The Art of Client Growth

Facilitates Client Growth in ICF-Aligned Coaching

CONTENTS

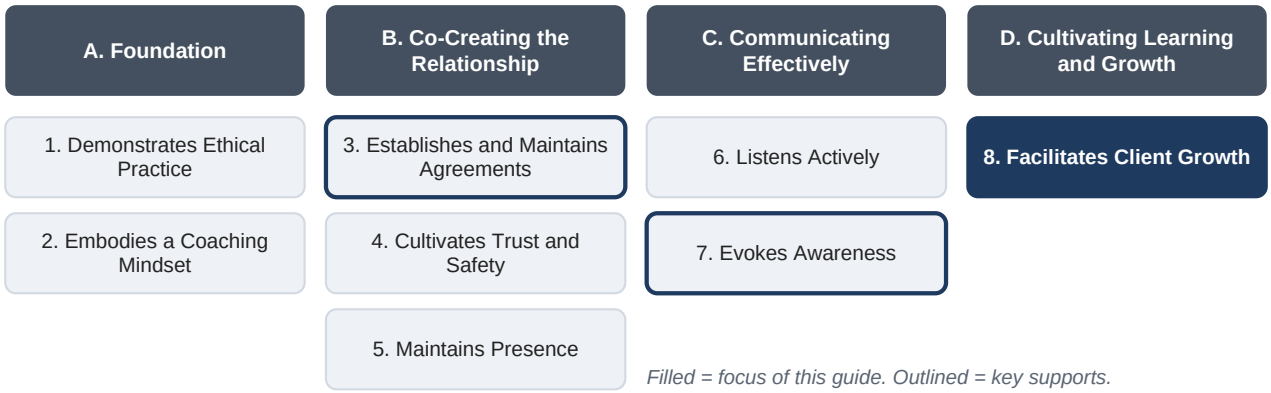
	About This Guide	2
	Map of Areas	3
1	From Insight to Integration	4
2	Clarifying Goals & Desired Outcomes	6
3	Designing Actions & Experiments	7
4	Client Autonomy & Choice	9
5	Accountability That Works	11
6	Resources, Support & Barriers	13
7	Anticipating Results & Learning	15
8	Summarizing Learning & Closing Sessions	17
9	Celebrating Progress & Sustaining Change	19
10	Growth Across the Engagement	21
	Putting It Together	22
	Session Checklist	24

About This Guide

In ICF-aligned coaching, Facilitates Client Growth is Core Competency 8. It means partnering with the client to transform learning and insight into action, and promoting the client's autonomy in the coaching process. Awareness only matters if it changes how the client thinks, chooses and acts in their own life, in a way they own.

This guide organizes the competency into ten areas. Each has subcategories with sample questions and phrases to adapt in your own words, plus diagrams, tables and worksheets. It is a map, not a script: the client sets the destination, and the coach facilitates the journey.

Where client growth fits in the ICF model



The eight ICF Core Competencies (2019 model). Facilitates Client Growth is Competency 8, building on Evokes Awareness and on the agreements made in Competency 3.

What the competency asks of the coach

In plain words (paraphrased from the ICF model)	Where in this guide
Works with the client to integrate new awareness, insight or learning into their worldview and behaviors	Area 1
Partners with the client to design goals, actions and accountability that integrate and expand new learning	Areas 2, 3 and 5
Acknowledges and supports the client's autonomy in designing goals, actions and ways of being accountable	Area 4
Supports the client in identifying potential results or learning from specific actions or ideas	Area 7
Invites the client to consider how to move forward, including resources, support and barriers	Area 6
Partners with the client to summarize learning and insight within or between sessions, and to close the session	Area 8
Celebrates the client's progress and successes	Areas 9 and 10

Paraphrased summary. For the official wording, see the ICF Core Competencies on coachingfederation.org.

Principles that keep growth client-centered

- **The client owns the agenda and the action.** Plans the client designs are the plans they follow.
- **Insight is not the finish line.** Ask what the client will do, try or change.
- **Small experiments beat grand plans.** Learning comes from trying, and from noticing what happens.
- **Accountability is a gift, not a threat.** The client decides how they want to be supported.
- **Setbacks are data.** Curiosity about what happened keeps momentum alive.
- **Celebrate honestly.** Name what the client did and who they became in doing it.

Map of Areas

The ten areas fall into four themes, shown by color. Each box links to its section when the PDF is opened in a viewer that supports links.



The four themes

Theme	The question it answers	Areas
Insight to Direction	What will the client do with what they have learned?	1 From Insight to Integration, 2 Clarifying Goals & Desired Outcomes, 3 Designing Actions & Experiments
Owning the Path	How does the client stay in charge and supported?	4 Client Autonomy & Choice, 5 Accountability That Works, 6 Resources, Support & Barriers
Learning & Momentum	What was learned, and what comes next?	7 Anticipating Results & Learning, 8 Summarizing Learning & Closing Sessions
Over Time	How does change last and grow?	9 Celebrating Progress & Sustaining Change, 10 Growth Across the Engagement

How to use this guide

1. **Start with one area.** Choose a theme to practice across a few sessions.
2. **Adapt the phrases.** Use your own voice and the client's words.
3. **Use the tools lightly.** Share worksheets with clients only if they find them useful.
4. **Ask the client.** They know best what helps them grow.

