

A 70 Years Old Principle of Coaching

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Carl-Gustav Jung

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As an executive coach I consider it very important to continuously learn more about the various fields that are related to my work. One of these areas is certainly psychology. Though I'm not aiming at becoming a therapist for CEO's, I enjoy reading psychology related literature.

Recently I finished reading "Modern Man in Search of a Soul" by the great Carl Gustav Jung (see picture), the father of Analytical Psychology. This book was published in 1933 (!) when people only would have thought of a 4-wheel-carriage when hearing the word 'coach'.

I was quite amazed when I read a section (page 239ff) that clearly described an important coaching principle:

"It might be supposed that it is easy for the doctor [at that time psychologists typically were doctors - the author] to show understanding in this respect. But people forget that even doctors have moral scruples, and that certain patients' confessions are hard even for a doctor to swallow. Yet the patient does not feel himself accepted unless the very worst in him is accepted too. No one can bring this about by mere words; it comes only through the doctor's sincerity and through his attitude towards himself and his own evil side. If the doctor wants to offer guidance to another, or even to accompany him a step of the way, he must be in touch with this other person's psychic life.

He is never in touch when he passes judgement. Whether he puts his judgements into words, or keeps them to himself, makes not the slightest difference. To take the opposite position, and to agree with the patient offhand, is also of no use, but estranges him as much as condemnation.

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We can get in touch with another person only by an attitude of unprejudiced objectivity. This may sound like a scientific precept, and may be confused with a purely intellectual and detached attitude of mind. But what I mean to convey is something quite different. It is a human quality - a kind of deep respect for facts and events and for the person who suffers from them - a respect for the secret of such a human life.

[...]

It is a moral achievement on the part of the doctor, who ought not to let himself be repelled by illness and corruption. We cannot change anything unless we accept it. Condemnation does not liberate, it oppresses. I am the oppressor of the person I condemn, not his friend and fellow-sufferer. I do not in the least mean to say that we must never pass judgement in the cases of persons whom we desire to help and improve. But if the doctor wishes to help a human being he must be able to accept him as he is. And he can do this in reality only when he has already seen and accepted himself as he is.

Perhaps this sounds very simple, but simple things are always the most difficult. In actual life it requires the greatest discipline to be simple, and the acceptance of oneself is the essence of the moral problem and the epitome of a whole outlook upon life."

Wow, this reminds me a lot of the principles taught during my coach training. I am still struck by the fact that C.G. Jung wrote this over 70 years ago. What a deep insight he already had at that time.

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I found it important to share this with you, my fellow coaches and those interested in coaching.



Charlie Lang is an Executive Coach and Trainer who founded Progress-U Limited in 2002. His mission is to develop his clients to become First-Class Leaders. He is a passionate and professional Executive Coach, Mentor Coach, Trainer, Public Speaker and Author of articles related to leadership, change management and innovative sales.

In 2004, he initiated the Master Coach Alliance (see <http://www.master-coach-alliance.com>) in Hong Kong, a network of professional Life, Business and Corporate Coaches. End of 2004, he started authoring the book "The Groupness Factor" (see <http://www.progressu.com.hk/Groupness-book.htm>) which is being published in mid-August 2005. He also wrote numerous articles for magazines and newspapers like CareerTimes, Human Resources, Banking Today, Asiapreneur, etc.

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