

CAREER COACHING WITH SELF-WORTH

INTRODUCTION

Not surprisingly, most career-coaching centres on you. Your talents, your strengths, your values, your passion in life... these are the conversations that dominate the career-coaching space. Well, it is your career after all, so this is all to be expected.

However, there are two shadow sides to any approach that focuses solely on you. One of these is personal in nature, and one is marketplace-related. Let's start with the first problem.

FIRST PROBLEM: CREATING A SELF-ESTEEM GAP?

The danger with all conversations about “potential” is that they often create a subtle undertone that we are “not enough” already. The more you tell me about what I could/should be, the more dissatisfied I may feel about my current situation.

Sometimes, this works in our favour. It's often frustration with current jobs (or bosses or life in general) that nudges us out of our comfort-zone and motivates us to look for better things. So far, so good. Dissatisfaction about our situation can be healthy. However, if that dissatisfaction is about who we **are** – not just about our situation – then a more dangerous, disempowering dynamic comes into play.

A wise career coach will hopefully spot this quickly and even anticipate it. They will usually counterbalance this dissatisfaction by drawing attention to our strengths: indeed “awareness of strengths” is one of the core competencies of coaching. However... even here, notice how we can still be making our relationship with oneself (self-worth) contingent on positive adjectives such as “creative” “smart” or “charismatic”. The voice of self-esteem again, entering this time via positive judgements about the self, all the time creating still more expectations to live up to.

SECOND PROBLEM: WHO CARES?

The second issue with the chorus of self-esteem is that we are often just talking to ourselves. Unless our gifts and talents somehow link to the needs of others, then the value of these often lies hidden. The unfortunate reality is that this is often the case.

No amount of introspection or self-analysis will tell you where you are most needed, where your talents have most value. This has to be done via *external*/exploration, not *internal*/introspection. This was one of the reasons for writing “*The Courage to Ask*” back in 2012: to encourage people (particularly introverts) to overcome the resistance towards having those vital opportunity conversations.

CAREER-COACHING FROM A SELF-WORTH PERSPECTIVE

When we are in a season of career-transition, this is one of the times when we most need to befriend ourselves unconditionally, not just for those positive adjectives that might confer self-esteem. The first



three shifts described in “The Self-Worth Safari” will hopefully help to establish the roots of self-worth via assertion, expression and self-acceptance, as already outlined in the book. You saw this illustrated vividly in the story of Pete in Chapter Two.

As we become aware of the possibility of unconditional friendship towards ourselves, we usually feel a new sense of lightness and energy flowing in. In this way, we are now ready to start exploring! (It is a Safari, after all!). Just as Pete did, we can start to have cups of coffee with people about *their* needs, *their* challenges, how *their* future will be different to their past. In that context, we can share a little of our experience.

When people do these meetings, a number of things usually happen at the same time:

- New ideas, new possibilities and new information appears;
- We get introduced to new people, that we didn't know before;
- We see our talents from a fresh perspective;
- We feel energised by these conversations;
- We reflect on the application of our strengths through others' experiences and competencies;
- We learn to better define and communicate our professional needs and wants through listening to others;
- Whether we do so or not, our sense of self-worth grows and develops, through the exercise of curiosity;
- We discover that we can talk to anybody!

For clarity, these conversations are primarily about them; not about you. Please avoid the pitfalls of telling too many war-stories or sharing random opinions. You are there like a journalist, to investigate their story.

GETTING SUPPORT

It is valuable to have a coach to guide you through this process: and to hopefully save you from three common pitfalls:

- a) Wasting too many hours in introspection. While some of this is valuable, the hours spent on self-analysis can (and do) reach the point of diminishing returns. It's the quality of self-reflection that matters, not the quantity.
- b) Practicing and rehearsing for your exploration-meetings, including help to set them up. The most common pitfall here is the difficulty of getting started — a pitfall that grows at times when self-worth is vulnerable.
- c) Slipping back into your habitual narrative, which is often what is keeping us stuck.

If you would like to set up a (no-obligation) Skype or Zoom call, my email is John@SelfWorthAcademy.com

I wish you joy and lightness as you uncover a new relationship with yourself, as well as a new relationship with potential employers ☺