

# The Power of coaching

## Transcript of interview with Linley Rose

### Nadine

A very good morning from London. Good evening Linley, because you're in New Zealand. Really delighted to welcome you on this LinkedIn Live, your first you told me just before we went on air. You're a very special person for me. People might wonder why I invited Linley Rose on our LinkedIn Live. About 16 years ago, I was invited by my Headteacher to go to New Zealand to look at best practice in schools. We were introduced by Barbara Prashnig. At that point, you had a coaching business. We started coaching together, you became my coach, and you were my coach for a number of years when I was an Assistant Head, Deputy Head and Headteacher. You have been a master certified coach, so MCC from the ICF, you are a passionate, effective, efficient coach. You've been a coach for about 20 years and 16 of those I've known you so I feel very, very privileged. And I know that it's working, because I would never have been where I am now had you not coached me, I have to say, because you've asked me some amazing questions in our discussions. One of them was: 'what opportunity is that giving you Nadine? And I remember that when you asked me that question first when I was very frustrated, because things were not going the way I wanted them to go. I was quite frustrated by that question. Now I'm thinking this is such a wonderful question. So thank you Linley for being here today and for spending a lot of time with me on this early morning LinkedIn Live. So Linley, is there anything else that you would like to share with us about yourself?

### Linley

Thank you. Well, yes, 20 years coaching, been an ICF MCC coach since 2008. And I've just renewed that again. A couple of years ago, though, I felt like I was going to retire and go and live at the beach, which I do. I live at the beach. I live in the Coromandel in New Zealand for anyone that's listening that knows that. And it's very beautiful. I'd like to call that rewiring. I haven't been traveling for coaching or coach training the last couple of years, I've been doing mainly mentoring or working with just a handful of client firms that I've enjoyed working with over the years. But most of the 15 years, say 2004-2018 was training coaching skills. And I was really lucky to see the world doing that. And because I became an MCC quite early on, and I had good coach training skills, the markets that were just gaining momentum and coaching like India and China welcomed me. And I'm so grateful to come and work with the leaders that wanted to become coaches. That's been an amazing journey. And I know that's a such an overdone word, but it is a continuum. And when you think that we've known each other 16 years and what has changed so much for both of us over that period of time. I have to acknowledge you are the perfect coaching client who is willing to build their self-awareness. That's got to have a lot to do with your success. Most of my clients are like that too and it gives me as a coach such energy to work with people. So that's a great.

### Nadine

It's my pleasure. Linley, you're working with leaders and high achievers and I'm interested in the word high achievers. What's your definition of it?

### Linley

My definition, or it could be what a high achiever characteristic is, or it could be, what does an organization deem a high achiever. There are so many ways of thinking about a high achiever, we all have our own definitions. For me it's someone that can become a bit of a role model, someone who is really competent, who is confident, and is committed. If they're competent, they have the skills for the job, or the education or the training or the background, they have the skills to do the job that they're in, confident, someone who's articulate, who's really happy to help others, their confidence, so they're not holding on tightly to a position and in fear of someone else being competitive with them. And committed to the overall big picture, the

overall good. I guess that for me is what makes a high achiever. And then forward focused.

**Nadine**

Some people also talk about elite. Do you think that there is a difference between being a high achiever and an elite person?

**Linley**

If you think about it from a science sports perspective, I don't think there is much difference really, it's just the level that you achieve, and the amount of focus that goes into taking yourself forward. And being the person who is going to make a difference to their organization, whether that be the professional organization, or whether that be some other type of organization that they might be involved in, a community organization or not for profit.

**Nadine**

High achievers have been role models, committed, confident. That's the good bit, isn't it? We're all wanting to be that. But what's in the way for them? What are the barriers for those high achievers?

**Linley**

What is in the way is they work too hard. They don't come up for air they don't have enough balance, they don't have enough time just to think, because they're doing all the time. They're in that doing rather than in that vision. work with an organization because they're the ones that are going to get things done, and they're driving themselves and other people a lot of the time. That's something that we've talked about over the years, taking that time to reflect. I think that's what's missing for a lot of high achievers, reflection time. Many get too tired.

