

From a Somatic coaching perspective, how might you tackle the following problem? I am looking to compare styles. Any thoughts would be appreciated.

The Odd Couple - When Opposites Don't Attract

What do you get when you have two directors who oversee two different departments that need to cooperate, but one is a planner/organizer and the other is a fly-by-the seat of their pants kind of person? How do you get these people to respect each other's styles?

Response:

Great question, and it's a pretty abstract scenario. While Somatic coaching can include interactions beyond talking (e.g. lying-down bodywork or a series of movement exercises to generate awareness), I'll stick to the ontological (using language/conversation) for comparison.

In this example, I would want to understand:

- client's purpose/direction/horizon -- what are they moving toward?
- their understanding and alignment of the organization (larger system) vision/direction. In my current client, I very often start meetings or "reset" to ensure the company goals are in mind, and the personal goals are aligned to it (or at least not working against it)
- values (what are most/least important? how are those held and carried forward?)
- habit nature - what behaviors are automatic and possibly invisible to the client?
- client's own awareness of their values, habit nature, and blind spots (how self-reflective are these two-hypothetical people)

All of this is context for understanding the situation and dynamics. As the coach, I'm most effective when I'm mindfully present, able to set my own ego aside, and connected to my aliveness/purpose as I'm blending with this. The more I'm judging and psycho-analyzing the client or their environment, the less I am in service to them.

In this example, I think of somatics as a lens to see the situation through. Focusing on the whole self (person as a system of their thoughts, feelings, sensation, and spirituality) the questions or conversation around the topic are exploring their attachments and aversions, their relationship with aliveness (flow of energy vs constriction). What are they rushing toward? What are they holding back or clenching tightly? What are they wishing/forcing to be ("c'mon orange sapling, hurry up and grow taller so I can eat your fruit!!") vs diminishing or ignoring? Inviting the client to experience their own sensations or reactions as something is discussed, or sharing with them your own experience of their story (e.g. when you are talking about how you spend an hour prioritizing your to-do list in the morning before starting any work, I noticed myself breathing more shallow, which produced a feeling of anxiety and overwhelm")

In the hypothetical, somatics could explore whether the organizer is "kept safe" by the planning, or how their entire upbringing was about "measure twice/cut once" and how that has served them well. Seat-of-pants person maybe strongly instinctual and learned through 2 decades of tennis that as long as they have enough practice with the range of moves in the workplace, they are most effective when they are present and allowing themselves to flow toward and with the next incoming assault.

I would coach the two-hypothetical people to explore what their narrative is about themselves, their workstyles, and their interaction with this other person. If they both express a desire to work more collaboratively (or be as civil as can and get what they need from each other), I might spend a little more time reflecting/grounding their narratives about what value the other provides, checking any assumptions or judgements. Not trying to wish for peace and tranquility or force it, but if either is providing value in the system, we want to connect with that.

There are a number of somatic practices that can be done with these people separately (e.g. Jo Kata - where are you being deliberate? Where are you being impulsive?) and together (e.g. have them two-step together, hand-on-heart and have them speak their values) to give them a safe space to experience these qualities of each other without the work being a trigger/grab, and to allow them to "try on" the qualities of the other.

Thanks for the question,
John Eisenschmidt