



The Big Blue Box Ltd

Personal Insights

The Background

T is a creative and sophisticated senior manager. His role requires him to shape and develop the leadership culture within a substantial organisation.

The brief for the coaching series had indicated that T's style and his immediate team had an air of chaos about them – creative but somewhat unreliable! As if to prove the point, T arrived late and apologetic to one of our early coaching sessions. Some issues outside work were coming to a head and T was distracted.

The Process

Our discussions in the early coaching sessions were wide ranging and could easily go off on interesting tangents and would have to be brought back to focus. Keeping track of the themes was challenging. However a picture emerged as we talked through T's story.

His parents divorced and he had lived with his strict and values-driven father, who himself had had a very difficult childhood. As T remarked:

'I don't feel a 'son' relationship... I have issues around my father'.

In his adult life T had also married, had children, divorced and then remarried. His home life was complex and provided little respite. This had produced a man who was highly sensitised to the quality of relationships – in his own words:

'Highly sensing' ... 'Values driven'.

It was clear that T had little time and energy left for himself and the things that he needed to achieve.

Having explored his background, our discussions focused on T's leadership and the performance of his team. The insights began to be revealed. He gave generously of his time to staff, whom he 'micro managed' and was perhaps over protective.

A key moment occurred - when challenged; T admitted

'I'm nervous about losing control of a situation...fear of doing harm has prevented me from having truthful conversations'.

Suddenly the previous conversation all became relevant as T began to recognise for himself some of the drivers for his leadership style. His concern for others and need for relationships led him into a 'nurturing' style –yet not giving them enough 'space to grow', and a concern for their 'safety' meant retaining too much responsibility for himself rather than fully delegating.

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The Outcomes

Later, reflecting on the outcomes from the coaching sessions T observed:

'I've made massive changes in and out of work ... in my style as a leader ... I realised I liked to be liked ... my need for recognition has reduced... I've started saying 'No!' to my people... I'm having open, honest and tough conversations... I'm going to reduce my life's complexity and manage relationships ...I'm going to do less – not get involved in the detail but prioritise, and manage people's expectations'.

T's values and experiences had shaped him as a leader; the coaching helped him to understand the consequences – for himself and others, of his behaviours, and enabled him to see how he could benefit from making a few simple changes.