**Nadine**

They are constantly unsatisfied by wanting more and therefore they are driven by always wanting to do better. I remember vividly a conversation between you and I, when I was a Headteacher, and when it would come to August, because August in England is the moment when we get the results, GCSE and a level. I remember that I would not sleep the night before. A week before, I would start to feel the anxiety and the worries and the night before I would not sleep and it was also about me being unable to calm myself down because I had such high expectations of myself. At that point it wasn't really work, it was part of the holiday to some extent. In my mind, I had set really high expectations with numbers. I remember you asking me what success looked like for me. At that point, I said, Oh, well, Linley it's got to be 90. It's all about numbers. Now I look back at that question and I'm thinking probably at that time, it was very right for me to answer that. But now with time, I would answer very differently. Being a high achiever, and having goals that are like the Kilimanjaro to climb, and sometimes it looks like impossible, isn't always about what we achieve ourselves, there are things within ourselves that we can achieve. One of them, for example, can be calmness, not wanting to know more, but actually being quite confident, and happy with what you have. Because by being a high achiever, and always wanting more, and always wanting to achieve high, then you forget the present moment.

**Linley**

It's fine if you love your work, and to be completely focused on work and not have very much space for other things in your life, there is a period in your life when that's great. And that works well. What is missing for those people is the balance that I talk about, is the reflection, and the reflection about their work and how they are identifying what success is for example, or what meaning are they giving to all of the things and is there another perspective that they're missing out on? High achievers are the people who benefit most from coaching, because they're all really willing to put themselves at risk or to work hard. They're already willing to be open and look at how they're seeing things.

**Nadine**

And to some extent, a coaching session, when you're a high achiever, is giving you a moment to reflect, isn't it?

**Linley**

Absolutely. That's the space that you're in.

**Nadine**

What would be your advice then? Because I used to love our sessions. I've got a whole file of notes of our sessions, which maybe one day I'll publish. But what's your advice for high achievers who can't have coaching all the time, because it's a financial commitment as well, but who want to keep reflecting. What are the habits they need to bring in to keep that reflective mode going? And not only when Linley or Nadine are talking to them?

**Linley**

One of the biggest habits is don't shift keep shifting your appointment with your coach, show up, make that a priority in your day, because that's giving you space for yourself. Many coaches talk to me about how they have to be really flexible for the clients because the clients are in demand here and there and traveling and doing things. If you're a high achiever, be proactive. If you really do need to change your appointment with your coach, be proactive about it instead of your coach having to chase you up and make it something really important, something to treasure as part of your own professional development and part of how you how you work at your best.

**Nadine**

Do you think that reflecting is sufficient only when we talk? Or are you encouraging those achievers to also write down their reflections?

**Linley**

It depends what works for people. Writing does work for some people and for others that doesn't, so finding the style that works best for you. It's an occasion to reflect, but what are you going to do with that reflection? That's what the coach is really part of your life for: sitting on your shoulder. So what does that mean? And what difference will it make to the way you approach your work tomorrow? How willing are you to make that change? How will it grow you as a person? Because we're all on a growth journey. I've been out with some eighty-year-olds tonight, who are still absolutely passionate about learning. That's good.

**Nadine**

You're saying that your clients are looking for clarity, they're looking for focus, confidence. And you mentioned correctness. How do you measure the impact of coaching on those?

**Linley**

Some of it is about job satisfaction. How did they report their job satisfaction as we're going through a six or one year working together? What do the 360 surveys say from two years ago to this year? What did the culture surveys say within their organization? Have they had a new job offer to them internally? Have they applied and got a new job externally? Have they been offered a promotion? Or more experience internally? Those are all of the ways that you that I might think they're developing, they're growing, they're learning. And just their own feedback. I've got way more confidence than I used to have. I'm able to focus, I know where I'm going now. It's all of those statements that you will hear from your clients.

**Nadine**

What do you do as a coach, when you listen to your clients say, Yes, I'm more confident, I'm clear in my head about where I'm going, where I'm taking the organization. What do you do with those clients when you're not convinced that that's the case. You don't think that they are telling you enough to for you to think they've grown. What do you do as a coach?

**Linley**

You trust what you're hearing and keep asking questions like, well, how is that showing up? What does someone else say? What does the board say? What does your boss say? What are they noticing about you? What feedback are they giving you? Because if you genuinely are more confident, or more clear, or more focused, or whatever, someone is going to notice and someone is going to say something, especially if they know that you're in a coaching program. You may well be on a leadership program and coaching is just part

of that. Someone is going to show, so keep asking them.

### **Nadine**

I should share with you that Gemma Stow is listening to us, she's just said hello. Gemma is a great coach. She works on making women more visible in organizations. Gemma, if you've got a question to ask Linley, please feel free to post something and we will go through your questions. Linley, you know that I am particularly interested in in conflict and difficulty. What are what are the type of conflicts that coaching is reducing? Because you also mention that on your website, and when you talk, you talk a lot about the impact of coaching, one of them being that it's reducing conflict, but what types of conflict is it?

