



Sub-module 5.1 - The fundamental principles of coaching (active listening, questioning, feedback, etc.)

Coaching is a practice of accompaniment based on a set of fundamental principles, which guide the coach's posture and interventions. These principles are the pillars of an effective and ethical coaching relationship, focused on the client's needs and resources. In the context of grief coaching, these principles take on a particular dimension, as they allow for the creation of an emotionally safe and supportive space for bereaved individuals. Among these principles, we can mention active listening, questioning, feedback, confidentiality, non-judgment, and the empowerment of the client.

Active listening is at the heart of coaching. It involves being fully present and attentive to what the client is expressing, both verbally and non-verbally. This is an empathetic listening, which seeks to understand the client's internal world, their emotions, beliefs, values, without seeking to judge or hastily interpret them. In grief coaching, active listening allows welcoming with kindness the intense and sometimes contradictory emotions of the bereaved, helping them to feel heard and validated in their unique experience. For example, when a client tearfully speaks of the anger she feels towards her deceased spouse, the coach can practice active listening by gently reflecting back: "I see that you feel intense anger towards him right now, and that it is very painful for you to experience this feeling."

Questioning is another key principle of coaching. It involves asking open and relevant questions, inviting the client to explore their experience, clarify their thoughts and find their own answers. The coach's questions are not interrogations, but opportunities for reflection and awareness for the client. In grief coaching, questioning can help bereaved individuals to verbalize their emotions, identify their needs and resources, and make sense of their loss.

For example, when facing a client expressing their guilt for being alive after his daughter's death, the coach can gently ask: "What would your daughter have wished for you today? How could you honor her memory while taking care of yourself?"

Feedback is an important principle of coaching, which consists of offering the client constructive and compassionate feedback on their progress, strengths, and areas for development. The coach's feedback is not a judgment, but a mirror that allows the client to become aware of themselves and their impact on their environment. In grief coaching, feedback can help the bereaved to recognize the steps they have taken in their journey, the resources they have mobilized, the challenges left to face. For example, during a review session, the coach can share with his client: "Since we started working together, I have noticed that you have been able to express your sorrow to your loved ones, that you have resumed a sporting activity that makes you feel good, and that you are able to bring up happy memories of your father. I think these are significant strides, even though there are still ups and downs."

Confidentiality is a key ethical principle in coaching, guaranteeing to the client that what they share in the sessions will remain strictly confidential, except where legally obligated otherwise. This principle creates a climate of trust and safety, where the client can open up without fear of judgment or exposure. In grief coaching, confidentiality is crucial, as bereaved individuals may experience shame, guilt, or anger that they are afraid to express to their loved ones. Knowing that the coach is bound by professional secrecy allows them to open up more freely. For example, in the first session, the coach can reassure his client by saying: "Everything you confide to me here will stay between us, within the limits of the law. This is a place where you can express yourself freely and safely."

Non-judgment is another integral principle of coaching, which involves welcoming the client with an attitude of openness and unconditional respect. The coach does not judge the client's thoughts, emotions, or actions, but attempts to understand them with curiosity and kindness. In grief coaching, non-judgment is paramount, as bereaved individuals may have reactions and thoughts that frighten them or make them feel ashamed, like anger towards the deceased, relief from ceasing to suffer, or the desire to join the departed. The coach welcomes these expressions with compassion and normalizes their human nature. For example, if a client confides that she blames God for letting her child die, the coach can gently respond: "This is a normal and understandable reaction in your situation, many bereaved parents feel this spiritual anger. You have the right to experience all of these emotions."

Finally, empowering the client is a core principle of coaching, stating that the client is the expert in their life and the primary agent of their change. The coach is not there to give advice or ready-made solutions but to help the client clarify their goals, mobilize their resources, and take action. In grief coaching, empowerment is essential, as it allows bereaved individuals to regain a sense of control and meaning in a situation that

overwhelms them. The coach encourages them to make informed choices to take care of themselves, to draw upon their strengths and values to go through their grief. For example, when a client wonders how to handle the first anniversary of his mother's death, the coach can ask him to reflect: "How would you like to live this day? What would be meaningful and comforting for you? What resources would you need?"

In essence, the fundamental principles of coaching are the pillars of a benevolent, ethical, and effective support relationship. By embodying these in their practice, the GRIEF COACH creates conditions for a meaningful and supportive grieving journey for bereaved individuals. Active listening, questioning, feedback, confidentiality, non-judgment, and empowering are all compasses that guide the coach in their posture and interventions. By cultivating these consciously and committedly, the coach can offer bereaved individuals a unique space of safety, reflection and transformation, where they can tame their grief and learn to live again, one step at a time. The fundamental principles of coaching thus lay the foundations of deeply human support, serving the resilience and growth of each individual, in the ordeal of bereavement and beyond.

Key points to remember:

- The fundamental principles of coaching (active listening, questioning, feedback, confidentiality, non-judgment, empowerment) are essential to creating an effective and ethical coaching relationship, especially in the context of grief coaching.
- Active listening allows empathetically welcoming the intense emotions of bereaved individuals and helping them feel heard and validated in their unique experience.
- Questioning helps bereaved individuals to explore their experiences, clarify their thoughts, and find their own answers. The coach's open and relevant questions are opportunities for reflection and awareness.
- The coach's constructive and compassionate feedback allows bereaved individuals to recognize their progress, their strengths, and the challenges that remain in their grieving journey.
- Confidentiality guarantees a safe and trusting space where bereaved individuals can express themselves freely, without fear of judgment or exposure.
- The coach's non-judging approach is fundamental, as it compassionately welcomes the difficult reactions and thoughts of bereaved individuals, normalizing these human feelings.
- Empowering the client affirms that the bereaved individual is the expert in their life and the main actor in their journey. The coach urges them to make informed choices, to mobilize their resources, and to give meaning to their experience.

- By embodying these principles, the GRIEF COACH offers deeply human support to the bereaved, promoting their resilience and growth in the face of the loss of a loved one.