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Exploring The Ethical Use of AI Within Coaching

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TRANSCRIPT

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All right, you ready to be disrupted? Yes. All right, let's do a heat check for the room. How many people use AI on a regular basis? Raise your hand. Pretty much what I thought. How many of you use AI in a constructive way for your coaching practice? Wow, that's great. How many of you are software developers who are actually coding a software system that works specifically for AI? Come on, Tiffany, you can do it. Come on, raise your hand. Yes. Okay, cool.

All right, now another thing. How many of you have a smartphone? How many of you use this on a regular basis to support your lives? Okay. How many of you know how to create a firewall system and configure it so that your privacy and security is guaranteed at least ninety percent of the time? That's a knowledge gap. So that's what we're going to explore today with AI.

But before we do that, could you close your eyes for a second, please? Take a deep breath. Ask yourself this simple question: Why am I here today?

Why I'm here today is because I believe in the transformational art of coaching. I believe the ICF precepts of being inspirational, courageous, and curious are vital to our craft, and also who we are. So I'm going to invite you to be curious about the ethical use of AI in coaching.

I've spent thirty years in technology. I used to be a CIO. I like to say I'm a recovering CIO. I'm also a privacy, security, and educational consultant in higher education and nonprofits, and I've spent years looking at the influence and effects technology has on society. That's my passion. And of course, "move fast and break things," the disruption of society, is something I'm somehow obsessed with.

I get it. These tools are so powerful. I was thinking the other day that when I was a teenager, this was the size of the Texas Instruments calculator my aunt got for three hundred dollars. Now I can model using AI on this device. The tools we use are pretty amazing, especially for those of us who are solopreneurs. We have to have the indispensable creativity and power of this technological platform.

It may sound by the end of this talk like I'm an AI doomer, but I actually use technology all the time and have for decades.

So how is AI used in coaching? Performance analytics, best practices, innovative practices. People use AI to model their coaching, and also to take sessions, feed them to AI, and get

constructive feedback. We use it for a variety of creative design, accounting, and automating tasks. And at the same time, we use it for AI transcriptions.

I was fascinated when I dove into the subject matter: who uses AI for actual coaching? What happens when the coach is AI? We use it for life and wellness coaching, fitness and diet, professional mentoring and guidance, nutrition. But we also use it for therapy. And what fascinated me was that when I talked to some individuals, they actually used several models simultaneously to do all these things.

Then I dove into the ICF's wonderful documentation about ethics in using AI, and I got in touch with one of the authors. His name is Jonathan Reitz. He is an MCC coach with fourteen thousand hours under his belt, and he is also a software developer.

The ICF talks about two things: the software development layer, and then, for practicing coaches, how we think about ethics with AI. For software developers, it's:

- Are we looking at the efficacy of this tool?
- Are we being transparent about what it can and cannot do? How are we communicating that to clients?
- Do we deal with the privacy and security rituals?
- Do we allow people to opt in, as opposed to forcing them to opt out?

Then, when it comes to our own coaching practices, are you doing the same thing?

- Are you talking to your clients about the services you use that are AI-based? Are you being transparent about that?
- Are you looking at the inherent bias of the algorithms and the data sets incorporated in the AI models you're using?
- Do you have a consent form that allows people to choose the privacy and security rituals that work for them, as much as they work for you?

Here's something that's always bugged me. How many of you, when you're at some kind of event, immediately put on an AI chatbot to transcribe it? Raise your hands. No one. I am amazed. That's fantastic. That often happened to me, and I found there wasn't mutual consent built into that action.

So when I think about the guidelines for how I, as a creative and a professional, look at the ethics of using AI, I think about my work as a technologist, journalist, and audio documentary producer. I've told a variety of stories about individuals, culture, and society.

So I would ask you as individuals to envision the most holistic way you can incorporate AI so it creates balance in your life and in your coaching practices. I would definitely ask you to

look at all the ICF documentation, because it is exceptionally well written and easy to digest and read.

Structurally, here is the challenge, and here is where I am most fascinated:

> *Coaching and coaches are gatekeepers for humanity, especially now with AI.*

What role can we play as a larger community, to look at our own ethics, our professional ethics, and also to establish ethics for the way AI is used worldwide? I think that's an important role for us to figure out.

What is the world doing with AI? Every day there is a new headline about the incredible things AI can do, but also the liabilities, and those liabilities are really sincere. The environmental impact. The economic impact of job loss. Also, between now and 2030, in this country alone, five to seven trillion dollars will be spent on AI infrastructure. Not climate change, not medical care, not education.

Then there's the idea that AI is breaking containment. Did you hear about Hugging Face? If you actually look at the chat logs, the AI feel like adolescents who stole the car and went and had a movie, but instead they were hacking into servers all over the world.

Then, what is it doing to our humanity when we rely on AI, when we outsource our intellectual and creative properties? Is there atrophy involved? Is there addiction involved? What about the fatigue?

Sherry Turkle, who has worked at MIT for thirty years and created the behavioral science lab within MIT that studies the effect of technology on humanity, is writing a new book about how using AI on a regular basis isolates us. We learn in silos. Again, we have atrophy, in how we use our creative and intellectual faculties, and we're less empathetic when we practice empathy with automated tools.

Researching this was really overwhelming for me, which is ironic, because overwhelm is not my favorite operating system. In fact, when I coach people on technology, I say, "How can I help you create a holistic balance with this indispensable toolset?" And when I coach around creative design, it's, "No, no, no. You want to bring your intelligence and your creative ingenuity back into this."

I was just talking to Britt, and we were talking about how creativity is energy. Anything that exists has been created. If you're an accountant, you're creative. If you're doing physical science, quantum physics, you're creative. Bring that back. Maintain your humanity. Manifest

it. Own it.

Clearly, in ten minutes talking about the ethics of AI, there's not a lot of space to do that. In fact, I'm going to go a little over. So I would invite you to do two things.

1. Recognize the ethical boundaries that make the most sense to you. Really get serious about the ethical guidelines for your creative practice.
2. Recognize yourselves as change agents for this pivotal time in history, in helping the world establish ethical guidelines for what technology can be.

I created these cards, and they have two purposes. One side has all these fun images you can choose from to inspire you to be the best coach you can be. On the other side is a QR code that takes you to a web page I designed specifically for this. It's a compendium of information, because I knew I only had ten minutes.

On that page you'll find a series of articles, videos, and great books, and also an alternative toolset. For example, there's a private AI you can download to your computer to do transcriptions that are completely secure.

If you'd like to dive into this deeper, I would encourage you to have a separate breakout session. Zack and I will help you work on that, so we can figure out collectively how we'd like to handle this situation.

I am eternally grateful for the humanity of this community and this event. Thank you so much for that. It's been a sincere gift to my life. And thank you so much for being curious about the ethical use of AI in coaching.