

NONJUDGMENTAL



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Communication Competencies

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Introduction

As of the day I am writing this book, I am in the 24th year of my career in managing, teaching and coaching. And I have dedicated my last ten years to coaching. Many of my clients and students have asked me why I had not written a book on coaching and coaching competencies until now.

The answer was pretty easy for me. I never wanted to write a book that starts by answering the question “What is coaching?” and then compares coaching with other professions. A didactic book with the passing on of a little information on coaching did not excite me at all. And I certainly did not want another book that starts with “What’s Coaching?” and continues with “What are the Differences between Coaching and Therapy?” to hold up space on bookstores’ shelves. Repeating things over and over again suffocates the readers and puts them off when it comes to reading.

Perhaps you might be familiar with these words of Rumi:

*How good it is to migrate every
day! How beautiful it is to stop
somewhere every day!*

*How nice it is to flow without
freezing and getting muddy!*

*Is gone, my loved one, with
yesterday, Now is the time to
say new things.*

I felt that if I was going to write something it had to bring something new to the table, to say something that hadn't been said before. I told myself, "If I am going to do this, then this book has to create value by bringing new things to the area or adding to the existing knowledge. It has to be a resource from which not only the beginner coaches but also the masters of this profession could learn new things."

After conducting thousands of training sessions I know that the person who has learned the most is me. Today, I can write something about my profession, and I am thrilled to transfer my knowledge to others.

There is an old story that I love. Once upon a time, there was a crockery master living in Anatolia. The quality of this master's work was legendary. He also had an assistant working in his shop. In the culture of craftsmanship, one used to start from being an apprentice and then advanced to be a foreman, and finally became the master. This assistant had also started as an apprentice and then became a foreman. After a while, the foreman thought that he had learned everything there is to learn about this profession and that it was high time he had started his own business. When he told his idea to his master, the master answered, "You are

good, and you will become better, but it is a little early for you. Because you still have not learned the crux of the profession, the puffing point.

The foreman tried to be patient for a while but then, defeated by his own ambitions, decided to open his own workshop and started to work on his masterpieces. After some time, his works of art started to crack and break. When the foreman could not handle the situation, he went to see his master. His master immediately understood what was wrong, and as he worked on the mud with his rolling pin, right at the final moment, he blew some air by puffing towards the little air bubbles. And since that day the most delicate part of a practice, the crux of the matter is called the puffing point ('püf noktası') in Turkish.

And in this book, I tried to mention all the puffing points of the matter to the extent they can be expressed in writing. Some parts might not always be as easy as they look while reading them. To develop the right skills for those parts, you will have to use the muscles you have not used until today. You will also need time and experience. Throughout this book, my approach to coaching represents the school of thought of the Sola Unitas Academy. As you read the competencies, you will see Sola Unitas' perspective much more clearly.

You will also find anecdotes and points of view of coaches whose opinions I trust. I am sure those anecdotes will also be inspiring for all of us.

I hope this book's content is of great use for coaches, prospective coaches, mentors, leaders, and everyone who desires to improve their communication competencies.

Umut Kısa,
Istanbul, 2020

Coaching Competencies

According to you, what defines a coach, a mentor, or a leader? The answer to this question for me is the competencies. Having the right competencies mean fulfilling the role you are playing accurately and successfully. Some competencies develop over a long period of time and require lots of effort, while others are acquired thanks to a temporary awareness. While some competencies require a state of ‘doing,’ the others are more about the state of ‘being.’

The *soft skills* mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon culture are actually not so soft. On the contrary, those skills have a *hard* effect on our lives, and they define whether we are happy. Surely, the word *soft* is used because these skills are hard to explain concretely. As someone who has been offering training sessions on communication, explaining these competencies is not hard, but understanding them is.

I have worked with companies where employees with strong analytical skills and high IQ scores work, and I have witnessed that the ones who are not competent in terms of communication skills have real trouble when it comes to making themselves and the people around them happy. Com-

munication competencies are the most powerful tools in the world. You can make millions of people follow you and shake the world up when you use it as leverage. All these do not have anything to do with how smart you are, and they have everything to do with whether you improve these competencies. We are not born with these competencies. Therefore, the benefits of them are, unfortunately, limited unless we train ourselves.

