

Coaching Style Seven

*An inordinate passion
for pleasure is the secret
of remaining young.*

Oscar Wilde

Characteristically, Sevens are charming, upbeat, and humorous, tell lots of stories, and focus on the positive. They can also show a lack of attention to details that makes an in-the-box Seven scattered and unreliable. Coaching these clients can be energizing because they're playful and inventive. They love to talk. You'll develop rapport quickly if you ask lots of questions. They may also convince you they're ready to change when they respond to suggestions quickly, but their early enthusiasm could lead you to have unrealistic expectations.

Peggy, a Seven, hired Mary to coach her because she felt she'd been a dilettante in her work. She wanted to establish a career she could envision as deeply satisfying over the long haul. She had changed jobs and life goals often and easily and felt blown about by every wind.

Mary and Peggy established some tentative goals together. A few weeks after they started coaching, Mary reinforced some concrete steps Peggy had taken toward her career goals. Following that session Peggy wrote, "From deep within me came the full weight of the realization of what I had accomplished and this brought me to tears. When I first started down this path, all I wanted was to find and release that happy little kid inside. Little did I know what that journey would entail—having the desire and courage, as Joseph Campbell said, to go into the forest where no one else had ventured. I KNEW that was the journey I had to take yet was hesitant to take. I am amazed at the tenacity I have demonstrated. I, a lightweight Seven, have simply refused to stop hacking my way through the forest of my emotional and psychological landscape. Thank you for helping me with this breakthrough."

We're tempted to write – light-heartedly, of course: "And everyone lived happily ever after." In the session above, Peggy felt she made a significant breakthrough. As with all of us, though, the process of transformation waxed and waned. Every week she would find a new and fascinating approach to envisioning a more fulfilling career, and every week Mary encouraged Peggy to take action instead of losing herself in the thrill of generating ideas. It's not always easy to help Sevens corral their buoyant energy and move from imagining possibilities to creating a durable framework for change.

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Coaching Sevens is one of the few times you want to help clients become less optimistic. They need to have a more sober picture of their tasks, and to observe how they tend to run away from anything too detailed or problematic.

Your Seven clients may be somewhat scattered and unreliable in the beginning, but with your coaching they will become more realistically enthusiastic while remaining visionary.

Fears Confinement

Sevens are polarized between creating pleasant options and feeling confined. You'll often hear these clients describe feeling trapped, and they may even use prison metaphors. One Seven told Mary, "A friend of mine who went to prison handled it very well, but I don't know if I could stand being cooped up like that. There are times when I feel that way about this company. I'm making so much money here, I feel completely trapped, realizing I can't leave no matter how bad it gets. Then I think, 'I can't wait to get out of here and be free.'" Another said, "The biggest problem in my job is that everything's so programmed. Sometimes every hour is scheduled. It's a problem because I love to make connections but usually feel I have to say, 'Gotta run now, goodbye!'"

Sometimes the confinement lies within Sevens. They are more easily addicted than other styles and feel trapped by whatever they're addicted to. You'll improve your coaching skills as you recognize how addiction plays out for them. One of Clarence's clients said, "I get a kick out of a game on our home computer, and I'll play it before I go to bed, much more than I should. I'm not a gambler because I have strong moral feelings about it, though I did go to Reno with a friend to test a theory. I set a limit on what I would spend, but found myself wanting to do it more. This bothers me because I want to think of myself as self-disciplined, but when I really make up my mind to do something—such as losing weight—that can be addictive, too. When I read a book for pleasure my wife tells the kids, 'Say goodbye to Dad, guys.' When I get close to the end, I'll stay up till 3:00 AM to finish it, no matter what I have ahead of me the next day." Another Seven admitted to Mary, "I smoke pot, and it gets worse when I'm under stress and feel there's no escape. It's not that I think smoking pot is bad, certainly no worse than having a couple of drinks. It's the compulsion that bothers me. I was smoking and eating breakfast at the same time this morning and heard myself saying, 'You're going to enjoy this if it kills you.'" A coach might ask Sevens to notice when they experience a surge of appetite—for food, sex, caffeine, or entertainment. The desire may signal that they're running away from something.

When Sevens start a project it feels like an adventure, but when the demands of the project get heavy, they feel confined by the boredom or difficulty. They may find a way to circumvent the real work. When they do, find out where they feel

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

Fears confinement

Escapes into pleasant options

Acts childlike or childish

Substitutes charm for substance