

## The story of how I gloriously failed my Coaching Certification exam.

“What’s that?” I can already hear you saying, “YOU? Mr. Confidence coach for coaches? You failed your exam? How could this be?”

Yes, it’s true. I failed. And before you gasp in horror, or begin to furrow your brow in scorn, I’ll have you know that I am very proud of my failure. In fact, I wear that badge quite proudly. I will even go so far as to say that, even after 10 years, this was the single most impactful event in my coach training. I certainly came prepared. I was good in my skills, and felt confident. And I believe that I did some good coaching. Not only that, but I had what I thought was an “ace in the hole” that would have surely tipped any questionable coaching in my favor, so that even if my coaching wasn’t amazing, I knew I would do enough to get by. Looking back, I realize clearly that had I just, “done enough to get by ” and passed, I most likely would have continued on to be a good coach. But I truly believe that BECAUSE I failed, I am a now great coach. And it’s from that failure that I have also been able to pass on powerful learning to hundreds of coaches to follow.

Want to know why? Of course you do.

What's the whole story? Well, read on.

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### The Preparation.

It all really began two days before the exam.

Well, it actually began way before that, if you consider the hours of practicing, and guerilla coaching (over 50 practice sessions), and reading and preparing and working with my own coach. I did everything that anyone taught me. I listened to every feedback, but much of it came from other coaches just like me. And while the feedback that I did get from seasoned supervisors was helpful, sometimes it was contradictory. But I persevered. I took everything that was given to me and I worked hard to make sure I knew all my coaching skills well. But even with the hours of practicing and drilling, there comes a point when you have to accept that, "You know what you know," and any more studying and practicing wasn’t really going to make much difference. It was eventually time for me to make the drive from Chicago to Minneapolis to take my Certification exam. (I should point out that this was in the days when you had to schedule an entire day to take your exam live, in person, and you were videotaped. Nowadays, it’s much easier to block off

a few hours and simply coach over the phone and be evaluated that way. I don't mean to be one of those, "Oh, back in my day we had to coach uphill, in the snow, both ways", but it was kind of like that.)

In order to cover the full 400 mile distance and not be totally wiped out for the exam, the 7 hour journey was split into a two days. To give me additional support, my wife came along. The plan was simple. We'd travel there, I would conquer my exam, get my credentials, and we would make a nice little vacation out of it all. Everything started off well. We left the city at a good hour to avoid all the traffic and the roads were clear. This was already the beginning of what was sure to be a wonderful experience. However, after only about an hour on the road, we began to feel bad—scratchy throat, sniffles, stuffy head. By the time we reached the halfway point in Madison, we were both consumed with what seemed to be an ugly flu—symptoms of fever, drainage, coughing and body aches. While desperately trying to sleep amidst all the nose blowing and miserable feeling, we were completely miserable. It felt like we should just hole up in the hotel for a few days while we recovered, pass on the exam and try to take it another time. But with so much at stake I *had* to continue. All my family, friends, Certification classmates and coaching colleagues (including everyone I had done practice sessions with—all 50 of them) were counting on me. I couldn't let them down.

The next day we got up, endured breakfast (when we really wanted to stay in bed the whole day), and experienced the worst drive I've had to endure, feeling miserable and fluish, feverish and draining all the way. We pulled into Minneapolis by about 4:00 in the afternoon and immediately took a nap in the hotel. At one point, we managed to drag ourselves out to find some soup (that was all we could even think about eating), and then it was back to bed to sleep the rest of the night away.

When we woke the next morning, we were actually feeling much better, but still on the weakened side. So I left my wife to sleep and heal in the hotel, while I made my way to the other hotel about 5 miles away, where the exam was taking place. As I walked into the exam room, I discovered, to my delight, that I already knew two of the three examiners. ("Man, this is going to be easy," I thought. "I got two leaders in my corner already.") But I also knew that I was still recovering from my sickness, and I needed to conserve my energy if I was going to make it through the entire day. During the opening circle where we all touched base, debriefed on what to expect for the day, covered logistics as well as any additional sharing from the other coaches to be tested, I announced to the group my situation, so they would know what was going on with me. Perhaps they might even take into account that I was coaching in a weakened state. I mean, not every coach can do that, right? That's got to count for extra points or something.