1

INSIGHT TO DIRECTION · FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION

From Insight to Integration

An insight is a moment; integration is when it shapes how the client sees themselves and acts. The coach helps the client carry new awareness from the conversation into their worldview, choices and everyday behavior.

From noticing to doing: a client example



From insight to integration. Coaches help clients move down the ladder, not just up it.

Capturing the insight — letting the client put the learning in their own words.

- *"What are you realizing?"*
- *"What is the most important thing you're taking from this?"*
- *"How would you put that in your own words?"*

Exploring what it means — linking the insight to values, identity and life.

- *"What does this mean for you?"*
- *"How does this change how you see yourself or your situation?"*
- *"What does this say about what matters to you?"*

Connecting to behavior — bridging thinking and doing.

- *"How will this show up in what you do?"*
- *"What would you do differently if you fully believed this?"*
- *"Where will you notice this in your day-to-day life?"*

Linking to the bigger picture — connecting learning to goals and worldview.

- *"How does this connect to what you want?"*
- *"What belief is shifting for you?"*
- *"How does this fit with who you want to become?"*

Making it stick — anchoring learning so it lasts.

- *"What will remind you of this when things get busy?"*
- *"What small practice would keep this alive?"*
- *"Who or what could help you hold on to this?"*

Testing the learning — checking whether the insight holds in practice.

- *"How will you know this insight is true for you?"*
- *"What would you notice if it were working?"*
- *"What would you like to test first?"*

Levels of change

Level	What changes	A question to invite it
Doing	Actions and habits	*"What will you do differently?"*
Thinking	Beliefs and interpretations	*"What do you now believe?"*
Feeling	Emotional response	*"How do you feel about it now?"*
Relating	How the client engages with others	*"How will this change your relationships?"*
Being	Identity and sense of self	*"Who are you becoming?"*

> **Coach's note.** Let the client name the learning. A lesson the coach states is easy to forget; one the client discovers and says aloud is much more likely to last.

2

INSIGHT TO DIRECTION · FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION

Clarifying Goals & Desired Outcomes

Growth needs direction. The coach helps the client turn what they want into clear, meaningful goals in the client's own words, without imposing the coach's view of what is ambitious or worthwhile.

"On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident are you in the plan?"



Why a 4 and not a 1? (strengths and resources)
What would make it a 5 or 6? (the next small step)
What would a 7 look like? (the client's own target)

A scaling question. Starting from where the client is (not from zero) builds on strengths and makes the next step small.

Defining the desired outcome — what the client wants, in their words.

- *"What would you like to have happen?"*
- *"What would success look like for you?"*
- *"How will you know you've achieved it?"*

Why it matters — linking the goal to values and purpose.

- *"Why is this important to you?"*
- *"What will this give you?"*
- *"What would it mean to reach it?"*

Making it concrete — turning intentions into observable results.

- *"What would be different, and what would you see or hear?"*
- *"How will you measure progress?"*
- *"What would be a good first milestone?"*

Checking fit and ownership — ensuring the goal is the client's own.

- *"Whose goal is this?"*
- *"On a scale of 1 to 10, how committed are you?"*
- *"What would make it more yours?"*

Handling multiple or competing goals — choosing and sequencing.

- *"Which of these matters most right now?"*
- *"What would you let go of, or postpone?"*
- *"How do these goals fit together?"*

Revisiting and reshaping goals — adjusting as learning unfolds.

- *"Is this still the right goal?"*
- *"What has changed since we set it?"*
- *"What would you like to adjust?"*

Vague goal to clear goal

Vague	A question to sharpen it	Clearer (client's words)
Be a better leader	*"What would a better leader do differently?"*	*"Hold a weekly one-to-one with each team member."*
Get healthier	*"What would 'healthier' look like in three months?"*	*"Walk 30 minutes, four days a week."*
Have more confidence	*"When would you notice more confidence?"*	*"Speak up once in every team meeting."*
Reduce stress	*"What would be different if stress were lower?"*	*"Finish work by six, three days a week."*

