



MODULE SEVEN

The Coach's Self-doubt



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Introduction

In Module Seven, we are interested in the specific ways that self-doubt shows up for us as coaches as we lead our businesses and client work.

This Module is about how to support yourself and when to seek help (and what kind of help you might need).

In this Module, we'll:

- Discover how to recognise when you are experiencing self-doubt and how to coach yourself (as well as exploring the limits of self-coaching – yep, we need each other!).
- How to tend to your vulnerabilities with compassion.
- What to do when you are activated by client stories and traumas, how to support yourself so you minimise entanglement.

CONSIDER:

- What are these approaches revealing to me about my own self-doubt?
- Where is self-doubt emerging in my coaching business?
- Where is self-doubt emerging in my coaching practice?
- What is unclear to me?
- What questions do I have?

Self-belief Coaching tools + approaches

The tools and approaches referred to in this Module are available for you to download as unformatted word docs for you to add your own branding.

REF.	NAME	NOTES
SBCAM7A	SOAP Self-reflection Process	Evaluate every coaching session you have.

Self-doubt as a coach

KEY MESSAGE: As Self-belief Coaches, we know that self-doubt is an understandable response to any action that feels psychologically risky. We normalise our own self-doubt. We know we have resources available to us and we trust in our resourcefulness. Our commitment to serving our clients is bigger than our self-doubt.

PURPOSE OF THIS MODULE:

As we have explored the root causes of self-doubt, the meaning-making stories that keep it alive and the characteristics of your Protector, it's likely that you are getting to know your own self-doubt intimately!

As Self-belief Coaches, we have a duty of care to tend to our own self-doubt.

This helps you:

1. **Serve clients at the highest level:** When self-belief, self-trust, self-worth, and self-acceptance are available to you, your energy is magnetic. You coach from a deeply grounded presence while remaining lovingly detached to the outcome of a session, or a client relationship.
2. **Minimise entanglements:** coaching 'clean' from your Healthy Self, recognising your own tender places and being able to self-manage all serves to help you stay devoted to the Healthy Self of the client. You are able to recognise their protector and survivor self at work.
3. **Create the coaching practice you are dreaming of:** it is no accident that you feel called here, now, to this work. You are unlimited potential. When your self-belief, self-trust, self-worth and self-acceptance are available to you, your business dreams are a matter of time, energy and strategy.

In this module, we'll explore your self-doubt in your coaching practice and your coaching business; how you can self-coach and when you might need more support.

KNOWING YOUR SELF-DOUBT

'Where does my self-doubt emerge?' might be one of the most interesting questions you can ask yourself.

Other good questions:

- **What is the greatest source of vulnerability in your coaching practice?** (e.g.: making decisions, finding clients, selling your

services, creating, actively marketing, momentum, visibility, actually coaching, rewarding yourself with money, rest, treats and celebrations, savings, other goals...)?

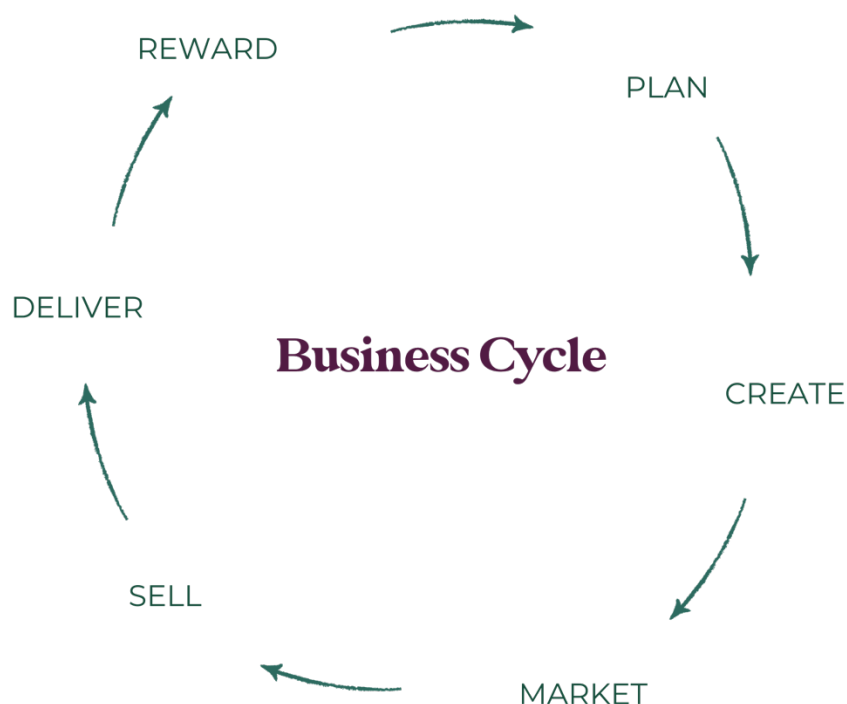
- If you are self-employed: when it comes to your coaching business, **what are you holding yourself back from?**
- If you are working in-house: what is the untapped value your coaching work could add to this organisation? What are you holding yourself back from?