I also was really big on an exercise I had learned in my training, “the Future Self”. It was a guided visualization that had me tap into what I imagined my deepest most powerful self would be. I used it in all my coaching and loved it. And all my clients loved it. In fact, I was convinced that if you had a connection with your “Future Self” then everything else was easy. So being so gung ho on the matter, I also encouraged all of us taking the exam (and even the examiners for good measure) to take a moment to connect with all of our “Future Selves” for support and to help us stay grounded in our magnificence... and some other insightful stuff that I felt was incredibly important to help us get through this task.

It was going to be a long day—they told us to block off 8 hours in order to cover two oral coaching demonstrations from everyone taking the exam (and there were eight of us) as well as have plenty of time to complete the comprehensive written exam. So on top of attempting to prove my coaching skills, I also was working with a handicap and shifted my mode to conserve my energy. So when it came time to decide who was going to do the oral exam first, I immediately jumped on it. My plan was to get it out of the way so I could just relax and then take my time with the written part of the exam.

### The Oral Exam

Of course I can't reveal much about the exam, nor the content of our coaching with respect to my two clients. However, I will bring up aspects from my experience that had an impact on my overall coaching. My first client mentioned early on in our session something about her “Future self”. As I said, I was really into "Future Self" at the time and so when I heard that word, I instantly knew how I should take this session. After all, I was the self-proclaimed "Future Self" expert. I proceeded to launch into this whole thing, trying to impress the examiners and my client with how much I "got" future self, while trying to guide my client through a modified FS exercise in only 12 minutes. An amazing task that the examiners were sure to be impressed by. I don't know of any other coach that would dare to attempt such a feat.

Once that was done, I went to work on my written exam (all the time pacing... pacing... pacing) while continuing to manage my energy. After all, it was a long day, and still plenty of stuff to come.

Then came client #2, where I got to coach one of the examiners. Now, I will say, that of the three, I knew two of them personally. I had assisted both of them during their training, they had witnessed my coaching, and I knew that they loved me. However, it was my luck that the one that I ended up coaching was the one that I didn't know. All the better, this way, my two “ace in the hole's” could remain “objective” and still be pulling for me.

I will say, she was absolutely amazing. In fact, I can still remember the conversation I was having during the session.

"Hm, there's that music coming from the other room. Man, that's distracting. I wonder if I could use that to demonstrate my amazingly skilled coaching, you know use it somehow."

*"Hey, you may be on to something. OK. But keep an ear out for when you can slip it in. That should really impress them."*

"Impress who?"

*"Well, your client, and of course the examiners."*

"Yeah. But really all I need to do is just listen to my client."

*"Good point. Well, are you?"*

"Am I what?"

*"Listening to your client."*

"Well, her lips are moving. I'm here coaching her. So I must be."

*"Fair enough. But what is she saying?"*

"I guess I don't know."

*"Well, then, don't you think you should start actually listening to her instead of talking with me?"*

"Yeah. You're right. I should do that."

*"Ok, then do it."*

"I am."

*"Are you sure?"*

"Of course, I'm sure. What do you think I am? New at this? I'm a coach. That's what I do. I listen to my client."

*"OK, smarty. Then what is she saying."*

"Who?"

*"Your client that you are listening to."*

"I don't know."

*"Why not?"*

"Cause I'm busy talking to you."

*"Well, forget about me and listen to your client."*

“OK. I will.”

**Pause, while my client continues on talking about whatever it was she was talking about.**

*"Hey, by the way, how's your energy doing?"*

"Oh, pretty good. I'm holding up all right. I think I'll make it through this oral part and then be able to relax a little. It's hard work controlling my energy."

*"Yeah, I know. Well, keep it up."*

“You bet.”

*"Of course it can't be easy, having to do all this, and such a long day, having just recovered from some flu bug, and while driving 7 hours on top of that. I'm sure they're quite impressed with your commitment."*

"Thanks."

*"No problem. By the way, what is she talking about?"*

"Who? My client? Something about a cliff, I think. What am I going to do with a cliff? Man. I don't know. I already did Fulfillment stuff with the first client. maybe I can do some Balance stuff. That'll show my range and versatility."

