

Characteristics of a Healing Relationship

(from Trauma to Freedom - by Kristina Lea and Heather Ensworth, Ph.D.)

The qualities of a healing relationship are:

- **Empathy:** having a sense of being seen and heard; the importance of mirroring and active listening
- **Respect:** feeling that the other person holds you in respect and compassion
- **Unconditional love:** feeling that the connection is not based on your being used, abused, or exploited, but is based on what supports you in being who you are
- **Trust:** feeling safe in the relationship
- **Clear boundaries:** experiencing clear boundaries in the relationship, so that you don't feel neglected, invaded, or violated emotionally or physically

Additional characteristics for the coach in building a healing relationship with a client:

- **Witness self:** the importance of being in your witness self and being aware of your own issues, trauma triggers and biases
- **Taking responsibility for your own process and healing journey and supporting that in your client** - we can only take our clients as deeply as we have gone ourselves in our own healing journeys. And it is important to respect and support your clients in taking responsibility for their healing process. As coaches, we can assist and care but not "carry" or rescue the client. The responsibility for healing is within each of us.
- **Avoiding projections:** it is important as a coach to honor the uniqueness of your client and not make assumptions or project your own feelings and experiences on to the client.
- **Having appropriate expectations:** It is important to attune to the client's own goals, pace and capacity for change.
- **Knowing your own limitations:** It is important to be aware of the context and limitations of your own training and skills and to seek out further training or supervision as needed and to be willing to refer clients to other professionals when they require expertise beyond your training and abilities.
- **Allowing mistakes, holding yourself with compassion and repairing the relationship:** Hold yourself with compassion and know that you can't be perfect in the coaching relationship. When a mistake is made or there is a rupture in the coaching relationship, it is important to acknowledge that and then process this with the client in a way that can not only repair the relationship but also further deep the trust between you and the client.