Self-doubt and your coaching business

SELF-DOUBT STORIES AND YOUR LEADERSHIP

Just being curious about the nature of how self-doubt shows up in the cycle of your business can reveal so much!

A helpful way into this is to look at the six different aspects of every business (no matter what the size and scope), and notice where you hold yourself back:



Be curious about what you believe about your ability to fulfil each aspect of your business.

- Notice any body sensations that suggest there isn't a 'clean and clear' story here.
- What is the self-doubt story you have?
- What is your Protector worried about?
- What does your Healthy Self want you to know?
- What themes and patterns do you notice?
- What are the risks you are doing a great job of protecting yourself from?

Notice how you are already internalising the Protective Belief!

For example: you might be avoiding being too visible to protect yourself from the risk of rejection and criticism – notice how you end up rejecting the part of you that is longing to coach clients. Are you criticising yourself for not showing up in the way that you want to?

If you are protecting yourself from the risk of disappointment, how are you disappointed in yourself?

You may be waiting to feel certain emotions before you commit to a flavour of coaching, to protect yourself from failure – notice how little you are achieving by never moving forward?

It can be helpful to notice that you are already living with the risk you are also working hard to avoid.

If you're willing to allow it instead of resisting it, and you're willing to look at it with curiosity instead of resistance, that's where your power is going to come from.

Protective Beliefs are always an invitation for us to grow our leadership.

SELF-DOUBT AND BUSINESS GOALS

- What are your business goals?
- How do you feel about your Business Goals?
- What do you want your business to look like next year, in three or five years?
- Do you want to be a One-Person-Band, Small-Team or Empire?
- How much money do you want to make this year?
- Do you want to grow? What's the strategy for that?
- What would it mean to outsource some tasks that you don't enjoy?
- What do you need to do this month to create momentum towards your goals?
- What is your relationship to achievement? Exploring your business goals is a doorway to expanding your self-concept. Goals bring up our beliefs about our capacity to achieve them.

So if you have never made it past the planning stage, if you tend to quit as soon as things go off-plan, if you have lots of goals but no real idea where to start - there is likely to be a juicy old belief supporting this behaviour.

How you define a goal and how doable or risky it feels, is based on what you believe.

YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO GOALS

I've found there are five main relationships we tend to have with Business Goals. These sit along a spectrum and most of us tend to have one or two predominant approaches to risk:

GOAL-DRIVEN	GOAL-ORIENTED	GOAL-DREAMER	GOAL-AGNOSTIC	GOAL-ADVERSE
My business is a way for me to achieve goals. Embrace ambition and feel stimulated by a stretch target. Light/Conscious belief: I have unlimited potential. Shadow/Unconscious belief: The harder I work, the more I feel worthy. Risk: Failure, Disappointment.	I enjoy the process of setting targets, making progress and achieving aims. Value witnessing personal growth, feel excited by possibility. Light/Conscious belief: I am creative, capable and committed. Shadow/Unconscious belief: Don't aim too high. Don't get too big. Risk: Disappointment, Conflict.	I like the idea of goals, and I tend to stay in 'dreaming and scheming' them. Reluctant to commit to taking action towards achieving goals. Light/Conscious belief: I am present to right now. Shadow/Unconscious belief: I don't trust myself to follow through. This is too hard. Risk: Complexity, Judgement.	I don't know what goals to choose or choose too many and scatter energy. Take a 'what will be, will be' approach to goals. Light/Conscious belief: I am unattached to achievement. Shadow/Unconscious belief: I can't handle the pressure. Risk: Complexity, Success.	I tend to avoid or dismiss or ridicule goals. Enjoy being an outsider and doing business differently. Light/Conscious belief: Goals are not important to me. Shadow/Unconscious belief: I don't know who I will be if I achieve or fail this goal. Risk profile: Complexity, Rejection.

