



Glenn Livingston, Ph.D.

Glenn's companies have sold consulting and/or coaching services to dozens of Fortune 500 clients. He's worked with coaching clients all over the world, and directly supervised many coaches and psychotherapists.

Dr. Livingston's companies' previous work and theories have also appeared in dozens of major media like The New York Times, Crain's NY Business, and many more

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Glenn: Hi, this is Glenn Livingston. I'm here with Sunny Hills. Hi, Sunny.

Sunny: Hi, Glenn.

Glenn: Sunny has quite an interesting background as a life coach, an entrepreneur, and a positive thinker. Sunny has graciously consented to let me interview him today. So that, you, as a listener, may have the opportunity to learn from his experience and understand what resource he has to offer. With that, Sunny, I thought that we might start by talking about when you first got involved with life coaching.

Sunny: What would you like to know?

Glenn: Well, how long have you been involved in life coaching?

Sunny: I first heard of the term in -- I think I heard of it on the Internet sometime in the 90's. But I first really heard about it in the fall of 2000 when my wife had gone up camping with a friend. She came back and said, "You want to talk to Deb about this thing called life coaching. It's her career and I think you

might really like it." I did talk with Deb. She introduced me to the book *Co-active Coaching* and...

Glenn: Is Deb one of the authors of *Co-active Coaching*?

Sunny: She's one of the authors of *Therapist as Life Coach*.

Glenn: Oh, I see, yes, with Patrick Williams.

Sunny: Right. She had a therapy practice. She told me the story how she had a therapy practice, doing clinical work. She taught at the university. What was happening was that because of insurance issues, she had to diagnose people with an illness in order to treat them or work with them. She didn't like that because she wanted to work with people without having to put them in some category of being ill. With life coaching, you're actually working with healthy people who simply want to enrich their lives. She liked that a lot better. She started experimenting with it. She converted her whole practice to that. Then, she wrote that book with Pat Williams.

I had been thinking of -- after I retired and moved here to Maui in 1999, I was spending a year just kicking around the beach and working part time at a radio station here locally, having fun. I had thought of going into business

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consulting but as I was on my way over here, we -- my wife and I visited a friend who had a business that was similar to ours, in the audio-video retail area. In talking with him, I realized that if I work as a consultant, I would actually be taking on his problems as my own and I'd be really powerless to implement strategies, but I'd have all the burden of the responsibility of the problem. I ditched the idea of becoming a consultant. But as I talk with Deb and read this book about co-active coaching, I realized that this is very different. Here, the client's responsible and the client finds the solution. I'm simply a catalyst.

Glenn: Did that appeal to you?

Sunny: Yeah. Because I could use my experience to ask questions rather than to provide answers.

Glenn: Got you. I just want you to touch on something that you said because I thought it was very important that the catalyst which brought your friend out of the psychotherapy world and into the life coaching world was her concern with having to force the diagnosis, force the person into the mold of a mental disorder, in order to get reimbursement from the insurance companies.

Sunny: Uh-hmm.

Glenn: Okay, I just want to make sure I understood that correctly.

Sunny: Right. The pretext of going forward with any client was always that they were a broken person; that they had problems; they had to be fixed. She felt some of the people she came across were not broken. But in order to get paid, she had to say they were.

Glenn: Okay. In co-active coaching, you work with whole people.

Sunny: Yeah, the assumption is that a person is resourceful, creative, and whole. That's the basis of it.

Glenn: Did you take action on that once you became aware of co-active coaching in that paradigm? How did you get more involved?

Sunny: Well, I read that book. I'm a real self-starter type person. I've been an incredibly successful student in life. I read the book and decided I could at least practice and apply these principles since no license was required to practice. I called up some business friends, colleagues that I know in Oregon when I was in business. I told them of my interest in this new

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field and told them that I would essentially do this for them of consulting which was not consulting. I would do it for no charge, would they be interested? A few of them had said, "Yes". So, I pretty much dabbled in it with a book knowledge which I admit now, and I see now, is very limited. I wanted to find out whether I would even be interested in this field, whether I'd even like it. I didn't want to move forward with paying for a certification or committing to it without having some feel for whether I really liked it. I wasn't about to do something I didn't like, not when I'm retired and living on Maui.

Glenn: You've got a whale singing in your backyard, right?

Sunny: Yeah, right outside my door, there's a cruise ship there right now.

Glenn: I'd like not to gloss over so much the way that you initiated yourself into the field, because I think that's an important scenario that you just outlined and something that other potential coaching wannabes, coaching newbies can possibly emulate. I'm wondering two things: I'm wondering if you could elaborate a little bit more about specifically who you approach and how you approach them, you know, more specifically what you said; and secondarily...

Sunny: Maybe secondarily might be how I proceeded to coach, what guidelines I use or...?

Glenn: Yes, there was that. Also, how you might do it differently if you had to do it over again?

Sunny: Okay. How I did it was, for instance, I called an entrepreneur. He was a state farm insurance agent. He was going through some transition where state farm was displacing him. He actually had a possible lawsuit against them. He was now going to manage a local insurance agent office in another town. He was going through some transition. I knew that and I simply said that this format would be that we'd have weekly calls. I'd ask him some powerful, thought provoking questions. We'd come away with either, an inquiry, something for him to think about and ponder from different perspective, or with an action step that he would agree to. Then, the following week, we'd check-in and see where he was, do the same kind of thing from there. He said, "Sure, you're welcome."

Glenn: Did anybody say no?

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Sunny: Yeah. I also asked someone here on Maui. She said, "No". However, it's funny because about a year later, she hired me. She became my only client on Maui. All my clients have been in remote areas, different countries, or different states.

Glenn: By telephone.

Sunny: Uh-huh. It was funny. She said. "No". But a year later, she called me up and said, "Are you still doing that?"

Glenn: Interesting. How many people did you call altogether?