*"Good idea. Meanwhile, perhaps you should listen to your client."*

"Oh yeah. Man, that music next door is loud. I wish they would turn it down, it's so distracting. It's all I can do to pay attention to my client. Oh well, I'm sure they'll take that into account as well."

...and on it went.

Had I actually been paying attention, I might have realized that I was indeed not doing a good job of managing, nor coaching for that matter. I was off in my own conversation with myself and leaving my poor client on her own.

At one point, this amazing woman, while still being a client, locked my shoulders and said, "Coach! I NEED to go here." She certainly put up an valiant effort and did everything she could to help me succeed in my exam. But to no avail. I was so busy pacing myself, conserving my energy, and trying to DO a good job so I wouldn't let everyone down that I just couldn't allow myself to take on one more thing, especially something like actually listening to my client. All in all, I walked away feeling I did all right. I figured I managed to pull off some decent coaching, despite the distractions, and especially despite my

weakened state and energy conservation mode. I'm sure they would take all of that into consideration. Heck, they knew me. If the circumstances were better, I'm sure they knew I would do some amazing coaching. With the oral exams completed, I could now just relax and take my time with the written part.

## The Written Exam

It was a lovely day, so I went outside and found a table in the cafe where I could sit, sip my iced tea, and fill out the written exam in a slow steady pace (remember: pacing... pacing... pacing.) The major energy drain of the Oral Exam was well behind me, and although it wasn't by all means stellar, I knew I did fine and was sure to have passed.

I began to feel better, too. Although still tired from my illness and filling my morning with super-focus and energy management, I was all right. Actually, I was more than all right. I was quite relaxed. So relaxed that I could feel a nice energy flowing through me. Much different than the morning's experience. That sure was a lot of hard managing. The written exam was the easy part now. In fact, I actually was the first one in my group to finish the exam. So I took advantage of the extra time allowed (we had something like 6 hours to complete the written exam) and went back and rewrote some of my answers, and embellished on others. In fact, I even turned the test over and supplied my own questions and answers on the back to areas I felt were missing attention. And still I was done before everyone else.

Man were they all going to be impressed when they read this.

We gathered once more at the closing circle complete our day. My other testmates were unsure of how they did, and I was the only walking out feeling pretty confident of my results. Sure, I told myself, it wasn't my best coaching. But those two leaders know me and what I'm capable of. And they all know I was recovering from a nasty flu and my energy was down. I'm sure they'll take that into account.

I made my way back to the hotel to celebrate my completing this momentous task with my wife, who was feeling much better as well. We enjoyed a lovely dinner and then headed home the next day.

## The Results

About a month went by.

In those days, you would receive your results in the mail one of two ways.

- A) A letter saying "Congratulations, you passed."
- 2) A package containing a videotape of your live exam, indicating that you failed and the tape is there for you to review what went wrong."

I got the tape.

I was stunned. What happened? I couldn't believe it. I'm a good coach. I know it. Everyone I coached in all those practice sessions said so. My clients all believe it. On average I got really good Supervision scores. What could have possibly went wrong? For crying out loud, they *knew* I was sick. That had to count for something. Well, not exactly sick, but weakened from being sick. And I even traveled during that illness to make that exam. (How many dedicated coaches would do that?) And the two leaders who know me, didn't they stick up for me?

I know what happened. It was that one that I coached. I didn't know her from before and so she didn't really get a good sample of what I can do. Besides, I was distracted by all that music in the next room and I was managing my energy so I could make it through that whole day. Cripes, a whole day! If they didn't make that stupid exam so ridiculously big, then I wouldn't have to have paced myself so much. If I just had to coach, that would be one thing. And I would have been awesome. But I had the whole day to consider, and that written part, and I had to pace my energy to give me at least a possible chance of making it to the end. What the hell do they want, anyway?"

... and on it went.

Needless to say, I failed my exam.

But now, to add insult to injury, I had to schedule a call with one of the examiners and review the tape with him to find out what went wrong. Well, I know what went wrong. I didn't need a stupid video tape and examiner to tell me what happened. I was weakened from being sick, and a two day drive (with not much food, because we weren't feeling good), I mean, what did they expect? Who could coach under those circumstances anyway? And then there was all that noise in the room next door and... well, *I* knew what happened. Now I had to listen to someone else tell me what I already knew. And then I had to defend myself.