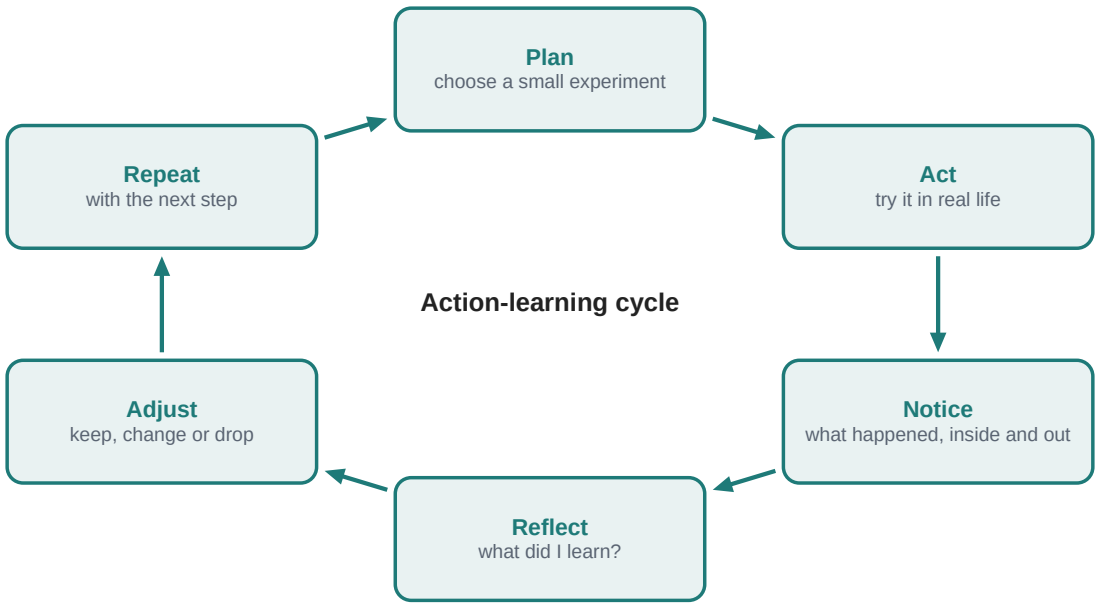
Coach's note. A good goal is one the client can see, feel and measure. Offer these as prompts, not a required formula; some clients prefer images, themes or values over numbers.

3

INSIGHT TO DIRECTION · FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION

Designing Actions & Experiments

Actions make learning real. The coach partners with the client to design steps that stretch them without overwhelming them, framed as experiments so that every result, good or bad, teaches something.



A cycle of experiments. Each loop produces learning, whatever the outcome.

Generating options — widening the field before narrowing.

- *"What could you do?"*
- *"What else? And what else?"*
- *"What would you do if there were no limits?"*

Choosing a first step — starting small and specific.

- *"Which option feels most promising?"*
- *"What is the smallest step that would still matter?"*
- *"What would be a good experiment for this week?"*

Making it specific — who, what, where and when.

- *“What exactly will you do, and when?”*
- *“Where will you do it, and with whom?”*
- *“What will you do first?”*

Testing readiness — checking commitment and capacity.

- *“How confident are you that you’ll do it?”*
- *“What would make it a bit easier?”*
- *“What might get in the way?”*

Framing as an experiment — removing pass/fail pressure.

- *“What do you want to learn from trying this?”*
- *“What would you notice if it went well? If it didn’t?”*
- *“How will you treat the result, as feedback?”*

Stretch and safety — balancing challenge with support.

- *“How much of a stretch is this for you?”*
- *“What would make it a slightly bigger, or smaller, step?”*
- *“What support would you like while you try it?”*

Choosing among options



An impact and effort matrix. Clients place their own options; the coach asks what they notice.

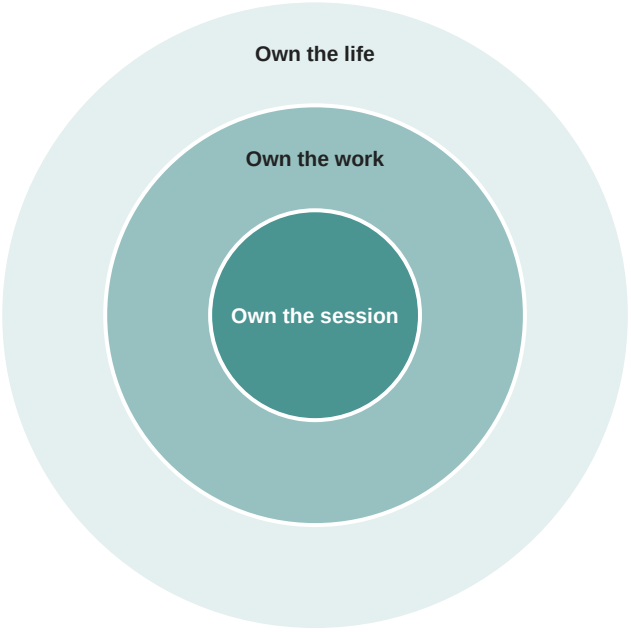
> **Coach’s note.** Actions may happen in or between sessions. Ask the client for their own ideas first, and offer yours only with permission.

4

OWNING THE PATH · AUTONOMY, ACCOUNTABILITY, SUPPORT

Client Autonomy & Choice

Autonomy is the heart of this competency. The client is the expert on their life and the decision-maker in coaching. The coach supports their right to choose, even when the coach would choose differently.



