THE 5 CATCH-ALL QUESTIONS!

Next time you *freeze* with a client, and don't know what to say next:

First, try SILENCE!

And/or use one of these 5 Questions:

1. **What would be the best question I could ask you now?**

2. **If you secretly knew the way forward from here, what would it be?**

3. **If you were coaching yourself, what question would you ask now?**

4. **What question do YOU think I should ask you now?**

5. **I don't know where to go next with this. Where would you go?**

Trust yourself and the coaching process!

The 5 Questions to ask When You Freeze & Can't Think What to Say Next! | By Emma-Louise Elsey

*It's happened to us all, especially when we're starting out: We **freeze** in a coaching session and literally can't think what to ask or say next. The great thing in coaching of course is that we don't have to know what to say next - in fact it's often better if we don't...*

When we think of stress we usually think of the "Fight" or "Flight" response, but "Freeze" is just as common. So I developed a strategy to get me through those moments when I froze. If the whole point of coaching is that the client knows what's right for them, why was I trying so hard? If they have the answers, doesn't it make sense they might know some of the questions too?

The strategy? Get the CLIENT to tell you what to ask next!

So, here are 5 powerful catch-all questions to get you moving:

1. **What would be the best question I could ask you now?** *(first, this implies that there are many questions available, and asks your client to suggest the BEST one!)*
2. **If you secretly knew the way forward from here, what would it be?** *(this question assumes there is already a way forward AND that they already know it! ***Use only with good rapport so your client feels supported - and not irritated by the question)*
3. **If you were coaching yourself, what question would you ask now?** *(gets them into a coaching frame of mind to find a powerful question! And by asking your client to put their coaching hat on, you may get a surprisingly insightful question)*
4. **What question do YOU think I should ask you now?** *(a constructive use of the word "should", cutting through all 'the fluff' to the question you SHOULD ask to move them forwards!)*
5. **I don't know where to go next with this. Where would you go?** *(sometimes honesty is the best policy! Ask confidently - and know that by asking this question, you're also modelling a healthy willingness to be imperfect - and letting them be the expert too!)*

Watch out for: It's easy to make the situation worse when we freeze by judging ourselves and letting our inner critic beat us up for our 'failure' to stay on top of the session. This only creates a vicious circle where we take ourselves even further away from dancing in the moment with our client!

*"Feel Stuck? Relax! Trust the client, trust YOURSELF and trust the Coaching PROCESS!" **Emma-Louise Elsey***

The Trick: Is to take a deep breath and ask a question which asks the client to show you the next steps. This is about trusting the coaching process - and trusting your client to know what's best for them!
Feeling really brave? Here's another idea:

The simplest and also the most challenging strategy is ironically... more silence. Simply wait for your client to speak again. Take a deep breath, feel your feet on the floor and trust that your client knows what to say next.

It takes a lot of guts when you're already panicking to give the client more silence. It means sitting with and allowing the discomfort of NOT knowing. But if you lean in to the silence and your discomfort, real coaching magic can happen.

And it may not happen too! If after this extended pause your client pipes up and says, "Are you still there?" (which has happened to me on more than one occasion) you can simply say, "I was waiting to see where you would take this next." Then, like me you'll quickly learn that your client didn't think you were a terrible coach. And you'll learn that the world does not end simply because you don't have the all the answers - or indeed the right questions.