

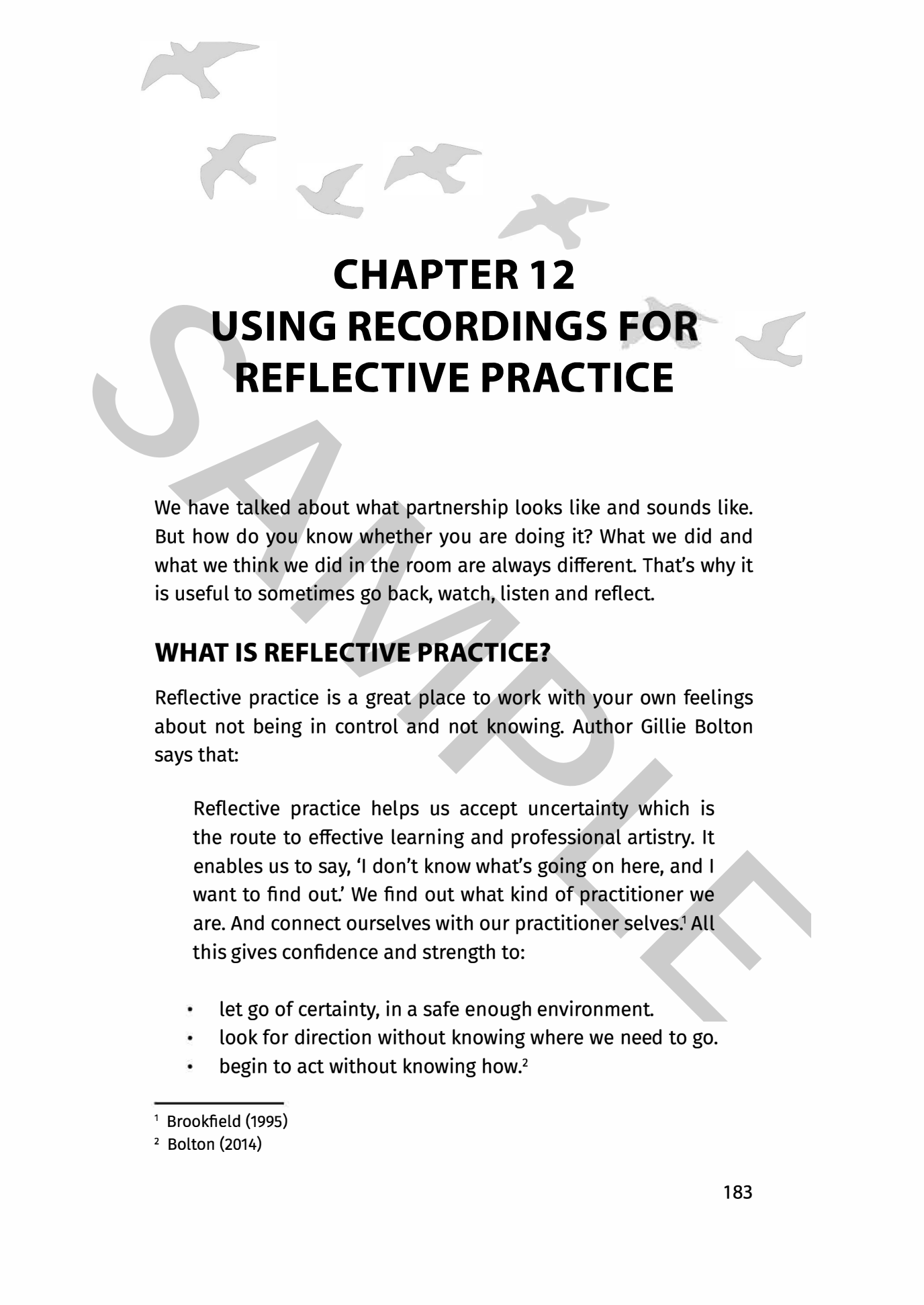


# **THE HUMAN BEHIND THE COACH**

**Here's a taster from The Human Behind The Coach**

**Find out more in The Human Behind the Coach by  
Claire Pedrick MCC and Lucia Baldelli**

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## CHAPTER 12

# USING RECORDINGS FOR REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

We have talked about what partnership looks like and sounds like. But how do you know whether you are doing it? What we did and what we think we did in the room are always different. That's why it is useful to sometimes go back, watch, listen and reflect.