Own the session
The client sets the agenda, pace and depth, and says when to stop or change course.

Own the work
The client designs the goals, actions and accountability that fit them.

Own the life
The client makes the final decisions about their life, values and direction.

Layers of client autonomy, from the coaching session outward to the client's life.

Inviting the client to lead — putting the client in the driver's seat.

- *"What would you like to focus on?"*
- *"How would you like to use our time?"*
- *"What do you want to do with that?"*

Offering rather than directing — sharing ideas with permission.

- *"Would you like to hear an idea?"*
- *"I have a thought. Is it okay if I share it?"*
- *"What do you make of it? Take what fits and leave the rest."*

Supporting decisions you wouldn't make — respecting a different choice.

- *"Help me understand what makes that the right choice for you."*
- *"What would it give you?"*
- *"How can I best support you in that?"*

Building the client's own methods — encouraging their way of working.

- *"What has worked for you before?"*
- *"What method suits you best?"*
- *"How do you learn and change best?"*

Noticing over-reliance on the coach — growing independence.

- *"What would you tell yourself if I weren't here?"*
- *"What do you already know about this?"*
- *"How could you rely more on your own wisdom?"*

Honoring ‘no’ and ‘not yet’ — respecting limits and timing.

- *“It’s okay not to do this now. What feels right?”*
- *“What would make this a yes later?”*
- *“What would you like to do instead?”*

Directing versus facilitating

Directing	Facilitating
“You should talk to your manager.”	*“What options do you see for the conversation?”*
“Here’s what I’d do.”	*“What would you do? May I share what I’d consider?”*
“Do this by Friday.”	*“What will you do, and by when?”*
“That’s a mistake.”	*“What do you see as the risks and benefits?”*
“Let me fix that for you.”	*“How would you like to handle it?”*

> **Coach’s note.** Autonomy does not mean the coach stays silent. The coach can challenge, share and ask, then return the decision to the client.

5

OWNING THE PATH · AUTONOMY, ACCOUNTABILITY, SUPPORT

Accountability That Works

Accountability in coaching is the client's own commitment, supported by a structure the client chooses. It helps clients follow through without shame, because it is built on partnership, not policing.

A client-designed accountability loop



A client-designed accountability loop. The client chooses the structure and reports in their own words.

Designing the structure — the client picks how to be held accountable.

- *"How would you like to hold yourself accountable?"*
- *"What would support you in following through?"*
- *"How and when would you like to check in?"*

Clear commitments — specific and time-bound.

- *"What exactly will you do, and by when?"*
- *"How will you know it's done?"*
- *"What will you tell me next time?"*

Following up well — curious rather than judging.

- *"How did it go?"*
- *"What happened with the action you chose?"*
- *"What did you learn from trying?"*

When the action wasn't done — exploring without shame.

- *"What got in the way?"*
- *"What does that tell you?"*
- *"What would you like to do now?"*

Intrinsic motivation — connecting actions to what matters.

- *"Why does this matter to you?"*
- *"What will it give you?"*
- *"What would keep you going when it's hard?"*

Adjusting the structure — changing what isn't working.

- *"Is this way of checking in still helping?"*
- *"What would make it more useful?"*
- *"What would you like to try instead?"*

Accountability: supportive and unhelpful

Unhelpful	Supportive
"Why didn't you do it?"	*"What got in the way?"*
"You promised."	*"What would you like to do with this now?"*
Setting the action for the client	*Asking the client to set it*
Treating a miss as failure	*Treating it as information*
Dropping follow-up	*Following up with curiosity*

> **Coach's note.** If actions are repeatedly not done, the goal, the plan or the timing may need revisiting. Ask what the pattern is telling the client.

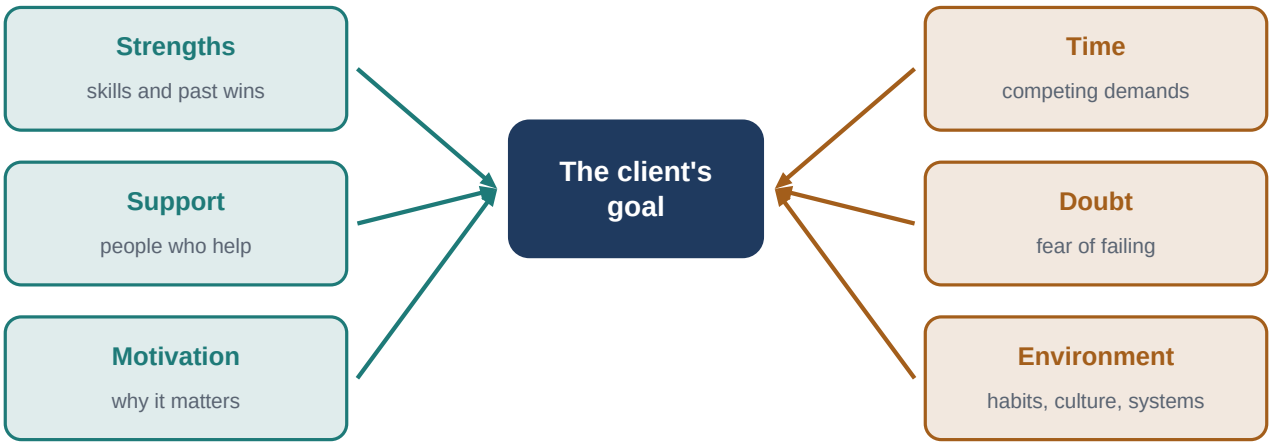
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OWNING THE PATH · AUTONOMY, ACCOUNTABILITY, SUPPORT

