



THE CULT OF COACHING

With Rhiannon Bush

INTRO

“Do I need a life coach?” You’re listening to Episode 8, with Rhiannon Bush

Welcome to the Do I need a life coach? Podcast. We’re here to discuss the ins- and outs- of the life coaching industry and give you tools to use, to see for yourself. I’m your host, Rhiannon Bush. Mother, management consultant and a passionate, certified life coach.



Hello my friends. How are you today? I don't know if you're aware, but I am living in Tasmania with my family. I grew up here and then I spent 14 years after high school gallivanting around Australia and the UK. I did a lot of travel while I was over there, had an absolute ball and then when I had my son, we moved back home.

I met my partner in Sydney, but we were both living in Melbourne and now we're back. And the thing about a Tassie winter, for those of you who don't know, is it's long and it's cold and it's quite dark. So the fact that we are getting some really nice days, the warmth of the sun, the flowers are blooming like the daphne's out, the spring bulbs are out... just warms my heart, I'm so thrilled that summer's coming and, you know, the flora and fauna are kind of telling us that the summer is just around the corner. So very, very excited about that. It's the little things I tell you.



Today I want to talk about the cult of coaching and it's really interesting to me that I had a lot of friends in the past who, kind of, rolled their eyes at me when I started the coaching journey and began studying it because it was like this, “Oh yeah, you're into that”. That. That thing. And I was always like, “What are you talking about? This stuff is amazing. It changed my life. I absolutely love it. I want to teach it”.

And you know, true to my word, I haven't given up on it since. However, I've been watching a documentary on the cult called NXIVM, and it's actually the second documentary my partner, Damien and I have been watching and I find it quite upsetting simply because so many of the tools that they refer to, or the questions that they ask in the little snippets of videos that they show, are very much the same thing that I was taught in my coach training and the same things that I've done with my clients... the same things that changed my life.



I've had a little bit of a grapple with – why do some people go into this and live it and breathe it and end up in something like NXIVM, where it's almost a detriment to their health and wellbeing? Really... the aim of what I believe personal development tools are all about, which is helping and assisting and encouraging people to live their best lives and feel really empowered internally about the choices that they're making and the action that they're taking to get to what they want and I've had a really, really big think about it.

Before we get into that, one of the biggest moments I think I had in this kind of, you know, “is life coaching a cult or not?”, was actually at the first day of Unleash The Power Within with Tony Robbins. I had the best time at that conference, I'm a huge Tony Robbins fan, but I do remember, because the first night you do the fire walk, I've done the fire walk, I'm a fire walker... but that day you do a lot of trance work. There's a lot of hypnotic stuff that goes on, which is kind of bizarre because you're in this stadium of thousands and thousands and thousands of people all super excited to be there, you're with your people, it's this incredible experience and I highly recommend it to anybody that ever has been curious about going to it.



It's just four days, a four day conference with Tony Robbins and I highly, highly recommend you do it, but I do remember walking out of the conference, ready to go outside to do the fire walking and we were chanting as we were going and I was like, "oh, this... yeah. Okay. I get it. I get it. I get why people are referring to this sort of thing as a bit cultish".

You either buy into it or you don't. You resist it or you, you embrace it. And I think it's important to understand the reasons that people get so far down the rabbit hole and give you some tools to kind of prevent that happening to you if you are susceptible or concerned about that happening to you, because these tools are amazing and they do change your life.

And as I said in the previous podcast, it's a tool. So for those of you who are curious, it's important to understand that the tools are the responsibility of the person who holds the tools. Right? You know, like anything, if it's in the hands of somebody who uses it in an unethical way, then you've got a problem. We're all going to have a problem. But if we use tools for good and for reasons, you know, outside of ourselves, which I'm going to be addressing in a minute as well, because that's part of the whole NXIVM debacle, it's important that you recognize the fears that you have and use them to guide you in this process if you are looking to see a life coach.



Okay. So I understand the fear base, especially when you watch cult-like things. I'm quite fascinated with cults, with the brainwashing and the way that we can be so naive or also intrigued by something in the beginning, something that seems so amazing and fascinating, and somehow, somewhere years down the track, we end up going, "this is really attached to my identity now, and how do I detach from that?"

