

COACHING A PARTNER/FAMILY MEMBER/CLOSE FRIEND

INTRODUCTION

In this section document, we will cover the issues surrounding coaching a person who is close to a person who is experiencing problematic substance or behavior use. There are many similarities to topics in previous section which here are adapted as appropriate when coaching a partner or family member.

Please note that the differences and issues in this module are important and vital to working with this kind of client and whilst the topics covered appear to much the same these differences are key to the coaching being useful and effective.

Please also note that while the main context here refers to a partner, i.e. spouse or unmarried partner, many of the approaches apply to working with other family members and close friends.

PLEASE NOTE.

In this writing I have used the term 'using' and 'using person' to mean the person with a problem with a substance and behaviour use / addiction. This is not an ideal choice of words but is the best option to keep it brief and clear.

CONTENTS

- 1. Before you get started**
 - Develop relationships with referral sources**
 - Get a support team**
- 2. Coaching this client**
- 3. Finding the "Hidden" client - Identifying substance or behavior use/abuse/addiction as a factor in your client's relationships**
 - a. What about you?**
 - b. If you are in recovery yourself**
 - c. The 5 realms**
- 4. Preparing to bring the issue into the coaching relationship**
- 5. Opening the door**
- 6. Guidelines**
 - a. Start from the compassionate place.**
 - b. Be willing to have your judgments really tested.**
 - c. Resist all temptations to label**
 - d. Don't take sides**
 - e. Your unique role**
- 7. Clients' ability to be coached**
 - a. Limiting the client's options**
 - b. Increased client fear & anxiety**
 - c. Shame, guilt & secrecy**
 - d. Low self esteem**
- 8. Redesigning the relationship**

The Coaching Container, Money & Payment, Permissions, Non negotiables, Commitments, Referring, Style

 - a. The client/coach container**
 - b. Money and Payment**
 - c. Permissions**
 - i.To challenge**
 - ii.To teach/train**
 - iii.To offer to refer other professional contacts**
 - d. Non-negotiables**
 - e. Commitments**

- i. Confidentiality
 - ii. To Non-judgment
 - iii. To Compassion
 - iv. To Stay the course
- f. Referring a client
 - i. When should you offer/agree to refer?
 - a. When your client wants you to
 - b. When you think that they might benefit from another resource
 - c. When you wish to make coaching conditional on a referral
 - d. If you consider that the client is at risk or is a risk to themselves or others
 - ii. Setting up the referral
 - g. Style
- 9. Defenses - teaching the client
- 10. Teaching the client about Saboteurs and the Hidden client
 - The Hidden client in partners, friends and family members
- 11. Where to next?
- 12. The “bottom”
 - Anger
- 13. Strategize with the client for their recovery plan
 - a. What is key when the client chooses a recovery course of action
- 14. Accountability
- 15. Clients don't always find a solution
- 16. Clients with more than one issue
 - a. Know who is talking
 - b. Ask the client to prioritize their life agendas
- 17. Victim or perpetrator?
- 18. Co-dependency
- 19. Familiarity & resistance to change
- 20. Intervention
- 21. Family systems
 - The slow subtle dysfunction
- 22. In conclusion

1. Before you get started

There are a few suggested steps that are recommended before you step into the next stages of coaching a client who has a close relationship to someone who has these issues. They are.

Develop relationships with referral sources

If you are coaching someone who is a partner, relative or close to someone who has a substance or behaviors use issue, then it is advisable to have developed a relationship with appropriate referral sources. Your position as coach is not, as we have previously established, to treat the client, so it may become necessary and desirable for your client to seek other services that are treatment related or that are relevant to increasing their support network. They may also be complementary services that your client wishes to try as a way to broaden their understanding of their lives and assist them in the changes they wish to make.

Should your client want to be referred, or should you want to refer them, then you may need practitioners to whom you can refer them should it be required. This may cover quite a wide range of therapies, disciplines, treatments and practitioners. This is always going to be a moveable list that changes over time.

Starting this list and having at least a basic set of referral sources going in to the sessions with your clients builds a sense of containment and support for you.

Get a support team

This is a team of one or more people who support you, or to whom you can turn to for advice if you feel you've become stuck, or you want to reflect and gain insight into the work you are doing with a certain client. It can be other coaches you know, or any other professionals working in ways you understand and respect.

2. Coaching this client

It is natural that most people see the person with a substance or behavior use problem as, well, the problem! And it is true of course that their behavior and decisions often cause much suffering for those around them and of course themselves.

While the focus is on the using person, the people close to them can seem to be less of an issue and their difficulties are often minimized. Without a doubt though these people can become

deeply affected by the behaviour, presence and actions of the person they are close to and can be drawn into many similar associated phenomena that appear in the lives of the using persons themselves.

Once it has come to your attention that you are coaching a client who is close to a person with substance or behavior use issues, then the next steps are similar to those taken for a using person themselves and yet, as mentioned earlier, have their own particular challenges, needs and possible outcomes.

In the next section I will revisit various sections, topics and approaches that were presented in the Coaching a Client section, setting out the changed and similar contexts that apply when working with this kind of client differs in relation to those topics.

3. Finding the "Hidden" client - Identifying substance or behavior use/abuse/addiction as a factor in your clients relationships

Your client wants change. Sometimes that change is elusive and there appear to be factors that are either unknown or unspoken that are present in the client's life that are standing in the way of the changes occurring.

Generally, people close to using people, with whom they have emotional bonds, will wish to defend and protect them. This is apparent by the defenses that are present in the using person and which and once comingled with your client (who is in a relationship with the person), can be hard to unravel.

If this is the case, then your client may have events and experiences going on that she /he cannot or will not bring to the coaching sessions.

Again, we use a whole person approach with this client if we are planning to find out if they are experiencing issues with someone close to them who has a using issue.

In many, many cases, the client will eventually tell you about the person they are close to as the barriers to disclosure are lower with relatives and friends and partners.

a. What about you?

Whether you are given the information, or have to determine it yourself and bring it into the coaching, it is well, before you start, to make an examination of where you are with the issues and possible scenarios that may arise from working with this client.

What are your own beliefs, thoughts and feelings about this client's possible issue? What are your learned and entrenched attitudes toward people who stay in these kinds of relationships? Are they weak? Obtuse? Do they need rescuing? Do they have only themselves to blame? Are they ill/sick themselves?

What is your life experience regarding substance and or behaviour misuse? Have you ever had a friendship or relationship with someone who had a substance or behavior use issue? If you have, how clear are you about it and can you keep this out of the sessions with this client?

What are you taking into the coaching session that might get in the way?

By examining these questions, you will find out what or where you might find it difficult or challenging to stay with your client through the coaching relationship. It may be useful to talk it through with a mentor coach or other trusted confidant.

b. If you are in recovery yourself

Some people who have been very close to someone with an addiction or substance or behavior use issue will consider themselves to be in a recovery process in much the same way that the using person can be. If you are a coach who is in recovery, then this makes you a very special resource for this client. It also can make your job a little harder.

This personal experience you have will stand you in great stead with these clients and this work. It can also be your Achilles heel when holding a coaching stance with a client. Despite what you know, your role as their coach is to help them find their own path and, as far as you can, not direct them as to how that path unfolds. Your challenge may be that you will have to work so much harder to stay clear and separate from your clients' journey, particularly if it's a bumpy one. I recommend that you arrange to have good support for this as you coach these clients.

As previously mentioned, finding the Hidden client is best undertaken in a whole system approach and what we are looking for in our clients is similar to the issues we are watching for in the using person. As coaches you will be watching and listening and using your intuition.

So, what are we listening/watching for?

Here are some of the items that you should be paying attention to or that you may notice:

Preoccupation

With a place, person, event or resentment

Anomalies:

2 and 2 equals 5.

Inconsistency:

Peaks and valleys with unclear causes

Cycles and repetition

Of similar events, client as hero or victim of these cyclical scenarios

Justification:

Building a case that supports them being “right” about the partner

State of self-esteem:

Typically low; present with an addictive partner

Anxiety/euphoria:

Up and down patterns often linked to the using person’s behavior around their using. Anxiety exacerbated by uncertainty around behavior, finances etc. May point to an underlying issue such as depression. Be curious about unwarranted/unexplainable depressions.

Belligerence:

A defence against calamity

Manipulation:

Desire for control over and above the norm. Response to unpredictability of situation.

Powerlessness:

Client seems unable to act effectively. Nothing is working. Change thwarted.

Over/under stating:

Telling un-truths, usually as protection of the using person and as a way to defend them. Part of the Hidden client/defenses pattern.

Minimizing/Maximizing:

Letting big things pass without comment, making the little large and overblown. Way of coping with the traumatic.

Misdirecting:

Placing undue emphasis on an issue in order to have a safe outlet for powerful emotions. Misdirected feelings toward another person, either in or outside the family or group.

Defended/collapsing:

Switching between the two. Defends the person then collapses against them.

All these items may be directed by or employed by the Hidden client in pursuit of the Hidden clients' agenda.

It is suggested that over time, you practice noticing these different aspects as you coach your clients. It is most likely that you are noticing these types of things already and indeed you may have your own list from which you work.

It is also suggested you continue this observation outside of your coaching clients and observe people in general. Next time you are at a social event or in a public situation, see what pops out at you about the way some people are showing up.

c. The 5 realms

Below are 5 realms in which we place our attention to listen and observe; where the "Hidden" client and clues to substance or behavior use will be found.

These are the same realms as set out in Coaching the Client, so we will only recap here in brief, and I will add any particular aspect relevant to a family member or partner.

It is important to note that a one-time occurrence of the events or patterns below should not be used to jump too soon to assumptions. Looking for patterns and repetition of patterns is preferred, rather than moving too quickly to a conclusion.

