

Reframing in Relationship Coaching

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Reframing is a powerful tool in any situation, but it is particularly effective in relationship coaching. When done strategically and with conviction, the coach can reframe stressful scenarios in order to help the individuals see things from a different, more anabolic frame of reference. Below are some of my favorite examples.

When a couple reports that they fight constantly, the coach can say, "It sounds like there's a lot of energy and passion in your relationship. What if we turned that passion into something positive and growth producing?"

When one person in the relationship is complaining that the other is too demanding of their attention and time, the coach can say, "Wow, it sounds like he really loves to spend time with you. How does it feel to know that you are loved and valued? What might be some other ways that he can show you that love?" To him the coach could say, "What I hear is a lot of love and affection for her. How wonderful that you feel that way and enjoy her company that much. What might be a way for you to get your needs met and still honor her need for some quiet, alone time?"

When both people are complaining that the other just doesn't understand them or their needs, the coach might say, "Wow, look at the opportunity here. You both aren't feeling heard or understood and now you have a great opportunity to give each other what you are each looking for. Imagine how loved and accepted you will both feel when you can truly hear and validate each other. Let's start with each of you listening and paraphrasing back to the other the things that are most important to know."

Another great way to use reframing is when the coach notices that both individuals are asking for the same thing from each other. For example, each person is suggesting that the other isn't supporting them and isn't really on their "team." The coach can say, "Hmmm, this is really interesting, you are both feeling unsupported by the other and as if you are in this alone. What an amazing opportunity to fully support each other and to feel supported by getting on the same team. What is one way that you can each support the other?"

Reframing arguments, miscommunication, and complaints into opportunities is often an automatic shift for couples away from seeing a problem to seeing possible solutions. Couples can get caught in an “everything’s wrong” mindset and not see that disagreements and differences are actually fabulous opportunities for them to learn and grow together.

In our often-quick fix world, couples want to give up at the earliest signs of problems. However, the strongest relationships often come from turning problems into opportunities for the future.

Learning how to listen for the opportunity to reframe in relationship coaching sessions can be one of the most powerful tools for a coach. Listen for the GAILs and then think about how you can reframe them. When one partner thinks that the other’s behavior is due to a lack of love or respect, the coach can help reframe that into a more realistic, less catabolic insight. Asking the question, “What’s a different, more empowering way to view that?” is a great way to lead the clients to create their own reframe.

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