### **Linley**

I know you're doing so much work in that area, I'd love to ask you that question. The type of internal conflict, helping people think more clearly for themselves. But a lot of the conflicts that people get concerned about are what we might call personality conflicts with peers and colleagues. They're the early ones in a career to get a handle on. Then it's values and ethics that concern people, and change, the conflict of dealing with change, especially if you're in a frontline role, where you're implementing change, and working with people in very challenging situations. What would you add to that? What do you find?

### **Nadine**

I find the same as you, I'm interested in the proportion. Is there more internal conflict when you have a high achiever than external conflict? As a high achiever, you're probably asking yourself a lot of questions, so you're in conflict with yourself, because you don't know the answer, you're doubting a lot, you've got some self-beliefs. Despite the fact that you may have a track record in your career, you don't know if you're going to be able to do that specific thing, so you're in conflict with yourself, because you've got some self-doubt.

### **Linley**

Those internal conflicts, questioning yourself. That's another thing that is a common conversation in the coaching sessions, doubting yourself or second-guessing yourself, or their whole self-belief, backing yourself as I call it. It takes time for people to come to really understand what it means to back themselves. It doesn't need to be about I, I, I, backing yourself can be just a quiet confidence, a quiet serenity.

### **Nadine**

It's quite a shift for your internal conflict of having some self-belief that even if you're not sure you can do it, there is that little voice that tells you the 'what if?' Then you get quite anxious and worried about things and it's quite difficult to unstick yourself from those thoughts on your own.

### **Linley**

It's also training yourself to question the 'what if?' Does it have to be a 'what if'? How much energy am I using in thinking about the 'what if?' instead of being in the prism.

### **Nadine**

It can be exhausting to do that.

### **Linley**

That's why so many high achievers are tired a lot of the time because they do too much and too much thinking that isn't directed that well early in their career.

### **Nadine**

Gemma is just making a comment. She says 'it happens so much. I see it with my clients undervaluing and convincing yourself you're not good enough, you don't have enough experience. Owning can be subtle yet really strong.'

### **Linley**

All our systems are set up to perpetuate that I'm not good enough. You're told to strive more, strive to do more to get that recognition, etc., you need all of this on your CV before you can do that. It's a bit of a trap perpetuated by the system that we've allowed organizations to develop. That will shift and change because

organizations are progressing themselves.

**Nadine**

But it's quite challenging in a way to be a high achiever, because there is the pressure that one puts on oneself. And then there is everything else that you have to manage: people.

**Linley**

It's not just work, it's not just people at work that you have to manage. It's your own family, who are so proud of you and talking about you to the rest of the family or whoever it might be around you. It's keeping up that appearance and keeping up that strength for everybody. And it's a bit tough sometimes.

**Nadine**

Do you think leaders wear a mask?

**Linley**

I think there's quite a lot of self-protection. That's a way to survive. It's not necessarily a way to thrive. But it's what you might do while you're learning other techniques that will help you thrive and help you be more confident in who you really are and what you bring, and that belief in yourself. But we all topple from time to time. It's about how we get back up.

**Nadine**

Coaching can bring you a safe environment in which you can take off your mask, and be as you truly are. Coaching sessions aren't always smooth.

**Linley**

No, they're not. Often, it takes some time for the high achiever or the leader, or whoever's in the coachee seat, to take off that mask and really trust their coach enough to be real, even though they might have a good relationship. It does take time to develop that depth of trust that allows the coachee to be vulnerable. Because it is a vulnerable space.

**Nadine**

This means that sometimes, we may have clients who cry. How do you deal with the experience that you have Linley? How do you deal with a client who comes on a call and things are okay at the beginning, but you know that things are bubbling? You're you probing, and the client starts to cry. How do you deal with it, particularly when you're working on Zoom?

**Linley**

It's different with everyone? This is a great reason for coaches to always be in professional development and talking with colleagues, etc. discussing these sorts of things. You might look at the ethics, you might look for answers, you might listen to other people, but the most important thing is not interfering with that client's process. Just being there unconditionally for them, what they need at that point in time. It can be so so individual, but that would be my overarching point.

**Nadine**

When you say professional development, we do because we're part of ICF, and we also have the supervisor-mentor with whom we talk. Certainly for me, during COVID, some things have changed with my clients, we don't quite talk about the same thing as before, emotions are very high. Leaders are very vulnerable at the moment. For me, having a mentor-supervisor has been quite key, because I've not necessarily been trained to discuss some topics. You are a lot more experienced than me Linley. But you have a mentor. Who do you go to when you want to make sure that ethically, you're still the coach.

