

How to be an outstanding coach by having transformational conversations

Transcript of interview with Claire Pedrick

Nadine

Good morning, everybody. I'm Nadine. I'm an Executive and Leadership Coach. Today I've got a very special guest, Claire Pedrick. A very good morning to you.

Claire

Good morning. And thank you for inviting me. It's so lovely to be with you, Nadine.

Nadine

I'm really delighted to be talking to you today, because I heard a lot about you in the three years that I have worked with Tracy Sinclair and Karen Foy. Karen kept mentioning Claire Pedrick, you've got to read her book. For those who don't know what to do this weekend it's called Simplifying Coaching. I wanted to get the book itself, usually I download it on my iPad, but I prefer putting post-its that I can then use. I love your book. In your book, there are three things that you say that really have resonated with me. First of all, you talk about planes, you talk about flight. When I was a headteacher, I would always talk about checking in, everybody being in the right seat, the altitude and the turbulence. You talk about it in a different way, you talk about a BA flight that was meant to fly to Germany, but ended up landing in in Scotland, because the pilot and the copilot didn't do the checking. We'll come back to that. The second thing is that you talk about simple conversation. For me, the value of simple conversation as a linguist is really important because sometimes we make the language very difficult. Sometimes we don't understand what people are saying. Sometimes we want to say something and we then say something else. I love the idea of simplicity. Often when I work, and I don't know if it's because I'm a linguist, and am bilingual as well, I often think, how can I make that simpler in how I speak to people, in how I write. Then in your book, which is really cute, you talk about the popcorn moment, and I've never heard of that. So I want us to chat a little bit about the popcorn moment. I love your book, because it's easy to read. You want to read it over and over again. Anybody who is listening, please buy this amazing book, which by the way, I will be using in my PhD. Claire, is there anything you would like to add as an intro?

Claire

You've talked about the popcorn moment. You just need to know I make things up on the spur of the moment when I see something. Then I share those ideas, because it makes everything easier for everybody else. When we talk about the popcorn moment later, I'll also tell you where that came from, because in my mind, I can still see the person who said it to me. Absolutely simple. I really appreciate your feedback. Thank you. This morning, somebody on LinkedIn said that they were reading it in Serbia. One of the things that I love about it that I hadn't really thought about is that because it's written in quite a narrative style it's really easy to read for people for whom English isn't their primary language, because as you say, it hasn't got any big words in it.

Nadine

You're ready for the questions that I've prepared? We'll go with the flow as well, wherever it takes us. First of all, what made you decide to write this amazing book?

Claire

I wasn't going to. I've had a folder in my computer for years, called Simply Coaching. I've written a blog every week for 20 years about coaching, and it's become more and more about simplifying. I wasn't going to write it because there's always more to learn. The issue is that as soon as you've written it, you've learned some more. So this is my copy. And this is the revision. Because I already know some things that I didn't know when I finished writing it. I think oh, no, I would not put that in. But you have to draw the line. So the reason I wrote it is that somebody asked me to. About three years ago, my colleagues were going, we need to share our ideas, we need to get out there. And I'm going No, no, no, don't want to do that. We produced a set of picture postcards that represent coaching, people can get them off our website, in the shop, if they want them. It's a set of pictures that really simplify. In fact, now we've got two sets. One of the things about great coaching is being attentively not bothered. That's in the book, but it's just a set of pictures that give people something to think about. We send the pictures to the printer, they come back, and two weeks later, we decide that there's something that will make it simpler. So they're out of date straightaway. I'm super pleased, because two weeks before the book went to the publisher for edit, I was sitting in a cafe, talking to a friend who was trying to kick me over the line. She said, your anxiety is the wrong size. Because I was just getting a bit, is the world ready for something this simple? was my big anxiety. She said, it feels like your anxiety is the wrong size. Then we started talking and I realized that right-sizing was a much better description of how we co-create the coaching container than the word that coaching has traditionally used, which is contracting. That one managed to get in before it went. There's huge anxiety about something going to print when we're always learning. And that's my issue.

Nadine

You've dedicated this book to your mum.

Claire

My mum died two weeks after it went to edit. She died from COVID. I'm glad you asked me that, because there's a bit that's not in there. We had a funeral on Zoom, my aunt talked about her. I realized that I got my noticing from my mum. What I realized was that everything that's in the book, I learned from her, which I don't think I'd realized before. That was amazing. Thank you for asking that. She was kicking me over the line.

