



How to be a Trauma-informed Coach

COACHING MASTERCLASS

with Sas Petherick



become a **Self-belief Coach!**

EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH +
TRAUMA-INFORMED COACHING +
DEEPLY COMPASSIONATE PRESENCE
= A REVOLUTIONARY APPROACH TO SELF-DOUBT

Transform your coaching practice,
transform your business, transform yourself.

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THE DIRECT PATH TO YOUR COACHING MASTERY!

BEING TRAUMA INFORMED

Being a trauma-informed coach helps to create a safe container for our clients.

Being trauma-informed does not mean working with trauma.

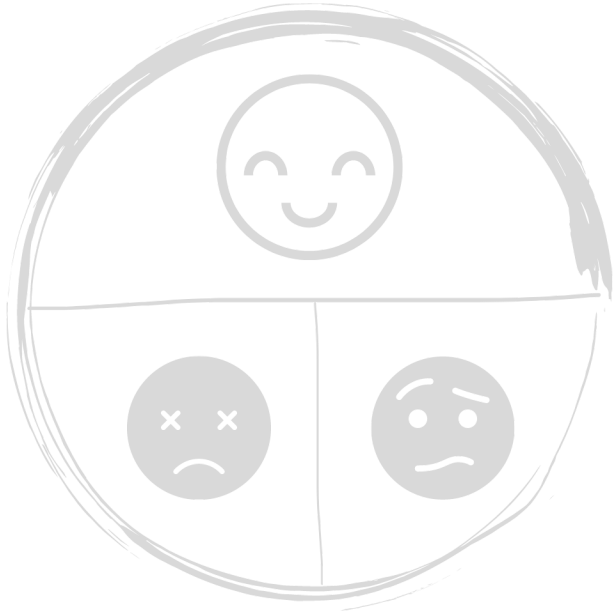
Trauma is a highly sophisticated process.

- It can be thought of as "what happens to a person when there is either too much too soon, too much for too long or not enough for too long" (Duros & Crowley, 2014).
- Trauma is caused by any event that's stressful enough to leave us feeling helpless, overwhelmed and/or profoundly unsafe.
- Our normal stress response prepares us for fight, flight, freeze or fawn. When trauma occurs, the psyche cannot withstand the event and our autonomic nervous system overrides and creates a 'freeze, fragment and collapse' response.

Trauma creates physiological + psychological impacts:

- Psychologically our psyche 'splits', this splitting includes submission, dissociation (a disconnection with the body and the present) and memory fragmentation.
- Physiologically rich sensory information flows through our bodies. These sensations are designed to keep us safe in the moment of trauma. Post-traumatic stress describes how our physiology is reactivated by stimulus after the trauma.

THREE SELVES MODEL



Professor Franz Ruppert (2011)

Healthy Self:

- All that existed in the person before the trauma
- Access to imagination, creativity, joy and pleasure
- Rounded memory, able to think clearly and show discernment
- Practices self-compassion, grounded, accesses emotions and needs,
- Brings the client to coaching!

Trauma Self:

- Has the job of shielding the experience of trauma:
- Often hidden/cut off from immediate consciousness
- Can block life energy, connection, meaning and vitality
- Can be frozen at the age and time of trauma
- May be triggered by a range of stimuli.

Survivor Self:

- Purpose is to block trauma.
- Maintains a rigid defence against being re-traumatised.
- Tend to involve a loss of connection with the body.
- We will meet the strategies of the Survivor Self.
- Survivor Self is NOT coachable.
- We coaches have our own survivor strategies!

SURVIVOR SELF STRATEGIES

Distraction:

- Anything that takes attention away from feeling. Client might use long narratives or give a lot of context or over-intellectualise. May avoid resting or being alone.
- Coaches tend to gloss over difficult emotions, introduce a tool to avoid feeling helpless, anxious or unsure.

Control:

- Bringing as much as possible under control (internally and externally) as a way of calming sense of disorder.
- Coaches can try to control sessions; steering clients away from any of their own discomfort, dismissing their own blind spots, not asking for help.

Compensation:

- Search for substitutes to emotional or embodied connection: consumption - excessive eating, drinking, promiscuity, gambling, scrolling, shopping, faux happiness.
- Coaches engaging in these behaviours are likely to benefit greatly from supportive supervision.

Illusions:

- Escaping to fantasy or believing in any kind of idealised easier, simpler, perfect existence. May idealise other people, gloss over reality, cling to being unique, indispensable or heroic.
- Coaches uncomfortable with client's reality can use positive thinking to help clients escape reality.

Denial:

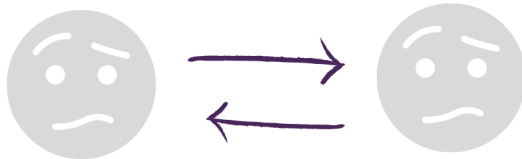
- Refusing to accept something that part of us knows to be true. 'Everything's FINE' glossing over difficult experiences and emotions.
- Coaches can pretend all is well in their client work/business rather than face reality.

ENTANGLEMENT

CLIENT



COACH



SURVIVOR SELVES

Entanglement is when the Client's Survivor Self activates the Survivor Self of the Coach who takes over the coaching.

Rescuing:

- Over-giving to accommodate the client's needs.
- Believe you are responsible to solve for the client.
- The urge to take away hurt, soothe or rescue.

