

Your Personal Style of Leadership

Know what it is and how to maximize its potential

8. Leadership coaching for the HAPPINESS motivated leader

You will recall that coach Sakina has decided to get some coaching herself. Sakina knows that while it has been easy for her to counsel others on how to control the fear of the type to which they belong, it is more difficult for any type to control their own fear. For many years Sakina has been thinking that through her lectures and her coaching of others she would naturally be also working on her own fear, that of emotional conflict. But it seems that the more successful she became in her professional activities the less important it became to her to work on herself. She realizes now how true it is that personal improvement is basically an uncomfortable endeavor. It involves the kind of effort that one finds easy to avoid by keeping busy with other things.

She knows a good coach by the name of Sashenka, someone who acquired excellent knowledge about types from Sakina's lectures and from her own independent studies in connection with her work as an executive coach. Sakina feels that Sashenka in many ways has a more immediate understanding of people than she has herself, because Sashenka seems to have a stronger natural rapport with people. Sashenka also has made many personal discoveries with her numerous clients, most of whom are highly placed executives and human relations department heads. She has continually shared those discoveries with Sakina. Sakina concludes that Sashenka is not only up to par in her theoretical knowledge of human types but that she has also accumulated more practical experience in applying that knowledge and more professional confidence in using it than Sakina has herself.

Sashenka belongs to the type motivated by LIKING, and because of it she would be the right type to coach Sakina, the HAPPINESS motivated type. Sashenka's type basically likes the environment around her and everything and everybody in that environment. Rather than wanting to change the world, she is interested in enjoying what the world has to offer. While Sakina is careful about getting close to people, Sashenka readily trusts people and seeks to help them. It is said by some serious students of human types that the type motivated by LIKING represents the angels in this world.

Sakina at first wonders whether the close friendship between them would somehow reduce coaching effectiveness, but she then recalls that Sashenka has already coached two other friends with excellent results. She decides to call Sashenka.

Sashenka answers with her usual receptive and positive attitude. She not only agrees to coach Sakina but expresses great satisfaction at being asked. She is convinced that both of them will benefit at the professional level and also as friends. Moreover, Sashenka tells Sakina that she has been wanting to call her because she has a couple of new coaching discoveries to share with Sakina.

They get together for the first coaching session, and as one would expect, the session covers a lot of ground. It is pretty much a routine session for them, as both Sashenka and Sakina have gone through the different stages of the first session many dozens of times with different clients. They quickly identify the strengths and the main fear of Sakina's

type, the HAPPINESS motivated type. Sashenka then helps Sakina to narrow in on and deal with the most important specific habit or tendency that she feels she needs to work on. Sashenka knows from experience that it is not enough to recognize the existence of a habit or tendency and to have the desire to deal with it. It is necessary to be specific about the habit or tendency that has to be controlled and it is essential to then methodically work on it. Sashenka makes sure to review in depth with Sakina the situations in which Sakina did not fully affirm her strengths. She paints a clear picture of the benefits that will accrue to both Sakina and to her clients once she has made the intended leadership improvement. She reviews in particular the effect that Sakina's control of her fear of emotional conflict will have on her lecture audiences. Sashenka illustrates with many examples how the fear of emotional conflict puts restraints on Sakina's professional effectiveness and on her personal happiness.

Being a professional coach herself, Sakina is fully aware of the benefits of coaching, but she is still amazed at how beneficial the first coaching session was for her. "You have to experience it to know it" she says to herself. Sashenka's review of how the fear of emotional conflict has affected Sakina's behavior was actually an eye opener for Sakina. She had of course realized all along that the fear of emotional conflict made her withdraw and made her want to be by herself, since those are tendencies inherent to her type. But only now can she see that her awareness in this regard was vague and theoretical and that she has been in denial much of the time, hiding from herself the full impact of the fear of emotional conflict on her lecturing and coaching activities.

In the goal setting portion, Sakina bases her goal on the affirmation "I am proactive about emotional conflict by listening and responding with empathy rather than withdrawing". She then decides that the first specific behavior she will modify will be the habit, at the end of her lectures, to refuse to take questions. She will invite questions and answer them. Sashenka has convinced her that the fear of emotional conflict in that situation is particularly groundless.

