

# ACHIEVING EXTRAORDINARY SUCCESS AS A COACH



*Nine Leading Coaches Share Their Best  
Practice Building Strategies*

FOREWORD BY JOE VITALE

## 8

### GIFTS OF SILENCE

*Sandra Davis*

Silence enfolds the vast expanse between body, mind, spirit, and life. In these spaces between thought, word, and deed are gifts waiting to unfold, secrets of the heart, dreams to be lived, promises to be kept, countless mysteries that stir the soul, and wisdom yet to be discovered. Tapping into this infinite world unlocks power, bringing forward limitless gifts that can assist you in realizing extraordinary success in your coaching practice.

Silence has both negative and positive connotations in our language. Asking someone to be silent may result in feelings of rejection or loss. And yet, a pause - an expression of silence - can provide an opportunity for someone to contribute to a conversation, thereby opening the door to acceptance.

Nature is often associated with silence, both through the great spiritual traditions and our personal experience. However, while magical moments of calm and stillness do occur in the natural world, nature is inherently active, alive, and full of sound. What is it then that the natural world offers that draws us? Being in nature offers us an opportunity to connect with something larger than ourselves, to find inner silence, and with it, to experience a sense of peace. In a way, it's like coming home to ourselves, for as we experience our con-

nection to the earth, we attune to the essence of our lives.

Many of us have tried to silence our minds. We seek to stop the endless dialogue and incessant chatter, often negative, waiting in the shadows to undermine or comment about our actions and plans. These voices or inner critics would have us believe that they bear messages to assist us on our journey. Yet they do not hold the knowledge we seek, and in listening to them, we inadvertently allow them access to our dreams and desires. True knowledge is found in the silence within, that place where we are able to get in touch with the depth of our Selves.

Being in practice as executive, organizational, and career coaches, we have a unique opportunity to help unlock our clients' gifts and potential. By listening beyond their words, we are able to support them in bringing what they want to life. To do this, we must come from a place beyond mind or thought, beyond judgment, or any place that seeks to control or determine. These limiting positions create ordinary results. Extraordinary results are created as we tap into the infinite - the silence within - discovering longings and dreams, many of which have been ignored or forgotten. To build a successful coaching practice, we must learn how to do this for ourselves as well.

Realizing success and ease, whether for our clients or ourselves, requires no less of us than to quiet our minds, open our hearts, embrace our Selves, and give thanks for the messages being revealed.

"When you are in tune with life, you will find yourself doing everything at the right time. All you have to do to get into tune is take time to go into the silence . . . A musical instrument, when it is out of tune, creates discord; you too, have to keep yourself in tune, and you cannot do it unless you take time to be still. It cannot be done when you are rushing around, anymore than a musical instrument can be tuned while it is being played. It is in the silence that the notes can be heard and be readjusted."

EILEEN CADDY

## THE GATEWAY TO PURE POTENTIAL

Silence imparts that which can be accessed in no other way. We have become so used to the activities and sounds around us that the stillness contained within the vessel of silence can often feel uncomfortable. So we find ourselves afraid of silence, associating it with wasting time, not being productive, feeling empty, or being left with our negative thoughts. Yet within it lies the greatest freedom one can know, for silence is the gateway to the unknown, "pure potential", and universal knowledge.

"Pure silence catapults you through the wall of illusion that was not there in the first place and suddenly you are found in a never-ending embrace with the other who is none other than your very Self."

UNKNOWN

We each come to know what we know through a system that is uniquely our own. We learn by example, from reading a book, sitting in a classroom, hearing a story, seeing a picture, participating in an experiment, or relying on our intuition. In addition to this "knowledge-based" system, we are gifted with other more subtle learnings as we move through our lives. The world reflects back to us the beliefs we hold about ourselves and our reality, and what we feel we are worthy of receiving. It also provides clues or messages, indicators that offer insights about what we should do next, whether or not we are on target, or whether we have assessed a situation correctly. What if in learning to pay attention to these subtle indicators, we discovered we are being guided in a direction that strengthens our alignment with our values and goals? What if by knowing how to ask the right questions and uncovering our limiting beliefs, we received the answers we sought, which lead us towards the natural expression of ourselves and our ultimate fulfillment? Imagine the possibilities!