**Linley**

I belong to a group that meets to discuss these things. I have had a formally trained supervisor, from time to time, but because I'm working a lot less now, I tend to reach out and keep regular contact with a couple of other MCCs that are still working. We trust each other and we can, we can really question how we're developing as coaches, what are we doing in our practice, what's going well, so the sort of things that you

would talk with the supervisor. I did belong for several years in Auckland, they were really great peer supervision groups, with four or five of us. We followed quite a strict structure and supported each other. Those people have become very close in your inner circle of your coaching.

### **Nadine**

You are a certified facilitator for a number of tools. So working style analysis. How do you use those tools? And how reliable are they? Why I'm asking, it was last year, I put a post on LinkedIn and it got a lot of comments, people were quite anti those tools. I was quite surprised by how many were anti facilitating tools. I was quite surprised by the reaction of people. How do you use them? And how reliable are they for you as an experienced coach?

### **Linley**

I'm going to be one of those people that don't use those tools anymore. I have and I think, in fact, that most of the well-known tools are pretty reliable. Different tools have different uses for people, depending on the stage of development. I do think it's a great thing for coaches to have a certification or certainly a good knowledge of a range of tools. Certainly, if you're working with leaders that are within a leadership program, the leadership program will use tools. 100%, they will use tools. So working with those, but I've seen people, these are more junior leaders, become quite fixated on what type they are. And that becomes their identity, they get stuck on that instead of thinking I can be who I choose to be. I have another friend who has trained as a coach and she has been in recruitment. She uses DISC and has a huge amount of success with placing people into jobs after they've done their DISC profiles, because they understand themselves better. They know what they're looking for. You can make them work for people and it's giving people confidence and moving them forward. They're a wonderful way of learning much more about yourself.

### **Nadine**

When I had those comments on LinkedIn, it's a snapshot in time. It doesn't mean that forever you're like that, but at a particular time, that's who you are. It's not necessarily who you want to be.

### **Linley**

That's right. Life changes for people. I can talk about, if we've got a moment, values in action, the VIA. I started using their profile in about 2007. Then I did a course with Ryan Niemiec out of the States to facilitate that a bit better, and to learn more about the VIA classification. I redid the survey in 2014-2015. Basically, two of the top five had shifted, but they were still within the top 10. It was pretty much the same. He interviewed me about what had changed in my life, to shift those around a little bit. And there were some major things that had happened to me, like having cancer and coming through the other side of that, and changing the way I was working in my business because of that. While it might stay similar, you do change a bit.

### **Nadine**

I agree. Like you said, I can be who I choose to be. That would make such a good blog, Linley. I'm making a note of that. High achievers no doubt have been challenged by COVID like everybody else. How can coaching help them?

### **Linley**

Different conversations about slightly different things now, because their usual basis of decision-making is gone in the interim, and maybe forever. There's a lot more short-term thinking. Having conversations about how our work was more emotional, impacts that are happening for people, lots of sadness is bubbling up for people, lots of stress is bubbling up for people, not necessarily this leader, but maybe the people that they're working with. And of course, people having to adapt to a whole new way of working from home. And trust is a big thing that's come up since COVID. What I'm hearing from people, people are feeling a bit more unsettled. And so trust within the organization, within their teams. I would encourage leaders to just slow down a bit, to notice the changes, because the changes are different when you're meeting on Zoom all the time and you can't offer the same resources as you used to have. So slowing down to notice and a much stronger focus on connecting people together somehow.

**Nadine**

At the moment, we're both working with leaders who have their agenda absolutely packed with meetings from very early on. They're not commuting anymore at the moment. They've replaced the commute with extra meetings. They're doing a very long day, with back-to-back meetings. It's quite challenging, isn't it to step back and be a high-achieving leader for 12 hours.

**Linley**

Absolutely. I did write down 'helping our leaders now to be in the moment'. And I ended 're-identify what does now mean? just those sorts of conversations. What does trust, what do emotions mean? How did they show up two years ago in your organization? How are they showing up now? Are people talking about them? Or do we have to change the types of conversations we're having with each other? Support? Connect and support? Are they words that we're using more often in normal conversations?

**Nadine**

I am becoming very aware in my conversations with clients that because things are changing so much at the moment in organizations, and people are moving between organizations, people are leaving. You mentioned sadness. There is a sense of grief, as well. People only realize how much they enjoyed working with a person once they've left, because you take it for granted that people are there every day and suddenly you realize you've got a N+1 or a new N+2, which is actually really nice and pleasure to work with. But they're grieving the former relationship with their former N+1, they've not had the time to say goodbye. Grief is very difficult to deal with at the moment for leaders.