I've heard what people say and clients that I've coached who have been abused. They were very strong and very independent from the outset, and then through a series of events and then a timeline with exposure to a particular person. With a very different ethical compass to them. They find themselves in a situation where they're stopping going, How did I end up here? How I wasn't this person? I've never been this person, but it's this incremental chip away over time. So really, I get it.

For me, discovering personal development and life coaching was very much around understanding myself. I was curious about human behaviour and why we do certain things, why we behave in certain ways. But when I did my first weekend ever exposed to life coaching and the coaching industry, I realised how much of my own mind and my own behaviour I didn't understand, and through getting that knowledge, all of a sudden I could piece together the course that I'd taken, how I ended up in certain places, and that knowledge is power.



It felt like a freedom that had come with knowing that. This is pretty normal. This is a way the human brain works. You are not alone. You are not different or unteachable or unloved or unworthy. This is just part of the human experience and to understand that further and develop that knowledge was a beautiful journey and it's been a really big driver. It's been something that I've stopped and thought, "I really want to help other people recognize this within themselves and understand that it is temporary, or it is changeable if they want a different outcome." So the cool thing has very much been brought to my attention when people have said, or maybe when I've tried to teach somebody or help someone and it's verged into a coaching conversation without permission.

One thing that we're taught as coaches is that you are never to coach without permission and I remember a woman I used to work with, she actually heard me in a conversation once and she said, "you coach a lot without permission." And you know what? Not all feedback is made equal. I'm going to do that on a later podcast as well, because I think that's really important. Just as a life lesson, you need to be very, very careful who you do and don't take feedback from. When she said this, I thought "yeah, thanks for your feedback." Even before becoming a coach, I had a real pride in conversations where I really helped friends, family, you know, whoever it might be, I was often for friends that shoulder to cry on. People would come to me to talk about what they were experiencing and just get my help, get my advice.



As I've said, giving advice is not coaching, and you learn that throughout, but there are some very, very coachy questions, and actually my partner and I when we started dating, we don't tend to fight and we have a very, very strong bond, but he's a coach as well. We've had to stop coaching one another because sometimes we've had arguments where I've then asked a very coachy question, or he's done the same to me, and it just goes against the grain. It's like, "do not be doing that. Do not be coaching me right now. I need a partner. I need to be unresourceful, and I want to be in victim, and I want to just whinge. So do not coach me out of this. Let me feel it. Let me be in the trench." You know what I mean?

An example of a really coachy question is, "and for what purpose do you feel that way?" When you are the recipient of a question like that in a coaching session, it is a really, really great question to have asked of you, to think about something differently. It's not so great when you are in the midst of a fight with a partner and they pull that one out. It is not okay. So that was a really interesting lesson. But I think a lot of people that are drawn to coaching to become a coach, not just to have coaching, but to be actually become a coach, they are drawn to it because of their innate ability to connect with people and to empathize with people and to help somebody move from A to B. That when it's got the coaching added to it, when you're actually taught, if you're that person already, and then you are taught the frameworks and the questions, and a lot of the coaching things that we're taught, that gets really, really amplified.



And then you kind of, it's almost a rite of passage for any coach to accidentally or on purpose, depending who you are, start just coaching everyone around you. So someone then comes to you with a problem and all of a sudden you're saying, "well, if you didn't have that, how would it be instead?" And it's patronizing and it's horrible. And for any budding coaches out, find clients. Find clients to coach instead of coaching people without permission. Okay?

Be you. Be a human and only ever coach with permission because otherwise this is what's going to happen. You're going to coach or you're going to ask a question like that and that then you're going to get that eye roll and you're going to get the backlash of "Oh, you're part of the cult", or, "Oh, you're in that camp." You know what I mean? And the thing is, if you are aware of coaching techniques and you love coaching, I can tell you right now, we want to avoid that stigma as much as possible. We don't want people feeling like, "Oh, there, there it is. You're a cult, you're a brainwasher, you're this, you that", because it immediately creates that resistance and then you don't get to help that person anyway. And if you do that too much, you don't even get to help them as a friend, because they're not going to come to you again. Trust me, from someone who knows, who's made the mistake, they're not going to come to you as a friend. They're not going to come to you as a coach. They really are going to resist, not even because they think that you're going to brainwash them, but there is a very big difference between being there for someone and feeling that compassion and helping versus a coaching relationship. Big, big difference.



