

Stuck in a self-destructive rut

Successfully using coaching to change the narrative

Background

Despite being intelligent, engaging, lively and great fun, Richard was stuck. He had an impressive list of academic credentials, including a Doctorate. He was also gifted in being able to communicate and present complex ideas in a manner which aided understanding and forward learning.

However, at 30 years old he was unsure where to focus his career and which way to move next. This uncertainty triggered a chain of feelings that were holding Richard back.

Key Issues

Richard was torn; he felt like an academic at heart but was put off by the competitiveness of the academic job market. He knew that "rejection is the rule" and people in his discipline regularly applied for hundreds of jobs before getting an offer, but he struggled to cope after just a handful of rejections. He also foresaw a string of short-term contracts and little financial or career certainty. This sparked a chain of emotions and events.

First, his confidence and belief in himself was plummeting; he felt a failure and was fond of comparing himself unfavourably to his academic peers.

As a result, he stopped applying for jobs. He became isolated, full of doubts. This spiralled as his lack of confidence affected the way he presented himself at conferences and in his daily research job, and he realised this was sabotaging his chances in the job market.

Talking to friends had limited success as they could only offer sympathy. Richard began to feel that he needed someone neutral and objective to talk to. Recognising this, he approached Emma for an initial coaching session to see if she could help.

Solution

After the initial coaching session, Richard quickly started to feel better. As he said, "Presenting my situation to a stranger was helpful. The negative self-talk I constantly subjected myself to didn't feel so compelling when I voiced it to Emma. I could also obviously see the inconsistencies in what I was saying."

"The reframing techniques Emma gave me were so effective..."

Richard

Working with him in their sessions, Emma taught Richard how to actively acknowledge and respond to his feelings of stress and anxiety. Importantly for Richard, he now felt that as he was actively addressing his problems, he was in control.

He observed that, "The reframing techniques Emma gave me were so effective, I quickly saw a lot of progress in how I felt about myself and my life."

"His feelings of uncertainty set off a chain of reactions and emotions that had begun to negatively affect his life."

Emma Falkner

Emma also recommended time management techniques which helped him to focus and get more done.

While coaching provided the neutral person to talk to that Richard needed, Emma provided more than that. She was a witness to the negative stories Richard was telling himself versus the facts. Emma spotted patterns in the way Richard was thinking and responding to events, and provided him with concrete tools to replace these patterns with something more positive and productive.

These tools were an area of knowledge that Richard and his friends simply didn't have. Importantly for Richard, he trusted Emma's expertise and experience - this was his biggest worry before seeking coaching, that he wouldn't have faith in the coach and that it would be a waste of money! It was anything but that.

Results

Richard is astonished when he looks back at how he felt when he first came to Emma and compares that to a year later. Now, he can:

- control his feelings of panic and helplessness
- stop beating himself up
- channel his energy productively
- formulate a strategy and organise his efforts.

As a result of the coaching, Richard set to work on his CV. He narrowed down the areas of his CV that were letting him down and focused on improving those.

He then got an interview for a job in academia.

While preparing for that interview he was nervous but he now knew how to use those nerves to spur himself on to action, rather than allowing them to paralyse himself with self-doubt.

"The techniques Emma has given me will help me throughout my life in every area."

Richard got the job.

Richard

Then he even successfully negotiated a higher salary. Having the confidence to ask for more money provided him with concrete evidence of his value to his employer.

He explained, "I wouldn't have asked for more money a year before. The techniques Emma has given me will help me throughout my life in every area; as long as I remember to use them!"

Conclusion

One to one coaching is more than simply an objective way of listening. It allows people to hear themselves and their narrative reflected back to them, and to then learn about tools and techniques to manage their feelings and change their narrative. This immediately has a huge impact on their lives and this continues into the future.

Names have been changed to protect client anonymity