When we were small, many of us were trained to ignore what we couldn't see with our own eyes, touch with our hands, or prove with our intellect. However, being sensitive, impressionable, and as yet, unformed by our cultural environ-

ment, we were connected with nature and our innermost selves. We could see the subtleties around us. We could hear what was in the spaces between the words. We could sense the unspoken. We saw clearly, knew honestly, and dreamed powerfully. We heard things and felt things, most of which could not be touched or proven. As we communicated what we knew, many of us were told we had very active imaginations and that what we saw or felt - our pure observations - could not possibly be true.

Led by our need to feel loved, to be accepted, or to keep ourselves safe, we began to question what it was we knew, we chose to stop sharing what we knew with others, or we wished we would stop knowing it. As this doubt or confusion within us grew, we began to create filters for ourselves, which in turn, influenced our sight and our feelings. The process of separation with nature and with our Selves had begun - separation from the subtleties, the spaces, and the silence that contains the truth of our existence.

When we choose to believe as true only what we can touch or prove, we begin to hold onto our lives more and more tightly. Inadvertently, we seek control in lieu of freedom, and we end up activating our fight or flight response, which is based in fear - be it fear of loss, fear of pain, or fear of the unknown. We give away our power in anticipation that something we perceive to be negative might happen, but we know not what. We lose sight of our dreams and our passions and our know- ingness. We forget that we create our reality.

"In Silence we have no problems, nor are we confused or frightened by life. When we are not confused or frightened, we do not act in crazy ways . . . Silence is the recognition that thoughts about life are not life itself. If we stay in touch with life through Silence, life will stay in touch with us. In this way, we become life itself, not thoughts about life. And then the mystery of life, the magic of life, and the beauty of life become our life."

ROBERT RABBIN

Science teaches us that thought precedes form. However, as we come to know that we are not our thoughts, we are provided with an opportunity to discover who we really are and to know the gifts we have to offer. Silence supports us in the discovery of ourselves, our purpose in life, and how best to manifest what we desire. It is ever present, yet impossible to grasp. Silence opens us to the promise of life, "pure potential", and the realm of possibilities. It waits for us to be still enough to hear, clear enough to see, and open enough to feel.

We must come to know the truth of our life, how to honor our experiences, learn from them, and move on. Silence can assist us in achieving a deeper level of knowing, and thus it can change our lives. As you access the silence within, it opens to an expanse rich beyond measure. Develop a clear vision of what you want to create in your practice, attend to any fears or limiting beliefs, and see what begins to show up.

## **OBSERVATIONS ABOUT SILENCE**

Have you ever felt the need to speak, just so there would not be silence? Silence often makes people feel uncomfortable. You can learn a lot about people by what they say or do to fill the silent spaces in a conversation. Will they talk about anything, even change the subject so as not to be in silence? Do they fidget or excuse themselves from the room? What do you notice about how people are when there is silence?

Can you be in silence? Are you able to listen to the deepest places within yourself, or must you fill the void with noise, or activity, or talking? In a meeting, are you able to allow the silence to be, so you can learn from it, or so that someone can reflect upon a question you've asked? Or do you find yourself feeling so uncomfortable with the silence that you must speak?

We are usually so busy thinking, that we aren't really listening to what another person is saying. We can also find ourselves formulating what it is we are going to say next while someone else is still talking, and therefore, we aren't fully available to him or her in the moment. There's a European saying that goes, "We each have many ears, but sometimes we can-

not hear each other." What if you were able to quiet your mind and truly be with another person, listening to their words and to what is in the spaces between their words; hearing what they are saying, while simultaneously being attuned to the multitude of non-verbal clues; listening from silence, rather than waiting silently for them to stop talking so you can jump right in? This type of witnessing can have a profound impact on a person's journey and their ability to change and transform.

"To listen to another's soul in a condition of disclosure and discovery may be perhaps the greatest service that one human being ever performs for another."