In terms of the cult brainwashing, again, I promise you coaching is not like that. Coaching is very much a tough love, but it is love. It is that conversation where you really, as a coach, don't weigh into the outcome for your client. It is a conversation where you ask questions to let them discover the answers for themselves, and that is a very, very empowering process.

I remember hearing from a coach that trained me, a brilliant, brilliant trainer, brilliant coach. I adore her. I still get her to coach me sometimes. She told me a story of a client of hers who, had done the wrong thing in a relationship and wasn't sure whether that was going to come out eventually or not. Through questioning, even though what this person had done went against my coach's moral code, she was able to ask the questions. The client got to a space where she said, "Yep, I definitely did the wrong thing. But no, I don't feel the need to come clean about it and be honest about it". Great. Would she, as the coach, have taken a different standpoint, I would imagine, yes, from the conversation that her and I had, (she was mentoring me at this point, by the way, not coaching me), it was very, very interesting where as a coach, your compass of the world, the way that you see the world, has to be put at bay. It has to be stopped in its tracks because that is not the way your client views the world. In a friend conversation, you can let those lines blur. There's no clear outlining or boundaries around a friendship conversation.



Whereas a coach-client relationship, there are definite boundaries, there's definite expectations, and your input and your personal opinion as a coach do not weigh in. Where you see things like NXIVM, in the beginning it's almost like ESP or whatever they set up in the start was really beneficial and was really, really great. It was to change the world. It was to put a lot of good into the world, and that's exactly what it was doing. That's what they were achieving. And then at some point down the line, and I can't imagine what changed, but the intention has changed, the leader has shifted their perspective and they want something different or it's become about something else, something selfish.

It's become about recruiting and a push for recruiting and controlling and manipulating. So you can see that the powers that be in that organization actually started putting how they wanted to see the world and how they wanted things to be, into the organization that they had created and grooming their people to do their bidding in the direction that they chose.



I don't need to add to that. I don't need to educate that they are whole and complete and perfect just as they are and their will is their own. When I've watched the NXIVM documentaries, they're not only using tools that are very, very powerful in the mind, which coaching tools are, they are transformational, they have used those tools for their own self gain. That goes against the ethics of coaching. That goes against everything in my mind, that coaching should and is. If this sort of thing concerns you when it comes to hiring a coach or maybe studying coaching, the ways that I recommend you go about overcoming these thoughts is firstly, if you're that fearful, don't do it. Honestly your fear is there for a reason.

Fear is one of the negative emotions that we have that is hardwired. We are hardwired to feel fear because it protects us. In our caveman days when we were walking down, you know, in a paddock or a field or whatever it was called back then, a paddock or a field in those days, was it? It would've been just like a forest or a desert or whatever. And then we saw something or heard something and it wasn't within the natural sounds of our environment, we have a fear response to trigger adrenaline in our amygdala. Again, I'm going to go into a bit of neuroscience in future podcasts, but we have that trigger in our brain that says, "run". Fight or flight. Fear is hardwired. It is not something we want to get rid of. It's not something we should ever try to get rid of. It is something that we should learn how to manage because we don't want fear running our lives, but we definitely need to pay attention to what it's trying to tell us in a given moment to a degree.



So if you're feeling that fearful, I'm serious. Forget about coaching for a while. Don't do it. Don't go there. Just carry on as you are. Or maybe look at other controlled mental health practices like seeing a psychologist or a counselor or somebody else. If you are like, "No, I really want that future pace, like action, planning, accountability. I want to change what's going on for me. To get the result that I want to get"... Then document the fears you have. Sit down and write out the fears that you have.