### WHAT IS REFLECTIVE PRACTICE?

Reflective practice is a great place to work with your own feelings about not being in control and not knowing. Author Gillie Bolton says that:

Reflective practice helps us accept uncertainty which is the route to effective learning and professional artistry. It enables us to say, 'I don't know what's going on here, and I want to find out.' We find out what kind of practitioner we are. And connect ourselves with our practitioner selves.<sup>1</sup> All this gives confidence and strength to:

- let go of certainty, in a safe enough environment.
- look for direction without knowing where we need to go.
- begin to act without knowing how.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Brookfield (1995)

<sup>2</sup> Bolton (2014)

*What did I do? What did I hear? What worked? What didn't work? How did they respond? What did I notice?* are all useful questions which bring insight. Journalling, one-to-one supervision, action learning sets or supervision groups are great ways of growing as a coach. They rely on what you remember but they don't include how you are really experienced by the thinker. Self-reported data is not enough to evaluate the usefulness or the quality of your coaching. Deep learning cannot be done in the session or through self-reflection alone.

## **DEEPER LEARNING**

What you see, hear and sense enable you to build trust, rapport, listen, form questions and enable the thinker to get in flow. Coaches miss much of what emerges because you have many other things to do, live in the room. What the thinker sees, hears and senses in and from you are equally important. From time to time it's useful learning to pay attention to these. A skilled reflective practitioner new to the idea of recordings said: *I get it! I need to **adjust me**.*

As part of coaches' development, we each spend a couple of days a week with them listening to recordings of their coaching. This is the most impactful way to develop as a coach and a useful way of assessing the competencies of coaching.

This may be the first time you have done a recording; you might not have done one since your training many years ago or you may be wondering why you would need to do one at all. Recordings are useful because they are the only way that you can observe the impact of what you are doing in the room.

Becoming an artful coach requires focus in two areas:

1. Work on your human stuff – this can be seen in the movement and heard in the sound of the conversation.
2. Take the technical coaching skills that you already have, tighten it up and then let it flow.

With a recording, you will learn to appreciate the gaps that need attention to become more artful. You'll notice your strengths as well as your habits. You will learn to watch how your questions and silences land with different thinkers. When coaches use recordings as development, they almost always begin to do less work. And you will start to take less notes! Your conversations will be more in flow. (We will talk about credential applications later in the chapter.)

Video recordings are much better for development than audio, unless you only work on the telephone. You can see the transitional moments of the conversation, the movement that disturbs the flow, what's happening in pauses, who is waiting. You can also notice if something is unsaid.

You might try different approaches to learn from your recordings: individual reflection, debriefing with a peer coach or a mentor coach. If you look at them on your own and you can see, hear or sense what's going on when you are watching the recording, you will probably learn to do that in the room.

Working with a peer is also useful to gain a different perspective. If you are going for ICF credentials, you will have to work with a mentor coach. We recommend that all coaches have mentor coaching to add value to your reflective practice. Mentor coaching 'consists of coaching and feedback in a collaborative, appreciative and dialogued process based on an observed or recorded coaching session to increase the coach's capability in coaching, in alignment with the ICF Core Competencies.'<sup>3</sup>

## **DO YOU HATE THE SOUND OF YOUR OWN VOICE?**

You are not alone. When you speak, you hear what you are saying in two ways, explains BBC science presenter Greg Foot:

The first is through vibrating sound waves hitting your eardrum, the way other people hear your voice. The second way is through vibrations inside your skull set off by your

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<sup>3</sup> ICF, *Mentor Coaching*.

vocal cords. Those vibrations travel up through your bony skull and again set the ear drum vibrating. However, as they travel through the bone they spread out and lower in pitch, giving you a false sense of bass.<sup>4</sup>

That is why recordings sound squeaky. This is how you sound to others! You may well cringe, and unless you listen to recordings, you are missing out on some deep learning.

## **RECORDING FOR DEVELOPMENT**

Here are some guidelines to come up with a good recording for your own development.

- **Choose the right thinker**
  - Record what you normally do with people you normally work with, even if it's hybrid coaching (coaching with some mentoring).
  - If there are commercial reasons why you can't record much of your work, you could offer three or four pro bono sessions to people in exchange for a recording.
  - Try to record with someone who is not completely new to coaching: it will take some time for them to go deep.
  - Don't choose someone who is a very experienced coach: they will do all the work by themselves.
  - For learning, a 30-minute session is ideal and a great way of tightening up your coaching.
  - If you aren't yet ready to watch your own recordings, search for coaching demos on YouTube. And watch the thinker. Not the coach.
  