Nadine

Is there a book number two at the back of your mind? Because you talk about the unsaid, what we don't say? What's bubbling there?

Claire

There's 100 books. I just blog my new ideas every week. There's certainly a revised Simplifying Coaching, bubbling. There's probably 100 books bubbling. I wrote a book 10 years ago. If I write another one in 10 years, there you are. It's all consuming and it takes your life and soul. The challenge and the joy about emergent learning is that I was learning as I was writing it. My husband would say, have a few years off.

Nadine

We should say that you've got a big coaching practice, you've got an office, which I've seen online, you have people working for you. You're very well established. Having the time to write a book when you are very busy, you must be very disciplined.

Claire

Or completely mad. Laura from Open University Press emailed me and said, Would you like to write a book? So I went well, I've got one in me, but of course it wasn't in my schedule. I used to write it after. I'd be traveling and delivering training, then I'd go to a pub and sit for two hours and write. Then I used up all my holidays because I didn't have time to write it. It felt really important, and the feedback has been overwhelming. It's been absolutely amazing. I'm really glad that I did it. But I also would like some space though.

Nadine

How long did it take you to write it?

© Nadine Powrie Consultancy

Claire

I started in September, and it was submitted in April. Apparently that's quite quick, according to Laura. It was in me, and yet it wasn't in me. It was a question of getting out what was in me. Then it was a question of making it make sense.

Nadine

Let's dive into your book. In it you talk about right-sizing a conversation. Can you explain this concept of right-sizing?

Claire

Otherwise known with the ICF core competencies as establishing and maintaining the agreement. What happens is we have a conversation with people, and because we're not clear what we're doing, we go all over the place. Usually, at some point in the conversation, we fall over the thing. If I take it from a different direction, curiosity is one of the core skills of coaching. It is one of the most disastrous things in the world, because I just follow my curiosity, but you will answer the questions that I asked you. We'll have this amazingly curious conversation at the end of which I know all about you, and you know nothing that you didn't know before. Making the conversation the right size says, Let's work out what we're doing, how are we going to do it? How are we going to know we've done it before we start doing the work, even if we then realize that we don't know what we're doing? Because now we do know, we know that we don't know. That's great. But often coaches actually behave as though they don't know but they never asked. Somebody will follow this exploration that the coach is leading them down, and it doesn't serve them. So making the thing the right size. My COVID example Nadine is I imagine I'm coaching Jonathan van Tam. I say to Jonathan van Tam, what would you like to talk about? He says, we have to get everybody in the UK vaccinated by the end of May. What often happens, and this isn't in the book, because this is new thinking, we often maximize the problem and we minimize the time. We either say or think: we can't possibly do justice to your very big problem in the time we have, oh dear. Right-sizing says, Jonathan van Tam, in the five minutes we've got, which bit of that is the question we need to explore? That's what right-sizing is.

Nadine

So it's about being very specific and precise.

Claire

It's about working out what the question is. The other thing that really bothers me about coaching is that we ask people what the problem is. When you ask them what the problem is, they start telling you, so coaching is future-focused. It's about moving forward. That's what the world needs more than anything now. It's optimistic and future focused. We right-size the work: what would you like to be different by the end of this conversation? And we're heading in this direction? But then I say, so what's the problem? Well, the problem is this. And it's a very big problem. And actually, not only is that a problem, also, this is a problem. If you say to somebody, what's the question you're bringing today? they almost always go silent, because inside they're going: What is the question? But if you ask them what the problem is, they maximize the problem. Then you go or feel, oh, no, we've only got an hour, oh dear. Right-sizing gets you to the heart of the work quickly, which means that a conversation is more likely to be transformational.

Nadine

I remember at the beginning of my former coaching with ICF asking Tracy Sinclair, how are we doing when we are working with a client, who at the beginning of coaching comes with a huge wave of information for 10 minutes? It used to be quite daunting, because you don't interrupt as a coach and after all, they are the client right and you have to explore where they want to go, but at the same time, you do want to right-size as you said. We used to have a long debate. When you're a new coach I certainly didn't have the the tools to learn to ask the right questions. Because if you ask the right question, you get probably a better answer, the answer that is taking us on the journey to look forward, not backward. It's easy for people to just talk about the past. It makes them feel good. Don't get me wrong.