DOUGLAS STEELE

We live in an era where we are constantly bombarded with information and demands upon our time. Many of us also feel the pressure of multiple and oftentimes conflicting priorities. As we feel this pressure build, it is not uncommon for it to be accompanied by an internal dialogue. Have you ever felt like you can no longer hear yourself think? Do you know others who feel so overwhelmed by their lives that they don't know what to do next? Have you ever felt this way? Learning how to quiet your mind, to access the silence within, can be invaluable. Not only is it a gift that can help to free you from these feelings, but it can also begin to unlock your knowingness, and in an uncanny way, guide you back to yourself. Without this ability to get in touch with the depth of your Self through silence, you can head down many a path that is not in your best interest, feeling encumbered, and continuing to make yourself wrong when things do not work out as you'd like.

As you come to know silence, you will find you are also able to teach others about its gifts. From a place of silence, the world stops being about you, while at the same time, you constantly feel replenished. This departure from ego allows you to selflessly be with others. This is not to say that you should not take care of yourself first before you give to others, in fact, quite the contrary. If we do not care for and love ourselves, we will be unable to fully be with or love another. We will always

be looking to others to fill the emptiness we feel within ourselves, and what we have to offer them will be full of attachment and need. As a result, our coaching practice will suffer.

However, when we are full with love of self, there is no lack. We have no need to become full through someone else, so there is no taking, only mutual giving. This place of fullness, of love of self, and of acceptance of self with all of our foibles and imperfections creates a sense of peace within us, which leads the way to silence. You can begin to see the circular nature of this gift, for as we experience and practice silence, its gifts are made available to everyone whose life we touch.

"There is a richness with silence that is unequalled. Secrets so vast they appear illusive, yet reminiscent of the primordial sea — the coming together of the past, the present, and the future."

SANDRA DAVIS

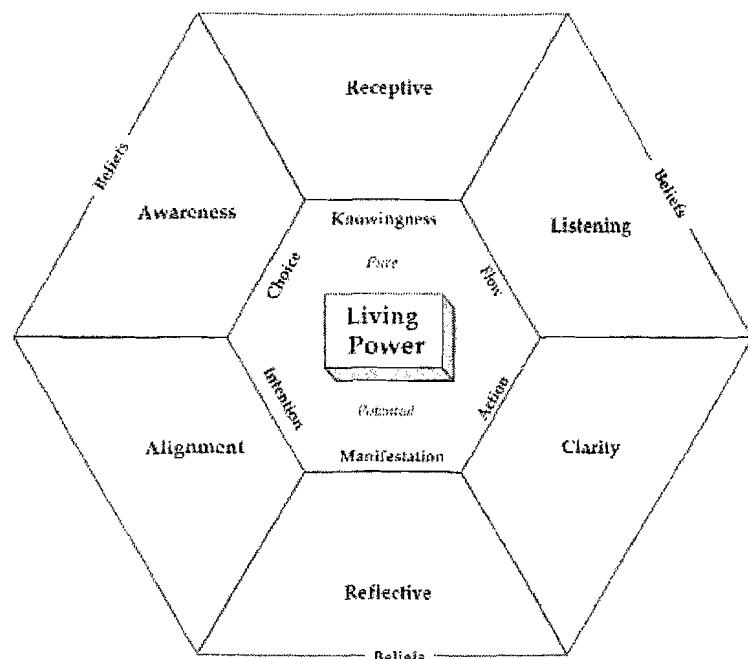
## **GIFTS THAT LEAD TO SUCCESS**

What we are able to create in the world is governed by our beliefs. They can serve to limit us or to show us that our only limitations are those we impose upon ourselves. In this way, our beliefs impact on not only our behavior in the world, but also on our thoughts about who we see ourselves to be and the success we are able to enjoy.

The gifts of silence are receptivity, listening, awareness, clarity, alignment, and reflection. By accessing these gifts, we are able to enter "pure potential" and through it our "living power."

The illustration below depicts this relationship, providing both a snapshot of the gifts of silence and a model for success creation. Silence is found in the white spaces, both all around and through the model.

### Gifts of Silence: Success Creation



The outer ring represents the gifts of silence. As we enter into silence, we are able to gain awareness and clarity about who we are and what we value. Receptivity allows us to receive information that has been stored deep within ourselves, as well as information that is beyond our present ability to know. Awareness, clarity, and alignment are essential building blocks for creating extraordinary success in our clients' or our own lives. We do this by listening to what we hear and to what's in the spaces between the sounds, by becoming aware of the messages our reality is reflecting back to us, and by aligning with our innermost selves.