- **Permissions**
  - You need permission to record. This does not need to be in the recording itself. If you are going to watch the recording with your mentor coach, remember to mention

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<sup>4</sup> Foot, *Why does your voice sound different on a recording?*

that in your permission request.

- When you ask permission in the recording, or just before you press play, you start one down. You have accidentally told the thinker you are indebted to them! Agreeing in advance by email is clear enough.

- Here is an example of a simple permission request.<sup>5</sup>

I confirm that I am happy to participate in the recording of my coaching session with :

Name of Coach

On (date)

I understand that:

- ◆ I have agreed to an audio/video recording of my coaching session.
- ◆ My mentor and their supervisor/mentor may review the material in order to monitor and improve my coach's skills.
- ◆ The recording may be uploaded to the International Coaching Federation as part of my coach's accreditation. Only the ICF examiner will hear/watch it.
- ◆ The purpose of the recording is to support my coach's own CPD (continuing professional development).
- ◆ At the end of the session, I have the opportunity to request that the recording is not used.
- ◆ The recording will be deleted within x months unless we agree otherwise.

- If you don't have a data privacy policy (plan), now is the time to sort it out. You will be storing personal information.

- **Getting ready to record**

- Conquer your recording aversion! While you are worried about recording, you won't be doing what you normally

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<sup>5</sup> You can download this sample from: [www.thehumanbehindthecoach.com](http://www.thehumanbehindthecoach.com)

do. Get permission to record everything that you can for a while and agree that you will delete them. You might not even watch them. Just get comfortable so that you can begin to record the normal you.

- If there are any technical challenges during the recording, ignore them and do not apologize for bad internet connection – it is not your fault. Ask them to repeat what they have just said only if you didn't hear at all.
  - Choose lights to make sure your face is visible and not in the dark.
  - Headphones can increase confidentiality because no one else can hear the thinker but if you are using wired headphones remember that they might be an obstacle to movement!
  - Choose a quiet place away from background noise and pick a time of the day when you are less likely to be interrupted.
  - Turn off reminders and notifications on your phone or computer.
  - Record in gallery view so that when you watch back you can see the two of you at the same time. If you are using Zoom this might be on your account settings on the website.
  - Given that it is not normal to see yourself while you are having a conversation live, cover the side of the screen with your picture so you aren't watching yourself! In unrecorded sessions, using *Hide Self View* makes the whole experience more normal.
- **The right mood**
    - There is no such a thing as a perfect recording.
    - You will always make mistakes, ask inadequate questions, go too fast or too slow. Only learn as much as is useful to learn from each recording. Over analysing is not going

to serve you.

- Less is more – listening back to a recording for development every other month will give you time to incorporate new learning in your practice.
- You need to be recording sessions that show you how you do what you do. Please avoid thinking that your mentor coach, supervisor, assessor are also present in the room. It will affect your presence!

- **Watch with someone else**

- The first time we watch a recording, we watch it with the coach. It's the only way for the coach to get feedback in real time because, like the thinker, we don't know what will happen next. We can only notice what is happening. Watching in advance allows us to give different feedback because we know how the recording will end. They bring deep and different learning.

## **BE GENTLE**

Whether you watch recordings alone or with a peer, mentor or supervisor, looking at too many aspects of your developmental edges could be overwhelming. You will need different kinds of feedback depending on your goal – individual reflection, debrief with a peer or mentor coach, or accreditation. What we offer here are some ideas. Use one or two and make them your own. Over time, it might be useful to be more systematic, but as you begin, please go gently.

Software programmers execute 'debug mode' when a programme is not working properly. Debugging helps find and fix errors. They look at code one line at a time to see its impact on the expected outcome and spot bugs easily. When we mentor very experienced coaches, we might take an hour to look at five minutes of a recording. We pause every time there is something to notice in a sound, a look, a pause and dive deep into the learning. This is not the place to start!



## **SOME IDEAS**

Here are some different ways to watch and listen. Please don't look for them all on your first recording, and please don't try and apply all the learning in your next coaching session. They are simply different lenses:

### *1. Simply watch the thinker*

Tünde Erdős said that 'presence is not about what the coach is doing. It's about the relationship between the coach and the thinker.'<sup>6</sup> Begin by only watching the thinker.

Ask yourself:

- Are they thinking?
- What do you notice when they are thinking? What do you notice when you're unsure whether they are thinking?
- When you spoke, was the thinker ready for you? Or were they busy?

