



How to Bring Your Best Self to a Transformative Coaching Experience

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You want your coaching clients to have a transformative experience from their work with you. High-impact coaching delivers forward momentum to the lives and careers of your clients that is measured not in incremental steps but in quantum leaps, crashing through real and perceived barriers that have held them back from achieving their highest potential.

To deliver this level of coaching requires that you bring your own best self to the process, and that does not occur without forethought and preparation. In applying the revolutionizing principles of Dr. Brené Brown's Rising Strong™ training, I believe there are five key steps you must take:

1. Fill out your own permission slip.

What do you need to give yourself permission to do or be—or to *not* do or be—for you to open up and hear your client in a way that is spectacular for them? This is highly unique to you and may vary from client to client, but when you can identify it ahead of time, it won't become an elephant in the room or a detraction from the process.

Some of you need to give yourself permission to have fun. Others may need to give yourself permission to take yourself seriously.

In my own coaching, my daily permission slip is, "You don't have to have all the answers." I write that out to myself before every coaching engagement or team facilitation and I keep it in my pocket. It's a powerful tool that gives me the courage to be real and vulnerable in my coaching relationships. In my group trainings, I share this aloud with the group. This, in turn, makes it easier for my clients to be real and vulnerable too.

2. Get clarity on your own values.

What would it take for you to bring your clients high-impact coaching in such a way that even if it fails, you'll know you did it with integrity to your values? If you're going to be vulnerable, you're going to experience failures sometimes. Brené Brown cites this as one of the "Physics of Vulnerability." If you're not failing, you're not pushing your edge enough. So when you do have a fall, and I hope you do, it's crucial that you know you've failed in service to your highest values.

I've had business clients who were following orders to deliver a project a certain way, and in doing so taking actions that did not align with their values. When it didn't go as planned, in addition to the typical

emotional and professional consequences of a failure, they experienced the additional burden of haunting questions such as, “Why was I so stupid?” “Why didn’t I do what I knew was right?” “Why didn’t I push back harder?”

Often the biggest casualty of a fall is one’s own self-trust. This can be more debilitating than just losing a client or having a project fail. Clarity of values that inform and drive your actions can minimize that impact and will enormously improve your resiliency after failure.

3. Know what it takes to be ready for that phone to ring.

This will be a different practice for each of you, but it’s crucial that you know what it takes to quiet your mind and create a clear channel to work with your clients and serve them most powerfully. For some it will be meditation. For others, it will be prayer, breathing exercises, or a walk in the woods...whatever works for you. The key is simply to practice enough self-compassion to DO IT before trying to serve others.

What does it take to keep you grounded and clear? Make sure you know the answer and practice it before every client session. I typically take a few minutes before each client to (1) breathe deeply to release whatever information from other calls is still running in my head, (2) review any notes from this client, (3) pull up their image in my mind and center myself on them, (4) create notes page into columns where I sketch out some key items to ask about or listen for, of course leaving space to note the most important element: what they tell me about their agenda/goals for the call.

When I have back-to-back calls (which I do NOT recommend but it just happens sometimes), I use my headset to walk outside while talking to just get fresh air and stay grounded.

4. Be present to your own story driving your reactions.

Understand that as humans, we are meaning-making machines. We are wired for story, and those stories drive our reactions and action. But we’re not often good at discerning whether our stories are true! This tip applies to you as coach, and to the perspective you can offer your client.

Develop a method for checking in with yourself to make sure that during any call or session, you’re listening to their story and not overlaying your own. Be present to your own reactions to their story. It’s always a dance—the goal is not to have no reaction. One of the gifts of coaching is to be empathic with our clients. The goal is to be clear about what’s yours and what’s theirs. A regular practice as described in #3 will support this enormously.

Stay tuned in to yourself – if you’re feeling discomfort, “reckon” with yourself: “What story am I telling myself?” or “What am I making up right now?” and be brave enough to share it with your client. Be very clear to convey which feelings you think are your client’s and which are yours. Tell them when you’re having your own reaction to their story. Acknowledge it – but ask for their reaction instead of imposing your own. You don’t have to know it all, and it takes courage to admit this. Truth-telling is an essential part of being aligned with your values (See #2 above).



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Modeling for your client the skill of recognizing a “story,” naming it, and getting greater clarity on its truth/accuracy in order to learn and grow will help them do the same. Brené Brown calls it “The Reckoning, The Rumble, The Revolution.” It’s a game-changer that they will thank you for!

5. Do your own work.

We can’t ask our clients to go any deeper than we’ve gone ourselves. That’s why—since 2016— we’ve designed our “Rising Strong™ for Helping Professionals” intensive weekend workshops to create a protected space for deep personal development for helping professionals (e.g., coaches, clergy, therapists, and HR professionals).

The Daring Way™ and Rising Strong™ are highly experiential personal growth methodologies based on the research and best-selling books of Dr. Brené Brown. I am a Master Facilitator for Brené Brown’s company, Brave Leaders Inc., tasked with delivering in-person facilitation of the course, “Daring Leadership: The Four Pillars of Courage” and all the “deep dive” modules.

Doing your own deep personal work is how you can get the clarity you need to deliver truly transformational coaching to your clients.

Rising Strong™ Workshops

<https://www.leadership-innovations.com/workshops/>

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Rising Strong™ Resources

Books by Brené Brown

- *Rising Strong: The Reckoning. The Rumble. The Revolution*
(http://bit.ly/Rising_Strong)
- *Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone*
(<http://bit.ly/BravingWilderness>)
- *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*
(<http://bit.ly/DaringGreatlyCourage>)

Websites

- <https://www.leadership-innovations.com/workshops/>
- <https://brenebrown.com/>

YouTube videos

- <https://brenebrown.com/videos/>

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