Claire

But it doesn't move them forward. The real challenge with coaching is it's so like other conversations, and

yet it's so different. If it's going to be different, we have to do it differently.

Nadine

When I say to people, I'm a coach, they always say, Oh, so all you do is ask questions. What would you say to that?

Claire

I don't say very much in coaching. That's why I like talking a lot in interviews. My job is to facilitate somebody else to think, and I will do as little as I need to do in service of that happening. Probably all coaches go through a 'I'm precious about questions' phase, but it's simply flow. It's about nudging people enough, that they move forward a bit. Once they move, they keep moving. It's not about me. It's about them. We work too hard. It's the biggest issue in the coaching profession: coaches work too hard. When coaches work too hard, the other person doesn't do so much. That is the difficulty. But then I can get a lot of money, if I work too hard, because then you have to come to me for 10 hours.

Nadine

It's interesting in your book, as well, you do mention that everything is bespoke, and should be bespoke. In the way that I offer my services, I don't have a plan of six sessions, and that to some extent throws quite a lot of people who say Don't, don't you have a program? Number of hours? I always go well, no, because you're very different. Everybody's different. I don't have that. And I don't niche.

Claire

No, I don't niche either.

Nadine

I'm glad to hear that. People have expectations of what they think coaching is about don't they?

Claire

We're having a tricky negotiation at the moment with a customer who's putting us up against five other coaches, which I don't like. They're going, but you need to do a chemistry session. We're saying, but we start doing the work straightaway. Really happy to have a five-minute Hello, chat. But if you're going to audition us against other people, and all the other coaches are offering six sessions, and we're going well, you might not need six sessions. You know what your values are when you fight for them, don't you? I just said to my colleague: forget it. Because probably the coaching can be done in a lot less than six sessions. We don't know, we've no idea unless we talk to the person. And when we talk to the person, we're going to start doing some good work. Otherwise, what you're doing is you're saying coaching is a date. Tell me all about yourself, Nadine. At the end of it, you think that's what coaching is? Actually the thing to do is to just start doing the work. That's where transformation happens.

Nadine

You're a rebel, then because you're learning. You're saying no, and that's good.

Claire

One of the things that book has done is it's given me confidence to absolutely stand in what I believe to be true. Which is coaching is an amazing thing. But it's not half as special as we make it out to be. It is very special. And it's not special. It's simply a way of getting somebody else to do amazing work and to move forward so that things are never the same again. That might only take one conversation, or it might take a long time. We don't know until we start doing the work.

Nadine

Good point. In your book, you also talk about co-creating the container. As I was reading that sentence, I had to press pause in the book and think. I've never heard of that concept of the container before. This is why I love your book. Because the words that you're using are so like everyday words. We can all understand what a container is. I don't really have to think for hours about that. But because it's so simple, I stopped and thought, What would that look like? Tell us about the container.

Claire

A whole load of things came together a long time ago, all at the same time. One is that the ICF talk about co-creating the coaching agreement. The reason I like the ICF competencies is that they're actually the only professional body in Europe who talk about partnership at all. That's a bit of a tangent, but co-creating, there's something about working out what we're doing. That's about putting boundaries around it. That's about a container. That was one piece of learning. The next piece of learning is I was reading Peter Senge's book Presence. I was so bowled over by a line in chapter one, that said 'in science transformation happens in a container'. I have to confess, I haven't read the rest of the book yet. When I found it to get the reference, the first few pages are absolutely looked at, and the rest of the book, I am going to go back and read it. He said that in science transformation happens in a container. That got me thinking about what was the connection between what he said there and what the ICF said about co-creating the agreement. On the back of an envelope, I drew this picture. This is my, this is my training notes. That's the pre-conversation that we were talking about earlier, which is what you do before you start doing the work. But it's only about opening up, doing it and ending it, that's the container. In baking, which is now my new best example, which I think is better than science, in baking, if you want to make a cake, you get all the ingredients, you mix them all together, you put it in a tin, you put it in the oven, apply heat, and what comes out of the oven is different from what went into the oven, and you can't unmake a cake. I love that as a definition of transformation. That's what we want in conversations, we want people to come out of the conversation in a completely different place from the way they went in or in a tiny different place in a way that won't be undone. That's the difference for me between transformation, which you can't reverse, and transaction, which is I just have a list of things to do. If we want transformation, science says you need a container. The really interesting thing is that if you show people this picture, they can really understand when they are the facilitator of the conversation, what it looks like. The really interesting thing that I notice is that ending in partnership is as important as beginning in partnership. Often the transformation happens when you're ending. I listen to coaches every day coaching, which is where I do most of my best learning. What coaches do is they extend the middle, because transformation hasn't happened. But if you keep extending the middle, it probably won't happen. You've got to actually start ending.

