Trust and Intimacy

Coaching Survey Report
ICF defines the 3rd core competency (Establishing Trust and Intimacy) as the “ability to create a safe, supportive environment that produces ongoing mutual respect and trust.”

The purpose of the survey is the attempt to shed some light on themes that supervisors have noticed with their supervisees and identify patterns relevant to the 3rd core competency (Trust).

Outcomes of this survey are included in my presentation at ICF Advance 2018 “Rethink Trust and Intimacy”.
The survey

The survey consisted of a questionnaire with 6 questions:
- 1 multiple-choice question
- 2 of linear scale
- 1 with checkboxes
- 2 open questions

It was conducted in August and September of 2018 with the participation of 33 coaching supervisors. Replies were collected in written via google forms.
The questionnaire

1. How often have you noticed the issue of Trust arising in your supervision sessions with your supervisees? Answers options: Never ➔ Always

2. Which of the following topics, that are connected with trust, have you noticed and/or worked on with your supervisee (select all that apply)
   - Confidence of the coach about his/her competence, working with strong emotions, now knowing, i.a.
   - Willingness of the coach to be vulnerable
   - Coach’s empathetic and compassionate behaviour towards coachee
   - Coach expresses doubts and/or judgment about his/her coachee
   - Coach feels the need to teach/educate the coachee
   - Coach focused on own performance
   - Coach’s consistency regarding contract (time, confidentiality, i.a.)
   - Coach has the tendency to do or does most of the work
   - Honest respect to coachee’s views, ideas and agenda
   - Equal partnership with the coachee
   - Openness of the coachee
   - Coachee seems resistant to feedback
   - Other

3. From all the cases that were brought up during the supervision sessions, what percentage of them you feel are/were connected with Trust? Answers’ options: 0%-20%, 20%-40%, 40%-60%, 60%-80%, 80%-100%

4. From the above cases, in how many of them did the coach know upfront that they were connected to Trust? (before this awareness came up as a result of the supervision conversation) Answers’ options: none/very few of them ➔ most/all of them

5. Please share an example where a topic that was brought to supervision and which initially seemed irrelevant to Trust, ended up being about Trust. Open question

6. What is one thing that you would like coaches to be (more) mindful of, about Creating Trust and Intimacy? Open question

Katerina Kanelidou
September 2018
SIX STEPS AHEAD
The results

66% of the supervisors that participated in the survey, have noticed that the issue of trust arises regularly or always in the coaching supervision sessions with their supervisees.

63.7% of the supervisors replied that only in some, very few or none of the cases brought up during supervision that are/were connected to trust, the coach knew upfront that they were connected to trust.

There is a variety of topics connected with trust, with confidence of the coach, his/her willingness to be vulnerable and focus on own performance being on top.

From the examples shared where a topic that was brought to supervision and which initially seemed irrelevant to Trust, ended up being about Trust, the most frequent are:

• Coach’s self-confidence, focus on his/her performance and competence.
• Coach taking responsibility for the progress, advising, becoming the rescuer.
• Emotional reactions towards the coachee.
• Openness and vulnerability of the coach.

In the last question the advises (or reminders) that supervisors give to us coaches are valuable. To summarise some of them:

- Trust is a mutual responsibility.
- A good coaching contract is absolutely important.
- Include the client; what he/she needs to be vulnerable.
- Trust one self. Trust the process. Trust the coachee.
- Trust starts from within.

(Because of the wealth of the examples and replies that the supervisors gave, I considered it important to include in this report all their answers of the questions 5 and 6.)
How often have you noticed the issue of Trust arising in your supervision sessions with your supervisees?
Which of the following topics, that are connected with trust, have you noticed and/or worked on with your supervisee?

- Confidence of the coach about his/her competence, working with strong emotions, now knowing, i.a. - 81.8%
- Willingness of the coach to be vulnerable - 75.8%
- Coach focused on own performance - 72.7%
- Coach has the tendency to do or does most of the work - 69.7%
- Coach feels the need to teach/educate the coachee - 66.7%
- Coach expresses doubts and/or judgment about his/her coachee - 60.7%
- Equal partnership with the coachee - 57.6%
- Coach’s consistency regarding contract (time, confidentiality, i.a.) - 51.5%
- Coach’s empathetic and compassionate behavior towards coachee - 51.5%
- Openness of the coachee - 45.5%
- Honest respect to coachee’s views, ideas and agenda - 42.4%
- Coachee seems resistant to feedback - 36.4%
- Other:  - Fear which can be stronger than confidence - 3%
  - Is a systemic topic - 3%
From all the cases that were brought up during the supervision sessions, what percentage of them do you feel are/were connected with Trust?

