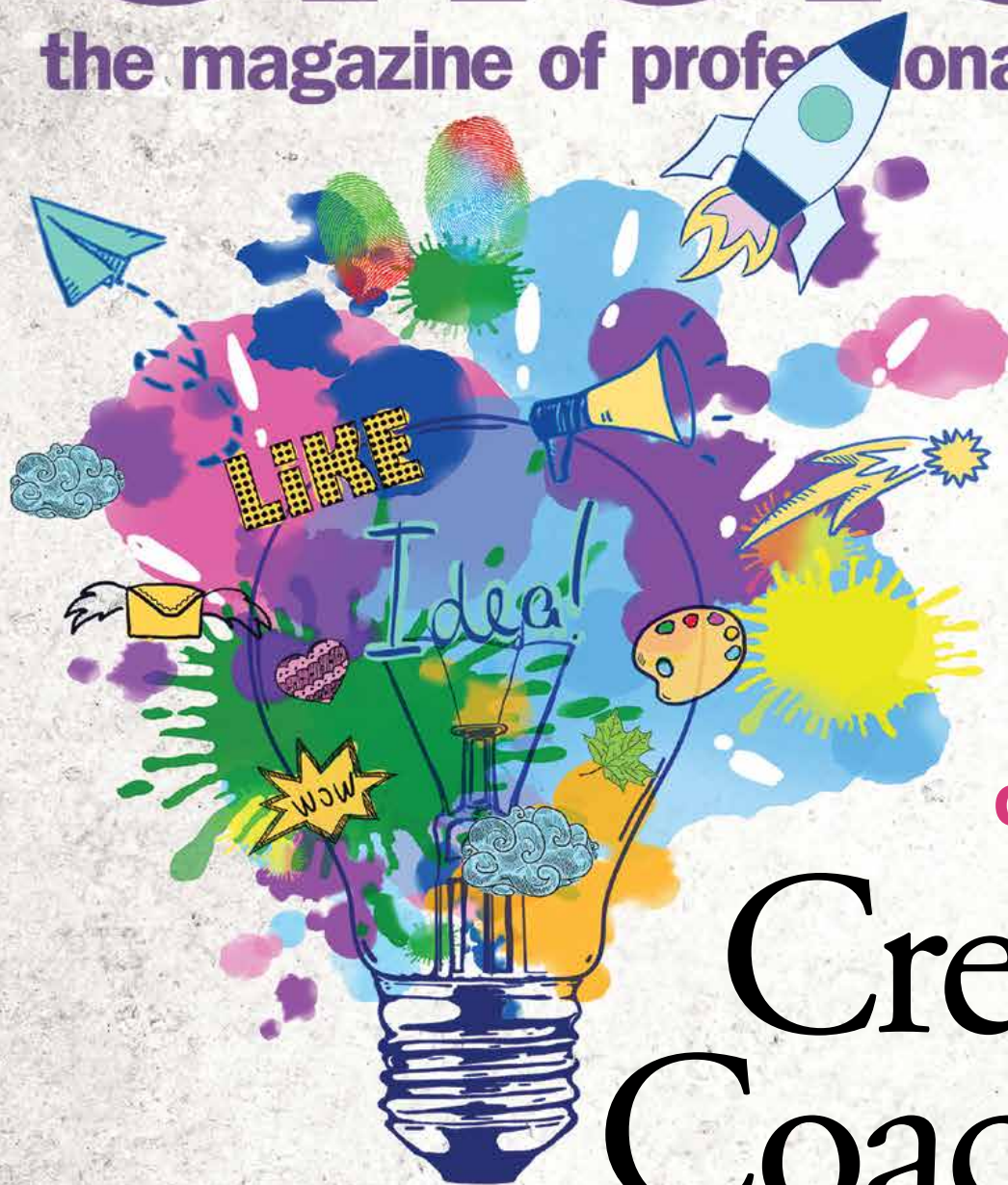


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How Self-Aware Are You?

By Lisa Murrell, BCC, PCC

Good coaches are very aware of their clients. However, conscious or not, your degree of self-awareness powerfully affects your coaching, your client and your life. Good coaches also know that self-management is essential to effective coaching. However, before we can manage ourselves, we need to be aware of what we need to manage.

There are essential areas of self-awareness we need in order to create and sustain a healthy coaching practice and life. Only through awareness in these areas can we begin to self-manage in any situation.

Congruence, or alignment between your inside and outside, is a very basic form of self-awareness. No matter how convincing you are on the outside, if not aligned with the inside, you are incongruent. Much like when you see a smiling face and everything seems fine yet you still feel on some level that something isn't right, your client will sense this lack of alignment as well. This incongruence affects the trust in the relationship, the very foundation of coaching.

A powerful coach must not only hold and live in congruence; we must be aware of when we are out of alignment within a coaching conversation. Then the management of that incongruence can begin – without judgment, shame or blame – gently guiding ourselves back into alignment.

Awareness of our emotions is an essential tool to valuable coaching. Through recognizing and embracing our



emotions, we are more fully present. Emotions can be a powerful source of information as well. The following is a simple process to awareness and self-management through our emotions. I call this 'emotional agility':

- 1. NOTICE** what sensations or emotions are present.
- 2. ASK** yourself what these emotions are telling you (there is always something behind them).
- 3. TAKE** appropriate action/inaction (i.e., is this your stuff or the client's stuff?).
- 4. RETURN** to engaged listening.

Noticing your attachment to the outcome is critical to holding the client as creative, resourceful and whole. This means awareness of wanting to fix, react to, or judge what is happening. It also means trusting that the client is getting what they need, even if you do not!

Finally, awareness of our boundaries is necessary to support our agreements. When our relationships go off-track, we find out just how critical boundaries are.

“ Noticing your *attachment* to the outcome is critical to holding the client as creative, resourceful and whole. ”

I consistently remind myself to meet the client where they are. I must pay attention to and respect their boundaries. Equally, I must set clear contracts, agreements, or boundaries, for the relationship and myself.

It is only through clear and agreed upon boundaries that real connection happens.

The deepest self-awareness happens when we allow, listen to and accept all of who we are. It is necessary to consider every level and dimension of ourselves in order to affect deep and transformational awareness, for you as coach and for the client. Managing these dimensions is only as effective as our awareness of them. •