The inner ring shows the relationship between the gifts of silence and "pure potential" (the inner white space), for as we utilize the gifts of silence, we gain access to our knowingness and our ability to make choices about the life we want to live, to focus our attention on what we want to create, take correct action in support of it, move into flow, and manifest our desires.

Success as a coach, ease in building our practice, fulfillment in our lives - these are just a few of the things that can be ours as "pure potential" expresses itself as "living power". This power continues to increase as we become more adept in transforming our limiting beliefs, managing our thoughts and perceptions, reading the indicators and patterns, and accessing the silence within.

Another way we can look at the model is as a three dimensional, three-layer hexagonal pyramid. At the base are our beliefs about our world and ourselves. These beliefs govern or regulate our ability to create. For example, if on some level we believe we are not capable of creating a thriving coaching practice, we will not be able to create one, no matter how hard we try. Silence is a vessel that both enfolds and is enfolded by the model. Through silence we are able to access its gifts of receptivity, listening, awareness, clarity, alignment, and reflection (layer one). And as we access these gifts, we are able to enter the realm of possibilities, "pure potential" where knowledge, choice, intention, flow, action, and manifestation reside (layer two). When layer two is activated, it releases our "living power" (layer three) into the world, creating our life. Within this context, as we continue to discover our Selves through silence, success and extraordinary results naturally emerge.

When our connection to silence slips away, life seems a little harder, and our discernment loses its edge. It's as if a veil comes between us and the clarity we seek. Decisions seem to have more caveats, thoughts more words, and sights less subtlety. The spaces seem to disappear and with them our sense of peace and connection. We begin to listen to what we don't "know", and as we do, our personal authority, our "living power" is diminished.

### PRACTICING SILENCE

Being silent is being able to be still with ourselves from the inside out and can happen in an instant. Yet silence is outside of space and time. Silence is not something you create, but something you discover within yourself or that you tap into. It

is ever present. It is a state in which peace abounds. There is a timelessness about silence that goes beyond thought. It is silence that provides a gateway to "pure potential" - all that is, ever was, or ever will be. It can make a tremendous difference in the ease with which your practice evolves.

There's a story about two lumberjacks. They were the very best of lumberjacks, and they were always arguing about who was the best woodchopper. Being tired of the incessant bickering, a challenge was issued: from sunrise to sunset they would chop wood, and whoever had the largest pile when the sun went down would be declared the best woodchopper. The sun came up and the two woodchoppers went to their piles. The first woodchopper chopped and chopped and chopped all day long. The second woodchopper chopped and stopped, chopped and stopped, chopped and stopped. When the day was over the second woodchopper's pile was bigger. The first woodchopper looked on in utter amazement, extremely puzzled. He asked the other, "I watched you. You chopped and stopped. Chopped and stopped. How can your pile possibly be bigger than mine?" The second woodchopper replied, "I stopped to sharpen my axe." By stopping to access the silence within, you too can do more and be sharper and more efficient in building your practice.

Following is a challenge and some exercises that can assist you in experiencing the gifts of silence in your life. As with anything new, do not expect to be able to master these techniques the first time you practice them. Give yourself time to learn what works best for you and make adjustments accordingly. The silence will guide you.

## THE CHALLENGE

Consciously, be silent for two seconds (1001, 1002, . . .) before you speak or jump in after someone else has finished talking. Practice this for 30 days. Notice what happens with others and with you.

## EXERCISE 1: SILENCING THE MIND

Our minds are often filled with thought. Sometimes, it feels as if the chatter will never stop. These thoughts need not be negative to be annoying or distracting. It is enough for them to be continuous. This exercise offers a vehicle for helping you quiet your mind. It focuses on you and how you are with yourself.

Find a comfortable place where you can sit without interruption. It does not matter whether the environment around you is quiet or noisy, although you may want to practice it in a quiet space initially.