Sunny: At the very first, probably -- it's been a long time, I'm guessing five or six. Another one, I ended up doing this kind of thing with was someone who I met on Maui in that first year I was here and he was working in a restaurant. He served this lady, who turned out to be, Rae Dawn Chong. She's an actress who's the daughter of Tommy Chong.

Glenn: Sure, I know who she is.

Sunny: She's a great actress. She was directing her first movie. She was so impressed with him. She cast him right there in the lead role and flew him to L.A. the next day, got him an agent, manager, and took him under her wing. He got cast in that movie and then, another movie. He did a few TV things. Now, he's in his third year in a show, starring role in the WB network. He's done several movies since. It turned out that when he was there auditioning, I went ahead and called him up and coached him for a while too as he was in the audition process, just to keep his momentum going, break into that industry.

I also worked with people who ran MLM. I had a cousin who is in MLM and coached her for some time. Kind of a diverse -- I didn't have any particular niche I was working with. They were just friends or family.

Glenn: Friends and family and former business associates. You give them all what the structure would be. You told them that there'd be no charge.

Sunny: Yeah. I told them I was doing it to see if I liked it. It was kind of selfishly motivated but they could benefit.

Glenn: How long did that go on for?

Sunny: I started that in October of 2000 and believe, it was in April of 2001 that I decided to go get certified or just start taking some of the precursors to the

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certification. Co-active coaching seemed, to me, to be the only one I would want to do. If it wasn't co-active coaching, I wouldn't have become a coach. Co-active coaching, the client is a know-it-all and I like that.

Glenn: Got it.

Sunny: It matches up with my training in college. I studied Greeks. I read Plato in the original Greek. Socrates was always a hero of mine. He was wise because he asked questions, not because he told people things. This was like a rebirth of the Socratic Method in the 21st century, almost spontaneous rebirth of a philosophy.

Glenn: You and I probably have more to talk about, because I am a fan of the Greeks as well. I'm sure you're much more literate about them but I'd leave that for an offline conversation.

You said that you did this trial period to see if you liked it. What that led you to is co-active coaching. But I want to still back up and go a little bit more through the trial period because a lot of the people listening to this are really

people that might be thinking about getting into it and not sure if they'll like it, just like you were at that time. I wonder what you liked about it.

Sunny: I like the idea that it was a discovery process. Again, like the Socratic Method, what Socrates called himself was a midwife, that he was a midwife of ideas. He asked questions and helped people give birth to the truth, to their truth. That's what this is like. It just seems that if there was a way for me to give back -- I had been taken under the wing of different mentors.

There was an old man in the 1980's who was an international director of Toastmasters. I had very poor self-esteem. I had called up this number in the paper about Toastmasters. I just happen to talk with him. He asked me about my life a little bit. It ended up -- he was the first one who told me that I was a valuable person, that I had something to give to the world. He made me believe in myself. He helped me develop my self-esteem. He did it with all the kindness of his heart, kind of like an older brother or a father that I never had. I always thought, someday, when I'm 74, I'm going to help some young person just like Don helped me.

Glenn: That's wonderful.

Sunny: As I was doing this coaching, I was like, I can do this now and it doesn't have to be with just one person.

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Glenn: You don't have to wait till you're 74.

Sunny: Right.

Glenn: Yeah. I think that in the coaches and any of the psychotherapists that I've talked with, there's always a story like that, about someone who really mentored them and made a tremendous difference in the path that they chose in life, the way that their self-confidence developed. I think that it's really valuable for people to take a moment and reflect upon who that is and what specifically they got from that person. That really provides an inspiration and motivation to move forward in the coaching industry.

Sunny: Yeah. In all my other work, I had been providing services for money, filling needs for people with regards to sound and video equipment, or installing it, or designing it, recording studio for them. I was always giving something to help them out for pay. But it seems like this was so much more targeted towards the person's heart and mind and who they are, turning them into a contributor or helping them become more of a contributor. It just seems like

it was more central with me and who I am, to them and who they were, than selling sound and video equipment.

Glenn: Sure.

Sunny: Meaningful. It's satisfying.

Glenn: Was there anything that surprised you as you got more involved with coaching as compared to what you expected it to be?

Sunny: I was surprised how much I grew as a person. I had been through some pretty big transitions. I'd read a lot of psychology, read William James and Freud, and all the classical psychology, Jung, Carl Jung. I read all the self-help books. I had done a lot of self-development over the years. I was really surprised at how much more there was for me. Because the first kind of coaching is fulfillment coaching and it's all about helping people identify their personal values that are unique to them, with their own language. Not values in the sense of morals but values such as -- one of my highest values is freedom. I value my free time. I value freedom to do what I want, when I want to. Some people have a high value toward integrity, you know, you've told me about that with you.

We all have our different values and so, there's discovery of values; do some future self exercises where you do a visualization, go up into the outer space and then come back down to earth 20 years in the future and meet

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your future self who introduces himself to you and tells you their name and you sit down and talk about how they got there; what they learned. You come back and so, you've met your future self. To help you think about who you are and how you want that to unfold, so, that you have something to work on with regards to your personal fulfillment.

Glenn: Got you.

Sunny: The second kind of coaching is balance coaching. The idea is that it's all about perspective. That we, in life -- that the client is going to believe or they feel that wherever they are, however they look at things, that that perspective they're in is real. That we, as coaches, know -- they can describe that perspective. They then tell you what their reality is. Then, you can invite them to physically move out of that and look at it and now get into another physical position, perhaps. You know, body geography and now say, "What's this perspective?", and name it. Now, this place where they were stuck, what do they see from here? That you can invite them to take four or five or six perspective in a period of 45 minutes and have them

actually, now look at four or five they created and named, and choose one. Which one's most attractive to them?

So, they recognize that they're not stuck. That you might have a working mother who believes she's too old to go back to work; that's a perspective. What's another perspective? Well, she's got experience. She has experience she's bringing to a job that others don't have. That's the experience perspective. You can ask her to tell about that.