The Physical realm

The stress of living with someone who is using a substance or behavior can often lead to bad health. This may not be easily or obviously explained by the client.

They may be lacking good quality sleep and may also be nervous, anxious or irritable all of which will impact on their physical wellbeing.

In some cases, if there is violence in the relationship there may be bumps and bruises and accidents.

The Cognitive realm

Again this is related to the impact of stresses and anxieties. The client may be having so much of their emotional mental world taken up with the situation of the relationship they are in that they are unable to think clearly.

The Emotional realm

Displaced emotions, misdirected emotional outbursts, self-focussed negative feelings about themselves. These are all clues as to states of emotional discomfort that the client is in. Investigating this with the client and finding unclear or unrealistic explanations can be a clue to a relationship, or circumstances around a relationship, being out of control and /or in crisis.

The Attitude realm

What attitudes are the clients holding and expressing about their lives, their world around them, their work, relationships and friendships? Do these attitudes add up? Do they switch fast and easily from say very pro to very anti? When you get curious about these switches, how easy is it for the client to reveal their reasoning and rationale? This can also show some cognitive functioning aspects as well.

Look for anomalies within the client's world. I ask clients that I think may have some of the issues we are talking about to fill out a wheel of life. This can be quite revealing. Pay particular attention to what the client says about their relationships. Do they score them low but not mention them much' or do they avoid talking about them when prompted?

The Intuitive Realm

In this realm we are not really putting our attention on anything specific. It's the space of the client, the energy and the small pieces of information that come from many sources. It is the empathetic place. It is the sublime and the unconscious, the fleeting and the subtle. It is a brush

with the soul, a whisper from the universe, it is all that your mind cannot know and yet that you recognize and understand.

4. Preparing to bring the issue into the coaching relationship

It may be that you have a client who has disclosed some of their issues with a partner, friend or relative who has substance use problem. It may be that you know nothing of it from them but that by careful listening and watching, you have sensed and observed that something is amiss for this client and that you wish to bring it into the coaching relationship.

It may also be that the client has disclosed it to you, but has previously told you they wish to keep it out of the coaching relationship, that it is not material to their coaching and that it is a topic that is off limits. In this case, you may have decided that for the coaching to progress and deepen and for the work that you know the client wishes to do on changing their life, the issue needs to be brought into the coaching relationship.

Whichever of these scenarios present themselves, there will come a point where you will articulate to the client what it is that you have seen, sensed and felt is present in their lives.

It would then be prudent to proceed with the understanding that what you may have seen or know is like the proverbial “tip of the iceberg”. The rest is under the surface, linked to the unconscious, knitted into this client’s very nature and emotional world.

As with the using client, you are, in a sense, approaching hallowed ground, sacred space, and to understand this is to show due respect for this clients being. A part of the client may be crying out to be able to deal with or confront or just have another person become aware of their situation, another part, the ‘Hidden’ part, does not want this disclosure.

Before you decide to tread into this area and world of your client and his/her hidden self, it would be a good time to reflect again on where you stand. Take a mental, emotional and spiritual reappraisal of yourself. If you open this door with your client, are you clear on what your next steps will be? This is important for the following reason;

Your client may never have disclosed their feelings and the impact on them of the relationship they are involved in with the using person. Furthermore there may be the safety and futures of children at stake, as well as financial and emotional security. They may well really feel like it is a live or die situation.

Bringing this to the fore then may elicit a variety of reactions. If they don't run away from you as a coach or in some other way end the coaching, and they stay in the relationship with you when

you bring these issues into the coaching, then this is a vital moment; full of responsibility for you the coach, and possibility for your client.

Yours may be the hand they grab as, despite the agenda of their Hidden client and the seeming insurmountable hurdles they face, they try to grapple with these issues. It won't be the first time they have struggled with it in themselves, but you may be the first human being who ever got to be present with them in this part of their lives and beings in this way.

So, before you take the next step check in with yourself.

As with the using client, get very clear in yourself as to what you are willing to offer this client. Are you willing to coach them and if so, do you have conditions that you will want them to meet? Be thorough in deciding what you think is at stake for you both in the coaching relationship before you proceed.

Are you willing to be available and present for the client in the post session period before the next session you have scheduled? This will be regardless of whether you will continue coaching.

If you are one of the few people or indeed the ONLY person who has knowledge of what is happening for the client or what might happen as a result of the session, then making yourself available to them in additional ways in the post session period is critical.

Taking this step is powerful and can lead to a crisis for the client. This can be in the form of extreme release of emotions, sadness, grief, anger and so on. They may feel exposed and out of control, and experience feelings of shame, guilt, fear and anger.

There may also be a considerable amount of relief for the client as well. It is not unusual for there to be tears about this relief as if a heavy burden is going to be or has been placed on the ground after a long haul. It will be most likely be a mixture of many different feelings and responses.

5. Opening the door

In previous sections we used the metaphor of opening the door in order to bring the issue of substance issue into the coaching relationship. In the module we broke down and set out several specific steps and approaches that can be used in bringing the topic into the coaching. This is not always necessary in the same way with someone who is close to a using person but nevertheless, it is sometimes necessary to take a planned approach.

As set out earlier, with the using person, the core issue is defenses. It is very common for relatives and friends to enter into a certain amount of defensiveness themselves around the using

person. Usually the closer the person is or the more intimate they are with the using person, the more intense and troublesome the feelings. There may be fear, anger (possibly rage) guilt, shame and feelings of powerlessness and loss of control.

Defenses then are mechanisms employed to protect themselves against these feelings as well as the circumstances that surround them. They can use minimizing strategies to downplay significant events so as to avoid really connecting with the impact of them and the feelings generated. These are in a very real sense survival strategies.

Defenses can mean that they obscure the real facts from you, their coach. If you have a client who you sense is covering up the issue or minimizing it, then you can take steps to bring it fully into the coaching relationship.

Whichever course you chose, it will end in the same place. The relationship with your client needs to be redesigned in order to integrate the issue they have with their using partner, friend or relative.

So, before we go to the design or redesign of the coaching relationship or relationship, there are some guidelines which are good to keep at the forefront of your mind. These are based on the guidelines in Coaching the Client and I will briefly reprise them here.

6. Guidelines

As you move along in the coaching, it can be helpful to revisit this as necessary to bring you back to a clear, centered and neutral space if so required.

a. Start from the compassionate place.

It's tough, confusing and painful to be close to someone who has substance or behavior use problems. In much the same way that we described earlier, it is vital to hold compassion center stage when working with these clients.

Often they will say and do things which make no sense to you rationally, and often those actions and decisions can seem to be leading the client to more pain and suffering. The nature of these dynamics between this client and the person they are close to with the issues are complex and nuanced and often defy logic.

In some ways this kind of client has become "dependent" on the person who is using, and can present behavior that is similar to substance or behaviour dependency. They may protect, deny and assist the using person, driven by an agenda of their own emotional dependence on them.

In some cases, close partners will try using substances with their significant other in a kind of “if I can’t beat em them join em” approach. In some cases the partner can end up becoming dependent on the substances themselves creating a complex web that involves the need for them to find their own recovery path in addition to dealing with the issue of their using partner and their relationship to them!

When this web includes children, it becomes all the more complex and the choices facing your client may well seem unbearably tangled and bleak. The client may be being physically or verbally abused. This may also be happening to children caught in the situation. In response to this, your client may become abusive back toward their partner or friend and even to their children as the stress takes its toll. This is a challenging scenario, confronting the risks attached to the client and any children are paramount.

Sometimes, if the clients using partner, child, parent or friend does not find and make a recovery and their using develops into full blown addiction, then your client may have to face the reality of that person’s incarceration and even death. The stakes are high!

Coaching this client is as challenging as coaching a person with a using problem. In some ways it can be even more challenging as it is often the case that all the focus goes onto the using person’s behavior. This is understandable, but for the client themselves to move toward their fullest life, they need to be able to become focused on themselves in a constructive way.

b. Be willing to have your judgments really tested.

As stated before substance or behaviors use issues are no respecters of people or values.

Defensiveness and the Hidden client reach out from the substance or behavior using person’s life into those around them. As mentioned above, defenses can develop in the friend, partner or relative. You, as the coach may find yourself marveling at your clients’ capacity to defend what is happening. You may find yourself being tempted to judge them. This is understandable. Who wouldn’t be tempted to judge a man who leaves his children in the care of his wife who he knows is drunk, stoned or gambling most of the day? Who wouldn’t be tempted too to judge someone who let the father of their children drive them home from school when high on drugs or alcohol?

Abuse can also occur against the client or their children. This is a hard place for the coach to stay focused, calm and attentive to the whole picture. These types of dilemmas crop up often when substance and behaviour use is well developed. When real dangers appear in these situations, it can be challenging for you the coach to be able to know where the line between coaching your client

to support them in taking self-responsibility ends and your duty to their safety or the safety of others begins. This also links to the issue of confidentiality, which we will cover in a later section.

When these situations become messy and challenging, the client often ends up stepping even further on their own values. A tendency to move to judgment will only reduce your capacity to stay neutral, clear headed and to working fully with your client across all of these possible scenarios.

c. Resist all temptations to label

In the same way that we don't diagnose or label our clients if they are using behavior or substances, so we refrain from being drawn into labeling or diagnosing our clients' partners, friends or relatives.

It may sound very like the husband or wife, girlfriend or boyfriend, daughter, son, brother sister is an "alcoholic" or "drug addict", but our role is **not to back up a client's diagnostic view.**

We can of course coach them on their viewpoint and assist them on planning responses and goals and the like. We can also support and coach them on seeking other resources that will be able to arrive at the appropriate diagnosis, we, however, are not that resource.