Well, it was a couple weeks later, I had my phone call with one of the examiners. And to make it worse, it was one that I already knew. It was on a Thursday morning, and together, on the phone, we each watched our copies of the epic video tape of that fatal exam. It was stunning. I was watching someone who looked like me, but I couldn't figure out what he was doing. With his first client, he made all these assumptions about what the client needed and went off on some bizarre "Future Self" tangent, completely losing his client in the process. What the hell was that? Then came client number two. I could actually almost hear the insane conversation that seemed to be going on in this poor coach's head.

"All I need to do is just listen to my client."

*"Good point. Well, are you?"*

"Am I what?"

*"Listening to your client."*

"Well, her lips are moving. I'm here coaching her. So I must be."

*"Fair enough. But what is she saying?"*

"I guess I don't know."

*"Well, then, don't you think you should start listening to her?"*

"Yeah. You're right. I should do that."

*"Ok, then do it."*

"I am."

*"Are you sure?"*

"Of course, I'm sure..."

It was staggering to watch.

I tried to defend myself, "yeah, but I was sick," I said.

My reviewer caught me. "Ben, you weren't sick."

He was right.

"Well, I was just getting over it, and I was really trying to pace myself."

Even as the words were coming out of my mouth, I knew it was all a lame excuse.

He pointed out to me that what was really missing was that I was not connecting with my client. I was so focused on my self-managing, that I was really not with my client at all.

And it didn't matter what my condition was anyway. In fact, if I had just acknowledged it, actually went *with* it, instead of battling it, and trying to cover it up, it could have been some good coaching.

"Yeah but..." I started to reply, and I knew he was right.

And on came the rest of the feedback—frame by frame. Sometimes he just tossed in a quick comment, other times we had to pause for more specific notes. But the damage was done. I was beaten.

Then came the final blow.

As we were winding up our call, my coaching soul torn to pieces, the examiner said, "I gotta tell you Ben. When I saw you walk into that room for the exam. I thought you would be the one that would be a slam-dunk. And you let me down."

I don't remember what was said after that.

That was Thursday.

I know that you're probably reading this and saying to yourself, "Wow. He said that? What a prick."

Yeah, I thought so too at the time.

I can tell you the whole rest of the day I was a swirling mass of anger, embarrassment, pain, depression, humiliation, and wondering if I really could do this whole coaching thing. It was one of the most miserable days of my conscious memory, worse than any girl friend break up, worse than any firing from a job. With coaching, I really thought I had discovered something that had stirred my soul. I thought, of all the people in my classes who said that "this was it!" I knew *I really meant it*. Was I wrong?

And all those coaches and friends and family and classmates who were cheering for me, and even the examiner. I let them all down. Great. The one thing I tried desperately not to do, THE ONE THING, and I completely blew it.

I felt alone. I felt lost. I felt empty.

That was Thursday.

### Going Down The Tube

The very next day, Friday. I got up and, out of sheer commitment, got in my car and headed up to assist a Coach training weekend I had scheduled awhile back. I don't know why I went. I suppose I didn't want to let anyone *else* down. And it was too late to cancel anyway. Besides, what was I going to say? "Sorry, I can't make it to assist because I feel bad." Cripes, I drove two days with the flu just so I could fail miserably. No way this excuse would pass.

So I went.

I should mention that the weekend was training the coaches in a part of training called Process. For those of you who aren't familiar, Process is (in part) all about really experiencing what you are not allowing yourself to experience. So I knew already this was going to be a lot of deep emotional work, and likely exploring some personally hard subjects. Not something that I was really looking forward to. My only hope was that I could just spend the entire time in the back of the room, "holding the space" and let the other assistants have the experience. (How generous

of me, huh?). My plan was to get through this weekend of coaching hell as quickly and quietly as possible and then give up this whole coaching thing.

Clearly I didn't have what it took. Obviously I didn't get it. I mean, I thought I was good, and I wasn't. So what is there left for me here? I looked at the clock and mentally made my time stamp.

Eight O'Clock. I just need to get through the next three days until 6:00 Sunday and I'm done. I don't know what else I'll do. But I know, without a doubt I'm done with coaching.

That was the plan.

