

LESSON 51

FROM WIMPY TO EDGY

The most common requests that the coach referral services receive are for “strong” coaches.

And not just experienced or skilled coaches, but coaches with either a strong personality or what I call having “the Edge.” And, I’ve never met a very successful coach who didn’t/doesn’t have this Edge. And as you develop this Edge, you will begin to attract more clients and keep the clients you have, longer. For whatever reason, the Edge works. And the marketplace will either dub you a “nice person/nice coach” or a coach who can make something happen, because they have the Edge.

What, exactly, is the Edge?

The Edge is several things...

1. The Edge is a no-nonsense component in the tone of your voice.

In other words, you have something more important to do than coddle your clients. Or be bored by their lack of commitment. Or impatient with their success cycle. You’ve gotten to a certain place in your life, not just in your coaching, where you’re just not that interested in the excuses, stories and wavering that clients tend to come with.

This is not to say that you’re rude, pushy, obnoxious or insensitive to the realities that your clients are facing, especially as they make significant changes in their lives. In fact, most of the coaches with the Edge are fairly quiet in tone, but there is this underlying note that the client hears which the client responds to and respects. The benefit of having the Edge is that clients don’t play games or do a number on you.

I think it’s really important to realize that many clients are experiencing more than a twinge of fear around the goals they’ve set for themselves with your help. And, being human, when we’re scared, we’ll look for a way

out, even to the point of distracting our coach or changing goals or being flaky. But when the coach has the Edge, the client just doesn't go there. Which saves everyone a lot of time.

2. The Edge means having a very sensitive b.s. detector.

I am NOT one to call the client on their b.s. It's my view that that approach is a power trip and not professional. However, I can/do detect inconsistencies in what the client is saying (and/or how they are saying it) and I do point those out, gently, simply, easily, fearlessly and in what's called a "charge neutral" tone, meaning there's no "charge" to my voice. It's a clean communication. And it's part of what the client is paying me for. Because most clients don't even know when they are b.s.'ing and they APPRECIATE your asking for a clarification. As a coach gains experience, they hear the subtle inconsistencies or things that just don't ring true. And, the coach who has the Edge brings this up within sixty seconds of hearing it. Not as a confrontive challenge (unsophisticated, unseemly, amateurish) but rather as a simple, shared observation or question. Just doing this will advance the relationship you have with your client, which leads to more honest communication and faster results.

3. The Edge means having an opinion and sharing it.

Some coaches receive training from schools where they are taught that the client has all of the answers and that the coach should suppress the coach's opinion so as to not get in the way of the client's process. This approach works for about 10% of the clients out there which means most of these coaches don't have very full practices and I think this is a shame. It's my view that a key part of why clients hire a coach is to hear the coach's opinion about the client's goals, situation, problem, dynamic or lifestyle. Even unsolicited opinions, if you have established that type of relationship/permission with your client, are immensely valuable and can forward the clients dramatically. We coaches provide so much to our clients: Support, wisdom, structure, questions, understanding, strategies, ideas, synergy and yes, opinions.

Why is it difficult for coaches to develop the Edge?

The short answer is that the coach is afraid of losing the client so they don't press enough. The single, proven solution is to rearrange your finances so that you have 50% more revenue coming from coaching client than you need to live on. Which might mean you'll need to keep a day job, or simplify your lifestyle significantly. This 50% reserve factor will give you the freedom to be honest with your clients, and while sensitive to their needs, not afraid of swinging out. If you cannot financially afford to lose your clients, you WILL be a mouse. Guaranteed. Again, the simple solution is money. Don't put yourself in a position where paying your mortgage is more important than your being an honest coach to your clients.

When does the Edge turn into a weapon?

There's a pretty fine line between having the Edge and using the Edge. The best coaches have the Edge and they don't have to use it. The coach learning about the edge and developing it for themselves, tends to use the Edge as if it's a tool. And in some cases, a weapon. You know the Edge is a weapon when you're feeling frustrated or having another emotional reaction to the client and you put an Edge into your voice that isn't natural or you say something with an emotional charge to it. At that point, you're simply venting. Which is not the Edge.

Ironically, the reason that coaches get frustrated isn't because the client isn't making progress, but rather because the coach has put up with it for too long and then by the time they do speak up, they are upset.

How will developing the Edge help me get more clients?

As you develop the Edge, you'll build self confidence. And self confidence is something that potential clients can feel and they tend to hire coaches who have this self confidence. You'll also find that clients are getting more results because of your Edge; that leads to more referrals and longer terms with current clients. And, you'll simply be a better coach because you're openly communicating at all times with your client, instead of holding back and trying to "be supportive." Most clients want/need more than support. Most client orient to coaches with the Edge.