If a diagnosis is made by a third party resource and your client decides to work within that paradigm, then you work with them within it as well. Remember though that this paradigm can change and you will need to be able to reframe your position within that change.

Often, a person with substance or behavior use issues will have a period or respite from their using. They may have a particularly heavy period of out of control behaviour and be able to pull themselves up for a while. The impact on the client who is a partner, relative or friend can be powerful and their relief is so palpable that they can, for a time, retreat to a place of minimizing the events and experiences that occurred leading up to and during the bad stretch.

Because humans want difficult events and circumstances to end, they will sometimes adopt wishful thinking when the using person pledges themselves to reform or to dealing with the issues.

If they don't have a coherent recovery plan and powerful allies, it is unlikely that they will be successful in their attempts, leading to still more suffering for everyone concerned when the using begins or increases again.

Your client then may be very influenced by these varying periods and may exhibit the 'Flick Flack' described elsewhere.

d. Don't take sides

When working with the client, the most powerful space to take is the neutral one. As the client will most likely be moving in and out of defenses and other perspectives, it is best to be curious about the shifts that they go through.

The Hidden client will often be present in the relationship between the using person and their partner, relative or friend. The Hidden client will persuade them to go along with or believe all sorts of rationalizations or ideas about their behavior.

Sometimes your client will come to a session quoting the Hidden client. The challenge for the coach is to understand when you are coaching the authentic client or this Hidden client voice. We will take a look at this a little later.

Sometimes clients are being abused either physically or verbally or are living in fear of abuse. If this arises for the client, then it is important again that you don't take sides, but rather shift the coaching to a place where the client can engage with what they wish to do about their situation, how they might change it and how you as their coach can help make that happen. And of course there are ethical issues that may come into play. These will be covered later in this course.

e. Your unique role

In much the same way as people with using problems will hide them from those around them as long as they can, so partners, relatives and friends can and often do the same.

Feelings of shame and a wish to preserve their social status as well as to protect the using person can lead to extensive concealment by the using person and their partners, children and friends.

Before partners and relatives or friends are finally forced to step back from the chronically using person, they can go through a period where they retreat from interacting with the outer world in a way that will reveal the true state of affairs.

As mentioned before addiction in full flight is the great remover. If your client is married to or lives with a using person, it may be that they also have much of their life "removed" from them. Clients can experience financial insecurity, loss of social position, the ability to work and even the partner themselves can be lost if they are incarcerated or die.

Often, you as the coach will find that you are the only person left for them to work with on these issues. Because you neither cooperate with the role of victim nor judge them for whatever decisions they make, you, the coach, are uniquely placed to assist them with deciding just how they can develop and manage a recovery for themselves from the situation they are in.

The stakes then are as high for a client in this position and your role as their coach is crucial and unique.

7. Clients' ability to be coached

Before we start looking at the redesign of the relationship or coaching agreement, we need to pause and consider the client and ask this question:

How does the fact of a close relationship between the client and a partner, relative or friend who has a substance or behavior issue actually impact on the clients' ability to change and be successfully coached?

There are four main impacts

a. Limiting the client's options

The tendency to deny and the impact of the Hidden client will create no go areas; parts of the clients' life with the using person that only they know about.

Motivated by the desire to conceal certain facts, or to deny the reality of what is happening to them as a result of the relationship, the client may keep areas of their lives and who they are out of reach of the coaching sessions.

This reduces the space and the options available to the coach and client relationship. Like the using person, the client may not consciously know they are tending to conceal, for they may be concealing them from themselves as well.

b. Increased client fear & anxiety

For clients who are parents of children, what may be at stake is the future hope for their children, their feelings of adequacy as parents and their ability to control events and keep themselves and their children safe.

All of these issues are deeply painful and confronting and the tendency is for these clients to avoid and manage this pain.

The Hidden client in the using person also can capitalize on this tendency through a strategy of raising negative outcomes that the parent, partner relative or friend might suffer if they don't conform to certain behaviors that will assist the using client in maintaining their habit.

For example a husband to a wife *"If you tell my workplace that I was out drinking all night I could lose my job and then where you and kids be?"*

Or a teenage son to their parents *“If you report me for drugs I’ll kill myself!” or “I’ll never speak to you again.”*

Or a wife to a husband *“If you tell anyone about my drug/drink/pill/food problem it means you don’t love me and that will break my heart”*

In these complex interactions, always at stake is the fear of a great loss, of security, of life itself, love and approval. By creating such high stakes, the Hidden client keeps the levels of anxiety and fear high.

c. Shame, guilt & secrecy

The shame and guilt commonly felt by partners, relatives or friends of using people relates to either things they have done for the using client, or have done themselves in attempts to manage the situation. In these ways they have often trodden on their own values in order to control, rescue or manage the using person and their behavior and the situation.

Some things they have done may have transgressed their own value system. It may be lying to cover up for someone or turning a blind eye to illegal events or not protesting about events when they really wanted to. As mentioned earlier, they may even have tried to use substances with their partners as a way to have some power and control or impact on what is happening to them. It may also be as a way to deaden the suffering they feel in the situation.

In other scenarios, being unable to protect children or other people they care about can lead to deep feelings of inadequacy, anger, shame and guilt.

In addition to these types of events, the client may also take their own stress out on other people around them, further compounding feelings of shame and guilt.

The sum total of this shame and guilt creates a further urge to secrecy.

If the client is also being victimized or manipulated by the using person, their inability to resist and stand up to the person will most likely cause feelings of shame, guilt and anger too. This feeling of powerlessness is most debilitating. They feel that they ought to be able to do something, but in fact they can’t.

A natural tendency then will be to hide this from you, the coach, thus putting pressure on the coaching space and the space within it.

d. Low self esteem

Low self-esteem closes down the space and connection in the coaching. All of the ways we have mentioned above will have the accumulative effect of reducing the client’s esteem of themselves. In the coaching space, as much, if not all of the behavior that occurs when the client is coping with their relationship with the using person, comes under pressure from defenses and the

Hidden client, leading the client to resist disclosure for fear of connecting fully with their feelings of low self-esteem.

And most, if not all, of these behaviors and consequences will be undermining the authentic clients' ability to keep themselves held in value and as seeing themselves as valuable to others.

Often, the client will be able to express the low self-esteem directly but will not be able to say why they feel this way and hold themselves in this regard, for to do so may mean having to make the hidden and denied, visible and known.

Pressing the client at this point will not necessarily reveal the real issue, but often evokes, sometimes to the coaches consternation, defensiveness in the form of minimizing, justification, anger, rejection of the coach and other protective patterns.

8. Redesigning the relationship

If you are coaching someone who is a partner, relative or close friend of someone with these issues then this dimension of the client life is best brought into the relationship you have with them.

It may be that this is a new client and they come with this information or they are existing clients who have disclosed to you or you have found out that they have a close relationship with someone who has a substance or behavior use issue. It can be a husband, wife, lover, best friend, son, daughter, mother or father. It can also be a boss or someone they work closely with every day. Whoever it is, this relationship will be a factor in your clients' life, and if you are coaching them, then it is appropriate and will serve the client best if you design or redesign the relationship in light of this.

Alternatively, the person may have come to you specifically because you are a recovery and wellness coach and you work with people with these issues. Either way let's look at what is required in the design.

Here are the 7 areas;

The Coaching Container, Money & Payment, Permissions, Non negotiable, Commitments, Referring, Style

a. The client/coach container

The main purpose of revisiting the boundaries and agreements in your coaching relationship for a client in this situation is to develop and build a strong or stronger container. In much the same

way that a strong container serves to create a safe space for the using client, a specifically strong container will also serve the client who is in a relationship with a person who is using.

The stakes are high, the feelings powerful and the forces that would act against your client getting to their biggest and most empowered life are considerable.

For this client then, trust is a key issue. Trust in you, trust in the coaching relationship. Trust is forged in the strength of the boundaries and the forces that are contained within it; love, acceptance, compassion, a fierce commitment to the truth and the best and biggest life for your client.

Often, clients express feelings of chaos, which is sometimes, although not always, expressed externally through chaotic circumstances. Sometimes the client appears to be in control and indeed compensates for the places where their lives are out of control by keeping a tight control on what they can. Whatever way these issues are showing up for the client, it will be best for them to embark on working with you within a strong and clear container.

So what might make a clear container for this client?

The best course of action is to ask them. If they don't have a clear idea, then ask them to reflect on it and you can make this a suggested piece of homework. If they feel unsafe in their lives, this is a powerful question to ask them and often what is true for their relationship with you will apply to their other relationships.

Once you have their feedback, you can work with them to shape the agreements that they need to develop a strong safe place. Some of these items will be covered in the topics that are below.

b. Money & Payment

Unless your client does not have control of their own money, payment issues will be unlikely to become problematic other than as typical money matters generally arise with clients.

There can develop a tension between the client and their partner or the person they are close to who is using if they are required to manage and repair financial problems for the using client. This applies when the using is problematic and moving towards addictive patterns. The client may come under pressure to abandon support systems like coaching on the grounds of cost.

Low self-esteem in the client also influences the idea of paying for support and help. In an environment where there are competing financial needs, the client's low self-esteem may mean they put themselves last on the list of those to whom the available resources should be given.

Be clear here then with this client. It will be helpful to them to prioritize themselves in this way with you ensuring they will have access to the benefit of coaching with you.

c. Permissions

Ask for and get various clear permissions. This is important. If something comes up in a session that is delicate or which will test the strength of the coaching relationship, referring to these permissions before jumping in can assist you in keeping both you and the client reminded of your coaching agreement and what you have both agreed is acceptable within it.

i. To challenge

I ask the client if I can challenge them. I might then get clear with them about how they might like this to occur. so there is an aspect here that is about style as well.