I walked into the room at the hotel where the training was to take place only to discover that I was the only assistant that weekend, which meant that if there was anything that needed to be done, I was going to have to do it. And there were an odd number of participants signed up. Which meant that for any pairing or even tripling up, I HAD to participate in every exercise. I couldn't sit out and just pretend to watch and care.

And then I noticed that of the two leaders sitting in the room awaiting my arrival, one of them was (you might have guessed it by now the way things were going downhill for me) the same coach who just one day before gave me that devastating feedback on my horrendous failure at coaching, and then promptly informed me that I had let him down.

He was right there in front of me.

There was no way I could hide.

Crap.

### Going Up The Tube

"So what did you do?" I can hear you ask.

Well, to be honest, I don't really recall that there was really any thought to it. I was there, I was caught, and couldn't turn back. My plans were dashed to the rocks. I was tender from the previous day and felt beaten already. I couldn't hide, and I couldn't face letting anyone else down, so I just dealt with it. I informed the other leader what had happened so he knew what was going on. They were both understanding and didn't try to coach me on it (that would have blown me over the edge, I'm sure) and I hunkered down for a weekend of "Process" coaching.

What was interesting was, once I had resigned myself to my situation, the rest of the weekend went quite well. I got some great coaching from the participants in the class. And in fact, I was able to get back into the swing and do some great coaching on my end as well.

By the time we got to the closing circle, when everyone had a chance to express their gratitude and acknowledgments, I finally revealed to everyone there what had happened. I kept names out of it and didn't reveal any of the feedback, nor that the very man who destroyed my coaching confidence was sitting next to me. Still, they were absolutely stunned. I was, too. Looking at myself, I certainly wasn't coaching like someone who had failed.

It was then that I learned firsthand a powerful lesson. I already knew this, and had been working with my clients on this very fact, but I REALLY got it this time—*failure is the single greatest place where we learn in our lives*. It was more than just a great lesson to intellectually pass on in coaching, I had really experienced it.

As the circle moved around to the leaders, my examiner—the man who gave me such devastating feedback (which, by the way, didn't seem so devastating anymore), the man who I “let down”, turned to me and said, "and Ben, in my book, you passed."

That was Sunday.

I knew that as far as the actual exam went, I'd still have to take it in order to truly pass and receive my credentials. His words made no difference to that. But in those short seconds he had encouraged two major things to my awareness. First: that I had recovered. No matter how bad it got, and no matter how poorly my coaching was during the exam, I was in truth a good coach all along and that I had just gotten in my own way (as many coaches have, and will continue to do). Second: That my letting him down wasn't as deep and personal as I had feared. That in fact, he was rooting for me the whole time.

When I went home that evening, I knew that I had already passed my retaking of the exam, not because he had said so, but because something had shifted. I had learned some powerful lessons, lessons that weren't taught to me before. Weak spots were revealed and strengthened. All that remained was the three month's time to pass before I could be re-examined.

### The Final Page: The Lessons Learned.

You see, the sheer fact that it's an exam tends to send us out of our comfort zone. And when that happens, we usually go to our defaults.

Of course we can feel prepared, I certainly did. I thought I had done everything right. I had been doing pretty good coaching, with client's and situations that I was familiar with. But just like the water behind a dam, when everything is fine, then everything is good. The dam is strong. But as soon as the pressure builds, those

little cracks in the dam, that weren't seen before, begin to show. So while I thought had it all pretty well under control, I was unaware that there were some habits that I had done a decent job of covering up. And once I got tossed around—a two day drive, a 24-hour flu, and all that pacing... pacing...pacing—the pressure increased and my cracks started to show. And when that happens, we automatically resort to our deep defaults.

A big one was working so hard to *get it right*.

Another one was *looking good*.

And finally, there was the powerful fear of *letting others down*.

In other words, the Performance Agenda kicks in. And when that happens, the coaching stops. Simply put, we all have agendas, even the coach. Ideally our agendas must be in service of the client's. However, the simple truth is that little agendas compete for energy and space. So when my performance agenda comes in, that urge to *look good, get it right*, and not *let them down*, then that shoves out my client's agenda.