This is the place to learn about silence and timing. You begin to see how the value to the thinker comes from the work they do and just not the words you speak.

### *2. Do we know what we are doing today?*

Watch a recording and notice:

- Who dived into the stuff first? (Any exploring or curious question about the content?)
- Are you *both* clear enough about what you're doing in this session? How you're both going to do it and how you'll know you've done it before *you* dived into exploring?
- Notice the transition points where you change direction. Who made the decision?

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<sup>6</sup> Erdős (2021a)

- How do you both know that you're still in partnership?
- How often are you checking in? When might you have checked in more?
- Can you clearly see the arc of the coaching container – the beginning, the middle and the end of the conversation?

### *3. What am I doing and what is happening between us?*

When they are looking at you they are probably talking to you. When they begin to look away it is often a sign that they are now thinking for themselves:

- What are you noticing?
- Are you moving forwards or backwards?
- Who is benefitting from the coach's interventions?
- How much is the coach controlling the direction of the conversation?
- How much is the coach rewording questions to make sure they are perfectly formed?
- What happens to the coach when things get difficult and the thinker is stuck?
- How comfortable is the coach when things get difficult?
- What emotions is the coach displaying accidentally?
- What do you see, hear or sense, and how and when are you offering that back?
- As you watch yourself ask a question, notice their eyes – did you stop talking as soon as they picked it up? Were they waiting for you to stop speaking?
- How many questions did you ask in the middle? How many of those questions kept them thinking?
- Who breaks the silences?
- Is your preference feeling or thinking and is their preference feeling or thinking? Are you noticing or offering back both?
- Who is leading? Who is following?

## *The Human Behind the Coach*

- How much is the conversation in flow? Or is it like table tennis?
- Can you see the transformation emerging?
- Who manages the ending? Are you leading it? Or is it in partnership?

### *4. The human lens*

Reflect on one of the human qualities from Part I:

- When are you demonstrating it and how?
- When are you not demonstrating it?
- What is the impact on the thinker?
- What needs to be different?

There are more reflection opportunities and specific exercises in each chapter.

### *5. Sound and movement*

- Do your questions sound like an offer or a statement? What's the impact?
- What is your *I-hear-you* sound? Does it encourage flow?
- What is your *Go-on-then* noise? Is it an offer or a blocker?
- Are you noticing and saying what you see/hear, e.g. the noises they make, and the laugh?
- What do you see/hear as an insight emerging in them?
- What do you do when they have had an insight? What sound or movement do you notice in them? And what do they notice in you?
- How could you bring more flow and humanity in the rightsizing?
- Are you asking permission before you go to another level?  
*How deep do you want to go?*

Deeper and different learning can come when you listen with video off or watch with sound off. As you get more confident with using recordings, you will begin to notice where you need to do some of the inside work. What's the one thing you will start with?

And as you watch recordings, if you are coming up with a list of questions you'd like to ask, they may well be the questions you need to start asking the thinker!

## **TRANSCRIPTS**

Looking at the words you actually said in a conversation is an excellent way of addressing bad habits fast! You can see how much you actually talk, rather than how much you think you talk. You can see when you ask multiple questions or offer unsolicited advice. In fact, you can look at a transcript through many lenses and get all kinds of insights and learning about what you need to do more of and what you can do less of in service of facilitating someone else to think. Recording transcripts are a great way for a mentor to see how your questions are structured. There are many low-cost websites where you can upload recordings and get a transcript, e.g. Otter.ai, and Temi.com, Google Meet and Zoom have a free transcript function. Whichever you choose, ensure that your recordings and transcripts are stored safely according to your countries data protection regulations.

## **USING RECORDINGS FOR ACCREDITATION**

Recording is required as part of the credential process for some professional bodies. ICF, for example, requires one or two recordings that demonstrate their coaching competencies.

We recommend that you don't take the first recording you have ever done and analyse it all through the lens of all the ICF competencies. Look at one competency at a time. Reflecting on the questions and observations you raise with your mentor coach will naturally strengthen your coaching competencies, as long as it's not a tick box activity to make sure that you pass a training assessment.

### *The Human Behind the Coach*

Here are some guidelines to create a recording for assessment with ICF.

- The coaching session must be with someone who has hired you as a coach and not in any other capacity.
- It must last 20–60 minutes.
- They could be a paid or pro bono client.
- The recording must be audio only with a full transcript, including exclamations and other noises. Please refer to the ICF requirements to understand what is needed.
- Ask written permission.



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