



Janet Harvey

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Go Beyond: Be a Sovereign Coach

Spontaneous moments allow us to transcend role and identity, to be sovereign as coach. Every person possesses the capacity to be free and at choice about our relationship to life in any moment; to go beyond with clients to foster a sustainable pathway for excellence and breakthrough experience in life, engage boldly and coach purposefully as a sovereign coach.

The greatest attainment of identity, autonomy, or selfhood is itself simultaneously a transcending of itself, a going beyond and above selfhood. The person can then become relatively egoless. Koltko-Rivera (2006)

Reflecting and paying attention to excellence are the keys to answering the question every coach asks me, how do I know I am being effective and artful?

Every single day I have an opportunity to be a better coach. Being a student of my own work and being available to question my assumptions, my bias, my models, my thinking and all the things I've learned are not nearly as important as is what is happening spontaneously in a moment for the client and our partnership together.

Those things determine if I am being effective and artful in every single opportunity I have to influence another. Unless I am available to go beyond what is known and surrender my ego's view of what serves, I will be less than fully potent and will limit the degree of breakthrough my client chooses to pursue. Each day I am humbled by the magnificent breakthroughs I witness and attend with clients in my capacity as coach.

Truthfully, this did not happen in the beginning. Clients made progress and reported satisfaction, and I felt proud and inspired to do more and learn more. My thirst for understanding led to an important discovery about what produces

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trust and intimacy for risk-taking that unleashes clients to express full potential. Paradoxically, it is fully accepting my experience in the moment with a client. Rather than building understanding of what works and why, a spontaneous moment allows me to transcend identity and role to be sovereign as coach.

Relationship Is the courageous act that evolves humanity

The most important relationship by far is the one with myself. When I stand in unconditional self-love I am centered, open and available fully to be in relationship with another without intentional bias. I perceive as a child, with wonder and awe for the miracle of being human. My full potency lives within me as fully granted power. It is up to me to be responsible to exercise that power. Accepting this premise means that every person possesses the same capacity to be free and at choice about our relationship to life in any moment. The choice is simultaneously inside-out and outside-in.

Domains of life



“Sovereignty” is the term I use to describe an inner stance that fuels me to be independent and in charge of the relationship I choose with the conditions of my life. “Living sovereign” offers the possibility that I will choose purposefully based upon who I am and what I value most. In choosing to be sovereign I act with integrity and response agility in every domain of my life.

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Liberate perceiving to make visible what is invisible yet present

A common definition for transcendence is “lying beyond the ordinary range of perception.” As a coach, this definition translates to going beyond what I think in order to be with what is happening in a moment for my clients. I approach perceiving with unconditional curiosity and full acceptance of client wholeness and innate creativity. Of course, while being expert is the enemy of learning, judgment is the enemy of curiosity.

Another paradox occurs when I realize that judgment is a natural human experience and a critical way in which I make meaning of my experiences. The challenge comes when my bias, habits, preferences and assumptions about another’s action or expression activates judgment and nearly instant behavioral responses that dishonor another unconsciously.

If I choose instead to notice my judgments and pause to breathe into what is, rather than the history that creates my bias, I can replace the behavior with curiosity.

Cutting an ox

Prince Wen Hui's cook was cutting up an ox. Out went a hand, down went a shoulder, he planted a foot, he pressed with a knee, the ox fell apart. With a whisper, the bright cleaver murmured like a gentle wind. Rhythm! Timing! Like a sacred dance, like "the mulberry grove", like ancient harmonies!

"Good work!" the prince exclaimed, "your method is faultless!"

Cutting an ox:



"Method?" said the cook, laying aside his cleaver, "what I follow is Tao beyond all methods!"

"When I first began to cut of oxen I would see before me the whole ox all in one mass. But now, I see nothing with the eye. My whole being apprehends. My senses are idle. The spirit, free to work without plan, follows its own instinct guided by natural line, by the secret opening, the hidden space; my cleaver finds its own way. I cut through no joint, chop no bone."

"A good cook needs a new chopper once a year – he cuts. A poor cook needs a new one every month – he hacks!"

"I have used this same cleaver nineteen years. It has cut up a thousand oxen. Its edge is as keen as if newly sharpened. There are spaces in the joints; the blade is thin and keen: when this

thinness finds that space there is all the room you need! It goes like a breeze! Hence I have had this cleaver nineteen years as if newly sharpened!”