Anyway, the idea is that you don't buy in to the client's one perspective they have on every situation. It's your job to see other possibilities and invite them to stand on. That's called balance coaching. Well, it had an impact on me as a person to not feel so stuck. Even though I'm retired, debt-free, living the life of my dreams in Maui, I still would find myself feeling stuck or feeling like there was one perspective on things. I came to realize that there's more than one perspective, always. It just gave me more freedom and choice, which I really value.

Glenn: I totally agree with that.

Sunny: Then, the third kind of coaching is called process coaching. This one didn't agree with me very much. The idea is that if you take a client there and you let them look whatever they're afraid of in that phase that suddenly, it's not so fearful anymore. If you take them down a tube or down into their emotion and let them be there and be with them there and just let them

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experience it, that they will, of their own accord, come out when they're ready.

Glenn: When you give the ghost a name, it ceases to be a ghost.

Sunny: Yeah. If it's -- their personality is this mansion with many rooms and there's a room that they don't want to go in, maybe you can just lead them to put their hand on the door. Maybe next time, they can crack it open. Maybe next time, they can peek in, you know.

Glenn: But you said, that didn't agree with you.

Sunny: Well, not with me, because this happens to be my life history. I think you know, I was hit by a car when I was 12 and almost killed and scarred my legs and kind of a socially outcast. During my teen years, I went from being a golden boy, who everybody loved, to being a freak and an outcast and...

Glenn: How old were you?

Sunny: I was 12. As a result, well, you could say, I spent the next 18 to 20 years -- I went into the dark side really deeply. I read those BFDs as a teenager, I was so absorbed with pain and suffering. It's like I lived there. I've been through all that. I've come out the other side and now, I'm Sunny. Personally, I don't think the dark side has much to offer. I'm choosing other things. For me, it was kind of like...

Glenn: Which kind of leads me to the goals and pursuits that you have now because, in addition to doing one-to-one coaching, you've also got another way that you're touching people's lives, don't you?

Sunny: Yeah. I've used the positive thinking and affirmation and visualization since the 80's. Having been an audio producer before I went into my own business, I've been a radio personality and professional audio producer. I've just always have wanted -- I've always had this idea of creating affirmation CDs. Just like everybody has some inner dreams that seem so big, you're scared to do it. For a long time, I was afraid to do it. But, just the last year or so, I've been creating CDs. Just since June 23rd, I now have nearly 4000 people in 52 countries who are receiving my affirmations by email, many of whom have bought my CDs, kind of, building up a network of positive thinking...

Glenn: You can get those affirmations for free by email, can't you?

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Sunny: Uh-hmm.

Glenn: At sunnythoughts.com, is that right?

Sunny: Right. S-U-N-N-Y-T-H-O-U-G-H-T-S.com

Glenn: Sure. I'm an avid user of the achievement and wealth CDs that you make which are just wonderful. I'm a debt-free, multi-millionaire, and I'm going to stay that way for the rest of my life.

Sunny: That's right.

Glenn: Which is very silly, the first time you hear it. But then, you listen to it then, it has an impact on your thinking.

Sunny: I think it's natural that the first time people hear them, there are pretty big thoughts in the first time people hear them the analytical mind goes crazy, that's nuts, what a wacky thought that is. But after a while, your inner

supportive voice gets activated and then, suddenly, people are telling me they just turn on the CD. All they have to do is hear the tone of my voice and it's a catalyst. They're thinking about their big dreams, they're making plans, and they're moving forward.

Glenn: There you go. It's wonderful to be able to touch lives on that level.

Sunny: Yeah, it's exciting. Without the coaching, I guarantee you, without the coach training, without doing the coaching, I would never have been as personally developed as I am, never been as confident as I am. I would never have gone after my own dreams as much as I am with doing this project. I certainly wouldn't be reaching 4000 people after nine months.

Glenn: That's, I think one of the wonderful things about coaching as a professional, overall, is that even if you don't make \$1 million in it, it helps you to embrace the lifestyle that ensures ongoing personal growth and fulfillment. If you're going to take responsibility for catalyzing other people's growth and fulfillment, then, you're going to be ongoingly exposed to that material and see what works, what doesn't work, and where people get stuck. It just becomes so much more possible to reach your own level of fulfillment and satisfaction. I think that, in the last 10 or 15 minutes of what you're describing, is really a culmination of the benefits of being in life coaching.

Sunny: Uh-hmm. It empowers you to be able to walk your talk. If you are able to walk your talk, you have more respect from your clients and your colleagues

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and yourself. I have had a coach or multiple coaches now for the past four or five years and I will have a coach or multiple coaches until the day I die. I think it's really important for people who are in coach training thinking about becoming a coach or who have had their training and practicing as coaches, I think it's really important that we all hire coaches ourselves. I mentor a lot of coaches. I have a lot of coaches as clients and have had, because of my business background. It's just a natural fit to help them build their practices.

What I always tell them is, not only hire a coach, hire an expensive coach even if it's not for a long time, do it for a while. Because what's going to happen is, you will get results. Not just by the virtue or the fact that they're expensive, but chances are, they're usually better if they're expensive than if they're not. What's going to happen is, you're going to get results. You go, "This is worth it." If it's worth it for you to pay \$375 a month, \$475 a month -- I've even paid as much as \$750 a month. In fact, I paid \$1000 a month. If you get results paying that much, it just empowers you to charge more yourself and have the confidence that you're worth it.

Glenn: I couldn't agree more. I, too, have had coaches and mentors my entire life and I will have them until I die. Because as one of my favorite mentors told me, you can't pick yourself up by your own collar, you know. You just don't have the leverage to do it yourself. The money that's come back to me from working with coaches, the expertise that I've developed from being coachable, making myself coachable is just invaluable.