Sakina has a second specific behavior that she wants to work on at the same time, as it is related to a totally different but recurring situation. It is her apprehension about provoking in a client a spontaneous denial or challenge whenever she points out a habit or a tendency about which the client appears to be very sensitive or touchy. Although this is perhaps a more difficult objective, Sashenka has convinced her that it is not helpful for a coach to fear misunderstandings and conflicts with clients. They are "an everyday natural occurrence in all relationships between people," and everybody needs to learn to be proactive as much as possible about misunderstandings and emotional conflict, and everyone also needs to know how to respond to them effectively when they do arise, as they inevitably will.

Sakina resolves to progressively reduce her stress by continually reminding herself of it before every meeting with clients. As Sashenka pointed out, Sakina doesn't need to change her preparation routine for sessions with clients. What she needs to change is the amount of stress she gives herself as she is preparing. She decides to work on reducing such stress by affixing a stick-on note on the inside cover of each client's file which reads "I am calm". This will remind her to take the correct attitude when working on the file.

As they review Sakina's goals together, Sashenka points out that the reduction of stress will also help Sakina to gradually reduce the time devoted to preparation. Furthermore, it will give Sakina greater ability to improvise and be more spontaneous during coaching sessions.

Sakina has always wanted to develop the ability to improvise and to adapt to the client's behavior during coaching and she now fully realizes that it is the fear of emotional conflict that prevented her from doing so. It is the same fear that caused her to worry excessively about raising the question of pride and vanity with Henry. This fear also made her refuse to answer questions after her talks and conferences. She now can see clearly how that fear has shaped her personality and has created the need to withdraw and to be alone. She realizes that she often spends an inordinate amount of time on unnecessary details, both in her research and in the store she runs during her husband's absences. With Sashenka's help she has come to understand that subconsciously she attends excessively to detail in order to justify to herself that she needs to be alone. It feels safer to be alone than to be in contact with people.

Sashenka's coaching helps Sakina to be highly successful with her two goals. She is now able to accomplish more as a coach by being less anxious about possible emotional conflict. In addition, she feels less tired after coaching sessions. Store operations also are making less strenuous demands on her as she is able to do without many of the detailed controls she had instituted. As a matter of fact, sales are up as she is devoting more attention to store visitors. The changes in Sakina's leadership behavior have even helped her to discover some secrets about selling!

Sashenka follows Sakina's progress closely and thoroughly. Together they cover all the restraining tendencies that HAPPINESS motivated leaders are liable to have, including "lack of an overall view of things, becoming obstinate, tendency to isolate self, and finding the external world menacing." Sashenka provides Sakina with examples of obstinacy or willfulness as demonstrated by Sakina in different situations. This motivates Sakina to set a new goal, that of removing obstinacy as a restrainer of her leadership strengths. She decides that willfulness is most unnecessary when she is asked to participate in professional activities and refuses to do so for no other reason than her fear of possible emotional conflict.

Again Sakina, with Sashenka's support, succeeds in developing control over a behavior she recognizes as being a hindrance to her leadership progress. Her reputation as a speaker grows, and she starts getting invited to participate in panel discussions about leadership development and is being asked to teach leadership development courses. All of this as a result of having developed mechanisms in her behavior that allow her to reduce the main negative tendencies of her type of leader, the HAPPINESS motivated one.

Sashenka thinks the world of Sakina and of her ability to work on herself. She feels that she owes it to Sakina to maintain an on-going follow-up program. She frequently calls on Sakina and visits her to offer her help. While Sakina greatly appreciates Sashenka's concern and help, she is starting to feel crowded by Sashenka. It seems to her that Sashenka is more often at her place than at her own. To Sakina it is almost as if Sashenka wanted to live Sakina's life and as if she planned to move in with her.

Sakina is starting to be ill at ease in Sashenka's presence, feeling that she is invading her privacy and is identifying too much with Sakina. Sakina is at a loss as to how to tell Sashenka. This is no longer Sakina's fear of emotional conflict; it's her type's need for solitude, a sensitivity to continual socializing. She asks herself "How do I tell that to a person whose professional insight, sincerity and friendship I value greatly but who I feel is clinging to me like a second skin which I don't need and which is simply too much?"

Read about the dénouement of this situation in next month's installment, and learn more about Sashenka, the leader motivated by LIKING, and about her goals.

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