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When we are **mindful**, we pay attention and see clearly whatever is happening in the present moment. When we operate from **leadership**, we paradoxically work from both our sources of strength and our blind spots. So, to bring mindful leadership into the coaching conversation, we, as coaches, pay attention to our own experience AND we evoke the emerging story of the coachee.

As coaches, we are called to first be present to ourselves: to know our strengths and to notice our own triggers. Our triggers reveal our blind spots. When we clutter the airwaves with our own points of view and judgment, we simply project our own desires and expectations upon another. When we recognize our blind spots, when we are clear about our own patterns of thinking and behaving, then we can be curious about the beliefs, attitudes and behaviors of others. We can enter the conversation reflectively and with non-evaluative language.

When we cross this threshold beyond ourselves, we become adventurers called to see the world with fresh eyes. We are called to be story listeners. Not simply to hear the story that the one before us tells, but, to be present to the story of *this moment*. We hear the story underneath the story, the heart of what is really going on and of what wants to come into the world. We do this by accessing verbal, para-verbal and non-verbal cues. Consider:

Verbal: What words are being used? Are certain words repeated? Are words thematic? Are the words used from a particular point of view? Where is the locus of control? Are certain values being expressed?

Para-verbal: Is there a marked tone to the story? Angry, determined, sad? Rapid speech? High pitched tone?

Non-verbal: Notice posture, eye contact, facial expressions, energy and gestures.

By asking questions that relate to the story that is surfacing, we enable the coachee to figure out what is going on for themselves; and we support them as they design ways to best serve their community.

How do we prepare for the conversation? We become more acutely aware of the story and the storyteller when we come to the conversation with calm and focused attention toward the one before us. So, before the encounter, we may take time to practice silence, notice our own breath, and pay attention to any stress or persistent thoughts that may intrude in our ability to be present. When we cultivate our own preparatory practice, our values and qualities come with us into the coaching conversation. In this safe zone, the coachee is able to be alert to the truths of their own story and begin to see what new narrative is possible. Together, we bring mindful leadership to the conversation and create a cycle of sustainable growth.