In episode one, I shared a worksheet A to B, and it was questions that you can ask yourself before hiring a coach. I suggest using that same worksheet, if you're feeling a little bit of fear around potentially hiring a coach. By doing that, you're going to actually put pen to paper or use your keyboard if you'd rather use your computer, I'm much faster at touch typing than I am at writing, so I often use the computer. Keep in mind, there is something really beautiful that happens when you do put a pen to paper because it's so much more kinesthetic and you actually have to write the words out there is this brain-hand connection thing that happens, so I suggest doing it both ways. See what works better for you, see what's more impactful and do that. But if you're like me and you just want fast results and you want to get things done quickly, then yep, use your computer, but do the worksheet.

Write down all of the hesitancy, all the fears, all the things that you're questioning and that will at least put it down on paper for you to see outside of your own mind. The second is define success for you. Work out what does success look like? If I was to get a coach, if I was to actually do this thing, what do I want?



Because the people that went into NXIVM and got sucked down the rabbit hole, they wanted something, but I don't think they were really, really defined on what that was for them because when you define what you want and what success looks like for you, all of a sudden you've got the outline. You've got the, "Yes, this falls within getting me there", or "no it doesn't". I can tell you right now, as soon as you start to experience stuff that makes you a little bit uncomfortable, you are going to be able to come back to that and go, "Does that fall within that? Yes, it does. Okay. Well then maybe it's worth being uncomfortable for". Or "no, actually I don't see how that's relevant at all, and that's why I feel the fear, or I feel uncomfortable or I feel anxiety" or whatever the feeling may be, but a negative feeling.

"That's why I'm feeling it, because I don't see how this aligns to that". It'll give you a checkpoint. It'll give you a bit of an anchor to go, "Well, yes, this is on track", or "no, actually it's not making sense". The third is always listen to your gut or your heart or your head. A lot of the coaching work, that my coaches do with me, is a technique called mBit. I'm not qualified in mBit. I know other processes that I have adapted to get similar results. It's one thing about coaching. When you are a coach, you can tweak things to get the same outcomes for your clients, even if you may not be specifically trained in one methodology. This methodology is very intuitive.



I'm very head. I'm very pragmatic. I'm very much like, "Okay, that's what you want. Let's devise a plan to get there. What emotions are stopping you? Right. Let's clean it up". I'm very straightforward in that approach. Other coaches are much more energetically centered. Actually, one of my coaches said to me, she's a very good friend of mine, her name is Alex Knysh and I will put her details in the show notes for anybody who wants to look her up. She said to me "Rhi, you are so in your masculine energy right now". And I did a little eye roll. I was like, "Oh, here we go". And she's like, "No, babe, you're pushing. You are pushing and pushing and pushing. Can you stop, allow and receive?" and I actually started crying because I was so push, push, push. She'd nailed it and I was very much in that space at that time. Paying attention to your energy centers and where you are focusing your energy is a very, very important practice, and it is something that I encourage and work with my clients to do.

So when you are stepping into the zone of "do I want to coach", "am I fearful of what's going to happen?" "Am I going to lose myself?" The questions are, yes, that's possible, but not probable. I also want to highlight that sometimes you see a coach to lose yourself because you're sick of yourself. I remember once seeing a coach and I just thought to myself, "What am I doing? I'm so sick of repeating this to myself over and over again, and I really wanted to move past it", and that was the whole reason I saw the coach, because I wanted to just move on. I remember reading a Post by Gary V, and he was saying you've got to kill who you were born to be to become the person you were meant to become. And I thought that was quite extreme, but, in a way, he's got a point.



You need to completely change who you are to become the person that you want to become, but also I think you need to be clear in defining who it is that you want to become before you step into that, so you don't completely lose yourself in a directionless way. I also believe one of the things about something like NXIVM or even the Tony Robbins event, which I loved... Again, I'll say it, I feel kind of like I've dropped him in it, but actually I love, love, love, love Tony Robbins and everything he is about. But when you've got large volumes of people all together, that's the power of what we call quantum.

We can energetically align with very, very large groups. We're tribal as a species, and so a lot of times when we are in a big group... like think about the last time you went into a mosh pit, I mean, for me, when looking from the outside in, mosh pits are the most ridiculous thing I've ever seen. Like why would you want to be that smooshed up against sweaty, stinky festival people?

