

Coaching Style One

When you coach Ones, you'll discover they abide by principles and rules. They want guidelines. They will appreciate you being prompt and considerate. You will encourage and energize them if you matter-of-factly accept that they've alienated people while you acknowledge the importance of their ideals.

*The proof of true love
is to be unsparing in
criticism.*

Moliere
The Misanthrope
1666

Mary received an e-mail from Jesse about the possibility of being coached. Jesse wrote: "I'm in the midst of a career meltdown. Apparently I'm horrible to work with. I've been told I'm a perfectionist, demanding, and critical, even when I'm trying not to be. I'm totally unaware that I have that effect on people while it's happening. I feel stuck and don't know how to fix this. I've sought help from several people, but I don't want to keep trying what is patently not working. Is there any hope for me?"

This is a lovely invitation from a One. It may not seem like a great opportunity when Jesse writes that she is horrible to be around, nothing has worked, and she feels hopeless. But when she feels this much pain, she is most open to change, and will appreciate all the help she can get. Jesse's hopelessness was paradoxically Mary's cause for hope.

Mary read between the lines of Jesse's message. Obviously, Jesse was open and ready to be coached. She also needed to feel hope. She had tried to fix herself but that hadn't worked. Others had tried to fix her with equally dismal results. It was time to do something different.

Jesse, like many Ones, wanted to be good and help others be good, too. Ones are often surprised that their efforts to improve others are counterproductive. In their first coaching call, Jesse told Mary, "I don't want to hurt people." It distressed her to find out that people were so angry at her attempts to improve things that she had jeopardized her career. Why, with such good intent, would she have these negative consequences?

Mary encouraged Jesse with this response: "Indeed there is hope for you. When people judge you they reinforce your own habit of self-criticism, which is probably at the root of your distress. You need to experience some new behavior that will bring you approval so you can develop more confidence in your own mental health and good sense."

As they talked, Mary looked for signals typical of Ones: How controlled (over-controlled) do they sound? To what degree does their speech reveal rigid

assumptions about how things should be? How often do they say, “should”? Do they correct you? Can they enjoy or indulge in humor, as Edgar did when Mary spilled coffee at their first meeting? When reporting negative feedback do they rationalize, or do they at least tentatively accept it as Jesse did? (“Apparently I’m horrible to work with.”)

In general, Ones need to observe and interrupt their key pattern of seeking only what’s wrong. Your coaching will help them develop nuance and options.

Compares Reality to What Ought to Be

Ones look at the world through a moral lens. They see the moral dimension of complex behavior with a clarity other styles can’t match. Radio star and life-advice guru Laura Schlesinger (“Dr. Laura” to 20 million listeners) may not be your ideal of sweetness and light. She may trample on your feelings, but she has all those listeners because she offers a moral vision. She believes that she knows the one right moral answer to any question and energetically shares her certitude.

W. Edwards Deming influenced both Japanese and American businesses with his zeal for quality. His principle: “Zero Defects.” Quality control was a moral imperative for this tireless teacher. He insisted that striving for perfection is always better than spending time, energy, money, and creativity on repair.

Ones know in their bones how things ought to be. When faced with what they consider someone’s inferior work or dysfunctional systems they may react with visceral anger. Edgar described this anger as rising from the pit of his stomach “like a heat wave.” Many Ones have a reforming streak, and their zeal can inspire action. Look at Ross Perot, John Ashcroft, or Ralph Nader in the USA or Nelson Mandela and Margaret Thatcher abroad. All have had a mission to make things right the way they see it.

Their idealism can lead them to want to improve themselves with enviable discipline. A One friend of Mary’s has for many years risen an hour early each morning. She exercises for 20 minutes, meditates for 20 minutes, and then writes in her journal for 20 minutes.

Ones can often help others see the moral reward of a job well done. Their vision lifts mundane details to the level of virtuous striving. They don’t lay bricks, they build cathedrals. In business, they excel at a task that many executives dread: having to evaluate performance. Evaluation comes naturally to them. They understand and value standards and, when out of the box, they apply them fairly. If they are in the box, they compare performance to an unreachable ideal.

Pay attention to these four habits of in-the-box Ones:

Compares reality to what ought to be

Thinks in black and white

Defends with reaction formation

Becomes judgmental under pressure