I also cover some challenging ground that may become necessary in this type of coaching situation. Challenging a client to their biggest self or largest life is of course a key part of the coaches' kit. I want to cover though the need that may arise as an appropriate coaching act; to challenge the influence of the Hidden client.

Often, partners incorporate their partner, friend or relatives Hidden client within their own perspectives. These are adopted ideas, views and thoughts, most of which are designed to enable the Hidden client in the using person to continue serving its agenda; the using. The client then may adopt "reasons" for the using persons substance or behavior use which the client themselves have not really tested or in fact they really disagree with. Once noticed or felt in the coaching, the coach then can challenge this with the client.

So, in this part of designing the relationship, I am preparing the ground for the client so that we have some agreement about how we will work with this idea of challenge before we come across it in the heat of the session. At this point your client has not been exposed to the idea of the Hidden client so I do not mention the idea of challenging the Hidden client. This will most likely not make sense to the client if they have not yet learned about the Hidden client approach.

Later when the client does learn about it, then you can revisit the challenging issue and extend it to the Hidden client. (**Hidden Client 2 – Handout for Partners, Friends and Families** (see, teaching the client about the Hidden client below)

Once your client has understood the Hidden client concept and has agreed to use it with you in the coaching relationship, you can develop ***an relationship with the client*** to challenge the Hidden client together. ***This is crucial***, as it shifts the emphasis off the client directly and onto a part of the client and their using partner, friend or relative's Hidden client.

ii. To teach/train

There is much valuable information available for clients with these issues. Get their permission now to offer them information that may be helpful to them. This can be books on all sorts of topics not only related to substance use and the impact on families and groups. I encourage clients to learn as much as they can about being themselves (human) and wondering how to make sense of who they are and where they are going now with this new information.

For instance, I consider it crucial to have the client brought up to speed on defenses and how they work, and also about the concept of the Hidden client. I tell the client I may wish to offer them information from time to time, and we will pause the coaching for me to impart this information. In effect, I am training/teaching them something at that point. When we are finished, we can move back to a coaching stance. They get control of this process and permission is always sought.

iii. To offer to refer other professional contacts

I like to let the client know that if I consider it to be useful, I may suggest they get some support or assistance from another professional, practitioner or treatment. This might be a therapist, counselor or so on. I ask for their permission to talk to them about this.

d. Non-negotiables

Advise them that you have a legal duty and obligation to report it if you become aware that the client intends to or may unintentionally harm themselves or others. In addition, if you think the client or others in their household or family are at risk from someone close to them then, unless the client takes action to remove themselves or any others from this situation, you reserve the right to inform the authorities again subject to the local and relevant laws where you practice.

Make it clear that this is non-negotiable, i.e there are no circumstances in which you would agree to not taking the requisite action required by law and to protect them or others.

e. Commitments

At this delicate stage of the coaching, it is helpful that there are various reinforcements put in place. These are in the form of commitments that I discuss with the client and we agree to.

As mentioned in the container section above, one of the key objectives here is to prepare the ground for greater trust. By now, if you have been through the previous items we have been talking about, the space of the coaching may well be feeling clear and strong. This is good, but it may have also raised the clients' tension level as the container strengthens. This is a calling forth of its own and inside this container we need to find a few touchstones to do with trust.

So talk about your commitment to them and their commitment to the coaching. (This is not about money as I cover that in a separate part of the session)

I tell the client that they can expect from me;

i. Confidentiality

There is a sense of loyalty that quite understandably exists between your client and the using person. If they are to talk about what is going on in their relationship, the disclosure will most likely feel to them like a betrayal. If they are angry at the using person, then the anger may help them disclose the events or circumstances. As this anger abates though, it may be replaced by guilt and fear. Guilt at having betrayed the person, and fear that they might find out.

Confidentiality then is vital and I would suggest you make a clear unequivocal commitment to it. If you have done this before, now you will be able to reinforce it. Go slowly and with focused intent. I frame this by using examples most of which I intuit from what I am reading of the client. If they are in a relationship, I will use examples like infidelity, dishonesty and so on. I will make it clear that I am big, strong and un-shockable (which in fact I am) and that they are welcome to bring anything they like into the space.

It is possible that the client may also wish to bring into the space disclosures about themselves and what they have done. In the complex and unstable world that surrounds a substance or behavior user, family and partners often resort to acts that go against their own personal ethics and morals.

An example would be a woman taking money from her husband's wallet for food for the family as experience has shown her that he may not have any later having drunk or gambled it away. She effectively resorts to theft to manage her resources. In another example a man might spy on his girlfriend as she goes out alone to use drugs but has told him she has to work overtime. Or maybe a parent will search their daughter or sons room for signs of drugs, trying to make sense of some of their behavior.

In these types of cases, the cost to the relative and their values is high and they may struggle to acknowledge these behaviors to others including you.

It is not of course a necessity that they do so, and what is at stake here is not their behavior but their ability to have a choice about how they behave and how that shapes their lives.

So these clients need to know that whatever they bring to me, I will hold it confidential. Period. It will stay in the room with us and never ever leave unless they explicitly give me permission to do so. I make it clear that this applies to any other party or person who may have had some involvement in setting up the coaching.

Exceptions to this are of course anything that I am obligated to legally report, and depending where you are live and practice coaching, this is up to you to know. I make sure I tell them this again.

ii. To Non judgment

Following this is non-judgment. I give them a clear message that despite what they bring, I will do my best to not judge them. Clients who are wrestling with relating to someone with substance or behavior use issues are usually really good at judging themselves negatively, so they don't need me doing it as well.

We have learned from our look at implicit priming that a response with attached beliefs can often be evoked too quickly for an individual to stop the response.

So let's be clear, sometimes the issues you are having in this coaching specialty can be profoundly challenging. And we may respond from our own thoughts and feelings in ways that we find hard. We may in fact be triggered. What happens next is what defines your effectiveness and skill. If you cannot self-manage yourself in service of your client then you need to get some supervision and support. Non judgment means dealing with your responses so that they do not become externally placed upon and in your client's experience. They are sharing these matters with you at this deep and difficult level precisely because they have decided that you can cope with it or at least they will risk you knowing it.

Then what is the good to them if we get triggered, act out and collapse the principle of coaching? So we catch ourselves before we move to judgment and condemnation.

iii. To Compassion

I reiterate that I understand what they are going through. I will talk about my work with other clients and people in their situation (confidentially of course)

The important thing is to back up the self-management around non-judgment and confidentiality with a feeling of deep caring for this client and the journey they are on.

Perhaps it is possible that compassion might be hard to connect with for clients in these predicaments, but it could be the case. If you can't compassionately connect with this, then it would be good to think about not working with this client.

iv. To Stay the course

I acknowledge to the client that in the unpredictable world of being close to a using person, events and life outcomes may be unreliable and subject to arbitrary change.

If your client is to take a journey of change, then they will benefit from having some calm loving and positive centers around which to gravitate. You and your coaching with them can be such a center.

So it becomes important that they know that you are stable and going nowhere as long as they need your support and services. I tell the client that providing they are willing to turn up, then I will coach them as long as they need.

This is important as well and by placing this here in the designed relationship, we can refer back to it when it does get tough. This is as much for you as the client, for it can be very challenging to coach someone in this situation and you may find yourself wanting to throw in the towel.

Once I have been through my commitments I ask them what they are willing to commit to. As we go along, I try to articulate what they say as clearly as possible and make sure I make notes to remember what they tell me.

f. Referring a client

The issue of referring is relevant regardless of whether you will continue coaching the client, are going to take a break, or are going to end this particular coaching relationship.

Like a person with substance or behavior use, this client may need help from a source other than you. You are the coach, and part of working with this client is assisting them in finding out how they are going to integrate and manage the challenges of issues of their relationship to a person with substance or behavior use or addiction. In addition, this experience may have impacted them in ways that require other types of professional support and care.

So in this designing session, I always take a deeper look at the issue of referring. We have already asked the client if it is okay for you to talk to them about making a recommendation to refer them earlier on in the session. Now I come back to it as the last piece of the session. I also will just set out for the client what my role as a coach is in the referral place and make it clear that I am not replacing myself by referring.

i. When should you offer/agree to refer?

a. When your client wants you to

If your client is in crisis or if you sense that they need more or other kinds of support than what you can offer, then ask them. If they seem drawn to the idea then coach them on what it might be and what they feel would help.

If they do think they want some other kind of support, information etc., then you can get them to brainstorm and get a list of some kind going. Exclude nothing, however “out there” it may seem to you.

It may include one or more or even all of the following; medical doctor, rehabilitation clinic, counselor, nutritional consultant, psychotherapist, addiction counselor, Yoga/Pilates etc teacher, CBT practitioner, priest, meditation teacher and/or group, vicar, Rabbi, church group and so on.

Any kind of physical, emotional/ spiritual or psychological practitioner or facility is an option.

b. When you think that they might benefit from another resource

At some point in the coaching it may become apparent to you that the client is in need of services and support that you as a coach do not offer. It may of course be that you are a multi-disciplinary practitioner and have the resources to offer some other support that is not coaching and you may wish to step out of the coaching role and into another.

In the first instance, if you genuinely feel that the client needs some other assistance, then go ahead and offer it to them making sure that you set out your reasons and how what you are offering to refer them to differs from what you do. Unless you plan to make such a referral a condition of your coaching this client, (see c. below) then do not push the client in any way, but rather let them sit with it.