Your relationship with your business goals reflects your personal values and your beliefs about your capability to achieve goals. Consider your relationship to your business goals: *What beliefs might explain how you have approach goals? Is there more light or shadow? What would you like to change?*

Self-doubt in your coaching practice

I'm going to assume that one of the reasons you became a coach was a simple and heartfelt desire to help others.

But what if that sometimes involves being deep in your own discomfort?

How successful are you at questioning yourself and your work, recognising when sessions do not go well, knowing when clients aren't able to apply what they learn from your coaching?

What if you find you are out of your depth, not experienced enough or simply unable to build a connection with a client?

In my experience, this is an intrinsic part of being a coach. *Doesn't it sound like fun?!*

The good news is that there is a correlation between our psychological growth as practitioners and the impact of our work with clients.

SELF-REFLECTION AS A SELF-COACHING PRACTICE

Because we often run our tiny coaching empires from our spare room, many of us work alone. With few natural sources of feedback, it's important to pay attention to our own experience of each coaching session.

A Self-reflection practice can lead to five really important outcomes that have a huge impact on the effectiveness of your coaching. You:

1. Take responsibility for your thoughts, feelings and behaviours.
2. Gain awareness of your underlying assumptions, notice patterns of responses and tune in to your blind spots.
3. Consider how your experience of coaching impacts your coaching work.
4. Develop the capacity to learn from and utilise your vulnerabilities.
5. Consider the changes you might make, and experiment with implementing change.

I've found that as I have expanded my capacity to be with my own discomfort and my client's struggles, my clients are better able to make the transformation they came for.

It will help you to pay attention to your own development as a coach, as well as your need for support.

I'll take you through the process, using a real-life example of a coach I have mentored.

Reflective practice explicitly considers the emotional effect of your coaching sessions, and what you as a practitioner can learn from your own thoughts and feelings about them.

SBCA Coaching Tool: SOAP Self-Reflection Process:

The SOAP process originated in the U.K.'s National Health Service as a way of quickly getting to the root cause of problematic issues.

SOAP is an acronym for Subjective, Objective, Analysis and Personal learning.

Applied to coaching, this is a simple self-reflection process you can go through at the end of every coaching session. I've found this takes around 10-15 minutes.

SOAP utilises the fundamentals of good coaching: reflecting, reframing and questioning, all activities that we invite our clients to undertake, as they address how they show up in their own lives.

The payoff is huge!

The main benefits are:

1. This approach grounds you in your own experience; your focus is on what the session was like for you.
2. You'll gain insight into your practice, make sense of your experience and think about how you can improve.
3. Over time, you may begin to notice patterns, recurring challenges or issues that are preventing your practice from moving forwards.

Take a few moments immediately after a coaching session to consider what happened, using the template over the page.

SOAP SELF-REFLECTION TEMPLATE

S: SUBJECTIVE ACCOUNT What was your subjective experience of the session (what did you think, feel and notice)? I thought: I felt: I noticed the bodily sensations of:	O: OBJECTIVE DESCRIPTION What objective facts do you recall from the session (what was said, what happened)? I said: The client said: I observed:
A: ANALYSIS Based on this subjective and objective information, what conclusions can you draw about this session? It went well in these ways: It could have been better in these ways:	P: PERSONAL LEARNING With honesty and compassion, consider what would help your coaching improve? I would like to get better at: Next time I'd like to try:

YOUR SOAP FINDINGS

You may start noticing a pattern in your coaching that you want to address. It's natural to want to roll up your sleeves and get on with 'fixing' it ASAP. However it's worth taking some time:

- Taking action can sometimes be a way of deflecting or avoiding any discomfort we experience as a result of our new awareness.
- Reflective practice involves more durable solutions.
- Taking your time to tease out themes and patterns is particularly helpful if you aren't sure what action to take.