Any of this sound familiar? Of course it does. We fall into these traps all the time. It's not just exams, but any given moment of our coaching. The exam is just a magnified experience with increased pressure./

My examiner was right. If I had simply acknowledged what was really going on, instead of working so hard to pretend it wasn't a factor that was going to get in my way, my exam might have gone much differently.

(As an example, a couple months earlier another coach had taken her exam and her back went out. She acknowledged her condition, even did her exam lying on the floor and passed. The power of transparency at work.)

Since that fateful experience, I've had many an obstacle occasion and challenging circumstance. My house flooded, my dog died, I've had illnesses, been up all night, a parent in the hospital, and many others. It happens. Life happens. And instead of pretending it didn't, or exerting considerable effort and energy to insist that we aren't impacted, it's much easier and better to simply acknowledge "what's so", and when we do, it's power over us subsides and we are able to move on.

And what a beautiful permission you are then able to give your clients. I suspect that they have various challenges and obstacles in their lives, too. Things they're exerting a tremendous amount of energy to pretend aren't happening. But it happens. Life happens. Their life happens. And we're working with them to get

the most out of their lives, right? Well, that means opening the door wide open and embracing the hard stuff, too.

Regardless of your physical condition, your outside circumstances, your situation, your challenges, I'm here to tell you that you are still a skilled coach. Your outside world doesn't have to dictate who you are. You're still caring and curious and passionate and all those things that make you powerful—just powerful facing certain challenges, like recovering from being under the weather.

I had an instructor long ago in college that kept wanting us to do our 30 minute warm-up exercises every morning.. "But Louis," we would protest, "I was up all night studying, I'm tired."

"Then let's do the warm-up tired."

"But Louis," we'd try again, "I'm still drunk from partying last night."

"Fine," he'd reply, "then let's do the warm-up still drunk."

"But Louis," we'd pull our trump card, "I'm sick with the flu."

"Good," he's simply state, "then let's do the warm-up sick with the flu."

No matter what we threw at him that seemed like a perfectly legitimate excuse, he responded the same. He didn't say, "Just pretend you're not hung over or sick. Imagine that you've gotten a good night's sleep and no one will notice." He embraced our situation, allowed us to BE with whatever it was AND still do what it was that we needed to DO.

So how do you prepare for your exam?

As you know that are typically two portions to any coaching exam. A written and an oral—each one tapping into the two different realms of coaching—the brain and the body, or informational and intuitive.

As far as the written portion goes, that's pretty easy. It's all brain based/informational. Listen to your recordings, know your coaching diagrams and models cold, have your friends quiz you. Revisit your homework. And even check out the Coaching Skills Forum ([www.coachingskillsforum.com](http://www.coachingskillsforum.com)) to learn more about your coaching skills.

It's all information that has been going through your brain through any of the five senses. Read, listen, talk, write, and any other form of information to practice relaying your coaching knowledge in that same way. So when you get to the written part of your exam, you're just recalling what you already know, and relaying it through the channels that you're already quite familiar with—writing, reading, talking, etc.

And then there's part two: the Oral part of the exam. Often in coaching, we don't have time for all that thinking. We need to be connected to the client, and able to receive the information they are providing and then intuitively act. It's about displaying how we perform in the moment of coaching. (See? There's that "perform" word again. It always seems to pop in.)

Speaking as someone who failed masterly, I can tell you what I did and later recognized what I did not do.

I did what everyone else does to prepare for their exams. I concentrated my efforts on massive amounts of "Guerilla Coaching" (as I called it) 15-minute coaching sessions. However, I did not know how to utilize that simple exercise to truly gain the greatest learning and benefit. It's only looking back did I discover some simple little tweaks and adjustments that instantly enhance and strengthen over 10 coaching skills.

One of the unexpected benefits from this was that I became more familiar with the "unknown" element of coaching—mainly, who is my client? What is their topic? Where are they coming from?

I also recognized that I was more comfortable with certain types and focuses of coaching, where others I was less so. I could have been more proactive about strengthening those weakened areas. A simple predetermining of which principle I would attempt to use before I got on the call (obviously if it needed to shift into a different direction, I would) would have made all the difference. Otherwise, I would naturally go do the coaching that I was most comfortable. And sure enough, when it came time for my exam, one of my clients really could have used some coaching in what was my weakest area. (It invariably happens that way, don't it?)