- Just sit with yourself for a moment. Now, turn your attention inward. Tune in to you, as if you were a station on your car radio that you wanted to listen to. Continue to make adjustments in your listening until you come in clearly. (If, initially, you find yourself having difficulty achieving this level of focus, here's an alternative: Consciously choose to let go of whatever it is you are most aware of that you are holding on to. Then just be present with yourself as best you can for a few minutes. Continue to practice this until you are able to be with yourself comfortably.)

- Now that you've tuned in your channel, check in with yourself: How do you feel? What's going on around you? What sounds do you hear? What are your thoughts? What's going on inside of you? Observe yourself for a few moments. Just be aware of what you are seeing, or hearing, or feeling - one thing, and then the next, and the next.

- Now quietly say the word "hush". Wait a moment and say it again, "hush", and feel the weight of the world drift away. Feel it slip off you. First off your head and your shoulders, then off your arms and your torso, and finally, off your hips and your legs, and as it does, it turns to dust. Tune to yourself again and take a moment to notice what is going on with you now. Does your mind seem clearer, quieter? Is there less static?

- Now say the word again: "hush" . . . this time noticing your breath. Breathe in and exhale deeply. And again, "hush"

as you inhale the breath, slowly this time, and as you exhale, empty your mind, allowing any remaining thoughts to leave with your breath.

- One last time now, "hush" . . . and feel as if you are being held in a soft cloud or someone's loving arms. Feel this love, this acceptance. Feel comforted and peaceful. "Hush". . . and feel your body relax and any remaining thoughts or concerns fall away.

- Now shift your attention back to yourself. Tune in to your channel once again, and be aware of the silence, that sense of calm around you and within you. Resume your day with renewed clarity and awareness.

## **EXERCISE 2 – SILENT GIFTS: INDICATORS, MESSAGES, CLUES**

The world is full of clues as to whether or not we are taking actions that support our life's path. Being aware of these indicators, or messages, is extremely powerful in helping us to remain on track when creating a successful practice with joy and ease. While the example that follows is relatively straight forward, the premise for reading and using the indicators remains the same for even the most complex situations. Here are some questions for you to consider:

Is there a pattern in the things that are showing up around you?

How does this pattern relate to you and your practice at this moment?

What action is being supported by the indicators?

What happens when you take action in the direction you think the indicator(s) is/are guiding you? Do you encounter coincidences and synchronistic events? Does everything click into place, flow easily, or do you run into obstacles or have your progress come to a screeching halt?

What is this feedback telling you? Are you on course? Do you need to make an adjustment?

This can get tricky, because sometimes, it appears as if our smaller actions are being supported. However, when we step back and look at the meta-pattern, we are able to see that we only ever get so far before our efforts are blocked. This larger context offers a new perspective for determining our next action. This is particularly helpful when we encounter a repeating pattern.

## **EXAMPLE**

You have been struggling with your sales figures for the past three months, asking yourself what you can do to create a dramatic increase in your revenue stream. Last week you found yourself wondering about whether or not you should sign up for a marketing class. In yesterday's mail you received a flyer about a new marketing book. You find yourself holding the flyer today, when the phone rings. The local university is calling to inform you of a special marketing class being offered this fall that will focus specifically on the market sector you want to serve.

The pattern is supporting you in becoming more informed about marketing. Is the class the right direction? Or could it be that you are going to meet someone by pursuing the class? A conversation with the university could hold your next clue.

## **EXERCISE 3 - CREATING PERSONAL MOMENTS OF SILENCE**

Many of us have experiences that leave us feeling out of synch with other people and ourselves. This exercise can quickly take you to a state where you can reconnect with the gifts of silence. Some people use this exercise when they feel the need for an "adult time-out" or a mini-vacation. It can shift your perspective in seconds. It's an invaluable tool.

Sit quietly with yourself and close your eyes. Create in your mind's eye a place that is soothing, a place that brings you comfort, a special place where you would like to spend some time. It may or may not be some place you know. It could

be some place you dream about. What does it look like? What does it feel like? How about the smell? How do you feel when you are there? What are the subtleties of this place? Work with this vision until when you open your eyes you can sense this place before you as if it were a hologram. Look upon it.