Let me get back a little more to the practicalities, if you don't mind.

Sunny: No, I don't mind.

Glenn: What would you say, in your experience with coaches that you've mentored and in your own experience, what do you think is the two or three most common mistakes that people make in the beginning are?

Sunny: Not believing in themselves, would be a big one. Thinking that it's going to be easy, and that clients are just going to come to them, I think might be another one.

Glenn: By the way, the system that I'm teaching people is well-designed to get people to walk through the door. But that doesn't invalidate what you're saying because once they're in the door, your marketing is how good a coach you are. People that think that that would be easy or that's just simple as talking to a friend are, you're in for a bit of surprise. But the people that are willing to really commit and have a passion for growing themselves

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and can embrace the process, rather than the moment to moment success, are going to be much more successful in the long run.

Sunny: Well, I think that what happens a lot is that people develop good coaching skills and they bring to the table, a rich life experience. I think what you're creating is going to be very valuable to them. Because I think one of the big mistakes people don't realize, it is a business and if they haven't been in business before -- fortunately, I've been in business for 12 years.

I think, by having your own business, you recognize that it's a process in my mind, that I like to think that it takes about three years to build a business from scratch. You might say, "Well, that's a limiting thought. It doesn't have to take that long." However, you're setting up all kinds of systems. There's so much to be done besides the coaching itself. You're building up a reputation, a referral network. I think, a lot of times, people think, it's just going to happen overnight. I think a mistake is to think that if you haven't built a huge business in one year, that you're a failure. That's my own personal belief of a mistake people make.

Glenn: Interesting. Susan Austin said the same thing. For those people that are very eager to get started as fast as they can get started, are there a couple of things you'd recommend that they do?

Sunny: Well, I think investing in programs like what you're developing, I think just ongoing education and self-development is crucial. I think that reading a book like the *The E-Myth Revisited* by Michael Gerber is good. A lot of people, you know, they talk about that -- I can't remember the name of the author, that guy who's from Hawaii who does this financial stuff.

Glenn: Kiosoki

Sunny: people like that, who if you haven't thought that way before yourself, but you're just beginning, that can be a mind opener, you know.

Glenn: It sounds like what you're saying is that, when people first get involved with life coaching, they get very involved with the doing of life coaching but not as much with the business aspects of life coaching. You need a rudimentary grounding in how to work on the business as opposed to in the business, the importance of cash flow, and the way that people who built wealth think of those things.

Sunny: Uh-hmm. I think so. I really believe in just all forms of education. Benjamin Franklin said -- let's see, I can't remember the exact phrase now.

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But the idea is, whatever money you put into your education, it's going to make you fill your purse overflowing. I can't remember the exact words on how he said it. He had some clever ways, you know, in 18th century language.

Glenn: Which is extremely true in this industry in particular. It's true in any business but in this industry in particular, because you are your product. Because so many of the people that come to you, regardless of what life problems they come to you to solve, will need help in balancing out their life with business in some way.

Sunny: Well, that's true, too, yeah.

Glenn: Yes. Having an understanding and a grounding in business principles is very important.

Sunny: What I would say is, what happens is people, they'll get start out and they'll think, "Okay, I've got to do some advertising." What I would say is, "Don't

spend a penny on advertising. Put that money into training yourself on marketing."

Glenn: Right.

Sunny: You'd be so far ahead.

Glenn: I totally agree. The people listening to this will be of that mind. When you do coaching, do you have any particular assignments that you like to give people?

Sunny: No, I don't. What we do is we enter into the moment with the person and create from that space. No, I do not have any kind of pre-formed types of assignments I like to give.

Glenn: Got it.

Sunny: When I do give something, it's always negotiated. It's like, this is coming to me from my intuition, from what we discussed. I like to play with this idea for the next week and take it as an inquiry and think about it. What I do is, I do a two-hour design session where they get to design me as the coach and explain what an inquiry is and what homework is. That, at the end of the session, they'll get an inquiry or a piece of homework and they get to say, "Yes, I'll do that." "No, I won't do that." Or they get to negotiate and say, "I won't do that but I'll do this." Or they can say, "I don't want any homework or

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inquiry this week." But usually they do. What I'll do is throw out an idea and they usually modify it or they say, "No, that's perfect. I'll do that." Sometimes, that suggestion for a homework or an inquiry comes after the first ten minutes of the call. At the end of the call, we say, "Well, is that all we're going to do or are we going to do some more?" Sometimes, at the end, they get an inquiry and two pieces of homework. It's never a formula. It always comes out of whatever they brought to the table and the safe and courageous space that we create for them to think new thoughts they've never thought before.

Glenn: Sunny, could you give me an example of an inquiry and homework assignment?

Sunny: Sure. An inquiry might be -- maybe we did some perspective work. I might ask you, "Would you like to try living in that perspective this week?" Since it's usually a newly discovered perspective and...

Glenn: That would go back to the example that you gave about your mother being out of work. One perspective is that she can't get a job because she's too old. Another perspective is that she is an accomplished typist or something like that.

Sunny: Or she brings a wealth of information, a wealth of life experience, or whatever she discovered and heard in that other perspective. I'm likely to say, "Well, would you like to live in that perspective this week? Would you like to try it out for size?"

Glenn: Got it.

Sunny: That's kind of a combination of an inquiry and homework. That's almost like a hybrid. Straight inquiry might be, "What does it mean to be courageous?" Ask yourself that, when you're brushing your teeth; ask yourself that, what it means to be courageous. This morning, when I'm waking up, what do I think of it now? What do I think of it while I'm driving to work? You know, put it, tape that question on your mirror, on your computer, and ask yourself, "What is courage to me?" all week long. That's an inquiry.

Glenn: I see.

Sunny: Kind of, taking an idea and looking at it from different perspectives, from different life places, throughout the week, to come up with multiple answers for yourself of what you feel that concept is. It's usually about an idea or a perspective or a notion and kind of exploring it, play with it, and come up with your own interpretation of it.