From the above cases, in how many of them did the coach know upfront that they were connected to Trust? (before this awareness came up as a result of the supervision conversation)
Please share an example where a topic that was brought to supervision and which initially seemed irrelevant to Trust, ended up being about Trust [1]

• An issue where someone may not trust them-selves and think that the issue is about someone else or the circumstances.
• Supervisee talks about not being as helpful as they would have liked to be with their coachee - and it comes down to not trusting themselves and a lack of confidence in their own competence. Or a supervisee feeling their coachee is not making progress because they are taking the responsibility for progress onto their own shoulder, rather than seeing it as a mutual responsibility and trusting in that.
• The client seemed resistant to the coaching process, the coach did not trust the client ability to engage in the process but after exploration the coach realised was not trusting her own skills to work with a "scared" client.
• Sharing some very personal reactions emotions (e.g. anger with their client) that only the safe space of supervision would allow them to share.
• A coach brought the issue of whether to shut down long-standing business - trust issues: competences, confidence, trust in self, trust in future.
• No open-ended questions.
• In a recent session, the coach began to subtly lead the client to what he clearly saw as the obvious solution. For 12 minutes of a 20-minute session, it was evident that he was pushing the client towards what he, the coach, saw as the only "right" solution. On review, the coach had been completely unaware of this issue as a demonstration of lack of trust in the clients’ ability to be in charge of their own decision-making. Initially he did not see that it was a form of disrespect (an opposite value to trust) to believe that the coach has the client's answer. When we coaches think we know better than the client what they should do, we are positioning ourselves as smarter or better than our clients. It takes trust in ourselves and greater trust in our clients to set aside our ego and keep our ideas out of the coaching session.
• Coach concerned that client not fully committed to coaching outcomes yet loved the coaching sessions. Although trust was not named, the coach (supervisee) possibly had a trust issue about whether the client was fully committed to a coaching approach preferring instead to take advantage of having a nice chat that made them feel good.
• Something is going wrong in the client system without having an idea about what is the topic.
• Coach was irritated with client showing up late or cancelling on last minute.
Please share an example where a topic that was brought to supervision and which initially seemed irrelevant to Trust, ended up being about Trust [2]

• Sharing of health diagnosis in confidence; supervisee concerned about perceptions, discrimination and potential risk to employability.
• Feeling being a victim at work.
• Coach giving advice to client/advising instead of coaching.
• Coach did not realise that the issue the client had in relationships was linked to trust which only was put after the coach let go and trusted the coaching process.
• Coach focused on own performance
• I often observe coaches who want to expand their range or their skill set; the deeper learning is that they can only expand range or enhance tool/skill by finding that place of trust.
• Mainly the topics that relate to trust are focused on trusting oneself. Supervise will bring something they think is related to another area and very often it’s about trusting themselves and the coaching process. Not the topic that they brought.
• Coach was not trusting her feelings in the relationship. Was afraid she was providing value due to her emotions. Thought her emotions were getting in the way of her coaching but instead were building trust and intimacy with the client.
• Topic brought was the coachee not making enough progress with an eye toward exploring their coachability. What arose was the coach not trusting the coachee’s own process for change and how they defined "progress".
• Employee performance.
• Supervisee felt they had not trusted in their intervention.
• Concern about capacity to explore personal issues, fear of going into therapy territory turned out to be lack of trust in her capacity to draw on her counselling training alongside her coaching training, and to check that client is ok with trusting her to help him. She did already feel they had together established a safe space in their relationship, so together could go at his pace.
• Often the conversation of multi-party contracting starts as a logical one, but ends up frequently being about trust between and amongst all parties.
• Coach’s client was talking about trust breaches with other colleagues which the coach explored in a literal way (also important) without considering the fact that it might also relate much more than they were aware to the coaching process itself – following a session or greater disclosure and vulnerability.
Please share an example where a topic that was brought to supervision and which initially seemed irrelevant to Trust, ended up being about Trust [3]

• My Supervision client did not realise that he could trust himself to improvise, when the strict ICF model didn't work for his session.
• The coach feels alone and full of anxiety after the session.
• How to deal with client who disengaged from objectives of the coaching program towards the end of the contract.
• Overdeveloped strength of caring led a coach to adopt the role of rescuer believing this to be in the best interests of the coachee. Exploration or working practices revealed for the coach potential for underestimation of the coachee’s capabilities. The coach adopting a trusting approach in the resourcefulness of the coachee and resisting the temptation to create dependency helped the coachee to flourish.
• Recently there was a supervisee at me who brought in a case in which she seriously doubted the truthfulness and honesty of her coachee. She even insinuated that the coachee put her (= my supervisee) in a bad light on her client, that is the boss of the coachee. The supervisor thought she saw the signs. This situation seemed to have arisen because the coachee expected answers and solutions from the coach, and the coach (my supervisee) did not dare to say that she did not. The coachee then reproached her that she became evasive. In our supervision session, the supervisor realised that she did not dare to be vulnerable, that she was not open, and that there was no equal partnership with the coachee. This kept the supervisor in an 'I-it' relationship, so there was no connection and no real relationship anymore, so no basis for trust. She saw that. She then devoted herself to the various relationships within the context of her assignment, i.e. to the client / sponsor and in particular to the relationship with the coachee. She restored the safe space for her coachee and rebuilt the relationship, and so regained her trust. Also the relationship with me, her supervisor, is much more open and connected.
• How to give feedback to a coach about ethics.
• Trust on herself as coach - in doing level instead being level.
• The coach felt like a punch in his stomach when the coachee mentioned she hates incompetency in general when talking about her team, and he didn’t share how he felt then and there. We worked on trust in many facets: trust in his intuition, trust on his vulnerability and sharing his feeling with the coachee, trust on the openness of the coachee towards that sharing.
What is one thing that you would like coaches to be (more) mindful of, about Creating Trust and Intimacy? [1]