If you decide that you want to switch roles, then do so in a way that works best for you. It is my opinion though that in most cases the client will be best served by your referring them to a resource that is another professional rather than you being in both roles. This will give them a bigger resource with a wider spread and that is most likely to be of use to them

c. When you wish to make coaching conditional on a referral

As mentioned above, sometimes you may want to make it a condition of continuing or starting coaching that a client seeks some assistance in some other field. It is absolutely ok to do this, provided you understand the impact that this may have on the coaching relationship. I would strongly suggest checking this out with your client at some point in the future. It is likely to be a real issue.

If the situation from where you stand demands it, then follow your conviction.

If you think that the client may need a psychiatric assessment, medical support or other specialist support such as therapy, then tell them so.. Explain why without stepping into the realm of diagnostics and ask them if they are willing to accept this as a condition of the coaching.

If they ask you to suggest a practitioner, then do so if you have one that you want to offer. If the client would prefer to find one themselves, I would encourage them to do so.

A note of caution here, in my experience, it is *always* preferable if it is the client who themselves decides on a course of action such as reaching out for support or assistance from a resource other than you the coach. No matter how carefully you frame or set out your requirement that they see other practitioners, it will be tantamount to placing a possible barrier to entry to the deep coaching relationship with you that springs from their own agenda. I would always prefer to carry on coaching and see if the client decides to look for other resources for themselves on their own initiative that arises in the coaching.

As you will be unable to actually understand how your client is interacting with another professional and if they feel you have leveraged them into that relationship, then they may not be as frank and as open about including information from that relationship into your coaching with them. In other words, they may either withhold from you as an expression of anger towards you or as a punishment.

So, if you are going to make this type of referral a condition, be clear as to the implications and issues that may arise from it.

d. If you consider that the client is at risk or is a risk to themselves or others

This is the same as for the using person. If this client is at risk and has made this known to you, then referral may be a legal requirement. If in doubt, seek counsel from your support team.

iii. Setting up the referral

This task is approached in exactly the same way that I set out in *Coaching the Client* and I suggest you follow it in the same way.

g. Style

Again, this is approached in much the same way as I would for a client. This is really about finding out how your clients will best be served, according to them; by how you express certain aspects and things to them, how you set the tone and space of the coaching and how you manage your interactions with them.

With these clients then it is important to put attention on behavioral, linguistic and emotional triggers that the client may have.

All of us have triggers. These are cues or sensory stimulations that we pick up from people and environments around us. They are natural, necessary and part of how we draw on past experience and utilize information built up in our subconscious over the course of our lives.

Triggers have all kinds of effects on us both pleasant and unpleasant. In general, we are concerned here with triggers that close us down, send us into states of fight or flight. Generally, the

degree to which we are aware of them depends on how much personal development work we have done on ourselves. As coaches, this is often considerable. In many people though, the triggers are not known. With my clients I am aware that they may not have a good grasp on what triggers they have. As we progress through the coaching it will become apparent to the clients what kind of things trigger them into a closed down and dissonant place.

People who have been living in situations where a person close to them is using will often tend to have well developed defensive triggers, some of which are activated through ways of being that you as a coach may present. These triggers tend to activate in them, quite understandably, flight of flight responses.

So, the style question for your clients is a key factor in developing the kind of relationship with them that allows them to quickly develop trust in the coaching relationship. Delving into the ways the client would like to be interacted with not only gives you valuable information to work with them, but also invites them to be curious about themselves and what they do and don't like about the way the world and other people interact with them.

As mentioned earlier, we will be offering to tell our client about the Hidden client. If the client identifies the Hidden client in themselves, and the person they are close to and you agree to work within this concept, then triggers will be significant as the client will most likely be sensitive to ways that the Hidden client speaks to them. It is extremely useful to the client to get a clear grasp on how they are manipulated and controlled by the Hidden client. Once they do, they will be able to develop ways to increase their choice about how they react and manage this part of their relationship.

Finally – write it down

So, finally, it is not only a great idea to write this all down, but in my view essential. Do a simple document which sets out what you have covered and agreed to with your client. Sign it yourself and have them sign it. You won't have time in the session itself, so prep the paperwork ahead of time and quickly review and sign it at the beginning of the next session. We have a template you can use as a guide.

9. Defenses - teaching the client

In earlier sections we became familiar with the significance of defenses. Again, teaching a client about this concept is key, and as we have already obtained their permission to pause coaching and offer them things to learn which may be useful in the coaching, your first port of call should be these defenses.

I offer them a handout **Defences 2 – Handout for partners, friends and families**. This document sets out the relationship between defenses in a using person and how it also arises in the person close to them.

You can give them the handout at the end of the re-design of the relationship session. I like to give it in writing. It gives them time to read it at their own pace and you can also make it a homework request!

Get some accountability going around it, and thus you will increase the chance that the topic gets into the clients consciousness.

The topic and idea of defenses is universal and often the reaction to it is one of seeming to already know about it. Often the client will immediately recognize defenses in the other person. It may take a little more time and work for them to recognize it in themselves!

It is very unlikely that your client will not understand or recognize defenses as a concept that applies to the using partner or themselves. In the event that they do resist or appear to not know do NOT put off telling them about it. In time, they will most likely start to recognize it.

So, give them a handout and then go through it with them. Don't spend too much time on this, but make sure they get the key points. Then they can keep the handout and take it home. You can do this either at the redesigning session or at the next available opportunity. If you feel your client can get something out of it without you, then make sure they get the handout.

Having familiarized them with the topic, you can refer to it within the coaching and develop it as a tool for them to use as they navigate their way through the issues thrown up by their relationship to the using person.

10. Teaching the client about Saboteurs and the Hidden client

As we have already established, teaching our clients about the saboteur is a vital part of the coaching process. Extending and shaping this teaching to include the Hidden client is then fairly simple if you have laid the saboteur groundwork already.

In working with a new client it is recommended to teach about saboteurs in general and do some work around getting to know what particular ones the client can recognize **before** developing this into the Hidden client saboteur framing.

The Hidden client in partners, friends and family members

The Hidden client manifests differently in people close to a using person. Often the using persons Hidden client will appear to colonize or occupy part of the character or personality of the

person close to them. In this way, the Hidden client extends its reach within its familial or friend group and thus extends its ability to both maintain substance or behaviour use and procure further opportunities to reinforce, protect and continue it.

Relatives and friends will seek to protect the person that they are close to and will often set out similar arguments in defense of the using person's behavior or will try to explain it away using arguments and protestations they have absorbed from the Hidden client in the using person. For example, John has a story that he is drinking too much due to "pressures" at work. This "reason" which may or may not be valid, is then repeated by Mary, his partner, to others as an explanation to the wider world as to why John is behaving in certain ways and drinking as he does. This of course is not an uncommon occurrence between couples, however where substance use or behavior is involved, the reason John's work pressure claims, tend to go untested by his partner. Deeper thought and investigation about John's work issues would most likely reveal that he may be medicating himself with alcohol for feelings he has around his work and his responses to it. While the focus is kept on the job, it is easier for John to go on drinking. A shift in focus to other aspects, such as his ability to say no, the way he works with groups and how he manages stresses would begin to reveal the deeper relationship of dependence on alcohol. While the job remains the stated problem and reason there will be little progress. Unless John and Mary find ways to have different conversations Mary will continue to support the Hidden clients' presentation of the reason John drinks.

The Hidden client is adept at presenting various scenarios or reasons why certain behaviors take place. All of these reasons will be supporting the behavior, the use of the substance or behavior. In this way the Hidden client colonizes partners, friends and relatives.

This imported Hidden client then blends with other saboteurs within the client, effectively producing a unique version of the Hidden client. The agenda of this Hidden client is mostly to assist the *using person* in continuing the using.

Often it will employ saboteurs within the person close to them, your client, to bolster thinking processes and emotional responses that support the using. This becomes evident as the issue of defenses also unfolds for the client and they see where they are witnessing defenses in the person close to them and in themselves.

So, once I feel that my client has a grip on saboteurs (and they feel they do) and once we have established and redesigned the new relationship, I will offer them the **Hidden Client 2 – Handout for Partners, Friends and Families**

In much the same way you did with defenses I give them this information and go through it with them. If it resonates with them, then I will ask them to consider seeing if we can work with this in our coaching, as and when needed.

If the client agrees to this, then at the next session I will take some time to have the client design the Hidden client **as they see it in the person they are close to** as much as possible. This helps the client to get a clear view of the Hidden client in the using partner. This is important as this will assist them in separating out the Hidden client from the authentic. I then ask them to set out what it is that they think the Hidden client in the using person wants.

Then I ask the client to make a list or journal of all the ways in which they may have assimilated or taken on board the Hidden client they have previously described. If they find that they can (and they usually can), then I then have them see which of their own saboteurs have been enlisted to the Hidden clients cause. Again, we write these down. This then is the beginning of the client getting a clear picture of **their own Hidden client**. I ask them what agenda they think this Hidden client is serving, (i.e what does it want) and we spend some time in looking into and making that clear. If the client is comfortable with the idea that they have their own clear Hidden client, then I have them revisit what it looks like, its characteristics and so on in order to distinguish it from the characteristics of the Hidden client they have previously described in the person they are close to.

If it is not immediately apparent to the client that they have taken on board some of the Hidden client from the person they are close to, then I will leave this step and come back to it later, having them reflect on it as a piece of homework.

Here is a brief summary of the steps:

- i. Have your client describe and design the Hidden client in the person they are close to who is using. Get them to describe specific character traits, style of speaking, tone etc e.g blaming, justifying, protecting, wheedling, intimidation etc
- ii. Have them set out what they think the Hidden clients' agenda is.
- iii. Have the client make a list of any of the above characteristics that they may have absorbed from the Hidden client. e.g blaming, justifying, protecting etc

- iv. Have the client see if any of their saboteurs are aligned with the Hidden client
- v. Have the client set out what they think **their** Hidden clients' agenda is.
- vi. Now have the client fully describe their Hidden client and give it as far as possible a clear identity so that the client can keep it easily and clearly in focus whenever necessary.

