

On second thoughts

"Whether you think you can or whether you think you can't, you're right."

– Henry Ford, (July 30, 1863 – April 7, 1947) American industrialist and founder of the Ford Motor Company

Perhaps one of the biggest benefits individuals gain from coaching is the increased self-awareness of what drives their behaviour and what has the potential to stop them achieving the goals they desire. I would suggest that the quality of an individual's self-belief correlates directly to the success they can achieve. Even though from the outset they may come to coaching highly motivated and committed, as the relationship with their coach develops deep rooted negative beliefs may surface and they will understand how these can sabotage their progress.

The underlying beliefs (positive or negative) we have about our abilities, our potential, and how we would cope with new situations, is the most powerful force dictating the extent of our success. When taking steps to develop and achieve goals there will be a need to stretch our comfort zone, deal with challenges, assess outcomes which were perhaps not what we had wanted and continue to move forward. It is often at these points that any limiting beliefs we may have will surface and have the potential to stop us in our tracks.

What I have found can happen, is that the client will initially produce a standard answer to a question that they think I will expect. If they are committing to particular step and their tone of voice is sincere and confident it is highly likely that they will complete the actions as stated.

However, if when finishing their answer there is almost an audible 'but' hanging in the air or they are hesitant or their tone is unsure, I will ask them what thought popped into their head immediately after that statement. It is often their second thought which holds the key to any limiting beliefs they may have about achieving what they had just committed to.

These second thought processes, whether limiting or empowering, have immense power over whether the action will happen. They may come from a fear, negative habits, or past behaviours which have built up a negative evidence bank of occasions when the client hasn't achieved their goal. If a client is empowered and positive he will take the action and assess the result in a constructive way. If a client's thoughts are limiting, it is highly likely that the second thoughts will command the behaviour and success can be uncertain.

Examples of second thoughts which might follow a Yes ('but') are:

- I haven't achieved this in the past so why should I achieve it this time?
- Can I really do that?
- Am I good enough?
- Do I have the capability to take that step?
- What will people think of me?

- Will I look stupid?
- Am I prepared to take the chance of an adverse outcome?

By voicing the second thought attached to the action they are able to begin work on breaking down the limiting belief and develop strategies to rationalise the root cause of them. The coaching relationship creates an excellent, non-judgemental environment to increase a client's self-awareness to the source of the limiting thought processes and understand how to overcome them at a rate they feel appropriate.

Why not have a go yourself? Next time you commit to taking a step towards a goal, pause and listen to see if there is a second thought popping up behind it. Whatever, the second thought, you will understand whether you believe you can achieve it or not. If there is some doubt, the great news is that you can now begin working on the limiting belief that has been holding you back from achieving success.

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