“True, there are sometimes tough joints. I feel them coming, I slow down, I watch closely, hold back, barely move the blade, and whump! The part falls away landing like a clod of earth.”

“Then I withdraw the blade, I stand still and let the joy of the work sink in. I clean the blade and put it away.”

Prince Wen Hui said, “This is it! My cook has shown me how I ought to live my own life!”

Chuang-tzu [Trans. Thomas Merton, quoted in Mitchell, *The Enlightened Heart*]

Being a sovereign coach requires perceiving through a deeper, internal perspective.

To appreciate the full potency of being a coach and how I coach from my core, authentic self, I must be disciplined to perceive, witness and fully embody the unique expression of my individual humanity. Being a sovereign coach requires perceiving through a deeper, internal perspective that is naturally curious about another person and is response-agile with each twist and turn a client chooses to explore.

These are the practices I have explored for going beyond my field of knowing to not knowing for client benefit:

- Allow clients to enliven me emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually.
- Notice the experience and allow it to evoke curiosity on behalf of my client.
- Sustain safety for authentic, fully potent expression through my fully intentioned awareness with my client.
- Be more committed to a client’s relationship with the underlying meaning that blocks getting what they want.

Experiment with a few clients by never asking an informational or content-oriented question. Surrender needing to know information or gaining content understanding and notice how clients accelerate awareness of breakthrough choices and make sustaining commitments for new behavior.

I choose to relax into creating awareness on behalf of the client, seeing into and on behalf of the essence of that person.

Practice this outside of coaching sessions by writing down emotional language perceived while watching a movie or listening to music. I put my brain's neuroplasticity to work and give my brain an activity through which to build a habit for emotional perceiving, or alternatively, any perceiving method that does not come naturally when I am engaged with clients.

Rather than practicing formulaic questions or focusing on being curious with just the right words, I allow multi-dimensional perceiving to be the wellspring of a boldly evocative mindset for curiosity. I allow the presence of fear in clients so that awareness of what is loved, that lives and is protected by the fear, emerges into the dialogue as new awareness.

Clients always express exactly what is required to open the pathway toward an emergent self-discovery. I choose to relax into creating awareness on behalf of the client, seeing into and on behalf of the essence of that person. With this approach, my curiosity is sourced directly from what the client expresses. As coach, I am simply the delivery mechanism that stimulates deeper inquiry for the client.

Be inspired reciprocally

So many small, meaningful moments occur with my clients when my breath catches, tears well up, laughter escapes spontaneously and reverence for inner beauty is discovered and reclaimed.

What is the pattern that occurs across clients just before a client moves beyond known and familiar insight into the surprise associated with the somatic response of the breath, tears or laughter?

Answering this question provides me with practical data for practicing methods that expand the variety of my perceiving dimensions that stimulate being sovereign in life. Reciprocal inspiration was born as a description of what emerges in the field of exchange in any given session, and over time with my clients when I am being a sovereign coach.

In a recent interview of a celebrated songwriter, the journalist asked the question, "What is your source of excellence as a songwriter?" Without a second of hesitation the songwriter said, "It's necessary to let go of everything I know and everything I believe is my expertise, and allow myself to simply be in a moment, influenced by the emotions and sensations and the experience of whatever it is I'm wanting to express in the lyric being written."

With this story as an analogy, the thought-provoking and creative exchange that is a coaching conversation evolving over time is the writing of the lyrics for my clients' lives. The only difference is that my perceiving evokes curiosity that

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makes the invisible visible for the client to claim, to embody new choices so the client writes their own lyrics.

When I trust my capacity to self-author and embody a sovereign path I inhabit my life more congruently. A quiet confidence results that shifts my focus of attention more fully toward an experience of my client that involves inviting and challenging the client to step ever more fully into who they are. My inner congruence generates safety for my client. I become a role model that builds on that safety, and is an inherent invitation for clients to surrender habitual ways of being, communication and engaging so that a change in behavior occurs that will move action forward toward what is more desirable.

I cannot change what has been nor predict what will be. Yet I create in each moment and to do so consciously is being a sovereign human. Engage boldly and coach purposefully as a sovereign coach and go beyond with clients to foster a sustainable pathway for excellence and breakthrough experience in life.

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