

EXERCISE

Noticing Breath



Time: 35-40 minutes



Setup and materials: pencil and paper, moveable chairs set in groups of 3



Good For: Large Groups, Small Groups

Framing:

This exercise helps you notice changes in breathing. Awareness of the breath can give you hints about a person's state of mind, or their level of stress or ease, or how aligned they are.

The topic for the coaching conversation is some sort of short-term goal, something the person being coached wants to accomplish in the next two to three months. After you have thought about your goal, you will be in groups of 3 with a coach, client, and breath marker. Throughout the coaching, the breath marker will signal visually when the client breaths in and out.

Steps:

1. Solo 2 minutes

Think and make notes about a short-term goal, something you want to accomplish in the next two to three months.

2. Groups of 3, 7 minutes coaching followed by 3 minute colleague conversation

Directions to the Client: Give this coaching time to thinking about every aspect of this goal that feels relevant. Allow yourself space to notice anything that comes up in your mind related to your outcome.

Directions to the Coach: with curiosity, invite any direction in the client's thinking without expectation of "progress" or pressure of any kind. Give the person space to think around and through to this outcome.

By the end of the conversation, one person may want more clarity or decisiveness. Another person might choose to define steps. A different individual could set it on a timeline.

Remember, as a coach, is it not your job to figure it out. In fact, you can't. But the client can. Our preferences are so varied when it comes to what will motivate us. Invite your client to find a strategy that fits their personality and preferences, so that the journey to

the outcome will be enjoyable. How can it be fun? How can it be easy? Two of my favorite questions.

Directions to the Observer: sit to the side and behind the client, well outside their peripheral vision. You want the coach to see you easily, and the client to not see you at all.

Mark the client's breath with a hand movement. You will be doing this for the entire 7 minute conversation, so settle your arm comfortably, and make small but noticeable movements. Up, down, side-to-side, whatever is most natural for you.

(Teacher, show them your hand resting comfortably on your leg and moving slightly but noticeably. Synchronize it with your breath. Then show them if you held your whole arm out to mark it, it would be very noticeable, but your arm would get very tired, hence the direction to be comfortable.)

3. Colleague conversation, 3 minutes

At the end of each round, have a short colleague conversation about this level of awareness. Then move on to the next round.

4. Ongoing practice

Mark the breathing of a character when you are watching a tv show or movie. Subtly move your own finger, or toe, or whatever, when you are in a conversation with someone to mark their breathing. Synchronize your breathing with someone else.