Resources, Support & Barriers

Few changes succeed alone. The coach invites the client to look at what already helps them, what support they might draw on, and what might get in the way, so the plan survives real life.

HELPING FORCES **HINDERING FORCES**



A force field view of a goal. Strengthening helping forces and planning for hindering ones makes change more likely.

Inner resources — strengths, skills and experience.

- *"What strengths can you draw on?"*
- *"When have you done something like this before?"*
- *"What do you know about yourself that helps?"*

Outer resources — people, tools, time and money.

- *"What resources do you have?"*
- *"What would help you most right now?"*
- *"What do you need that you don't yet have?"*

People and support — who can help and how.

- *"Who could support you in this?"*
- *"How would you like them to help?"*
- *"What would you like to ask for?"*

Potential barriers — anticipating what could get in the way.

- *"What might get in the way?"*
- *"What has stopped you before?"*
- *"What would you do if that happened?"*

Internal barriers — doubts, fears and habits.

- *"What are you telling yourself about this?"*
- *"What are you afraid of?"*
- *"What would you say to a friend in your place?"*

Plan B and contingencies — preparing for setbacks.

- *“If this doesn’t work, what’s your plan B?”*
- *“How will you get back on track?”*
- *“What is the earliest sign you’re slipping, and what will you do?”*

Barrier planning worksheet

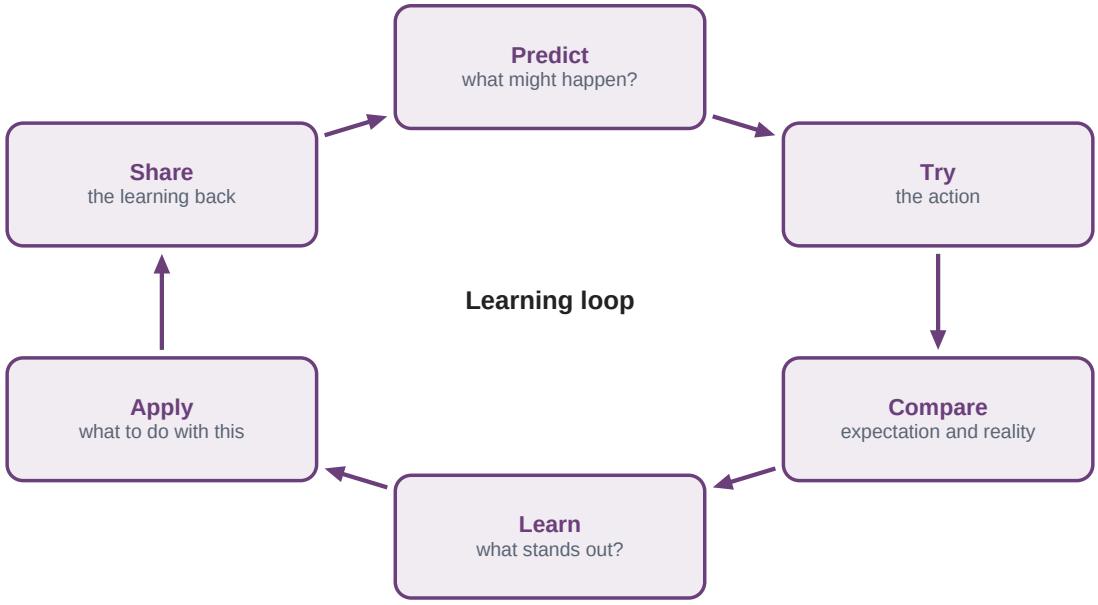
Possible barrier	How likely?	What would help?	Who or what supports me?

A client-owned worksheet. The client fills it in; the coach asks, and does not fill it for them.

> **Coach’s note.** Name the barriers calmly. Anticipating them is not pessimism; it is the preparation that turns good intentions into steady progress.

7 Anticipating Results & Learning

Before and after an action, a few questions turn experience into growth. The coach helps the client imagine what might happen, notice what did, and take learning from every result.



From expectation to learning. The gap between predicted and actual results often teaches the most.

Imagining results — picturing possible outcomes.

- *"What do you hope will happen?"*
- *"What might you gain from this?"*
- *"What is the best, and the most likely, outcome?"*

Naming risks — considering downsides in advance.