Now see yourself being there in this place. Feel yourself there. Know that nothing or no one can enter this place unless invited by you. This place is for you; it is your special place, your haven. It is a place where you can go to touch the silence within. Where you can dream. And where you can be completely at ease. Make any adjustments that are necessary until this place becomes the most wonderful place you could ever imagine. Make it perfect for you.

Stay there for a few seconds, a couple of minutes, or an hour, depending upon the time you have available to you and your desire. Spending even a few minutes in your special place will give you a renewed sense of vitality and peace. Come back to your life, your surroundings, and notice how calm and refreshed you feel.

#### **EXERCISE 4 – LISTENING FROM SILENCE**

Being able to be silent within yourself so that you can truly, without distraction, be there for another human being or an organization is a gift most people will never forget. Here are some tips for listening to your clients from a place of silence that can help you build your coaching practice:

Quiet your mind.

Get a sense of your surroundings and center yourself.

Create a container of safety for your client and yourself. Silently, or together, identify what it is you want to have within this space. For example, clarity, honesty, ease, humor, expansion, etc.

Allow yourself to hear what is truly important to your client, not only through their words, but also from what's contained within the spaces between their words.

Listen deeply without judgment.

Further expand your awareness to the environment around you, listening for clues that may be presenting themselves. Ask yourself, what is it that is still unseen? Unheard?

Open to your heart and your knowingness. Listen from a place of silence. Are you getting any clues or feelings? Any insights? How are you responding to what your client is saying? Does it ring true? If not, what seems to be off? Use your own knowingness as a barometer.

Regardless of the knowledge you may be receiving, remember to ask your client whether or not they would like you to share this information with them, and then, only after they have done their own processing.

Help your client learn how to listen from silence and identify and interpret the indicators, messages, and patterns being presented.

Ask powerful questions that support your client in coming to awareness, clarity, and alignment by touching into the silence within.

Support your client in uncovering any limiting beliefs that are sabotaging their ability to know who they really are and powerfully live their dream.

Watch your practice grow.

#### **PARTING THOUGHTS**

Many people are afraid of silence, associating it with an emptiness or void. I believe this is because it reminds them that we have been cut off from nature and our Selves. In silence, we can again begin to hear that which is not available to us when our minds are busy with thought. Within the archetype of silence is all that is, ever was, and ever will be. It is a very powerful place. You will remember you have a choice about how you wish to live your life. Choice opens the way to passion, and passion ignites the fire within, allowing you to access the depths of your dreams and desires. From this place of passion, the work required to achieve what you desire becomes an act of love. This is the essence of coaching. So, dare to dream! Dare



to reach for the stars! Dare to go farther than you ever thought possible!

Bringing this level of clarity to your life and your coaching practice is extremely powerful. Clients will know that something is different and they will be drawn to you. You will be a beacon for those who want to discover their depth and live an extraordinary life. A life that is full of possibility, rich with success, and empowered by the gifts of silence.

Namaste'

## SANDRA DAVIS



Sandra Davis, a principal of the ECO Resource Group, is a seasoned executive and organizational coach, facilitator, and conflict resolution professional. For more than 25 years, Sandra has been supporting individuals and organizations in clarifying and reaching their goals using the gifts of silence and other creative techniques. Her reputation as a bridge communicator and organizational listener is rooted in her ability to listen deeply to her clients' needs, provide new frameworks for action, and assist her clients in overcoming obstacles, identifying opportunities, and achieving extraordinary results. Helping leaders develop sustainable business strategies and programs; guiding organizations through cultural change and transformation, rapid growth or downsizing; managing conflict and community-building are a few of Sandra's natural gifts. Her executive clients claim that having Sandra as a confidante, willing to ask them tough questions, tell them the truth, and think out-of-the-box, is invaluable – increasing both their effectiveness and level of personal satisfaction.

Sandra has worked with for-profit, non-profit, and government organizations. She has also coordinated several public-private partnerships that resulted in building unified visions and maximizing the use of limited human, financial, and natural resources. Sandra has an uncanny ability to put people at ease, getting them to talk about what is most important to them. Knowing how to elicit meaning from people's stories, she is able to set a foundation where people with disparate views can begin to build a common ground for collaboration or resolution.

Sandra is a founding member of the Earth Odysseys Foundation, whose mission is to advance sustainable environ-