- Trusting themselves and the process
- That it is a mutual responsibility.
- It is difficult to say, because usually we don’t take the road to talk much about trust. I find that 90% of the issues are because of the lack of enough contracting and that is often linked to making assumptions that the coach knows the language of the client means. In this case this would be kind of too much trust in their own “telepathic” abilities. If trust comes up as an issue, then it is more about the fact that the coach is not comfortable with the not knowing, with the uncertainty, when the client is stuck. Then they become helpers, problem solvers, instead of connected observers.
- Explore with clients what they need to be more vulnerable. A good coaching contract helped to set up a safe work environment.
- Having great rapport and contracting and recontracting as the coaching goes on.
- Setting up the relationship in a way that evokes trust from the very beginning is crucial. Without a trustworthy safe space, there is little room for reflective learning and positive parallel process.
- That coaching works exactly the way we say it does! “Trust the Process” as we say. Coaches must pay more than lip service to the idea that coaches believe that clients are deeply resourceful and have their own answers. When I hear student coaches say "but my clients will expect me to give advice" - I know there will be much work needing to be done to get past that.
- To be open minded, truly curious, non-judgmental, not assessing or evaluation, to have a warmth and care which allows for generous presence.
- Trust is not only about receiving, it is also about giving.
- Trust starts from within, if we put our Amygdala to rest, it has a direct impact on our client and that particular conversation.
- Consequences of self-disclosure.
What is one thing that you would like coaches to be (more) mindful of, about Creating Trust and Intimacy? [2]

- It’s not something that is ‘done’. By this I mean it builds over time and is essential in co-creating the coaching agreement/ goals and impacts outcomes. I feel that we can be even more brave as coaches than we think we can and as supervisees the supervision space is there to test it out.
- That they are humans not robots and their clients want to be trusted at a deep human level. Not directed but heard!
- Two things: 1. How powerful it is to be fully present with the client, on their agenda, and how that presence with deep listening builds trust. 2. How letting go of the need to add value enables a deeper and richer connection that leads to trust and intimacy.
- It’s all about us; supervisors, coaches, coachees and their clients.
- Being awake to how trust lives within them - a daily dialogue re trusting in self and what that might mean. Being able to be aware of what they might need to develop skills wise, intentions and interventions, values and beliefs.
- Take time to build this and notice how much it helps when you yourself feel trusting of your own capacity to be fully present and open hearted as this communicates itself via resonance set up in the emotional field between us and our clients. Prepare before sessions to ground and center yourself in readiness, then trust in yourself, and notice any small bodily changes you see in your client as they begin to drop their shoulders and slow their breathing down a bit, and stay quietly with them. It could be a good way to start sessions anyway, with a few quiet moments together to arrive in each other’s presence.
- To have an honest, vulnerable conversation about trust right in the first conversation with a potential coachee ~ what trust means to them as a coach, what it means for the coachee, how ICF defines trust, how the contracting supports trust, trust to support as needed, trust to be authentic throughout the relationship, etc.
- Coaches tend to underestimate the intimacy required just to open up an initial discussion and the strength of attachment and therefore disappointment and rejection, which can very quickly be evoked.
What is one thing that you would like coaches to be (more) mindful of, about Creating Trust and Intimacy? [3]

• Vulnerability is energy that creates the space for trust and intimacy.
• Being there for the client includes trusting oneself as a coach. That allows one to be fully present for the client, and thus embody and model trust as well as create intimacy with them.
• That they can trust their clients to think and feel.
• Trust the process and that the client will get to the answer required.
• Trust client's inner wisdom - not having "an agenda" for the client (pretending to know what is best for the client).
• Trust is a 3-part process: trusting self, coach trusting client, and coach trusting the coaching relationship. Trust can't be fully present if one of these components is missing.
• Trusting themselves and their future.
• Listen more. Let go of your tools. Trust the moment.
• Being mindful that the time varies for coachees to feel trust and intimacy on a continuum of immediate to never.
• The three anchors for coaching: relationship, trust and fidelity.
• In area of Establishing Trust and Intimacy unconscious processes can impact a relation, supervision is the best way to identify it and work on that competency.
• Openness
• I would like coaches to understand that intimacy in this competency doesn’t mean let’s now be friends with the client and being closer in the way I treat this person. It means being vulnerable and being aware of all sources of information that come up towards us, being through our body, mind or intuition.
Trust each other again and again. When the trust level gets high enough, people transcend apparent limits, discovering new and awesome abilities of which they were previously unaware.

David Armistead