



## Katie Harvey Coaching

Topic:

### Coaching in these unprecedented times.

I've never written a top-tips before. Or tried to send anything out to the coaching community at large. But this crazy time has made me overcome my natural shyness at doing so because I hope something I say below might help us as a community to coach even more mindfully and make the difference that I know our profession can make at this time.

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#### 1: A shared context -

Never before as a profession have we been going through the same challenge as all of our clients at the same time. Of course our individual circumstances are unique but the environment of uncertainty and the lack of control are shared by all of us. This brings benefits and challenges to us as coaches that we've never had to think about before in this way.

My first tip is to be mindful of this phenomenon as we coach.

#### 2: Watch for your own triggers -

Developing on from the knowledge that we are broadly in the same field as our clients now, we need to be very mindful and present to our own triggers in this topic. For example I'm diabetic and I notice that whenever a client mentions "*at least I'm not in one of the high risk categories like diabetes*" I feel a little shot of fear go through me. For others it might be completely different of course, such as one coach telling me one of her top values is Freedom and her trigger is people talking about the potential of being locked up for months in their homes. If we are aware of our triggers we can avoid being knocked out of presence, or at least come back to it quicker.

#### 3: Coping styles -

I've been so interested to see the different styles of coping my clients adopt during this time. Some let it all hang out emotionally and vent or cry, others use humour throughout the session, some don't even mention the **C word** in their session. I believe it is important to allow for all coping styles and more importantly, to be mindful of our own along the way so we don't force it on our clients!

#### 4: The opening -

I've been talking with the coaches I supervise about the importance of how we start the session in these times. Given what I said above about different coping styles and circumstances I believe it's important to use a neutral tone when greeting your client and allowing them to be however they want to be at the beginning without our influence. This may seem subtle, but the difference it can make is huge. **Let them set the tone.**

Also be mindful about how much information you share about your own experience with the situation. It can be tempting to chat about it, and can be very connecting to do so, but it's worth remembering that this can take us out of a coaching space and into more of a friend space and again affect our coaching presence. I don't mean to sound cold here of course, hopefully you get what I mean.

#### 5: News -

*I know this is an obvious one but as I've got this wrong too many times in the last week, it needs saying.* Imagine me, all prepped for my next client session, and the client is late calling. Before I realise it I'm looking at the latest news on my phone as I wait. Not good. I read one (inflammatory) story that really threw me and it was so hard to stop my heart racing let alone create great presence for the client when they did call. **This is MY 'note to self'.**

## 6: Chat -

Back to the subject of chat. Chat definitely has its place in communication. I love it, but in a coaching session we need to make sure the content of the session is intentional and chosen by the client. It could well be it is exactly how the client wants to use the session - vent, explore, think out loud about the situation at hand, we just need to make sure they are choosing that. Contract well at the beginning for [how the client wants to use the space](#).

## 7: Uncertainty in our businesses -

Many of us coaches are self employed and therefore this uncertain time can leave us wondering how it will affect our business and our industry. In my case I've had 2 clients need to stop for financial reasons, 2 start and one double her sessions to help think through online working for her company. [The fact that coaching can be virtual is a huge strength for our profession](#) in these times. I believe we can play a very important role in supporting people to calm themselves, adapt to change and plan for the new phase approaching. We might need to be innovative about what we provide to whom and how, but rather than worry about what a recession might do to coaching, let's see this as an opportunity to really serve people in a time of great need. At least choosing to think this way feels calming to me.

## 8: Themes -

Something I've found very interesting are the topics people are bringing to their sessions. I have noticed this week a lot of themes around feeling out of control. Not necessarily about the virus situation at all, but relationships, health, career. It seems possible that the [lack of control we are all feeling](#) is mirrored in their lives in the topics they bring. I'm also noticing that useful outcomes they are choosing for sessions are things like plans, next steps, calm mindsets. I think it's useful to be aware of this mirroring with topics and context and, when appropriate, we can share that with the client (without being attached to it being right :-)) and that can be useful too.

## 9: Be the calm -

*When the crowded refugee boats met with storms or pirates, if every one panicked, all would be lost. But if even one person stayed calm, it was enough to calm the others. It showed the way for everyone to survive.*

—Thich Nhat Hanh

Now I know that we don't have to be super human (thank goodness) and that we are not robots, as we're going through our own journeys with this. But, if we manage our presence well, we can be the calm that spreads through the boat.

## 10: Self care -

And that leads us to this - to be the calm in the boat, [we absolutely need to look after ourselves](#) and keep ourselves well, mentally and physically. Good sleep is vital, human connection, exercise, rest and good food / hydration.

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## Two final things

1) If you have 4 hrs a week to offer to front line NHS staff, and meet the requirements, here is a wonderful initiative set up to offer sessions to our incredible key workers.

<https://www.aim-you.com/volunteers/>

2) Robbie Swale and I will be recording another podcast together for his brilliant podcast series <https://www.thecoachsjourney.com/podcast> all about coaching in the times we find ourselves in. I'm hopeful it'll be live at some point next week.

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I've written this off the top of my head, with thoughts I've been amassing only during this last week, but as time is of the essence in sending this out. So much to dismay of my inner critic I'm going to send it as is. I hope it's useful.

Lots of love to all you coaches out there that this might reach:  
**Take care of yourselves.**

Katie.

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[www.katieharveycoaching.co.uk](http://www.katieharveycoaching.co.uk)