



CASE STUDY

How an instructional coach discovered that vulnerability is the key to authenticity



CLIENT AT A GLANCE

Facts:

- 25 years in education
- Located in Midwest
- Perfection is default mode
- People pleaser
- Three months of coaching

THE CHALLENGE

A job change left AB questioning her professional career. She wasn't sure if the new position was right for her. She was seeking clarity about who she was at this point in her career and what the role meant for her. She felt like she needed someone to coach her through the transition she was experiencing professionally.

THE RESULT

AB worked with a coach for 30-minutes each week for three months. Coaching helped her grow her confidence in her new position.

The weekly coaching sessions focused on supporting AB as she developed

- awareness of the roadblocks she put in her way,
- alignment of the position expectations and her perceived expectations
- actions that allow her to be okay with being uncomfortable

THE LEARNING

Learning One

Trusting who she is and who she is becoming

Learning Two

Exploring the uncomfortable parts of self is critical for authenticity

Learning Three

Courage to embrace vulnerability

Learning Four

Being uncomfortable allows for growth



I don't see vulnerability as a weakness anymore. I am confident in showing who I really, truly am.

AB

Instructional Coach

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The Challenge:

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“The roadblocks to my professional growth was my level of confidence in myself and understanding what I was capable of and being confident in what I was capable of doing. I knew at the time that the biggest roadblock was me and I felt a coach could come in, have conversation with me, have an outside perspective that I was not seeing that could give me that perspective of someone who was not living what I was living, someone who was not in the middle of what I was doing.”

AB recognized that her level of confidence was not allowing her to fully embrace the new position. It was holding her back from trusting who she was, who she was becoming and her experiences. She came to coaching so that the coach could fix her but she realized that coaching was like holding up a mirror to her life, professionally and personally.

“I didn't realize that in the beginning. Initially I just wanted someone to tell me the answers.”

In her previous position, AB was the expert. As an expert, she created solutions to problems and teachers looked to her for help. However, in her new position she was expected to coach rather than provide solutions. Teachers were not actively seeking coaching. She grappled with how to bridge the gap between being an expert and being a coach.

“It helped me realize what coaching truly is. I needed someone to facilitate my thinking, mirror my thinking, ask questions so that I came up with the answer.

Through coaching I felt it was more of a support to myself to do my own thinking and growth in the areas I need to grow in and not just solve my problems for me.”

Learned:

AB learned that she is in control of who she is and how she shows up.

“Coaching really helps put the work back on myself. I learned that I am very capable. I just needed that reflection piece to reflect on that. I learned to clarify my goals, where I was going and what I wanted to do. It went further than my professional career. It helped me personally because the personal piece always plays a part in your professional life. Coaching for me was a personal journey as well as a professional journey. I was not ready for that. I didn’t think that’s where it would go. But did I need it? Yes!”

She also learned that there are parts of her that are important to explore, even if it is uncomfortable.

“I just need some wind beneath my wings. I needed support outside of my immediate circle, someone who is familiar with my world but has an outside perspective and didn’t know me intimately to really ask questions that would send me in directions I would not have gone in myself. I know I went kicking and screaming in a few directions, but I did it.”

Her biggest lesson was gaining the courage to embrace vulnerability.

“To get the most out of coaching you have to be reflective and open to being vulnerable. Opening yourself up to the learning possibility that coaching brings definitely takes you further in your growth in whatever it is that is your need for coaching. It will take you further if you are honest and reflective. In my life, vulnerability has been seen as a weakness of sorts. And my personality, I don’t like to show weakness. I’ve learned that Vulnerability is the root of being courageous and having courage, except you are not going to grow in your life professionally and personally if you do not have the courage to be vulnerable. My favorite quote of Brene Brown is in order to gain courage you have to rumble with vulnerability and she says embrace the suck. That basically sums it up for me. Being vulnerable means you have to be open and reflective. It’s not easy, it’s not fun, but that is the road to get you to courage and being courageous you have to go down that path of vulnerability. Getting to the uncomfortableness and being good with it is going to help the growth.”

Results:

To be a transformational leader who supports shifts in teachers' pedagogical knowledge AB deepened her self awareness and fully embraces vulnerability. She recognizes that when she is uncomfortable, she is stretching herself and growing, while she is supporting others to stretch and grow.

“I recognize how I am showing up in interactions with others. I pay attention to my qualities and how I respond when talking to and leading others. I am aware of my confidence level. When my confidence feels low I am able to be vulnerable with the people I'm leading. I don't see vulnerability as a weakness anymore. I am confident in showing who I really, truly am. All I can do is be my best and that's enough. I am no longer performing to lead others. I lead from my best self.”