Nadine

You also say in the book that sometimes the transformation takes place outside of the conversation. The transformation can happen outside of the conversation that you've had with your coachee?

Claire

When we end well.

Nadine

Yes.

Claire

Going back to what you said earlier about the plane, we co-create the takeoff, we fly where actually we don't do much and they do lots of stuff. Then we land. When we land often the most significant learning happens just after it's ended. Which is a bit annoying, but it's really amazing.

Nadine

As a coach, it's nice to witness the transformation. But you also have to bear in mind that we're all human being with our own DNA, and sometimes you're not going to be able to see completely because it will be outside of the space.

Claire

I do a lot of training and development of coaches and that learning come from training. What I do for safety is you do a coaching demonstration. At the end of it, so this has been going on for years, I get the person who was being coached by me to sit aside from the rest of the group, while the rest of the group is noticing what they saw. The reason I did that was so that they didn't talk to the person who's been coached about their own stuff. But then I then I started to notice that as soon as the thinker had sat down, they'd grab something to write with. Then I began to say to them, when we came back to do the feedback, can I just check in? Do you know, something now that you didn't know when we finished? And they go, Oh, yes. Once

I thought it was a thing, I tested that out for a couple more years, and then I realized it really was a thing. It's a bit annoying, that they do their best work after they've left us. But that's also amazing.

Nadine

I'm a control freak. It's really part of the journey as a coach to grow and to let go of that control so that you fully accept that you can't control that transformation. The transformation is not you. It's the person.

Claire

The biggest thing about transformation is that you can't make it happen, but you can really stop it happening. Often transformation happens in conversations, and the coach doesn't see it. I'm doing the most amazing, exciting work at the moment with some coaches who are not English-speaking. And I don't speak their language. I am mentoring them through observation of videos. The really amazing thing is that you can absolutely see when transformation happens, and every time it's happened so far, the coach hasn't noticed. The amazing thing about working on Zoom is that you and they are sending me videos. It's like I can go: look, do you see that? Transformation happens in many conversations. But people are so busy being in control, as you say, that they don't see it. They walk straight over it. Let's do less.

Nadine

Talk to us about this group that you're mentoring. They are foreigners, speaking a different language. And you are mentoring them. You're observing them speaking in their own language, and you don't understand what they are talking about. You'll just watch, observing what you are seeing. This reminds me of when I was training in the Middle East, and I was invited to observe a science lesson in Arabic. People were saying, you're English and French, there is no way you're going to understand what's happening in that lesson. There are many ways, because it's all about nonverbal communication.

Claire

Somebody is going to their MCC, who doesn't coach in English. She's just asked me to be her mentor. I've said, I can probably do it for some of the sessions. But actually, technically, she probably needs two or three in her own language, so that it's clear what she's saying. But you can get so much from the music and the rhythm of the conversation. One of the questions that I ask people, when I'm mentoring them is to really look at the space between the coach and the thinker and the timing. When you begin to notice that, you really begin to notice that often the coach speaks too early. because the thinker is still thinking. There's some really good basic fundamental stuff that for some of us is quite advanced learning. Great coaching isn't about how impressive what I do is, it's about the impact that it has in the life of the other person. If we want to, if we want to become a great coach, we need to be watching thinkers thinking, and whether indeed they are or not. That will help us work out what we need to do in the conversation. Sadly, what I see in aspiring and new coaches is often a desire to watch as many expert coaches coaching as they possibly can. Then people just accumulate all these masses of questions, because they want to coach like somebody else did. But it's not about what I do. It's about what happens. We're looking in the wrong place.

