



Call #3 Notes: Active Listening and Powerful Questioning

Pre-work

All documents are housed at [http:// presencebasedcoaching.com/students/lipcc-program-materials/](http://presencebasedcoaching.com/students/lipcc-program-materials/). Before our call, please:

- Print out and review this PDF for the call
- Review the specific sections of the *PCC Exam Standards* on Active Listening and Powerful Questioning
- Review the section of the *PBC Competency Model* on Active Listening and Powerful Questioning
- Note any pressing questions or areas of confusion
- Take the self-assessment below

General Commentary

These two competencies complement each other and work in tandem. In Active Listening, the client speaks, the coach listens and responds...with Powerful Questioning, the coach speaks, and the client listens and responds. This interaction is like tossing a ball of communication back and forth between the two individuals, and if done well, creates a dance where understanding, exploration, discovery and meaning can emerge.

Competency #5: Active Listening (Reflector, Investigator)

ICF Language: Ability to focus completely on what the client is saying and is not saying, to understand the meaning of what is said in the context of the client's desires and to support client self-expression.

Presence-Based Coaching Language (LIPCC/PCC Level:) Coach listens deeply, reflecting and developing meaning with the client as the conversation emerges. Coach offers interpretations and new perspectives lightly, working with client to create relevance and immediacy. Listening and reflection includes more than simply content, and coach demonstrates awareness of patterns of emerging data in self and client. Coach works with client skillfully to open new perspective and possibilities.

a. Summarizes and reflects the client's concerns, goals, emotions, language, and interpretations

- b. Creates relevance and immediacy between emergent data and the client's coaching outcomes*
- c. Tracks and reflects client's emerging thread of discovery and learning*
- d. Reflects in/congruence, observations, and assessments around voice, affect, tone of voice, and somatic shape*
- e. Invites clearing and/or finding new perspective in client's situation, rather than supporting existing narrative*

Commentary

Principles of Active Listening include “whole body listening” or “deep listening” where the coach creates a space, in presence, through her undivided attention and attending to the client at all levels of client’s communication and experience. We might call this somatic listening for somatic shape/posture, emotions, narrative/story, beliefs/assumptions, in/congruence, relational connection, and sensations. We also listen for what is missing in these dimensions.

The coach’s listening also includes self: her own listening filters, boundaries between self and client, and any reactivity that arises in the moment within her own habit nature. Active Listening allows the coach to observe the client’s worldview, use of language, structures of interpretation, view of what is and isn’t possible. Active Listening offers glimpses into the client’s barriers/limitations and strengths/potential.

Active Listening can take the forms of reflecting back so client feels heard, summarizing content to move the action forward, tracking the client’s learning process, allowing the client to vent/clear old material, or creating immediacy and relevance.

Competency #6: Powerful Questioning (Investigator)

ICF Language: Ability to ask questions that reveal the information needed for maximum benefit to the coaching relationship and the client.

Presence-Based Coaching Language (LIPCC/PCC Level): Coach’s questions explore the territory around the client’s desired outcome, and bring client’s attention into present moment witnessing and awareness. Questions are open and exploratory, rather than leading and directive. Questions incorporate client language and perspectives. Questions may sometimes be uncomfortable for the client, and point client’s attention into new, unexplored territory and forward towards new action possibilities.

- a. Asks questions that develop creative tension through new understanding of situation, outcome and action*
- b. Asks open-ended questions that invite witnessing of present-moment experience on levels of narrative, emotion, and sensation*
- c. Asks curiosity-based questions that respond to the emerging thread, and that evoke discovery, commitment or action*

d. Asks questions that reveal the client's habits in action

Commentary

Powerful Questioning is in response to Active Listening – the dance of discovery between client and coach. Powerful questions reflect our belief that the client is whole and resourceful, and that he has his own answers.

Powerful questions happen in the context of the moment; therefore it doesn't work to have a "list" of questions to use in a standardized way. That said, when learning and practicing powerful questions, it's useful to have a range of possible questions from which to draw.

Powerful questions allow the coach to investigate further underneath the surface, to reveal what might be out of the client's awareness. This allows the client to discover the client's underlying structure of beliefs, assumptions or even identity. Once seen, these structures inform logical steps toward behaviors that he wants to change or build.

Powerful questions allow the coach to test her hypotheses about how the client operates in the world -- the client's operating system, so to speak. They allow the coach to gain insight into what factors might be needed to create change and how to support the client to meet his coaching goals. Often these internal operating systems are outdated, and in need of a more recent version!

Remember that the fundamental developmental move is to make what is subject to the client, object – to see that what he has taken to be true might actually be an unquestioned assumption. Powerful questions can create this shift, lifting the Bell Jar. Powerful questions can perturb the client's habitual patterns and evoke a new way of perceiving himself or his views about the situation. This can lead to more choice, possibility and ability to take different actions in the world.

Self-Assessment

Please do a self-assessment, considering your coaching skills in relation to the competencies, as described above. Rate yourself, 1-5, against each of the detailed competencies. The ICF Summary is the ICF language for the overall competency; the italicized items are the specific PBC descriptions that evidence this competency at the PCC/LIPCC level.

Please use these ratings:

- 1 indicates that you do not use this competency well. (Perhaps because you are not familiar or comfortable with it. Or, you overuse it to the degree that it gets in the way.)
- 5 indicates a high level of proficiency in using the competency, and do not overuse it out of habit. You can move fluidly in and out of this as needed.

5: Active Listening (Reflector, Investigator)		
Competency Detail	Rate	Your Comments
ICF Summary: Ability to focus completely on what the client is saying and not saying, to understand the meaning of what is said in the context of the client's desires, and to support client self-expression		
a. Summarizes and reflects the client's concerns, goals, emotions, language, and interpretations		
b. Creates relevance and immediacy between emergent data and the client's coaching outcomes		
c. Tracks and reflects client's emerging thread of discovery and learning		
d. Reflects in/congruence, observations, and assessments around voice, affect, tone of voice, and somatic shape		
e. Invites clearing and/or finding new perspective in client's situation, rather than supporting existing narrative		

6. Powerful Questioning (Investigator)		
Competency Detail	Rate	Your Comments
ICF Summary: Ability to ask questions that reveal the information needed for maximum benefit to the coaching relationship and the client.		
a. Asks questions that develop creative tension through new understanding of situation, outcome and action		
b. Asks open-ended questions that invite witnessing of present-moment experience in levels of narrative, emotion, and sensation		
c. Asks curiosity-based questions that respond to the emerging thread, and that evoke discovery, commitment or action		
d. Asks questions that reveal the client's habits in action		

Application Notes, Fieldwork, or Commitments to Self