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Homework is much more like, asking someone -- they might involve journaling their experience of something. Or it might be to make a journal entry every night based on what good things did they do that day. What were their successes for the day? It's usually an action. It could be done once a week or just done between...

Glenn: They could write down three courageous actions that they took that day.

Sunny: Sure.

Glenn: Okay, I got it.

Sunny: That kind of homework can be emailed. When I ask for those kinds of actions, what we recommended is that you can ask not only -- in the most fundamental way, and I don't always do this but, especially if I'm coaching someone just one time, and I'm going to do a follow-up, I'll ask them, "What do they want to do, when will they do it, and how will I know they did it? How

will they let me know? Do they want to email me? Do they want to call me? Do they want to talk about?"

Glenn: You really let them design it and take responsibility for it.

Sunny: Yeah. It's not just, "Oh yeah, I'll do that." But it's, "Okay, when, and how will I know?"

Glenn: That's a fairly clear distinction between coaching and psychotherapy. It's pretty rare that a psychotherapist would hold their patient accountable for an assignment like that, that a coach would. Do you agree?

Sunny: Yeah, I think so. I had some psychotherapy in the early 80's when I had my self-image problems. I don't remember any assignments like that that I was held accountable for, no. There's always exploration of past experiences.

Coaching isn't about the past. We never ask for the story or their history. We ask, "Where are you now? What's going on now? What are you thinking?"

Glenn: Where do you want to get in, how can we help you get there?

Sunny: Yeah, what might be, yeah, exactly. You go from, where are you now and where do you want to go?

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Glenn: Sunny, would you stop people from looking at the past, if it appears that it could help them get where they wanted to go?

Sunny: No, not at all. There are times when people want to tell a history or a story. In a design session, I do let them know about some of the coaching tools. One of them is intruding, that they're granting me permission to intrude. If they are doing a lot of story-telling that is not, that I don't feel is productive, that I have the right to intrude for the sake of their learning and their moving forward. If I feel like their storytelling is just going in circles or it's a delay or it's about other people and it's not about them. If the storytelling's about them and their inner life and their values, it can be quite revealing. If it's a storytelling about someone else and it's just going on and on, I got better things to do. [laughter]

Glenn: Got you.

Sunny: For the sake of them, it's time to stop. Let's ask a powerful question that's going to do some good for them, you know. They agree to that when we first start out.

Glenn: Sure. One of the motivation is that people will have, for coming to see a coach, is to help them change their thinking. I think we have to remember that the experience that we have in being with them -- we're only with them for that one hour or two hours or whatever it is each week or each month, but they're with them all the time. If we're experiencing that type of boredom or lack of connectedness to their soul, so to speak, then, it's likely that they are too. That leads to an emptiness and isolation and lack of ability to connect with their creative brilliance. They really need someone to intrude upon them.

Sunny: It's done in a way that they know we have their best interest at heart. It's not a judgment against them to stop them. It's not judging that they're wrong to be telling me this. It's a "Hey, great, and what about this?"

Glenn: Yeah. I also think the other brief conversation we should have about that is about induced feelings. This is something that comes from the psychotherapy world, from the psychology world. A notion that feelings that people don't want to have, they will find a way to get you to have while they're talking to you. If that person who is skirting around an important issue, you know, by telling stories, leaves you feeling anxious that perhaps, they don't want to feel anxious about what they mentioned earlier on the coaching session. That's why they're skirting around things. You need to help them to face that anxiety and move forward.

[0:33:34.7]

The complication is, that there's not a meter that you hang on the wall that can tell you whether this feeling is coming from them or it's coming from you. I think that every coach should be journaling to themselves every night about their association and thoughts and feelings about what went on in the sessions and what went on in their lives. Because it's only by really overdeveloping that self-reflective muscle that we're able to tell what came from the client and what came from us. There's a much more extensive discussion that we'll get into if this was a talk about psychotherapy.

Sunny: Well, it is related to one of the principles of coaching, I believe, is that, if you are experiencing something that you think you're bringing almost as baggage to the session, they're starting to talk about something and something is going through your head distracting you from really being over there with them, that it's kind of a coaching ethics that you confess that, that you put it out on the table. You say, "You know, as you're talking, I want you

to know that I've got this bias. I think your partner's a creep or whatever." You confess it. That's not a good example.

Glenn: Well, I think in minimum, you have to confess it to yourself, so, that you know that that's operating.

Sunny: It does serve the client, to let the client know, because otherwise, almost like what the coach's responsibility during the session is to remain clear, to be free of your own stuff, to be listening over there, and to be listening to what's in the air, what's between the lines. If you're thinking anything about "I", as you're listening, it's a disservice to the client. If I'm listening to a client and I started getting an "I" sentence or something about me, if I can't refocus, then it's time to confess it, so, that I can get it out so I can focus. They appreciate that. It's kind of like being honest about being distracted because otherwise, my job really is to be focused on them, not on me.

Glenn: Sure, it's often very relieving to focus on another person. It's very relieving experience to come outside of yourself and focus on the other person anyway.

Sunny: Well, it's one of the great services you can perform as a coach, because they don't get that from their friends or family. Their friends and family always have an inner agenda that they're going to put on them. As a coach, we get detached from having an agenda. If we have an agenda for them, that's what we want to confess because that's not part of the deal. We want to support their agenda.

Glenn: Sunny, have there been times in your coaching career that you've lost the faith, so to speak?

[0:36:05.2]

Sunny: There have been clients that have shaken me. I think I told you about the situation where a client. He was a consultant and he wanted me to help build his consulting practice. He came to the call one day and told me he thought he was going to be killing himself by the end of the day. That definitely disturbed me for a few months.

Glenn: How did you handle that?