Nadine

It's really interesting, because we often think it's about the quantity of the questions, as a new coach. You think, well, that's fine, I've got my 50 coaching questions. They are all great. And they are all powerful. I've ticked the box, I'm going to be fine. In fact, it's not at all about that.

Claire

That's the book I didn't write. It was going to be called the art of powerful questions. It was going to be 132 pages of amazing questions. I'm so glad I didn't write it, because all that does is it brings a third party into the conversation. There's you, there's me. And then there's my big box of questions. And instead of watching you, I'm watching them.

Nadine

When you talk about the music, and the rhythm, talk to us a little bit more about that.

Claire

That might be the next book. There's something about resonance and dissonance. This is a bit unformed.

For example, somebody in a session is going to go: once upon a time I had a life and I had a very interesting life and I'm going to tell you all about my stuff. What you're hearing there is quite a monotone tone. And what we know is that often that doesn't demonstrate somebody's got insights. Whereas if you are then dissonant, and you go 'so' often it's in the dissonance that you notice people thinking. Somebody will go 'so, actually, I've lived in a few places, and I've learned some stuff on the way'. You'll hear a hesitance in the music when somebody is thinking. Whereas when they're not thinking you'll hear a much more consistent tone. Noticing that is useful. Then there's a huge amount of stuff about silence, who breaks the silence? Where's the rests? The amazing gift that these coaches have given me, who don't speak English, is the capacity to do some extraordinary learning about the music, when I don't know what they're talking about.

Nadine

I'm going to want to do some training with you. We talked about transformational conversation. Your book says 'How to have more transformational conversations by doing less'. What is a transformational conversation?

Claire

Transformational conversation is where they get new insights into their own stuff that is going to change things, so when they understand something, or they recognize something, or they see something that will change the world. Here's an example, post-it notes. If you put them on the wall, they bend, and then they go up. They have a bendy bit. It's really annoying. One day, my colleague said, if you take the post-it note off this way it will stay flat. That's changed my life. That was a transformational insight. Now I like post-it notes because I can put them flat in my notebook, whereas before they used to be bendy in my notebook. That's a transformational insight because now I know that about post-it notes. I won't ever un-know that. In coaching, it might be somebody who goes 'I'm really clear that I want to do that'. I go, really? and they go, 'no'. When transformation happens, people often look away. You can see it often here next to people's eyes that they've had an insight. Once they've had that insight, it changes things forever. One of the guys I've quoted in the book is a Belgian playwright called Maurice Maeterlinck. He said, 'it's far more important that our lives be perceived, seen, than that they be transformed, for once they have been perceived, they will transform themselves of their own accord'. We aspire to this Nirvana of transformation. All we need to do is to work with people so they see things differently. I was doing some training last week, and I was getting them to draw. They'd been coaching for about six hours. Two of them were together in the room, one of them was drawing, and the other one was just being with her, but couldn't see because we're all virtual, which is great, because she had no power or control over the person who's drawing. The person who was drawing drew something, and said, Oh, that's really weird, because it's only on the bottom half of the page. The other one said, what's on the other half of the page? At which point, the person who had drawn the picture is in floods of tears. because she'd had an insight, she'd seen something she hadn't seen before, in a really good way, but she was so overcome by the emotion. That took about two seconds and that's a really good example of transformation. So often I think we lead people towards transformation, we're trying to push them. Drawing is an example of somebody just having an insight instantly that changes everything. Can I tell you the best thing? I was there and I've no idea what they were talking about. It's not for me to find that out, it's for them to do what they need to do with the insight. Seeing, perceiving, leads to transformation. Seeing it differently leads to transformation. We work too hard.

Nadine

I often say that being a coach is like being an optician. I give you a different pair of glasses with different lenses. You decide which one is best for you and what you see. What do you think of that?

Claire

I went to the optician on Saturday, it's the first time I've been out for months. I'm just thinking about that through that lens. It's interesting, because I don't go to the optician that often. I was really checking in whether I was giving him the right answer. I was saying to him, is that what I meant to say? He's going is it clearer or smaller or blacker? And I'm going well, I don't know. I think it's clearer. But that's really interesting, because he was pushing me until I made my own choice. Because it's not a place I very often experience, I was pushing back. was also culture-shocked because I haven't been anywhere for so many months. I was pushing back, because I wasn't sure what he wanted me to say. He was only working in service of me seeing things better. There are things I don't know, we'll have to talk again.