Once this Hidden client is established, then it can be integrated into and worked with in the coaching.

11. Where to next?

Let's step back for a moment and take stock of where we are at this point in the coaching relationship with your client.

You have redesigned the relationship and taken a good look at boundaries, issues around money, developed and deepened commitments and agreements. You may have agreed on a referral for the client that they have decided to look into. Your client has agreed to let you offer them information about certain things and this includes information about defenses and the Hidden client.

You may have given them the handouts on these two topics and they have considered them. Your client may or may not be in some stage of conscious defensiveness. If they are using substances or behavior in a problematic way then it is now a question of time.

By this point, you and your client have covered a lot of ground together; new ground containing seeds of information and many more possibilities for them. At the same time, we have moved the whole life frame of the client to just that, their whole lives, including the fact of their close relationship with someone who has issues with substance or behavior use.

All clients come to coaching to get something more of what they wanted, although this may have been presented as less of something they didn't want (the problem), but in the coaching you will have discovered with them what it is they do want or at least commenced a journey towards that place of clarity.

In the next sessions with this client, it is a great time to invite them to visit the world that they inhabit in their future that they wish to create in their now. This will revitalize the coaching and make for a shift back to the positive creative possibilities that exist for them.

They will start a journey where they will uncover as they go along, more and more information about what makes them tick, holds them back, spurs them on. What they are tolerating and what is possible to change.

They will be dealing either successfully with the part of them that is Hidden or it will be running them. Neither of you yet knows what the outcomes are going to be and how successful they will be at becoming fully at choice.

What we do know is that they now have more information and insight into what they are facing in their lives, and so more options to engage with you their coach on how to interact with it.

As stated in Module 3, in the end much of the success is defined by the presence of willingness. This is an internal shift only the client can make. What you can do is create an environment in which that shift may be more likely to occur and this is the space you have been creating within your actions in redesigning the relationship, offering teaching and information.

In coaching, the most powerful space we can offer people is the wide open strong loving and unshakably neutral non-judgmental space that lies at the heart of a great coaching relationship.

If there is anything other than our client that we as coaches need to place our attention on, it is this space and our presence in it.

12. The “bottom”

We have looked at the progression of substance or behavior use into addiction, if this progression takes place (it does not always) and if the person is left unassisted or cannot find other ways to manage the progression then it may well get worse.

Those close to a person who move through these stages can always move away from the using person, even disconnect from them altogether and rebuild their lives out of contact with them. This is not so easy to do where there may be children of the relationship or where the using person is your own child or close relative. It is true to say though that the client has more options than the using person themselves, not that exercising some of them are necessarily easy.

Implementing those options is of course challenging and presents a powerful and emotional journey. In some cases separation occurs through the using person either being placed in an institution or in some cases being imprisoned. And of course in extreme cases, death occurs which presents a whole new set of challenges for those left behind, one of whom may be your client.

Whatever the journey and direction, it seems that people close to a using relative friend or partner can experience a bottoming out or a collapse where they experience a total loss of confidence and ability to see how they can continue on their current life path. Confronted with the various consequences of both the using persons behaviors and the consequences of their own attempts to manage or deal with the situation they are in, there is sometimes a breakdown of all coping mechanisms and strength that leads to such a collapse.

What the characteristics and details of this collapse are is different for everyone and it never ceases to surprise me just how varied these details are. At the same time there are also common features too usually those of despair, shame and guilt.

There can be several “bottoms” for people as stated before. (One metaphor that can be useful is of the ocean floor reaching out from the shoreline that descends in a series of steps or bottoms on its way to the deep, each successive bottom deeper and darker and under more pressure than the previous).

It has most likely been the work of defenses and the Hidden client that have manifested in them that has kept them away from making clear self-actualized decisions about how to respond and manage the fact of their close relationship with the using person.

The bottom then is also a place of hope and often the place where a new way of living and life begins.

For as long as the using person is in the place where everything appears to have collapsed, there can appear a moment of clarity forged somehow from the broken and the fractured. This is a complex place that contains powerful feelings and themes and a large capacity for learning and self-illumination, as well as a large capacity for self-harm and shame.

As coach then, you need to be able to be with this client in this place without trying to fix or rescue and it is vital the coach acknowledges the clients experiences and feelings.

Do not try to solve anything, but by all means have some ideas on standby for them, preferably ideas that you brainstormed together when you redesigned the relationship. Wait though until the client casts around for ideas as to what to do.

At the bottom, the client may, as the using client may have too, for the first time, realize that they need a plan. A recovery plan that will help them out of the place they have arrived at and which will offer them a road back to a life they want.

At this point the client is most likely scared, angry and sad with the strongest drivers in their situation being fear, guilt and shame. The desire to move away from these feelings will drive their actions and decisions at this time. This is part of their **Motivational Direction**.

Anger

A word here about the value of anger;

The anger emotion and energy is potentially one of the most useful tools that your client can harness to assist them in the journey back from the darkness of their personal rock bottom. Anger, a much maligned emotion, is a vital transforming force. It can ignite like a bright jewel in the darkness of despair. Turned back from the shadows of blame, revenge and destruction, and aligned with compassion, integrity and vision it transforms into deep determination leading to clarity and action and love. If your client is angry, this is very positive. The key here is what your client will do with this energy.

Most of the time in the coaching we have been looking to what it is the client wishes to create, what they are drawn to, what is possible for them, what they dream of, and we have been with them as they created goals for themselves. At this point, these may have vanished into the chaos that has surfaced in the now. Faced with the mess and discord, the clients' attention turns to wanting to move away from this with thoughts of the future, for the time being, gone.

If the client can clearly make a link between their situation and the chaos, then this is fertile ground.

If you and the client have been working with the Hidden client concept, you can ask the client what the Hidden client has to say about what is going on. Often this will quickly bring the client face to face with the Hidden clients' illogical and ill thought out agenda. Asking the authentic client what they feel about the Hidden clients view will encourage the authentic client to strengthen their voice.

If the client decides they want to take some action, create a recovery plan or get more help then coach them to that place. Design some action, offer to support a referral and make it concrete and finite with accountability well built in.

This is a key moment. It may also not be the first or last key moment. Be aware that the bottom can be visited more than once and with varying degrees of pain and suffering before the client finally is able to start creating a good recovery plan that might work for them.

Clients can often chose strategies for recovery plans that either don't work or that are chosen by their Hidden client. In that case, coaching them to learn from these choices is vital.

This is to be expected in this work, and discouraging as this may be for the coach, managing such discouragement is important.

13. Strategize with the client for their recovery plan

Take steps with this client to bring the idea of working on a plan together into the coaching. Enrolling them clearly and consciously to the fact that they now are in a team with you and you are going to bring your resources to assist them will bring focus and a rallying point to them. It also adds accountability into the situation.

So, explore the possibilities with your client when they are ready. Find out what they see as the first wins they wish to make, assist them in breaking these down into the best most doable steps. Go gently.

Expect flip flopping and, if there has been a significant hitting bottom, be ready for their resolve to weaken. Ask them about this and see if they can tease out for themselves the part of them that is their authentic selves and the part that are defenses and the Hidden client reasserting itself.

a. What is key when the client chooses a recovery course of action

Clients can quite possibly choose many different recovery routes. As a coach, it is not for us to push or recommend any particular method or path.

Here are some of the different areas in which recovery plans can be all or partly located and/or implemented; Religious institutions and practices, family treatment programs, self-help organizations (e.g Alanon, Families Anonymous etc), spiritual practices such as meditation, physical therapies and practices such as Yoga and Pilates, psychotherapy, therapy, counseling, retreats and remote living communities, men's or women's groups.

The recovery plan may well end up consisting of combinations and variations of all these areas.

As a coach then, the following are key:

- The coaching position is outside of all direct treatments or therapies or other components that may be available to and chosen by the client.
- As coaches, we journey with our client as they make their recovery choices, coaching them to engage with the plans they chose and create and assisting them in adjusting it as required. We are then, **permanently client sided**, during the process of the clients' recovery journey **whatever that journey looks like**.
- The client may go off say to a treatment facility. The coach will leave them at the door and the client participates in the treatment program. Afterward, the coach continues with the client

whether the treatment is considered by the client (or the treatment facility) to be successful or not.

- We hold the biggest picture we can for our client, and as they integrate their recovery plans, we keep them mindful of the big agenda that exists for them. Coaches hold the focus for the client's biggest life over and above recovery from any substance or recovery use or addiction they may experience.

Your task as coach, is to assist the client in engaging as fully as possible with the elements of the chosen plan of recovery, help them process doubts, difficulties and help them stay connected to the biggest agenda, the possibility of their lives and most of all be a neutral place where they can find non judgment and a strong container.

There may well be many stops and starts; days when it works and days when it doesn't. There may be switches and changes to the plan, and even an abandonment of the plan altogether. Sometimes it is put down only to be picked back up again.

The Hidden client in both this client and the using person close to them will try to interfere with changes that seem to affect the using person's ability to use. Your client may well have to manage plenty of powerful reactions from the using person as the client changes their behavior and path.

It is not though for us to point out the folly of a particular course of action. The bottom line for the client is this; is it working? Clearly if it isn't, then we will want to see how we can assist our clients understand why it isn't working, what their part is in it and what they need to change in order to move on and make it work..

14. Accountability

Accountability is of course a powerful driver of the clients desire to transform. By being in action, they are changing their experiences and the view from their lives and so they have the opportunity to learn about themselves.