Sunny: I just pretty much said, "You know, I'm not trained for this", which is what I was trained to say. I bailed out of the conversation and that I want you to get some professional help from a therapy professional, a counselor.

He is really mad at me. I don't know that he's ever forgiven me. He felt like I abandoned him. I feel as though, if I were more experienced that I would've handled it better. I think that there was some truth in his accusations of me

abandoning him. I do it the best I could. I think that's part of what shook me, it was the best I could, and it didn't feel like it was good enough.

Glenn: Yeah, Sunny, you know, what you could say, in the future, is that you're legally required to -- for him to go see a professional but that you would like to talk though and really understand why he wants like to kill himself, so, that you accomplish both things.

Sunny: I think so, too.

Glenn: Then, you make sure he sees a professional.

Sunny: Yeah.

Glenn: Because I'm speaking as a psychologist now more than as a coach, because at that moment -- first of all, if someone actually comes into the room and talks to you about it, that means they're more interested in talking about it and hopefully, having you talk him out of it, than in actually doing it. Not that there aren't people who come in and talk about it and then do it, but it's less likely, if they're actually coming in to talk about it, they want to be talked out of it.

The other thing is that, if we're not to exacerbate their sense of it being urgent, so that, they need to understand that this is something they can talk about, but that you're legally required to refer them to someone else for this level of difficulty. Because you don't want to lead them to believe that you can fix it, yet as a human being, you can think about what you might do as a...

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Sunny: I could say, "Our coaching call is over. Now, I'm here as your friend."

Glenn: Yeah. Because if your friend said that they wanted to kill themselves, you would first ask them, "Why? What's going on?" Then, you would just compassionately figure out how to get them some professional help. That's basically what you need to do.

Sunny: He accused me of covering my rear end, which there's some truth to that. It also just scared me. I wasn't really prepared for it. Now, that it's happened, every time I enter into an agreement with a new coach and that design session, mostly, we talk about what they want; what the client wants; how they want to design me as a coach. We cover some of the coaching terms and methods and things. But I also, now, always say that, one thing I'm definitely not prepared to deal with is suicide. If you do bring it up, seriously, I mean not to say -- I let clients say, "Well, you know, sometimes I think

about suicide." They just talk about it that way, that's fine. But if you say, "I might commit suicide today." I want you to know that this session will be over. I'm not prepared to help you with that. I feel it's good to cover that right up front, which I did not do with him because I never anticipated it. But I had a good reception with people. I haven't had a problem since.

Glenn: It's a very viable strategy.

Sunny: That's, as far as things that have shaken me or help me lose the faith, that's it. I think when I've taken on clients who are more troubled -- I have taken on clients who are in therapy. What I find is, even though, I'm treating them as creative, magnificent, and whole and resourceful, that if they are in treatment, that naturally sometimes, they're going to go to these dark places or troubled places. I'm willing to go with them. I hold them in a space of being healthy. However, it can be trying. That can be challenging. It can wear me down.

Typically, I have become more picky about my clients because I'm not a coach for everybody. I tend to like people, not people who aren't troubled, but people who are not deeply troubled.

Glenn: You can't always tell.

Sunny: No, you can't.

[0:40:06.7]

Glenn: You can't always tell up front. That's why it's so important to have a trial period, not commit to having an ongoing relationship, until you really know that you're going to be able to work with the person and to get them results. Also, that you like working with them.

Sunny: And they like working with me, yeah. I think it's mutual. I think it's important that there be a fit both ways. Here's where business experience comes in. A lot of times, people who are new to business think that everyone is a prospect and everyone is a customer and the customer's always right. You have to serve everyone.

Well, I was in business, probably, for about three years in my sound and video business before I figured out that, "Hey! I don't want that person as a customer. They're too much trouble." I recognize I don't want that person as a customer. It's a lot easier to see which other ones I don't want. They

always have the assumption that I want everybody. Once you're in business for a while, it becomes clear you do not want to serve everybody. It's a real advantage to know that.

Glenn: To be able to market yourself, so, you have enough flow of people coming through the door that you can really choose.

I have the opinion that one bad client can ruin your practice.

Sunny: Really?

Glenn: I have that opinion because -- look at what happens when people have a really difficult client that they don't know how to work with. They look at their schedule for the week. Let's say, Harry's coming in Thursday afternoon. I never had a client named, Harry. That's why I'm using that name. Let's say, Harry's coming in Thursday afternoon. I'm thinking, "Oh my god, I can't believe I've got to see Harry on Thursday." People are dreading it all week long. If they're not able to work affectively with that person then they know they're not getting him results. They'll excuse them in their integrity and their self-confidence as a coach or a psychotherapist and it's unnecessary. You don't have to do that.

I think that if you learn enough about marketing, and you teach yourself to be a very effective coach, and you go through trial periods with people, and are very careful about who you commit to for longer term periods. By that, I mean that I might initially agree to have one or two sessions with people and see how that goes and then ask them if they'd like to commit to a trial of three months. If we're both agreed after the end of those three months that

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everything is going well, that we would continue to work together. That way, they're not shock if you need to discharge them.

Sunny: That's good. It is. It's a matter of managing your own energy. There can be significant drains. If you can recognize what that source of the drain is and eliminate it then, you're actually doing them more of a service to all the clients you are serving, because you are more of the present.

Hey, you're happier. After all, it's part of the reason for doing that trial period, is to see if I like it. To see if this is really for me.

Glenn: It takes away some of the reluctance that the clients have about the commitment to start with because they're not sure if they can afford the time or the money or if they want to reveal themselves ongoingly. Whether they're going to feel controlled or whether...

Sunny: They have the freedom to bow out, too.

Glenn: They've got the freedom to bow out also.

Sunny: Yeah, I like that.

Glenn: This has just been wonderful. I've got two or three more questions then, I think, we'll wind down and let's do something that you think I forgot to ask you.