Nadine

They are blogs that I wrote quite a few years ago, and I find comfort that I sense some hesitation or that you need to think about it. Because the point that you're making is, I'll tell him what I want to tell him. I was like you I went to the optician not long ago. It did cross my mind to be naughty during the session and to completely tell him that yes, I was seeing fine in that eye, and then what sort of glasses would you come up with, something completely inadequate and you wouldn't be able to see. That made me think about my blog. Sometimes we write things at a time in our life, because we believe in it. Then we mature, we train, we are being challenged, and also we elevate our thinking, like by reading your book, I'm thinking differently. You mentioned a lot the word think, and you make me think about Nancy Klein, the thinking partner. It means that, as coach, we never stop growing. It's okay at one time to have an idea then to go back two years later, and perhaps to say, I didn't express that very well. Now I would not necessarily agree with what I've written.

Claire

Although I am super pleased, I didn't write that book about questions. It's really important that people know we're learning. Because we live in a world where there's this kind of expert thing, and we all aspire to be experts. With my 30 years of coaching, and while I stopped counting my coaching hours in 2012, when I had 11,000 hours, the thing that I know is that I never know what I'm doing. In a coaching session, the one thing you can be absolutely sure of is that apart from creating the container, I have no idea what I'm doing. There's a season that I went through that I think we all go through where we think we ought to know, and because we don't know, we try and take control. It's about being really honest, that we're learning. Often I noticed leaders don't talk about learning, because they think that if they say they're learning, then it makes it sound as though they don't know what they're talking about. And therefore they can't say they're learning. But we're all learning. If I'm coaching you, I want you to be confident in my presence. But I also don't want you to think that I am a fully sorted person. I'm working with you and you're not sorted at all Nadine That's weird. I'm just a human being. You're a human being. We might be having a conversation that helps you to move forward in your thinking, I hope.

Nadine

I want to talk to you about STOKeRS. Karen Foy when we were doing the mentoring session brought it up. She quoted you, she gave her credit for that. Do you want to talk to us and tell us what this is?

Claire

It's just one of those things that you fall over. I've coached people in organizations to use coaching for many years, I've trained them, and also independent coaches. I was one day in an organization. The way that we do it is you do a coaching demonstration. Then you get the group to say what they noticed, you say at the beginning to make it all clear about co-creating the coaching agreement. A guy in the group called Adrian went, I'm not practicing this unless you give me a word for it. On that day, I happened to have written the questions. I just wrote them randomly in the order the group said, and on that day, it went: subject, what do you want us to think about? Time: in the time we have what would you like to be different by the end? How would you know, how are we going to do this? Where should we start? On that day, it has to be in that order. It hadn't been in that order every time. I said, Well, what, what word would you give it and he went, well, the beginning of all those words is STOKeRS. So I went, well use that word then. So he wrote it on his hand. When he was practicing, he did rather well, because he got his container. The next week, I'm in Wales with another group of people. I thought, let me try out this STOKeRS word. I said the word that that covers this is STOKeRS. One of the people called Steven in the group said, That's amazing, because the stoker is the person on the back of a tandem. You're describing a conversation that's about somebody's journey in leadership or whatever it is, or in life, and you're just facilitating them moving. And that's what the stoker on the back of a tandem does. That's where that came from. But the most amazing thing is that I didn't use to ask the time questions second. I used to say to people, we've got an hour, what do you like to think about? And then Jonathan van Tam, who I don't coach, would say, getting a vaccination program by the end of May. Then I go, oh no, and then he'd go, Oh, no. And then we'd both be in a state of panic. What I noticed after they put the T in second on that day, is that if you then ask the time question second – so in the hour we have, which bit of that – suddenly it becomes the right size. That was the beginning of the journey to right-sizing. It was totally random. It was actually to do with somebody saying I'm not doing that unless you give me a word. Now people around the world are using it. It's absolutely amazing.

Nadine

Yes, Karen used it with me. She introduced it to me first. Then we were doing a triad coaching with two other people –Karen was not there for that – we were giving each other feedback. I introduced this, pretended to be Claire Pedrick. I said, Have you heard of STOKeRS, I explained what it was, and then they used it. It's the domino effect, more and more people are using it. I saw that and thought this is quite magical, because it's a simple concept. It's not rocket science. And yet, we were not using it before, but it's giving you a structure.