- *"What could go wrong?"*
- *"What is the worst that could happen, and how would you handle it?"*
- *"What are you willing to risk?"*

Learning from results — noticing what happened.

- *"What happened?"*
- *"What worked, and what didn't?"*
- *"What surprised you?"*

Learning from setbacks — treating them as information.

- *"What can you learn from this?"*
- *"What would you do differently?"*
- *"What is the useful part of this experience?"*

Extracting insight — moving from event to meaning.

- *"What does this tell you about yourself?"*
- *"What are you noticing about your patterns?"*
- *"What would you like to carry forward?"*

Applying the learning — turning learning into the next step.

- *“How will you use this?”*
- *“Where else could this apply?”*
- *“What will you do next?”*

Before and after an action

Before the action	After the action
“What do you hope will happen?”	*“What actually happened?”*
“What might get in the way?”	*“What got in the way, and how did you respond?”*
“What do you want to learn?”	*“What did you learn?”*
“How will you know it worked?”	*“What would you do differently next time?”*
“What support do you want?”	*“What helped, and what do you need now?”*

> **Coach’s note.** Ask learning questions before judgment questions. “What did you learn?” opens the conversation; “Did it work?” can close it.

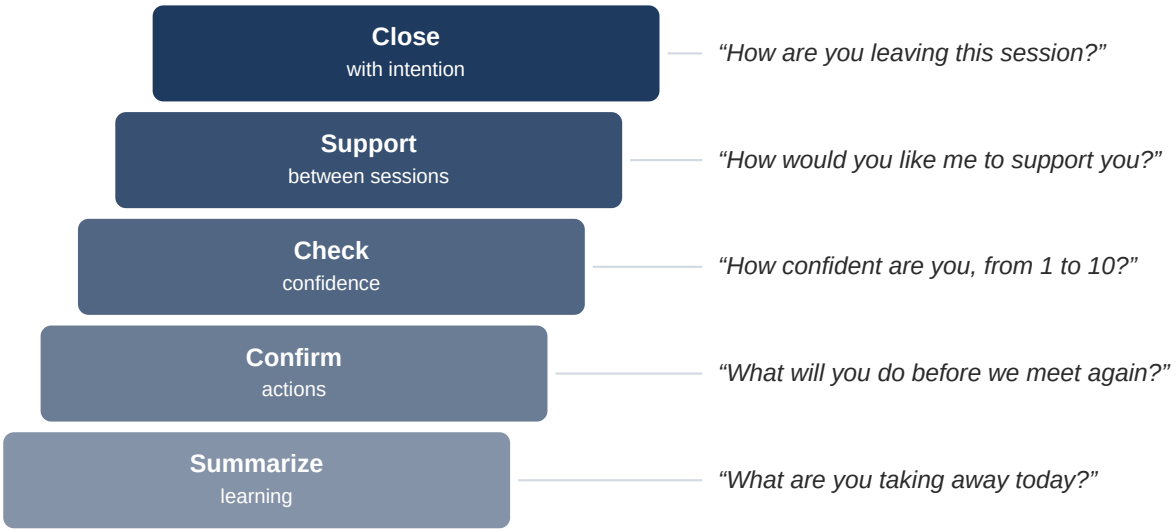
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LEARNING & MOMENTUM · RESULTS, SUMMARIES AND CLOSING

Summarizing Learning & Closing Sessions

How a session ends shapes what the client takes away. The coach partners with the client to summarize learning and insight, confirm next steps and close in a way that leaves energy, clarity and ownership with the client.

A client-led session close



Five moves for closing a session. Let the client say each one; the coach only prompts.

Client-led summary — letting the client name their learning.

- *"What are you taking away today?"*
- *"What stands out most?"*
- *"What is most important to remember?"*

Coach's summary (with permission) — offering a brief view.

- *"Would it be helpful if I summarized what I heard?"*
- *"What would you add or change?"*
- *"Did I capture what matters?"*

Summarizing between sessions — bringing earlier work back.

- *"What did we decide last time?"*
- *"What has happened since?"*
- *"How does today connect to what we've been working on?"*

Confirming next steps — making commitments visible.

- *"What will you do before we next meet?"*
- *"What support do you want in the meantime?"*
- *"How will you remember what we agreed?"*

Checking the session itself — gathering feedback.

- *"How was this session for you?"*
- *"What was most useful? What would you change?"*
- *"What would you like more or less of next time?"*

Closing with intention — ending clearly and warmly.