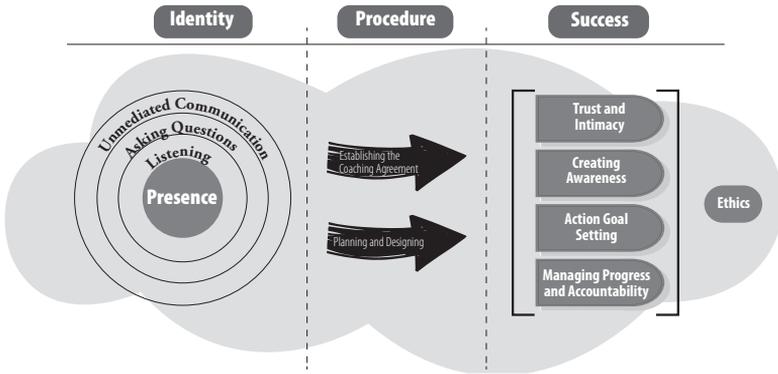
When coaching competencies are used for leadership, mentorship, or consultancy, they have transformative impacts. Thomas Leonard founded the International Coaching Federation, and it defined the 11 competencies that a coach must possess. These competencies were a summary of communication competencies that can be used in all areas. As one of the schools that provide coaching training, we preferred to classify these competencies, which require some explanation when first read or heard. Our approach is going to be slightly different from other schools. Because listing them one after another was not enough, and the interrelationships had to be shown as well.

When I questioned the extent to which coaches know these competencies individually and on corporate levels, what I realized was very interesting. Most of the graduates of these coaching schools underperformed when it comes to listing these competencies. One of the most important reasons for this, in my opinion, is the fact that these competencies are not emphasized enough in learning environments. But if you are not emphasizing coaching competencies, what can you possibly emphasize in a coaching training course?

For sure, it is never about listing these competencies by heart, but knowing them will provide you with a clear vision

on using them.

I prefer to define coaching competencies as in the diagram below. This diagram divides all competencies into four different groups.



1. Identity Competencies

Identity competencies are related to one's identity, and they need to be internalized by the individual. For these competencies to appear and develop, some awareness has to be established. They do not easily change, but once they do, it is irreversible. Once the new communication model is internalized, one starts to feel much better. During the transition phases, one might feel temporarily disturbed due to changes in their environment and reactions from people around them. Identity competencies are composed of the sub-competencies below:

- i. Presence
- ii. Listening
- iii. Questioning
- iv. Direct Communication

2. Process Driven Competencies

These are the standards mostly related to coaching and mentorship. The relationship will not have meaning and produce results unless these competencies are utilized. You might think of them as some kind of procedure for the job to be done. They give meaning to everything that's been done during coaching. Process driven competencies are composed of the sub-competencies below:

- i. Establishing the Coaching Agreement
- ii. Goal Setting and Planning

3. Success Competencies

Success competencies are the competencies and results that do not require a special effort but are created depending on the identity competencies. Putting active effort for achieving results will weaken these competencies. For example, when you push someone to reach awareness, you make them close up about awareness. Or if you work hard to establish trust, you will end up creating distrust. Success competencies are as follows:

- i. Trust and Intimacy
- ii. Creating Awareness
- iii. Designing Actions
- iv. Managing Progress and Accountability

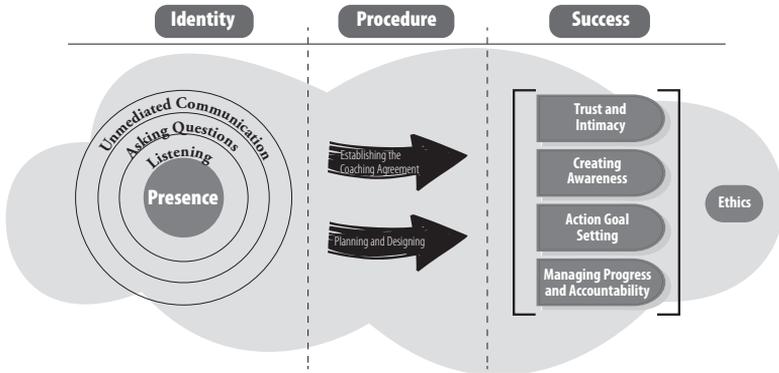
4. Ethical Competencies

Ethical competencies are related to both the individual and their environment. They are affected by the individual's character, the environment in which they were raised, their current environment, and the culture. These competencies are just like infrastructure. If ethical competencies are not strong, then the other competencies will have no meaning and effect at all. There is only one sub-competency here:

- i. Meeting Ethical Guidelines and Professional Standards

CHAPTER ONE

IDENTITY COMPETENCIES



1. Presence

“When I tell that every once in a while we should be celebrating/blessing/admiring someone around us just for the fact they are present, people always mistake it with spoiling that person. If someone gets spoiled, either one of the parties carries a burden that they should not be carrying or act spoiled to draw attention because their presence is not blessed. So, in both cases, people act spoiled because the ‘Attention’ is blessed, not the ‘Presence’. People acting spoiled is due to a lack of something not an excess.”

- Umut Kisa

“Let others see their own greatness when looking in your eyes.”

- Mollie Marti

The competency that lies at the heart of coaching, mentorship, leadership and communication in general, is the competency of “Presence”. The use of this competency which is also defined with words like *mindfulness* or *attentiveness* creates very positive outcomes in communication and sessions.

John Kabat Zinn¹ defines this concept as follows:

“The awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally.”

For instance, if there were a fire or an earthquake, since our lives would be at stake, we would directly become focused on the present moment and our current location. We would only have a single purpose: To save our lives or the lives of the ones we love. We would immediately start looking for an exit, searching for tools to stop the fire or save the important things for us from being damaged by the fire. In this kind of a scenario, we would not have any other options. With extrinsic motivation, our subconscious mind pushes us to move, and we focus on the most crucial things for us. We would not think about the promotion that we are seeking at the office or our neighbor’s behavior, such as throwing their trash in front of our house, the car that splashes mud all over us, or the due mortgage installment. Our primary job would be to save our lives. At that moment, there would be nothing more important than us and our loved ones staying alive.

So what if we were capable of focusing like this even when we do not feel this much stress and anxious? (Being able to focus like this whenever we want) What consequences would it have for us? What would have changed in our lives if we were able to willingly and knowingly feel like

a certain thing is the world's most important matter? How would this situation affect our success?

I can wholeheartedly tell you that there is no other competency that impacts other people and allows us to reach our objectives more than the competency of presence. Being present is at the center of everything.

Please use your imagination for me to explain to you how this competency works and how it makes you feel. Let's say, as you were returning home from the office on a winter day; you find yourself in an accident due to icy roads. The damage to your car is not significant but you got pretty scared. When your car slid on the ice, and you managed to stop at the barrier next to the road, you needed to catch your breath for a moment since you were in shock. You just froze there. After a while you pulled yourself together and managed to go home. All your muscles are still tense. You wish to tell your partner, your mother, or whoever you are living with about the incident you have just gone through. You enter into your house, put the keys where they belong. The person you love or the person with whom you want to share the story is sitting on the couch watching their favorite TV show. Maybe a TV series or a football match... You walk towards them, still in shock and with fear on your face, tenseness all over your body. You start communicating by saying, "You won't believe what just happened!" Without even looking at you the person sitting on the couch replies, "Right..." And continues to watch whatever show they were watching. And you, on the other hand, find yourself standing in the middle of your living room.

How would you feel if you experienced this?

Most people, when faced with such a situation, would feel alone and neglected. Your unmet need for social transaction will seem like you are being ignored, and you do not mean anything at all. Being ignored or thinking that you do not mean anything in this life is one of the worst tragedies in the world. I just want you to think about this for a moment. The biggest fear of most people is to be ignored. Your loved one's behavior does not necessarily mean that they do not love you or care about you, but this kind of communication would naturally make you feel so.