Let's walk through this with a real-life example.

Consider how this informs your own self-reflection practice and how you typically tend to take action.

'Alison' (not her real name) is a UK-based coach who I mentored in 2015. Here is some context to her situation when we began working together. Alison had completed coach training with CTI 18 months earlier, then went back to her full-time job. She has been actively coaching for the last six months, in the evenings and weekends, and has a goal of being fully self-employed as a coach within a year. Alison coaches men and women, post-divorce.

STEP 1: NOTICING AND ACKNOWLEDGING: SOMETHING IS WRONG, BUT YOU AREN'T SURE WHAT.

After completing your SOAP forms for a while: What patterns or themes do you notice?

What recurring thoughts, feelings or responses to clients do you notice?

After filling out her SOAP forms for a few weeks, Alison notices that she often feels her clients are resistant to moving on. Coaching sessions tend to involve her clients ruminating over the details of their divorce, and she describes feeling frustrated that they aren't 'serious' about moving on.

Alison is even questioning if this is a client group she can work with.

STEP 2. CONSIDERING AND MAKING SENSE: MAKING TENTATIVE CONNECTIONS

When have you experienced this before? What does your response remind you of? What do you think is underneath this problem?

Alison begins to explore her frustration on a few levels. She recognises that she imagined she would be working with clients who were excited about exploring their new start! Her own experience is that divorce can open up many opportunities for self-awareness and growth, and lead to wonderful outcomes.

We talk about how divorce is a significant life change, and what loss means to her. Alison remembers her parents' divorce as being all about loss; it was a confusing and upsetting time.

Her mother would sink into depression, leaving teenaged Alison in charge of running the house and taking care of her younger sister. She begins to see that she doesn't want to 'go through that again'.

STEP 3. CONNECTING AND MAKING MEANING: A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE COACH'S EXPERIENCE AND THE IMPACT ON PRACTICE

Deepen your awareness of this problem – what circumstances in your coaching prompt it?

Begin to record the specific details of when it occurs and what it feels like to you. What impact do you imagine it has on your clients? How does it impact your coaching work?

In our session, we talk about the choices Alison has and the advantages and disadvantages of maintaining her current position. We also discuss how Alison could show up to her coaching work in new ways, (being more open to exploring aspects of loss and grief) and the advantages and disadvantages of this.

Voicing her own resistance helps Alison decide that she does really want to work with post-divorce clients. She begins to take notes in a new way during sessions, noting her feelings and thoughts, as well as her usual notes of what her clients say.

After working with a few clients, she begins to see that they do want to move on, but they don't always feel excited about the future, and their process is far from linear.

By acknowledging her own emotions, Alison can see that there are specific instances, such as when clients are down or upset, that cause her to feel helpless.

We talk about what feeling helpless is like, and Alison can see that it's the emotion she finds hardest to be with. She still resents her mother's helplessness, and realises she never had time to feel this: she has always 'got on with things'.

Alison is gaining insight into how her thoughts and feelings are impacting her coaching work. She is also able to acknowledge that she wants her clients to move

beyond sadness and loss as quickly as possible, while also realising that this is not her responsibility, nor is it within her control.

Alison says her wish to avoid feeling helpless may not be in the best interests of her clients.

4. WORKING WITH NEW MEANING: DEEPER REFLECTION LEADS TO NEW MEANING AND NEW POSSIBILITIES.

What choices do you have about how you manage this problem? What changes do you want to make?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of maintaining your current position? What are the advantages and disadvantages of adopting a new approach?

Within six weeks of beginning her self-reflection work, Alison reports she is better able to separate her experience from that of her clients.

She has begun reading widely on the topics of divorce and of being a child of divorce, things she avoided before. She acknowledges that she is still healing from her own experiences and that she sometimes feels sadness, loss and helplessness. This has been a blind spot that led to a feeling of overwhelm. Now, it seems merely human.

Alison recognises that most of her clients have never spoken about their divorce to anyone outside of their immediate circle. She believes that she can better help her clients by making room for them to talk about their losses.

5. TRANSFORMING LEARNING INTO PRACTICE: LEARNINGS ARE INCORPORATED INTO YOUR COACHING

How will your problem be transformed into something useful and valuable for your practice?