- *“How are you feeling as we finish?”*
- *“What would you like to say as we close?”*
- *“Thank you for your openness today.”*

Session close: a quick template

Element	A prompt	The client says
Key learning	*“What is the most important thing for you?”*	
Action	*“What will you do before next time?”*	
Support	*“What do you want from me?”*	
Next focus	*“What would you like to explore next?”*	

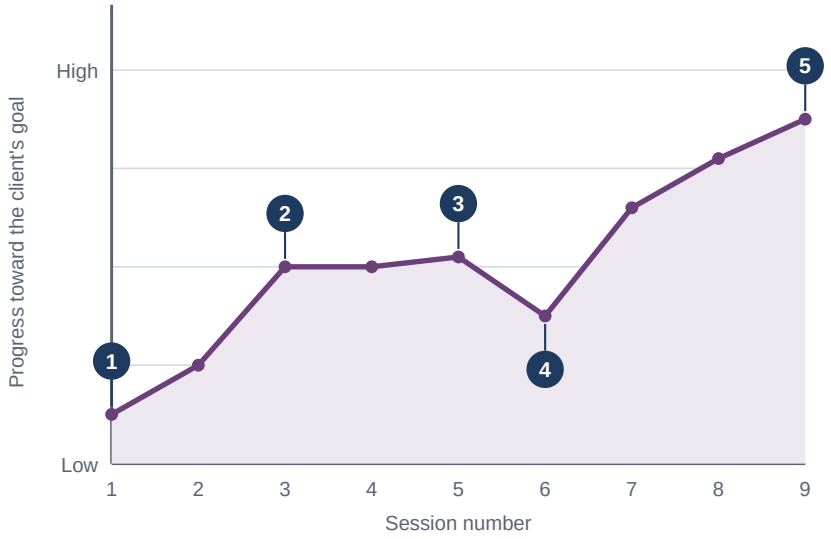
> **Coach’s note.** Leave time to close. Even five minutes lets the client name what they learned, which strengthens memory and ownership.

9

OVER TIME · CELEBRATING AND SUSTAINING CHANGE

Celebrating Progress & Sustaining Change

Celebration is not decoration. It tells the client what is working, builds confidence and fuels the next step. The coach notices progress, names it honestly and helps the client make new behavior last.



What happened

1. Insight: the client names what they want.
2. First experiment is designed and tried.
3. A plateau; the client reviews what is working.
4. A setback is treated as learning, not failure.
5. Progress is celebrated and the change takes hold.

A sample progress curve over nine sessions. Growth is rarely a straight line; plateaus and setbacks are part of the path.

Noticing progress — pointing out change the client may overlook.

- *"What is different now from when we started?"*
- *"What have you done that you couldn't do before?"*
- *"What are you noticing about yourself?"*

Celebrating wins, large and small — naming successes.

- *"That is real progress. How does it feel?"*
- *"What are you proud of?"*
- *"What would you like to celebrate?"*

Naming strengths and qualities — reflecting who the client is being.

- *"What did that take?"*
- *"What strength did you use?"*
- *"What does this show about you?"*

Handling plateaus — staying engaged when growth slows.

- *"What is going on right now?"*
- *"What is working, and what has stopped working?"*
- *"What would you like to try next?"*

Handling setbacks — relapse as part of change.

- *"What happened?"*
- *"What would help you get back on track?"*
- *"What have you learned about what you need?"*

Sustaining change — making new habits last.

- *“What will help you keep this going?”*
- *“What will remind you of this when you’re tired?”*
- *“Who can support you in keeping it up?”*

Progress tracker (sample data)

Area of growth	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Session 5	Session 6
Clarity of goal	low	medium	high	high	high	high
Taking action		low	medium	medium	high	high
Confidence	low	low	medium	medium	medium	high
Follow-through		low	low	medium	high	high
Support in place		low	medium	medium	high	high

Sample tracker (illustrative data) of how strongly each area showed up in six sessions. Use the client’s own areas, and share it only if it helps them.

> **Coach’s note.** Celebrate the effort and the learning, not just the outcome. Praise that names a strength the client used lands more deeply than a general “well done.”

10

OVER TIME · CELEBRATING AND SUSTAINING CHANGE

Growth Across the Engagement

Over a coaching relationship, growth moves through phases: clarity, action, integration and independence. The coach helps the client see the whole journey, evaluate progress and end well.



How to use the wheel

Rate yourself from 0 (center) to 10 (outer ring) in each area, today and where you want to be.

Or invite the client to rate their own growth in each area.

Scores here are samples for illustration only.

Today (sample)

Goal (sample)

A growth wheel (sample scores). Coach or client can use it as a conversation starter, not a test.

Mid-point review — checking progress against the original goals.

- *"What has changed since we began?"*
- *"What goals have moved, and which haven't?"*
- *"What would you like for the second half of our work?"*

Evaluating progress — client and coach look at evidence together.

- *"How do you know you've grown?"*
- *"What evidence would you point to?"*
- *"What would others say has changed?"*

Redirecting when needed — changing course.

- *"Is this still the right focus?"*
- *"What has emerged that matters more?"*
- *"What would you like to do differently?"*

Preparing for independence — growing the client's self-coaching.

- *"What will you do on your own when we finish?"*
- *"What questions can you ask yourself?"*
- *"What practices will keep you growing?"*

Ending the engagement — a considered, respectful close.

- *"What would make our last session meaningful?"*
- *"What do you want to take with you?"*
- *"How would you like to mark the end of our work?"*

Coach's own growth — learning from each client.

