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Loving Enough

I'm a personal coach. I help people move towards their goals. I provide a sounding board that won't gossip or be judgmental. I enable clients to understand what matters, what they value, and what they want in their life. And what they don't want.

I enjoy my clients a lot. I see their quirks and their divineness. I hear their dreams. What I didn't realize is that's not enough. I need to love them, too. Enough to tell them the hard truths about how they've been living their life, about how they are settling, about what's keeping them back from what they want. I remember finishing my training to be a coach. As our class watched a demo by the instructor, where she provided exactly this service of calling out the unspeakable, I wondered to myself, "You mean I have to love my client THAT much?" What other profession would demand of its members to say the unspeakable, in spite of the risk of being fired? Well, okay, maybe lots. But do people really do it?

I wondered about this idea of loving someone enough to say the hard truths. Sure, I had done it in my personal life with family members. But that was family. Family can't fire you. As much as they would like to sometimes. But I put my faith in the idea that being fierce for what the client truly desires is about loving them enough. Enough to want to make a real difference in their lives.

So I decided that my next set of coaching sessions with clients was going to be about telling the truth of what I had been doing—holding back, cheating them of what I knew was valuable information, and cheating myself as well. And letting them know that I wasn't going to be afraid of being fired anymore, that I was going to be fierce for them and as a result, fierce for myself as well. And then I told them what I had been seeing, sometimes for months, but never daring to approach that invisible line where polite exploration turns into ugly reality.

Guess what? My clients loved it. Not only did they validate what I had been hearing and seeing, but they wanted to know what else I hadn't told them. Our conversations took on amazing clarity and focus. I gave them exactly what they had come to me for in the first place. To put in front of them beliefs, assumptions, habits, and thinking that had been running their lives while they were happy to be on auto pilot. To point out what even their closest friends wouldn't tell them. And to put them in touch with what their soul was aching for.

But the most wonderful thing about this new way of coaching was what it did for me. I found out I loved my clients not just enough, but more than enough. And in the process, my own heart opened up fully, to both give and receive. The fierceness with which I took a stand for the client and for what I knew to be true was impossible without an open heart.

So the next time you find yourself dismissing what might be inappropriate or rude to say to another, think about where the truth lies. And then look to see how much you love that person. It's okay if the answer is that you don't love the person enough. But if the answer comes back that you do love them enough, don't you dare hold back. For your sake or theirs.

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www.leadingwithawholenewmind.com, and www.consciousliving-leaving.com. Carol is an executive coach, organization development consultant, and writer with over 20 years experience in the telecommunications and energy industries. Carol specializes in helping clients get unstuck and into the flow of great work. She works her magic by bringing the power of the creative, intuitive right brain into a left-brained world. While her degrees in engineering from Northwestern University have served her well, it's been her life and work experiences that have moved her to do her best work. She is certified by The Coaches Training Institute and credentialed by the International Coach Federation