I actually got peed on in a mosh pit, just on a side note, disgusting. Like, why? But in saying that, when you get in them and you feel the energy and then you get the artists, like the performers, and there is just this energetic bond that happens when you are sharing an experience and it's magical. Like it is pure magic.



I don't know if anybody has seen Woodstock 99. As you can tell, Damien and I love our documentaries, but this documentary shows the mosh bit from the stage angle when Korn play, and it is unbelievable to watch. Even on a screen you can see the ripple and you can see it going all the way back through all of these people, and that is the magic of what happens when we get in a group and when we congregate, and it's just an incredible thing to watch.

That's how I felt at Tony Robbins. That's how I feel in mosh pits. Yes, it was at like... Park Life or something like that and it, it's incredible. You've also got to keep in mind that the person who's guiding those really large groups, and thankfully I do believe Tony Robbins to be one of the most ethical life coaches out there, I mean he has said some things that have made me kind of go, "Ooh, is that erring on misogynistic?" I don't know but I adore him. I really do and you've got to remember that the person leading large groups of people have to be ethical and they have to be doing it for the right reasons. And profitability is a right reason, by the way. I'm going to address this later because I think this is such an important note. To earn money from doing things like this, actually enables them to do more of it. So Tony Robbins - a huge enterprise, huge, but the reach he has and the impact he's had is outstanding. NXIVM, again, massive reach. Massive influence. Very, very profitable. Not ethical, not positive.

I like to believe that there were some people that were part of the NXIVM cult that actually left feeling and being better than they started. They got some tools that they will use because I can't imagine the damage of having these tools used and then finding out that it was for an ill purpose or ethically it misaligned with what the client wanted or the ICF code of ethics.



So it's really important before going into this, if you have that fear that you set up the success measures for yourself, you look at best and worst case scenario. You choose a coach that you love, that you trust, and then any other criteria that you see fit. Like reviews, like accreditation, like training.

It's a bit stalkery, but you know, people are listed on people's websites for their experiences. For instance, online, if, just like when you're job hunting, if you are going to recruit and contact a referee, there is nothing stopping you reaching out to people's referees and saying, "Hey, what was your experience?" You know, take that extra note to really investigate if you're skeptical but you're sure you want to do it, the journey's worth it. It's an amazing, amazing, life changing journey, and those tools will be with me for the rest of my life, and I hope for my clients as well.



There is a dark side. There's a light and a dark side to everything. And seeing the NXIVM Cult documentary really just wanted me to bring this up very early in the piece with you, just to share my thoughts on it and to hopefully give you some insights for you to stop and go "Actually, I want to do it and now I've got the guidelines to follow, to do it in a way that makes me feel safe and like I'm going to benefit from this and not be..." you know, insert bad term there because I don't want to put that in anyone's mind.

It is a beautiful thing to experience and it will help you get results and live a life you love, empower you to make the change that you want to see. I've seen it so much more than I've seen the bad, and that's what keeps me hopeful and keeps me in tune and keeps me, you know, excited to do this podcast because I want to help as many people as I can see this as a good thing and grow and expand and live a life that they love and not buy in to the negative side of that.

So please, please feel free to write me any questions you have. I'm so happy to help answer any questions. I'm very honest, as you can tell, even though sometimes I'm saying things, I'm like, "Oh, should I have said that?" but I do think this is the place to. If you are questioning it, you know, keep listening, keep tuning in, come to my website, ask me some questions. I'm so happy to address anything that people are questioning. I want to help because coaching changed my life and I wanted to change yours, and I'm fortunate enough to be able to change the lives of my clients through the work that I do. All right. That's it for me. I will see you next week. Have an amazing week, and I will talk to you very, very soon.



OUTRO

Hey! Before you go, I always find reviews really helpful when looking for new information or insights...

If you've found this podcast valuable, please take a minute to write a quick review about what you've found most beneficial for you, so other people can benefit from your insights, and listen in too. I would LOVE that!

Also, if there are any topics you'd like me to cover specifically about life coaching or the life coaching industry, visit rhiannonbush.com to contact me. Thanks for joining and I'll see you in the next episode of Do I Need A Life Coach?!





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