- *"What did this client teach me?"*
- *"What would I do differently as a coach?"*
- *"What do I want to practice next?"*

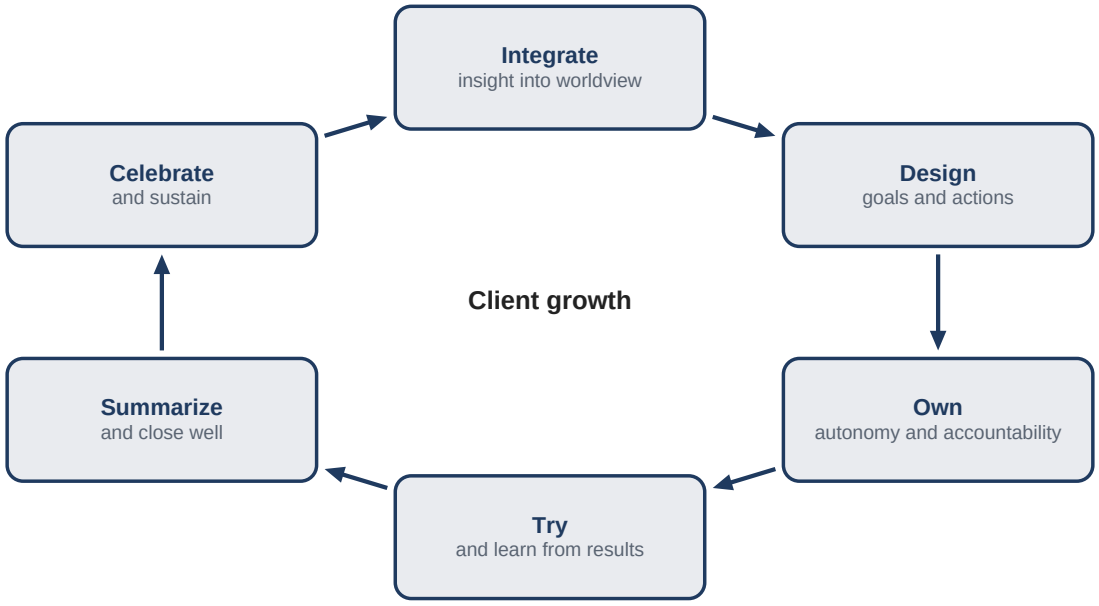
Phases of an engagement

Phase	Focus	The coach helps the client
Opening	Clarity and agreements	Define goals and how to work together
Exploring	Awareness and insight	Understand what is going on and what matters
Acting	Experiments and accountability	Try, learn and adjust in real life
Integrating	Making change last	Embed new habits and beliefs
Closing	Independence and celebration	Own the learning and plan beyond coaching

> **Coach's note.** Aim for progress, not perfection. A client who leaves with insight, a plan and the confidence to keep growing without the coach has been well served.

Putting It Together

Facilitating growth is a cycle rather than a checklist. The coach helps the client turn insight into goals, test actions, stay accountable, learn from results, celebrate progress and begin again.



The client growth cycle.

Do and avoid

Do	Avoid
Let the client design goals and actions	Handing over the plan
Ask what the client is learning	Telling them what they should learn
Frame actions as experiments	Treating actions as pass or fail
Follow up with curiosity	Following up with blame
Name progress and strengths	Saying only “well done”
Close sessions with the client’s summary	Ending abruptly or with only the coach’s summary

Phrases by purpose

Purpose	Sample phrases	When to use
Integrate	*What are you realizing? What does this mean for you?*	After an insight
Set direction	*What would you like to have happen?*	When forming goals
Design action	*What is a small step you could take?*	When planning
Check autonomy	*What feels right to you?*	When offering ideas
Support follow-through	*How would you like to be held accountable?*	When agreeing actions
Learn	*What did you learn? What surprised you?*	After actions
Celebrate	*What are you proud of? What did that take?*	When progress shows

Practical notes

- **Trust the client’s pace.** Growth cannot be rushed.
- **Keep actions small.** Success builds confidence for the next step.
- **Return decisions to the client.** Autonomy grows with practice.
- **Follow up.** It shows that the work and the client matter.
- **Celebrate often.** Notice what is working, not only what is left.
- **Close each session.** Even a brief summary anchors learning.

Session Checklist

A quick review after a session, or before the next one.

- [ ] I helped the client put their insight into their own words.
- [ ] I connected the insight to goals, values and behavior.
- [ ] The client designed the goals and actions, and I supported their autonomy.
- [ ] We framed actions as experiments with learning built in.
- [ ] The client chose how to be accountable.
- [ ] We looked at resources, support and possible barriers.
- [ ] I followed up on past actions with curiosity, not blame.
- [ ] The client summarized their learning, and we confirmed next steps.
- [ ] I noticed and celebrated the client's progress.
- [ ] I chose one thing to try next time to strengthen the client's growth.