Claire

It just helps us co-create. Then we can check in. The question I liked the most about STOKeRS, is the R question, role. How are we going to do this? Last week, I was training people globally in an ad agency how to give feedback. I said to them, step one is to ask people how they like to receive feedback, which is the role question in STOKeRS, and she said that in her job – she is a European working outside Europe, so she is given power that she doesn't deserve because of her country of origin – she said, so if I say to them, what's the best way for me to give feedback, they won't be able to answer because they'll try and give me the power. I said, yes. But the thing that you can do is that once you've said, how should we do this? if you check in in two or three minutes and say, Is this working? they can say no, because at the beginning, you haven't said we have to do this my way. When we don't say anything, people think they have to do it our way, and they give us power we don't deserve. Then it's really difficult to create. So just working out together, what we're doing before we start, it's amazing.

Nadine

It is and we encourage people to use it and to see how they feel, by using it.

Claire

We have little cards, and if anyone wants them, you can go to the website and get one. I haven't got any to hand, but we have that on a little card so that people can have it with them when they're coaching. If you're using coaching at work, you can give it to your colleague and say these questions might help form our conversation.

Nadine

Very handy. I saw them on your website. I'm currently doing a PhD looking at difficult conversations. It's not directly related to coaching but I'm looking at the role of hope, the emotion, on difficult conversations and the impact on difficult conversations in a business context. I want to borrow from coaching. What's your view on how coaching could help manage or eradicate difficult conversations?

Claire

That's a nice sideswiping question Nadine. There's somebody that I'd like to put you in touch with, who can talk about hope and agency. We can talk about that afterwards. There's something about coaching, because it's future focused, it can move away from blame. Because I think one of the difficult things about difficult conversations, and we were talking about this in the conversation last week about giving feedback, is that often, it feels like you didn't do that, or you did do that, or that was very bad. The real thing is future focus. Given this is where we are, what do we need to do to move forward? It doesn't pretend that the difficulty isn't there, it allows us to move forward. The other enormous gift that coaching brings to difficult conversations is if we say what we see, and not what we assume, or diagnose or anything else. It's not coaching, but it's bringing some of the principles into a difficult conversation. But hope is what the world needs right now more than anything else, future-focused, optimistic conversations, given that you can't leave the house. What's the conversation that we need to have now that will help you find hope in today?

Nadine

There's been a lot written about hope. But on the topic that I'm doing, there's been very little, if not nothing, written about it. A PhD, you have to bring something new to the table. Otherwise, what's the point? I'm interested in hope, because the world is pretty tough at the moment, and I just want to put some kind of light and belief that if you present things in a in a better way, and if your thinking is optimistic from the beginning, although optimism and hope are different things, if from the beginning there is hope, then it will massively influence the conversations that you will have with people in view of the words that you're

using, the questions you're asking, your silence, your body language. To show hope you don't have to talk.

Claire

No, and you have to really keep internally away from oh no, oh dear. Because if that's happening inside, it's quite difficult to keep hoping the space between us. You can't fake it. Presence is a core skill of coaching. You can't fake hope. Because if inside you're going 'we can't possibly do that' somebody's going to pick that up.

Nadine

Hope is about authenticity as well. We could talk about it for forever. You mentioned that you do not niche. I am so glad you say that, because there are a lot of business coaches out there who are telling business people like us, you must niche otherwise you will not survive, your business will not survive. At the beginning, I thought I must niche. I always struggle, because my clients are very different. When I'm told, oh, you should be creating an avatar for your clients, this just doesn't work for me. I've tried, it didn't work. What do you think about niching?

Claire

Do you think that's more common more recently?

Nadine

It's a movement that was created probably more recently than before, I don't know. Because when I talk to very experienced coaches, people like you, Tracy Sinclair, Karen Foy, they don't niche.