The story I have just told you summarizes what the other party would feel when the competency of presence does not exist during communication. And what if the person in front of you had shown interest in your story as if they were dealing with the most important thing in their lives? Wouldn't this moment have been one of the most satisfying moments of your life?

Presence or absence.

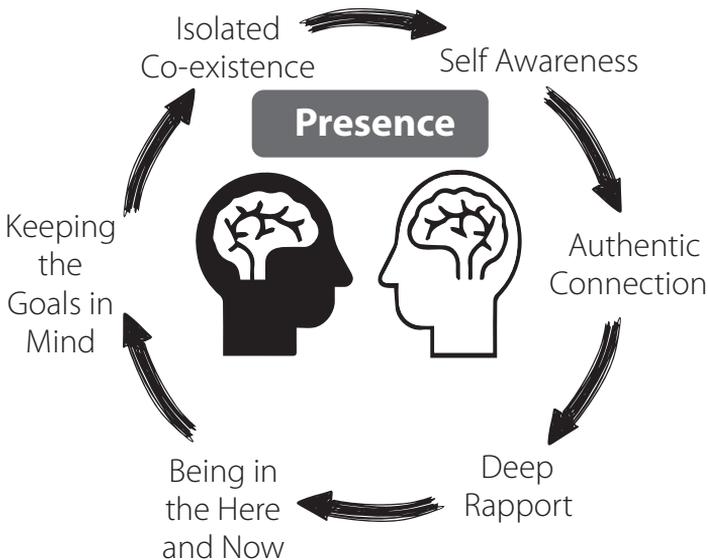
Your life has a meaning in someone's eyes or it does not.

According to a study conducted by Shepherd, Brown, and Greave in 1972, "To be present with another person naturally heals them."² Don't you find it interesting that even being present for someone has a healing power? Don't we all experience psychological problems when we do not receive enough care and attention as a human?

In order to define the competency of presence, we need to take a closer look at its components. Dividing this competency into its components will help us to better understand it.

According to Michael Abravanel, the competency of presence is composed of³ six elements:

1. Self Awareness
2. Authentic Connection
3. Deep Rapport
4. Being in the Here and Now
5. Keeping the Goals in Mind
6. Isolated Co-existence



Self Awareness

This depicts the coach's high level of awareness regarding their status, emotions, life, pains, traumas, and happiness factors. The things told by the client sometimes get stuck into a barrier inside the coach's mind. The coach turns to see their inner self, and this causes a distraction. For a coach not to get distracted by the coachee's stories, they need to have worked on many of their inner issues and have come a long way in resolving them. For instance, as the coachee tells something about their manager or their boss, the coach might personally feel for or against those third parties. Or an event that happened in the client's life might throw the coach back to some memory that affected them before.

Authentic Connection

The quality of the relationship between the coach and the client is directly proportional to their emotions' authenticity. The expressions that seem superficial and full of pretense will not create the desired effect and weaken the connection. A coach that focuses on their performance during a session will have a hard time establishing an authentic connection. The authentic connection between the coach and the client can only exist if their relationship has been built on real and genuine feelings. In such cases, the client feels that their hearts align when they get together.

Deep Rapport

We all are different, and the way we establish rapport with different people varies from one to another. The ideal

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“I NEVER TOLD ANYONE”

“When I tell that every once in a while we should be celebrating/blessing/admiring someone around us just for the fact they are present, people always mistake it with spoiling that person. If someone gets spoiled, either one of the parties carries a burden that they should not be carrying or act spoiled to draw attention because their presence is not blessed. So, in both cases, people act spoiled because the ‘Attention’ is blessed, not the ‘Presence’. People acting spoiled is due to a lack of something not an excess.” - Umut Kısa

According to you, what defines a coach, a mentor, or a leader? The answer to this question for the author is the competencies as a whole. Having the right competencies mean fulfilling the role you are playing accurately and successfully. Some competencies develop over a long period of time and require lots of effort, while others are acquired thanks to a momentary awareness. While some competencies require a state of ‘doing,’ the others are more about the state of ‘being.’

Nonjudgemental reveals that great leaders and coaches aren't those know the best, but those who have the highest level of communication competencies.

This book will change the way you understand yourself and others.