Because I was so determined to hit a record 50 practice sessions, I had to schedule many of them while I was out of my office and away from my desk. This turned out to be an additional unexpected benefit. Even experimenting around and coaching in different locations rather than your home wandering around the kitchen or sitting in that comfy chair can help you shift out of your comfort zone, allow yourself to stretch, all the while stay with your client. You don't need to do anything crazy, but change it up. The more you're comfortable with being uncomfortable, the more you don't have to allow your outside world to command how you show up. And when that happens, you can truly BE with your client, even when you're in a hotel room with music blasting through the walls.

All that outside stuff, as real as they are, are simply excuses. I can't allow them to take my attention away from my client, and sometimes it may just happen. There are things you can't change and can't ignore. But it's how you allow them to impact you is what makes all the difference.

Let's look at my circumstances. I got sick (excuse) and had to travel 400 miles (another excuse) and when I was coaching, there was loud music playing (excuse) and my client challenged me (excuse) and I had two examiners who knew me (excuse) and everyone was counting on me (excuse) and I kept focusing on how I had to do it right and after all this, I can't go home empty handed, and I have to pace myself and my energy. (Trap).

Do you see what happened? I was so far into my own performance mode that I lost connection with my client. And when there is no connection, there is no coaching. At all.

The last big lesson is that I failed. I blew it. And not just your ordinary average failure, but a real bomb. And I survived. Not only that, but it's that very failure that, as I mentioned, provided me with powerful learning that I get to turn around and give to other coaches, just like you.

But even more importantly, I get to be the permission for you to fail. If I can fail, fall to rock bottom, be on the verge of giving this all up, only to turn around and grow more powerful and strong and confident as a coach, then you can too.

Failure happens. It's a part of life. You can't resist it, avoid it or prevent it. Oh sure, you can minimize it, you can work really hard to prepare and reduce the odds of it happening, but sooner or later it's going to happen.

So what?

What's important is not that you fail. Failure is a way to identifying that you're stretching beyond your comfort zone. You're trying something new. You're growing. Failure is a part of powerful living.

What's important is that we get back up. We recover, our focus, our energy and ourselves. If I had given up, I can guarantee I would continue doing the same old thing that I had been doing, living a partially fulfilled life, still feeling like something was missing. And coaching would be just another notch in my bedpost of failed attempts that went nowhere. And when we accumulate enough of those, then we are afraid to try anything new because we have accumulated proof that trying new things = failure. And Failure = disappointment, misery, shame, sorrow, pain, discomfort, and loss.

However, when we accept that failure is an option (it may not be preferred, but it's an option) and we are able to handle it, then that is where our true power lies.

So when we give ourselves permission to fail in our coaching, then we don't have to *perform* or *get it right*. We can just BE with our clients—mistakes and all. (Which also gives them permission to accept their own failures and recover stronger than ever.)

## An Invitation for You

So now that we've come to the end of this lovely story, I ask you this radical question:

Are you willing to give up being perfect and passing the exam? Are you willing to let go of doing it right, looking good, and achieving incredible results?

If so, then you can simply BE with your client, and do what you know to do. And BE the coach that your clients need you to BE.

Pick one or the other, but you can't have both.

If your answer is YES, then I wish you tremendous success.

If your answer is NO, then I invite you to contact me and let me help you discover your Certification Exam Success.

As a result of my experience, I was able to take those powerful lessons learned and turn them into a foundation of great coaching for my clients in Certification, and then create a complete [Certification Exam Prep package](#) that passes on this experience to other coaches just like you. Exercises and conversations that are designed to build confidence and familiarity, so that you can handle yourself when you are out of your coaching comfort. There are also powerful tips and tricks that help any coach get instantly reconnected with their client, no matter what is going on to distract. Finally, some techniques that are designed to shift your focus and purpose for the exam, and help each and every coach create powerful coaching exam success, BEFORE they even take it.

I'm happy to talk with you further and pass on my knowledge and experience to you--so that you can have your own *coaching exam success*.

It's an amazing program that is unlike anything else out there. Because let's be honest, it's not about your exam anyway. That moment comes and goes rather quickly. This is about discovering how to fully tap into the powerful coach that I know you already are so you can BE the coach that you are here on this planet to BE and DO the coaching that you truly came here to DO.