What have you learned? How will this new understanding be used? How will it benefit your clients?

By our final session, Alison has written a blog post about her own experience of divorce that is authentic and vulnerable. It is widely shared, and she gains the confidence to write more and to make other changes in her practice.

Alison changes her sales page and her client intake process and, in the first session with a client, she makes room for loss and uncertainty.

Alison says she can see how her experience of divorce as a child, and her own divorce, have contributed to her flavour of coaching. She sees the extent to which her capacity to 'be with' the loss and sadness of her clients is allowing her coaching sessions to be deeper and more nuanced.

Her clients' outcomes seem richer, and she has received three testimonials confirming that her coaching work is making a real difference.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:

To work through this whole process took Alison almost six months. If she had acted after Step One, I imagine she would have decided to change her flavour of coaching.

By sitting in the problem and continuing to reflect, Alison has been able to grow, change and transform her learning into practise to better serve her clients.

I share Alison's story to demonstrate how self-reflection can help us to make sense of our own learning and lead to powerful shifts in our practice.

Having a self-reflection practice is fantastic for raising your awareness of your own blocks and challenges, but as we can see from Alison's experience there is nothing like having someone in your corner helping you through this.

Sources of support for you as a Coaching Practitioner

The key to finding the best support for you is articulating the problem you are trying to solve!

So always start with self-coaching – figure out what the real stumbling blocks are and then decide the best way forward.

Some options:

COACHING

Once you have articulated what is holding you back, find someone who can support you on specific issues – do you need coaching on visibility, or a relationship coach or a coach that works around body peace? What would help you the most?

COACH TRAINING

Have you found a knowledge gap? Do you need to learn a particular style of coaching that would help your clients?

THERAPY

If you find you are getting regularly entangled with clients, or you know there is an area of healing that would really help you, seek out therapy. This will help you to show up 'emotionally clean' for your clients and will provide you with more peace and freedom in your life.

BUSINESS COACH

To grow, to create the next thing, to move into a new specialism, to feel supported, to stop doing so much, to heal your money beliefs – business coaches can help you to expand what is possible for your work.

BUSINESS MASTERMIND

If you are feeling lonely and you bounce off other self-employed folks, other coaches – a mastermind can be a wonderful support. Be clear about what you want out of it too – if there is no 1:1 component, you are unlikely to get more than generalist ideas that you need to adapt and implement.

SPECIALIST COURSE

Maybe you want to learn how to write marketing emails, or to do fancy things on Instagram? Find a course for that!

STAFF!

Maybe you need someone to take things off your plate. You might need an assistant or a bookkeeper or a social media specialist. This can be for a temporary project, a few hours a week freelance or an employee – it can be as short or long term as you need.

COACHING SUPERVISION

Every form of talking therapy other than coaching includes support for the practitioner in the form of monitoring by a supervisor.

This is considered a 'best practice' and is usually mandatory.

Coaching Supervision is usually done on a one-to-one basis and involves formal engagement with a qualified coaching supervisor.

Regular supervision can help you to:

- develop your coaching skills through the engagement of an experienced practitioner.
- address ethical issues that you may encounter during coaching.
- maintain an approach of continuous learning, development and self-reflection.
- gain greater awareness of your own blind spots.
- explore options, new ideas and perspectives.

I'm a huge advocate of supervision. It has made the biggest difference to my growth and development as a coach.

Supervision is very different from coaching another coach (though it can look like it).

Supervising coaches is a specialist skill, much closer to the supervision of therapists.

There is a tonne of research on the ethics of coaching supervision, in particular about life coaching, because it often covers areas that have traditionally been served by therapy.

There is a prevailing belief within coaching circles that that 'coaching can never do any harm', but there is no empirical basis for this claim.

The research suggests that the opposite is true. It's usually due to naivety that well-meaning coaches get out of their depth and don't have the tools to recognise it.

Supervision is not yet mandatory for coaches, but as our industry develops and our professionalisation increases, it's likely that we will see an increasing demand for supervision.

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Finding a Coaching Supervisor:

[Association of Coaching Supervisors](#)

[Association for Coaching](#) (member directory with accredited Supervisors)

[Trusted Coach Directory](#) (specialising in executive coaches)

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