So accountability for our clients is key, and indeed coaching without accountability is not coaching! With these kinds of issues on the table, it may also become one of the rockiest areas of the coaching relationship.

I have previously mentioned that the client in the recovery process may well flip flop from one set of plans and actions to another. This extends into committing to some behaviors and then wanting to change their minds. In all of this, accountability can become buried in the constant change.

Client's accountability will then benefit from simplicity and clarity. I usually ask the client to commit to something that is extremely achievable and simple at first. This makes getting a few done coaching homework assignments banked more likely so developing the clients 'wins' on that front.

15. Clients don't always find a solution

It is unclear why some clients do and some clients don't manage to find a positive and fulfilling path in their lives while being close to someone who has a substance or behavior use issue. This is not altogether surprising particularly in cases where children are involved.

The emotional landscapes and the intricate ties that develop between people in these situations are complex to tease apart and full of pitfalls. In some ways it is clearer and easier for the person with the substance or behavior use, for they will eventually be faced with direct decisions that are often of an extreme nature. They may face losing their loved ones and family, prison or illness, insanity or death. These are, to many people, great motivators.

If they are a partner to someone who has a problem with substance use, the imperatives to personal change are not so extreme or draconian. Rather the calls to action and change on their part are a response to personal unhappiness and feelings of powerlessness that have eventually made their whole life seem reduced somehow, like an ongoing deep ache or sorrow. Often, friends, family and partners are faced with choices, all of which seem to have a cost to them that are unappealing. A damned if you do, damned if you don't dilemma.

At these times I believe that the best and most powerful place to invite your client is to the huge possibility of their own lives and how to find and keep to that path. Paradoxically, this is most likely the place where they can be of best service to the using person. When and if the using person finds their own path, when it is time, then at the beginning of that journey the friendly fulfilled face of their partner, close friend or parent will be a source of sustenance for the recovery journey.

To shatter our own lives by orbiting around that of the using person serves almost no one except the Hidden client and its agenda. It is unlikely to move us toward our deeper purpose or to the salvation of the person we love.

Where children are involved, these clients often stand faced by even starker choices. Who wishes to deny a child the relationship in whole or part to their parent or siblings? Who wishes to be the one to take sole care of children when already the circumstances under which the family lives are strained and uncertain? These are powerful dilemmas that may never be satisfactorily worked out by people in these situations.

You will find there will be many false starts, failures, u-turns and times when the client wants to give up. If you can be there with them holding their biggest lives in the frame, willing them on to

pick themselves up and carry on their journey, then you will have performed a deeply important service indeed.

16. Clients with more than one issue

Coaching a partner, family member or friend who also is using substances and/or behavior.

In earlier sections we looked at coaching a client who is using some substance and/or behavior. In this module, we are looking at a client who is a partner, close friend or family member of someone who is using a substance and/or behavior.

It is not though always so neatly divided and it is often the case that you will find both of these descriptions apply to a single client.

There are many reasons why people are drawn to each other, and of course people who have common pursuits and interests spend time together, form relationships and get married, move in together, start families and so on. People who like using substances (e.g. drinking alcohol) are drawn to each other and the use of alcohol or drugs as well as other behaviors will naturally form a part of their relationship and lifestyle. This is a perfectly natural and obvious situation. The same can apply to low level recreational gambling, sexual pursuits, a recreational use of narcotics and so on. In short, while the use does not become problematic, then all is usually well.

This does not only apply to partners, but to groups of friends, groups of work colleagues and so on.

It can also be a feature of the relationship between parents and their children. Some family social dialogues and habits revolve around drinking or certain behaviors. This then leads to family systems that contain members who may have or be developing a substance or behavior use issue while simultaneously be in relationship with a relative who may be going through the same issues. We can quickly see that this kind of familial environment is complex, nuanced and certainly clients from these circumstances may be more challenged than others who come from different communities.

So, there are many permutations and you may end up coaching a person who is both struggling with being close to a person with a substance use or behavior issue and **who also has** a substance or behavior use problem themselves. They may also have children or parents who are using as well as a social network that also revolves around using.

If you do find yourself in this position with an individual client, then below are the two key focuses to hold and develop with the client:

a. Know who is talking

It is helpful for the coach and the client to know the clear position from which they are viewing their life around them. Which part of them is talking and what is the main position? Are they talking as the using person or as the person close to someone else using?

It is important to keep both of these perspectives present in the coaching and to try to develop, with the client, a clear picture of how they differ. This is particularly helpful when it comes to keeping the Hidden client clearly in the client's frame of reference. The Hidden client will appear in both perspectives, but crucially serving different agenda's; that of the client themselves and that of the person close to the client. They may also be one and the same thing as they may be using together.

The client will also be able and often will move from these positions and perspectives very quickly. After some time of attentive listening, you will be able to notice the shifts. Being able to do this will allow you to help the client notice for themselves as well as gain some measure of conscious choice over which place they will occupy and when.

b. Ask the client to prioritize their life agendas

Your client will have more than one life agenda. As coach, my job is to help the client find the biggest most alive agenda at that time and serve that. As mentioned before, this agenda is often revealed in what the "problem" brought to the coaching is. It may be they want a better relationship with their partner, a different job or career, or perhaps they want more time, less stress, there are endless combinations. Underlying all these wants that they can't seem to fulfill lies the deeper agenda of how they wish to experience their lives emotionally, physically and spiritually.

The client then may be using because they live with a difficult situation. They may be medicating themselves to manage the feelings that arise when they are unable to change that situation to one that is closer to their deepest agendas. They may also be using because they find that the substance or behavior appears to be helping them fulfill these desires.

What is crucial is to not become caught up on trying to understand all this in its endless permutations. What you the coach need to find with the client are the big flagship resonant desires, over and above relief from their immediate suffering, that they have come to find.

With these firmly focused in the coaching relationship, you can invite the client to consider their possibility and progress from both the perspective of the using person and the perspective of being close to another using person.

17. Victim or perpetrator?

Clients occupying both their own substance and behaviour use issue perspective and being close to someone with a substance and behaviour use issues can often move between the two positions of both perpetrator and victim within these respective positions.

When under the influence of mood altering drugs or alcohol, or when latched onto certain behavior, the client may become emotionally present in destructive and manipulative ways. Where these emotions and their behaviors are not suppressed by the client themselves or other more powerful people, the client may become a perpetrator of violence, physical and emotional on those around them in order to get what they want.

This approach, if it is in some ways effective, can then become an adopted approach to many situations in life whether they are under the influence of a substance or behavior or not, becoming habitual perpetrators of violence and abuse.

A client who is in a close relationship with someone like this may well develop a victim role born out of being actually victimized and being unable to remove themselves from the situation and as a corollary to the role of the perpetrator.

This victim stance may well develop into a life coping mechanism as well as becoming an adopted habitual way of interacting with the external environment.

To add to the complexity of these types of roles, it is possible that some clients will be adopting both positions according to the social grouping within which they are present at any given time. So they may be overbearing, controlling and dominant at home but less so or even subservient in other wider social groups.

The descriptions above may seem extreme. On reflection though, it can be seen that many of us, whether we have substance or behavior use issues or not can discern the flavor of these two key roles in ourselves and our clients. How do we deal with bullies when we come across them? What is our reaction to those who seem to be unable to say “no” when they wish to and who are overly keen to do others bidding?

Articulating these key roles to your clients and having them explore them can be illuminating, useful and challenging. To observe oneself as a perpetrator or a victim is often distasteful and many clients will resist this. The words themselves carry baggage and it can be helpful to only use these specific terms if your client does.

Skilled coaching can, through the use of curiosity, bring these ideas into the coaching space, allowing the client to interact with them and test them out for themselves.

18. Co-dependency

Many people locked into difficult emotional relationships with using people will be somewhat co-dependant. (*Co-dependency is a specific topic which is the subject of a separate module – available soon*).

A co-dependant person is someone whose emotional balance and condition is entirely or partially dependent on the approval or attention of another or others, to a degree that disables or diminishes their ability and/or capacity to manage and change their own emotions and take autonomous actions without fear of others disapproval.

The co-dependent person may have developed strategies for coping with this, which may include the use of drugs, alcohol, sex or other behavior to mask or overlay uncomfortable emotions and feelings of powerlessness and anger that arise in them.

They may also disassociate from their feelings through over rationalization, excuse making or convoluted explanations.

Other characteristics are defences, low self esteem, compliant/control patterns, intimacy issues, caretaking.

For many co dependant people, another person becomes their drug or substance. In much the same way as reliance on a substance evokes defensiveness, so too does this reliance on another human being. People who are co-dependant, who depend on their sense of self being driven and derived from another, will develop a defense system that protects any threat that may loosen that dependent connection.

So, your client, who is in a relationship of some kind with a using person, may also be co-dependent. As a coach, this is something to be curious about and to bring into the coaching.

You can give them a handout on co-dependence (see **Co-Dependence**) and then ask them, as homework, to respond to the ideas in a future session.

Working with a client who recognizes and is willing to attempt to shift their co-dependent issues provides a coach with some of the most rewarding and also frustrating coaching experiences. One of the challenges will be dealing with the client developing a co-dependant relationship with you. These and other unique aspects of coaching in these situations are covered in the forthcoming module on the topic.

19. Familiarity & resistance to change

People often fear the change they wish for or dream about. For relationships that are entangled with substance or behavior use, this is certainly often the case. In many instances it can

seem somewhat bafflingly clear that, confronted with real change in the person they are close to, your client may start to back track, resisting the changes occurring around and in them.

Familiarity is an all body and mind experience. That the familiar may be painful does not preclude it being an extremely powerful force that resists change. Imagine for a moment that all that is familiar to us is multi layered with the deepest enduring connections existing at the lowest levels, the power of the connections reducing as we ascend through the layers.