**Linley**

We've got Top of Mind in New Zealand, because our Prime Minister has spoken a lot about being kind to yourself and to others around you. That's becoming a bit of a mainstream way of being or mantra to have at work now, which is great. And it will help people, it will support people.

**Nadine**

Nicola has left a comment. I know Nicola quite well. We've done some work in the Middle East together. And Nicola is saying, really interesting conversation, Nadine. Nicola, if you've got any questions, you can ask your question. Linley, you talk about kindness. It's interesting that you talk about kindness because yesterday, I did a LinkedIn Live with some peers of mine. And we did mention kindness and being kind to ourselves. How can you become kind to yourself when everything around you is changing? And moving fast and shifting fast? And you've got no control? What would be your advice? How can you become kind with yourself? What can we do to develop that?

**Linley**

That's going to be different for everyone as well. Having a conversation with your clients about what does it feel like? If you use the words, Oh, I'm being kind to myself, what's the thing that you would be doing? And finding a way to have more of that right now, making space for the things that you identify. I'm being kind to myself today. So just making space.

**Nadine**

I'm going to be doing a LinkedIn Live with some peers on kindness, because that day is my birthday. I thought I need a theme. That was really important for me. And kindness is really important. I'm wondering, am I kind enough? And how can I be kinder?

**Linley**

How do you show kindness? What would kindness look like in your team?

**Nadine**

Particularly if you don't see people face to face? How can I be kind on Zoom?

**Linley**

Is it that little chat that you send or is that the message you send afterwards?

**Nadine**

Is there something in my nonverbal communication that would transmit kindness?

**Linley**

It's a really lovely big juicy inquiry isn't it?

**Nadine**

Nicola said 'high performers in remote learning is an interesting consideration. This is a time when the 'be kind' has not as much priority as often resources have been reduced, and the demand is still there. How do you identify those who need to focus on themselves through a virtual approach, rather than the subtle gestures you pick up face to face?'

**Linley**

That's a good question, isn't it? That could be part of your inquiry on your kindness. session? Organizations might want to ask, their leaders might want to ask that question and play around with that.

**Nadine**

Do you remember? You helped me shape my weekly one-to-one with my senior leadership team because I was meeting them in one-to-ones. I really wanted to get the best out of them. We looked at my questioning techniques. If we were going to shift people's minds in their one-to-one, what are the questions I can ask to be a better leader? What questions can we ask about this kindness? As part of our one-to-ones?

**Linley**

You could ask things like, have you experienced kindness at work? And who from? what does that look like? What's the impact it has on you? How, if you've received kindness, what kindness have you given? It's all of those sorts of things that well help people to have a conversation or have a focus on kindness.

**Nadine**

Wouldn't it be lovely if people in their on- to-one systematically could ask about kindness? Even if we need to talk about performance. But to talk about kindness, to take a moment to step back and talk about it, wouldn't it be great?

**Linley**

In New Zealand, it could be quite easy, because that has been such a big thing for us as a country in the last nearly a year now. But lots and lots of one-to-ones are: what's gone really well for you this week? Or this month? What are you celebrating? As a leader, in your report, what are you celebrating this month? It's not a very big shift if you're already asking those sorts of questions. You could have that focus if it was something that you wanted to encourage.

**Nadine**

It's a mindset.

**Linley**

Absolutely. It's a belief that you have. Oh no, that it's too hard, kindness? I've got my cat on my knee.

**Nadine**

Linley, we've been on air for the past 50 minutes, which is great. Is there anything that you'd like to say or share with the 760 million users of LinkedIn?

**Linley**

It's been thought-provoking. I will go away and reflect on some of the things that we've been talking about and do in conversations with people to help them have a better experience in their lives.

**Nadine**

Linley, you just froze when you were speaking? Could you just say that again?

**Linley**

It's been a really interesting conversation and quite a lot of things have bubbled away for me and when I leave here, I will reflect on what conversations can I have or what conversations am I not having with people that I could be having with people that would give them a better experience of their life right now.

**Nadine**

I love that. Nicola has just said 'informal kindness has significant impact rather than formalized meetings'. In an ideal world, formal and informal is ideal. You can't always be informal at work, you have to be formal. So thank you very much Nicola, for all your feedback. Linley, it's been an absolute pleasure to have 50 minutes of you. I really enjoyed that and you're very welcome to come back on my LinkedIn Live at any time.

**Linley**

I don't like these late nights, Nadine.

**Nadine**

Thank you so much Linley.

**Linley**

You're welcome.

**Nadine**

I hope to talk again with you soon. Thank you.

**Linley**

Thank you. Bye.