Resentment:

- Believe you are doing all the hard work.
- Experience irritation, exasperation, frustration,
- or anger towards the client.

Avoidance:

- Veering towards politeness rather than saying what you believe will support the client.
- Feeling a lack of empathy (unmoved, distant, bored) towards the client.

Self-doubt:

- Believing every session needs an 'aha moment'.
- Questioning or second-guessing your skills and value as a coach.
- Holding yourself back usually because of a perceived risk of creating conflict, rejection or disappointment.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

After a session where you felt Entangled with the client:

Reflect on the moments you became aware of entanglement:

- What was really going on for me?
- What was I thinking about?
- What happened to my body connection?
- Who might the client have become for me?
- What images or memories emerge as I reflect?
- What was I feeling about the client?
- What was I afraid of?
- What might be behind that?

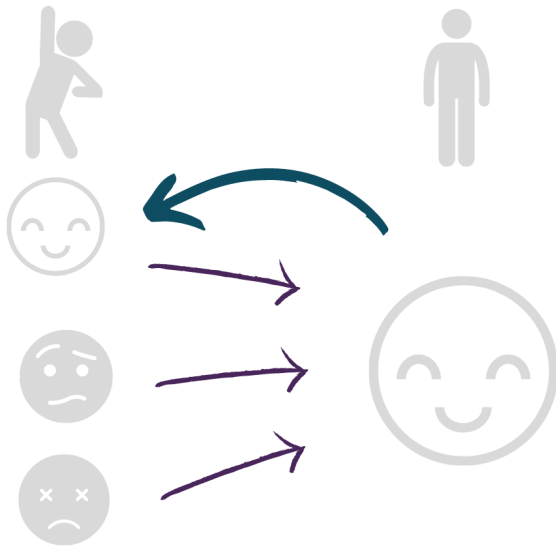
When you have worked with a 'difficult' client:

- What assumptions did you make about the client?
- What did you make this mean about yourself?
- What else could have been true?
- If this was actually a client in difficulty rather than a difficult client, how might you respond differently?

RETURN TO YOUR HEALTHY SELF

CLIENT

COACH



The most important thing is that we coach from our Healthy Self. This means effective coaching is still possible – no matter what is happening for the client.

QUALITIES OF THE COACH'S HEALTHY SELF:

Clear and deep presence

Lovingly detached

Active intuition + intellect

Access to Humour, Resilience, Courage, Emotional range.

EMBODIED.

Things to remember:

- Offer yourself and your client compassion.
- When you are in your Healthy Self, you are emotionally regulated - for clients with trauma this feels SAFE.
- Your Healthy Self is always available to you.

Come back to your Healthy Self:

- Notice you have left and gone to your Survivor Self.
- Come back to your body - shift your body, breathe, gently hold your thumb 'I've got me', suggest a break.
- Ask a question from your Healthy Self, to engage the Healthy Self of the Client.

THE CLIENT'S HEALTHY SELF

Always assume clients have Healthy Self resources, even if they are not always readily available to them.

Absolutes, Assumptions and Patterns:

- Reflect back and gently challenge 'absolutes' (always, never, everyone, no one), assumptions or patterns from the client's past experiences.
- *Is it likely that absolutely everyone will think that? I'm hearing an assumption that... can you think of situations in which this may not serve you? I'm noticing a pattern.... when do you think this started?*

Options and Parts:

- Expand the perspective so the client see that they are not their sadness, but part of them is sad.
- *What options become available if you consider the parts of you that are content (or are not sad)?*

Thickening the Narrative:

- Expanding the client's perception. Actively encourage a rounded story in their words.
- *You've talked a few time about being 'shy' - where do you think that identity came from (in your family, etc.)?*
- *Does 'shy' fit you now? In what ways has shyness helped you? When have you not been shy?*

Encouraging Embodiment:

- Support the client to connect with their felt-experience and their emotions in simple and safe ways.
- *Where do you feel that in your body? What sensations are you aware of in your body just as you sit there? I see there is emotion here, can you name it, what do you think this part is telling you? What does this emotion indicate you need? What might this feeling be protecting?*

WHEN TRAUMA ARISES

**Be a safe and compassionate witness.
There is nothing to fix.**

What to say:

- How are you right now, sharing this?
- I am so moved by what you have shared.
- As you remember this event, what resources can you see that your younger self called on?
- How do you experience this affecting you today in the way you show up?
- Thank you for trusting me with your story.
- What, if any, help are you getting or have you had around these issues?
- How does this connect, if at all, with what is happening currently for you?
- What might we be mindful of as we continue our work here?
- Your Healthy Self is always available to you.

GOOD PRACTICE

Contracting:

- Invite the client to share whatever feels safe.
- Ask how they like to be supported, challenged, held accountable, express their needs, ask for help in-between sessions.

Consent:

- Check-in before you introduce a tool or a concept.
- Give the client permission to say no, to pause, to ask for what they need.
- Take confidentiality seriously.

Courage:

- To talk about what might be going unsaid.
- To ask for more/different support.
- To not meet their goals, fail, be imperfect, make mistakes, be HUMAN.

**Trust Your Client.
Commit to your own development.**



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FURTHER READING

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Podcasts:

Rachel Yehuda, *OnBeing 2017: How Trauma and Resilience Cross Generations*.

David Treleaven, *Coaches Rising 2020: Becoming a Trauma-sensitive Coach*.

Sonya Renee Taylor, *Unlocking Us 2020: The Body is Not an Apology*.