One thing I wanted to ask you was, if you had any particular advice with regards to time management in how to set a few hours away that you wanted to and what that was like for you.

Sunny: Sure. Personally, I like to set my week up so that I only work Monday through Thursday. My advice would be for anybody who's going to be doing this is, be selfish and pick the time that you want to work. Say that, when you're getting a new client, you just say, that these are the times I have available.

First, you would be exploring whether you want to work together. If it turns out -- that's really the most important. Once you find out that you do want to work with someone, then you check out the schedule. But I think it's important to be selfish and to build a schedule around what you want. Don't make yourself available on Sunday evening for this person and Saturday morning for this person and bend over backwards for everyone. It might be tempting to do that at first. But in the long run, you're going to be happier if you structure it around your life.

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I like to work Monday through Thursday. In fact, what happened is my practice, when I first built it up, I had 17 clients in nine different time zones. I built that up in the first three months. I ended up finding out that I didn't like coaching that many clients and that I wanted some project days. Generally, what I would do is make it be that Mondays and Thursdays are my coaching days and that I only want to have eight clients. That I use Tuesdays and Wednesdays for project days or for working on the business rather than in the business according to *The E-Myth*.

I think it's important to structure -- I like do it in blocks. I like now to coach for 45 minutes. I like to keep people to the times but I have 15 minutes to recover between call. I think it's okay to be selfish. I think it's okay to make it work according to your schedule.

Glenn: Not only that, the more that people experience you is having a limited number of hours available, the more valuable they will tend to value your time, which will translate to both the willingness to pay higher fees and the interest and belief in the work that you do with them.

You wind up doing more effective work for better compensation and better personal life for the coach. I think that's a wonderful tip you provided.

Sunny: Regarding that, as far as appointments go to and other things that really did bother me in the beginning, was when -- especially when I was coaching the people for free before I started taking the training. At that time, I wasn't doing those two hour design sessions. People would stand me up. They wouldn't call in so I called them. They'd go, "Oh, I'm painting right now." "Wait a minute, we had an appointment. My life's important." I just felt like I was being belittled by the fact they wouldn't hold to the appointments. It was free.

But, you know, when people pay, what I found was, is that, I'm doing this coaching to give back to the world. I live a life for freedom over here. I don't have to work for a living. Regardless of whether I'm getting paid or not, if someone stands me up for an appointment, if they don't bother to email me or call me and let me know that the time is not going to work out, and I'm waiting for the call, that probably has been my biggest pet peeve. It's not a problem anymore. How I took care of it was, I started requiring the two-hour design session. I used to think, that if that really didn't benefit the client so much and it was a waste of their money and I was -- so, we didn't really need it.

But what I found is that the two-hour design session, while it's mostly about them and what they want and exploring things like that, there are three

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things I cover. One is the suicide issue we covered. The other one is, I let them know that we don't have privilege the way a psychotherapist or an attorney does. So, that if they're going to be committing a capital offense or whatever, they might just as well keep it to themselves. [laughter]

Glenn: Sunny, by the way, psychologists and attorneys are required to divulge by law, if a patient were to come in to me, as a doctor, and tell me that, "I killed my mother last night." My response to them would be that, "I recommend that you go to the police." I wouldn't be allowed to call the police if they killed them last night.

By the way, I'm not an attorney, so, if you can check this with an attorney, if you're listening, please don't take this as strictly legal advice. So, this is my understanding of the law today.

The situation changes though if a patient comes in and says, "I plan to kill my mother tomorrow night." If they plan to kill their mother tomorrow night, I have to both call the police and their mother to warn them. It's a myth to think that the confidentiality clauses protect people who plan to commit a crime.

Sunny: Okay.

Glenn: Just so you know.

Sunny: That's good. I think it's good for your listeners to know. What I do cover with them that we're not protected by any privilege and even pass that, we'd have to testify in court, too. Then, the other thing that I do which is totally selfish, is I let them know that I'm doing this and I really -- the thing I prize above all is my time and my freedom. My biggest pet peeve is being stood up. If they are not going to make a call, I want them to make every effort to either email me or call me and it's fine. I realize life gets in the way. I realize sometimes, they might forget and it could be that I get stood up. That's fine, if it's occasional. But if it's habitual, it's just not going to work. I let them know that right at the beginning. By spelling it out, it takes about a minute, they come back and say, "Oh, I'm very responsible. I respect time and..." By letting them vocalize that, they tend to adhere to the agreement better.

The other thing that I've done and brought in, that I think could be helpful to anybody who here is considering this as an occupation, because this can be a problem. What I do is, I have two phone lines. If they hadn't called by five minutes after their appointed time, I leave the line open that they're calling me on. I use my other line to call them.

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Sometimes, I reach them and they have forgotten or whatever. I just say, "Call me back. I'm here. Call me on the coaching line."

Sometimes, I get their answering machine and I leave a message. Then I immediately email them and I just say, "I'm here until 1:45 or whatever. I'm waiting for your call."

By doing that, it just made it be that it takes away the me sitting here waiting for a call and my own self-esteem going down, down, down. That's one little tip.

Glenn: Yeah, do you charge the people for that time?

Sunny: Oh, yeah. If I didn't call them back and let them know that I'm here waiting, and if I didn't cover it in that two-hour design session.

The fact that I'm getting paid and getting stood up doesn't make it any less to me. The money doesn't matter. I mean, I want to be paid. But it still would be a real bother to have them not respect the appointed time.

Glenn: I think that's really valuable the way that you set that up, a really valuable tip.

Sunny: It's helped -- the idea that I let them know that I'm going to be calling them after five minutes, it's empowering to them too because it's okay, to be human. It's okay, if they mess up. It's just a way for me to take some action and be proactive instead of sitting there passively.

In the very beginning days, I didn't have much confidence in my coaching. First, I'm all hyped up and after two minutes, it's kind of going, "Okay, well, what's going on." After five minutes, my self-esteem is going down more. By the time ten minutes is gone, it's like, "Oh, maybe, I'm not a good coach."