People find the easiest items to change exist close to the top. These would be the minor recent circumstances of their lives, what time they get up perhaps, or what they wear, what brands they buy in the store and so on. Then they would have other familiarities that have existed for them over longer periods of time such as their home, the people they live and work with. Below that would be deeply engrained habits of behaving and thinking and default responses emotionally to their world and the events within them, knitted into the really long term familiar places and people.

These layers also contain links between them where what appears to be a high level insignificant familiarity may be linked to a much deeper familiarity. With these types of connections, the seemingly insignificant issue is actually deeply resistant to change due to this connection.

As we move along in our lives, new experiences, people and places come into it. If they remain with us, for example a relationship, they mature in familiarity and slowly sink down into the deeper layers of familiarity. They also knit into other channels of familiarity that are already present with echoes of other relationships and people being drawn into a emotional web.

When a client starts to experience levels of discomfort or suffering with a situation, be it a relationship that has moved from causing joy and fulfillment to one that has shifted to manifesting conflict and pain as well, then they will start to think about changing it.

Understanding how familiar this relationship is and what it may be connected to is extremely useful to both the client and the coach for the strength and nature of the familiarity will directly affect the amount of resistance to change that the familiarity will generate.

When catastrophes occur for clients, such as the death or confinement of a close friend or relative or an unredeemable event such as an untreatable illness, then the change is forced by the circumstance.

This forced change can produce shock, grief, anger and in some cases relief for the client. When working with a client who has a relative or close friend who has serious problems with substance or behavior use, there may be pervading fears that they cannot make the changes they really wish to, as it may precipitate such a catastrophe.

For example, a client who wants to ask their son who is using drugs to leave their home. The fear is that they will precipitate an action by their son that may be catastrophic either circumstantially

or emotionally for the son; such as the son threatening to sever all communication with the client or threats of physical violence or of suicide.

If these kinds of dynamics have been present in the relationships of the client for a while, they too in their turn will have become familiar through repetition. As this occurs over time, again the familiarity becomes a force of resistance to change for the client.

If your client is both close to a person who is using as well as having using issues themselves, then there are further complexities to this familiarity.

The resistance to change then is connected to the loss of something deeply familiar. This perceived loss is tempered by the building suffering that may be associated with the person or situation. As this suffering worsens or lengthens, the fear of loss of familiarity may seem less daunting than in earlier stages. It's as if there are a set of scales that shift in balance.

So what can coaches do to help our clients manage this resistance to change?

Prepare the client

If you bring this idea of familiarity and resistance to change to the coaching relationship, your client will have the opportunity to engage with the ideas and prepare themselves with you. Resistance to change is very close to defensiveness and can look the same, although in my experience is not.

Ask the client what they would like to have happen in the coaching should they find themselves resisting the changes they are working for. Specifically ask them how they want you to be with them if you notice that they may be resisting.

Have a plan

Invite them to develop a plan to manage the loss of the familiar.

Here are my suggested three key strategies:

1. Expand other familiar aspects of the client's life.

If a client is for example planning to change a relationship in some way with a using person, this may open up significant time that had been previously been occupied with the relationship. This is an opportunity to increase time spent with other familiar people. The client could for instance ask close friends or relatives if they could plan to spend more time with them in the coming days/weeks/months. If the client can enroll these other familiar people in their lives to the cause for the coming change, this can help.

2. Renew the familiar places.

If the client is remaining in a home that they are or have been sharing with someone using then a makeover of the familiar space can help the shift. This applies whether the client is ending a relationship or not. They may just be moving to a different way of being within that relationship. Repainting walls, changing furnishings, introducing new smells, lighting, all these small shifts in a familiar environment will help the clients mind as it moves into the new.

3. Fast track and develop new familiar activities and places

As stated before, the more time that passes or exposure that occurs around a person, place or event, the more familiar it becomes. Ask your client to draw up a list of activities, people or places they would like to become familiar with. This will also be part of their bigger agenda for themselves.

Have them prioritize the top three, then choose one as a start. Work with them to create a plan to connect with the activity, person or place. Ask them to build into the plan an intensive first phase where they expose themselves to what they have chosen as much as possible in a short period.

For example a client decides they want to go to karate lessons. Ask them to go to as many karate lessons and classes as they can within a 2 week period. This could be every day or say three times a week. After the two weeks, it will begin to acquire a familiarity although their skill levels will not develop in the same way. Ensure that they are fully aware that the value of this process lies in the familiarity rather than in the acquisition of any skill.

The same applies to say developing a new favorite places to be with friends. Ask the client to meet a good friend or friends as often as they can at a certain coffee shop, restaurant or park, anywhere the client is drawn to that they don't know.

As they build up these new points of reference, they become familiar quickly through frequent exposure. They also are what I call "clear" spaces, ones that carry little psychological baggage. In fact, as they are born out of your coaching relationship, they also carry with them the deeply supportive energy that flows from the loving, accepting and safe environment that you have created with your client.

In reality, the process of change is not simply linear in time, nor is it something the course of which anyone can accurately predict. How it unfolds, the course it takes are always mysterious. We can though create environments for our clients within which the changes they seek and desire are nurtured and more likely to manifest.

20. Intervention

As mentioned in Module 2, as people with using and addiction problems become more unstable, and their condition and lives worsen, the pressure builds up from those close to them for someone to “do something!” That “something” that can sometimes be done is often called intervention.

Structured intervention can take many forms, and it is not important to go into them all here.

Broadly speaking, interventions are often necessarily confrontational and include ultimatums with consequences, although this may not always be the case.

It is of course perfectly natural that those close to a using person wishes for there to be change or some shift, leading to a “recovery” of some kind, which also offers some peace for those close to them.

These expressions for action focused around the using person are heartfelt and deeply emotional. They should then be treated with the greatest respect by a coach. There is a “but” here of course. That is simply that the greatest service you can offer your client is not to be drawn into trying to fix it with them; i.e. don’t give in to the temptation to try to arrange or become involved in an intervention.

What you can do is coach them to a wider understanding of what an intervention represents, what other ways they might receive the benefits of an intervention. If it is felt that this is a course of action they wish to take, then you can support and coach them to find referral sources who do offer intervention services.

I strongly recommend that coaches keep themselves distinctly separate from the actual process and maintain a focus on supporting their client as the process unfolds and the effects are felt in the clients’ life.

Interventions often do not work in the way intended, and can cause other consequences for those around the using person that are unexpected and sometimes irreversible.

Interventions can sometimes come in the form of simple actions with potentially huge consequences. For example a client telling the authorities that their son is selling drugs to maintain a drug habit can result in a custodial sentence and a criminal record for the son. It can also generate a rift between the client and the son and great feelings of conflict and guilt. In short a simple action with possibly devastating consequences.

While it is impossible to make generalities about whether such a course of action is desirable, what can be said and should be remembered is that holding this focus with your client is crucial for them to work through the choices and varieties of consequences that may ensue.

21. Family systems

Severe substance and behavior use as well as addiction has been often called a family illness.

As stated before we do not want to get caught up in the debate about whether using is an illness or not, however the idea of a “family” illness points to the crucial understanding that the using and its consequences cause ripple effects to all those close to the person. These ripples can sometimes rise into crashing waves threatening to engulf whole families.

The range of response to these events is wide. Some members of families can appear to deal better than others with the issues as they arise. Children and young people may be affected in ways that only become clear years later.

When coaching a client who is a part of this system, it is important to remember the deep interconnectedness of the group they are a part of. You are also coaching this group through your client.

There can be many conflicting agendas and your client may find themselves in seemingly complex and no win situations.

I recommend that you acquaint yourself thoroughly with how your clients’ family grouping is constituted. Then check in regularly with them around how the relationships with those other family members are being experienced and managed.

It is often the case that the short term problem solving agenda of your client is in fact the agenda of the whole family, and as such they are carrying the responsibility for making the changes happen.

Finding a balance between these collective responsibilities and the clients own deepest wishes are paramount. The clients’ fulfillment will not be served if they only focus on what the dilemma is and that it needs to be solved. By looking further into a future where they see bright prospects for themselves and all the other members of the family, they can see a bigger, better picture despite the current crisis.

The slow subtle dysfunction

Not all families or relationships which involve a using person are outwardly problematic. Often, the events that occur that are giving rise to unhappiness are subtle, seemingly small and over quickly. In some, these types of manifestation are harder for clients to confront than large showy painful crisis that all can see. The subtle infiltration of lives by problematic using often goes unnoticed and unassisted. The power of subtle emotional violence is hard to see in children or a spouse. The

constant unpredictability of a using person can foster deep insecurities in families, even when that unpredictability is unobtrusive and hard to discern to outside observers.

It is important to not underestimate what might be going on for the client who shows up with a heavy drinking spouse or a recreational drug using boyfriend or girlfriend who just cannot seem to get their lives together. What may seem like simple solutions to us are always much more complex matters for those relationships.

22. In conclusion

I often hear people who live with a using person describe themselves as feeling as though they are going mad. This is often stimulated by the mismatch between what is internal and unseen and what is visible. Often they are subtly told that “it is not that bad” or that they are making “too much fuss” or have “misunderstood” their partner or family member, and often they get drawn into a belief that somehow they are part of the cause of their loved ones problems.. It is a level of dissonance that is hard for many people to comprehend.

Be patient and deeply observant then with clients such as these. They will minimize what their experience is for they feel they ought to.

As coaches, we again sit patiently in the neutral space, neither minimizing nor maximizing our client’s experience. We wait for them to emerge as far as they can into a place where it is possible for them to see a new vision of their own lives and those of their loved ones.

When they do, we are waiting to take a journey with them into their new world.