Claire

I am experiencing it is increasingly irritating. Maybe it's something to do with COVID. I have noticed it endlessly over the last 12 months in a way that I haven't noticed before. But also I am now sat here in the same place all the time, rather than being all over the place, and I am in contact with coaches more than I have been because you just notice stuff on social media. It saddens me that people spend hours and hours working out what their niches are and then creating marketing materials for their niche. I remember in about 1998 hearing Thomas Leonard speaking in a friend's house in London. Two things I remember about that day. Well, three things. One is that my husband locked himself decorating in the bedroom. It was very traumatic because he couldn't get out until I got home from London. The other two more interesting things. Thomas Leonard said, just go out and coach 1000 people. The other thing that I learned on that day was that when he didn't know the answer to a question, he didn't fudge. He would look away, and he'd think, and that gave me confidence to do that myself. You asked me a question earlier about opticians and I said, I need to think about that. Now I'm very confident that I don't need to know the answer to everything. Sometimes I need to think. Here's the thing that said, Go out and coach 1000 people. I feel deeply uncomfortable when I see somebody's profile that goes I am a highly experienced coach, and this is my niche. Then you discover that they've got 10 hours coaching. It's not their niche, because they've only been coaching for 10 hours, or 20 hours or 30 hours. There's nothing wrong with not having a niche. Here speaks the person who when she started out coaching called herself the chief executive of Claire Pedrick company. Now I have staff and an office and all these things. I won't call myself the chief executive anymore. I call myself the managing partner, which is the most minimizing that I feel I can do. We try and make ourselves big when we're feeling less confident. I'm just a person. I work with people. Some people I worked with for a long time, and some people I worked with for a short time.

Nadine

It's important to be who we are, as coaches, ultimately, that's what's most important. Clients are not coming to us to say, oh, you're specialized in, and therefore we only want you because you're the expert. Because by definition, being the expert on that precise topic means you're not a coach, you're something else but not a coach. I remember Tracy Sinclair telling us in the training you don't have to be expert on the topic that's going to be brought to the table and in fact, do not be, choose not to be. I know now how right she was.

Claire

Because you listen differently. If you know about the thing they're talking about, then you start making

connections and you've got another person here. You're listening to your story or somebody else's story at the same time as you're listening to them. Quite a lot of customers who don't completely understand what coaching is think they need somebody who's been experienced in their world. But we mustn't. This is a multi-billion-pound business globally. Everybody's going to make money where they can, and if you can make money getting people to pay you to help them find their niche, then you will. That's a human instinct, isn't it? But I think we all need to say very clearly what is it that I need? I remember when I started out, meeting coaches who were training with me, who'd spent hours and hours on beautiful leaflets and written materials and everything else, and somebody wiser than I said, all you need is a business card and an email address. You don't need anything else. People need to know how to get in touch with you. That was good advice. Now I'd say a LinkedIn profile.

Nadine

We've been talking for about an hour. I could talk to you all day. You're very addictive. What am I going to do during the rest of the day without Claire talking to me? What would be your final message to the 706 million LinkedIn users?

Claire

My final message is it's not about you. Coaching is not about us and how amazing we are. It's about what's the least that I need to do in service of the person that I'm talking to feeling heard and having new insights. It's not rocket science. Simple is not simplistic, simple is actually a very beautiful thing. It's an art. But it also means that we don't have to work half as hard as we think we should. It enables the people that we're working with to really flourish and fly. That's a that's a wonderful gift that we bring to the world.

Nadine

I love that. If people want to speak with you, Claire, how can they go about it?

Claire

You can email info@3dcoaching.com. Go to the website, 3dcoaching.com. Or look for me, Claire Pedrick on LinkedIn, or Twitter, or Facebook. If you like the book, do share it because it this is the final part of my career. I've been coaching for 30 years, this is the last chapter, I suspect. It is my mission in life to enable people to feel more confident about doing less work. I've had some amazing messages through LinkedIn from people who go, it felt like it was less complicated than I'm hearing. Thank you for giving me license to do less. Because when we do less, other people do more. That's what it's about. So, share the book, read the book. Tell me what you think. Talk to me, so that I can learn some new stuff and get that simple stuff out there, too.

Nadine

That's amazing. Claire, thanks so much for being my very special guest today on this LinkedIn Live. I am going to be keeping in touch with you. I'd love to train with you.

Claire

Join our book club. It starts in April, where we're going to do some live stuff and then some Q&A stuff around the book, so people are really welcome to join that. It'll be shared on social media.

Nadine

I'll do that and really looking forward to speaking again with you at some point.

Claire

That'd be great.

Nadine

Have a nice Friday and thank you so much, Claire.

Claire

It's a pleasure. Take care. Bye bye.