Glenn: You know, I think that what most people don't realize is that the more effective you are in some ways, they're going to be going to areas that are scary to them, that they haven't been able to accomplish before, that are a little bit uncomfortable for them to look at. In some ways, the better that you do, the more that the client is going to want to flee the field. Of course, you want to work with them in such a way that they are maximally comfortable and motivated. But to a certain extent, it's inevitable that the client will have negative feelings as well as positive feelings about the coaching and about you personally. But that doesn't necessarily reflect badly upon you personally or about the coaching.

[0:51:05.8]

Sunny: Well, you know, that's another thing that I actually learned from the coach training. It's just a basic principle that I never really realized before is that almost everything in life, when someone's reacting or someone's out there doing something, and we have a tendency to think it's about us. What I've learned is, it's not about me, it's about them. It's not a reflection on me or my coaching abilities that they didn't call in. There's something going on in their life and it's really about them.

Glenn: Right, we're not quite that important.

Sunny: Yeah, before I got this training, before I became a coach, I used to think it was about me. Even when I was in the early days of coaching, as I'm telling

you, my esteem was going down. I've come over time, in the last few years, to recognize this.

Glenn: When I would have a client who didn't show up, I didn't have the design session that you talked about. I would instead make the assumption that the client was going to respect my time. I respect their time and respect the relationship. We can tell they missed a session, which everybody eventually misses, something for some reason or another. I think I once had a doctor who never missed a session. But other than that, I think that something goes wrong.

Usually, I won't charge them for that first time. Then, when they came in the next time, I'll let them know that I was not going to charge them for the one that they missed. That generally speaking, if they gave me 48-hours notice, that I wouldn't charge them for the session. After that, if they would miss a session, I would spend the time writing about that client or that patient. Because I figured I was getting paid and there was something going on with them. I would think very carefully about what happened in the last appointment, what I knew was happening in her life. I always keep a clear chart that has the major goals that the client is trying to accomplish and the major obstacles that are impeding them. I try to think about how this particular absence might reflect the type of obstacles that'd get in the way of their goals.

Then, when they come back I try to listen for an opportunity to talk them about -- sometimes, it's there. Sometimes, it's not. Sometimes, I do that directly. Sometimes, I let them talk about it themselves.

Sunny: That's really good. I do this similar thing. I have my notes from all their previous sessions. I spend the time reflecting on them and reading through. It gives me a chance to look back at what happened a year ago or six months ago. However, I haven't done that exercise that you're talking

[0:53:24.6]

about of looking at what his current behavior, how it relates to all that, and looking for an opportunity to talk about it. That's a great step to add.

Glenn: There are two ways to go about it. I think that the way that you described in the design session, it'll cut off the behavior at the past and, so, it'll facilitate the coaching relationship. It will make it less painful for the coach to go through working with that client. The flip side of that though, is that you miss out on some of the information that you could get about when the person actually does miss the session. What that might represent in their lives, in terms of the goals that they're trying to accomplish.

If your coaching has anything to do with relationships and this turns out to be any kind of a pattern, you can bet that you're not the only one that they do this with.

Sunny: You bet, yeah.

Glenn: The opportunity to gently and lovingly work it through and be one of the most empowering things that you give to them.

Sunny: Really, an eye opener to see the variation among people. There are some people who are compulsive almost about missing; and there are some people who are compulsive about being there. It's a wide variation. I actually coached people who were close friends. I mean, one referred the other to me and both became clients. One was compulsively, always there, and always so committed. The other one was so obviously absent. Like, "Wow, I wonder what their friendships like."

Glenn: Sunny, I once had a client who calls, who said that they wanted to come see me but their problem was they could never keep an appointment that they made. I'm serious.

Sunny: That's a problem.

Glenn: What I should've done was say, "Well, let's just have the appointment right now on the phone." I actually tried to make appointments with her and she actually didn't keep them. She was right. I wasn't able to help her at that time.

Sunny: They usually come to coaching for something, some action. They want to develop the sense of focus or they want to develop persistence or they want to spend more time with their family or they want to get a better job. They have something they want to do.

[0:55:21.8]

We call that a "small a" agenda, that's the immediate. What we do in that design session is really listen for and trying to discover what is their "big a" agenda, what's the subtext. What is their bigger purpose? What is all this for?

If all these things that they're coming to the coaching for were solved and they had all the money in the world and security and they were -- now, what would they be up to?

Well, with the in-the-bone session, what you're doing is you're committing to that "big a" agenda which maybe, they haven't even admitted to themselves

of what they're up to or maybe, you're helping them discover. Through all the coaching on all the immediate problem-solving sessions you're doing in the beginning, you also hold the place for them that they're on this way to this "big a" agenda. It's their big mission in life. You hold that for them, so, that when they forget it, you help keep them on course. Within the bone, it's about being able to stand for that for them to such a degree that you're willing to have them fire you. Because you're willing to challenge them enough that you're risking them not liking what you're saying or asking. But you're doing it for the sake of them and for the sake of their magnificence.

Glenn: It's either you're going to kill them or cure them, right?

Sunny: Yes. You have to be into the idea if you're willing to get fired. You're willing to say what needs to be said or ask what needs to be asked in such a way that...

Glenn: I love that. I think it's really inspiring.

Sunny: Good.

Glenn: I really enjoyed this talk. I'm sure that my listeners will be very happy to have this available to them. I'm wondering if people might like to get in touch with you. In addition to getting your free emails and affirmations at sunnythoughts.com, is there somewhere they can call you if they wanted some advice about coaching or anything else that you have to offer?

Sunny: I think email's better: That's S-U-N-N-Y-@-S-U-N-N-Y thoughts - with an S - .com.

Glenn: That's easy enough. That's terrific.

[0:57:23.3]

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