Being a Writer Podcast: ‘How to Get the Most out of Coaching’ with Dominique De-Light

**SPEAKERS**

Nelima Begum, Dominique De-Light

**Nelima Begum** 00:06

Welcome to the Being a Writer podcast, Dominique, how are you doing today?

**Dominique De-Light** 00:10

I'm fine, thank you.

**Nelima Begum** 00:12

How's your week been so far for any? I mean, by the time this comes out? Hopefully it won't have been. But it's been snowing a lot lately.

**Dominique De-Light** 00:20

So yes, there's been a lot of excitement in our house. And it's certainly nice to have a change of scenery. That's for sure.

**Nelima Begum** 00:27

Yeah. So today, I mean, you're here to talk about coaching and how to get the most out of it. And you've got a wealth of experience in this area. But I think the best place to start is to kind of talk about what coaching is, and how it works and who it's for.

**Dominique De-Light** 00:46

Absolutely. Well, coaching one to one is a contained deep thinking space, where with the support of a coach, you find solutions, and you create an action plan to achieve your goals. Whether that's a better work life, work balance, or finding time for your writing, overcoming creative blocks, or developing projects, is a safe space to unpack your thoughts, clarify your thinking, and enable you to be accountable. So sometimes it can really help to describe what coaching isn't. So it's not therapy, which looks back and why you do something. Coaching is more about looking forward about how you can do something, and it's not mentoring. You're not asking someone else for advice and following their recommendations. You're finding your own solutions what suits you best. So for many people, they choose to meet their coach monthly. And it can be for everybody, really, I mean, I use coaching techniques with my children who you know, are age 10. and above. I've used them in workshops with teenagers with writers, business leaders, freelancers, artists, anyone who really wants to change their mindset and find clarity, direction want to achieve their goals. So it's just really great. If you have a project you want to develop, and you're not quite sure how or you're feeling stuck, or you're considering a career change, or you want to find more time in the life, for things that are important to you. It's just really brilliant for increasing confidence and reaffirming boundaries and becoming more self aware. And it's really empowering. Because coaching enables you to realize you have the solutions to your issues within yourself.

**Nelima Begum** 02:51

I really like that you described it as a safe space, because from what you've just told us, it sounds like it's a very reflective process.

**Dominique De-Light** 03:00

Yeah, that's right. And so a lot of the time the coach is doing the work that I'm coaching is really like touch, I'm not a mentor, I'm not an advisor. So I'm creating the conditions for the client to work out what they need to do. So I use various structures and methods to enable the client to really think deeply about how they can resolve their issues and come up with a clear action plan. Yeah, so the client, the coach helps the client think through their plan in detail and the impact of falling through, which really helps with motivating the client. And so we're all you know, we're all more likely to commit and follow through our actions if we come up with ideas ourselves, rather than being given a plan to follow. And that's, that's the art of the code, getting people to come up with a realistic and achievable plan that they put into action because they're motivated to do so.

**Nelima Begum** 03:51

Right? Because you'd hold yourself accountable.

**Dominique De-Light** 03:54

That's, that's right. And because you've come up with the ideas, no one's told you what to do, you've come up with solutions that work best for you.

**Nelima Begum** 04:03

It goes back to that thing of just rejecting authority, I guess! I think it's nice that, you know, you kind of you would guide yourself through it, and you're there to kind of facilitate that reflective process.

**Dominique De-Light** 04:17

Yeah, and it's really important that a safe space is created because you're, you're working deeper, you're trying to get into the unconscious, you're trying to get into what motivates someone, and to open up and be authentic and genuine. That person has to feel really safe and trusted and honored and validated by the person they're working on.

**Nelima Begum** 04:39

In a lot of ways you help people realize their dreams and goals and work towards them. Of course, the methods and approaches vary from person to person, but can you give us some examples of how you'd kind of create that coaching environment or plan for a client?

**Dominique De-Light** 04:55

Well, as I was saying, it's about using you In various methods, whether it's reflective listening, or whether it's doing various little exercises that bypass the sort of conscious mind or conscious mind comes up with loads of reasons why we can't do things or why things are a bit difficult. And so it's about bypassing all those sort of barriers, and getting people to think really creatively about ways that they can find solutions to the issues. And so in doing that, people come up with ideas that they might have thought of before, but haven't really worked out how they can do them, or they might not have thought of before. And, and think, Oh, that's too off the wall or whatever. But then they find out that work out ways that it is feasible. And so by coming up each time with a few solutions, you then build up an action plan that works.

**Nelima Begum** 05:58

Okay, I wanted to ask, I mean, in relation to work life balance, which is quite a big topic at the moment, given current circumstances, I mean, has have the methods and the advice kind of changed in relation to that.

**Dominique De-Light** 06:15

I think people have to be a lot kinder to themselves. At the moment, we are living through a global pandemic, you know, it's very unusual times. And there is this there is a lot of pressure on us to you know, be working from home, homeschooling, potentially keeping up with our exercising or learning how to do sourdough starters. Oh, yes, you've got plenty of time to be creative now. Why haven't you made a banana bread yet? You know, there's a lot of fear and anxiety around our futures, we're also experiencing a lot of loss at the moment, loss of our normal life or social life, the normal support systems we might have in place. And so you know, it's not surprising if people are finding it difficult to be creative or difficult to focus and concentrate or find it difficult to plan because you know, who can plan at the moment, really, and we don't know what next year is going to be like. So all of those things are new at the moment, but that make us you know, things like homework and can really blur the boundaries between home life and working life and make it even harder to find time for our creative work as well. So some of some of the techniques I use may be similar. But I think it's even more important to emphasize the being kind to yourself taking really small steps, and encouraging people to take time for themselves, and just not be so hard on themselves and have such high expectations, perhaps we will need to manage our expectations a little. And things might take a little slower than normal. And that's okay.

**Nelima Begum** 08:03

On the subject of creativity, and finding it hard to be creative as well. I mean, as the co founder of Creative Future, a charity working with artists facing barriers, you have a great deal of experience working with creatives. Are there any concerns or issues that you've noticed, particularly common amongst artists?

**Dominique De-Light** 08:27

Yeah, there is, I mean, there's really a common issue is a lack of confidence and self belief. And we found that when we did research into what barriers about what stops people from being creative when I was director of Creative Future and and that can really prevent people from completing projects. Another issue I come up against a lot is, you know, creative people have lots of ideas, and then you don't know which ones to focus on. So or you could, you know, you could work on too many at the same times, the work doesn't develop sufficiently for it to succeed. Obviously, creative blocks come up quite a bit, people feeling stuck back can often be due to high expectations that people are putting on themselves. And obviously, as we've just discussed the issues of work life balance, and, you know, how do you carve out that time for your writing when you have family and work commitments, and that can really lead to feelings that you'll never quite realizing your potential, you've got this great story or piece of work inside you and you can never quite dedicate the time to it. Those can also be for people who are having their work published issues around marketing is often quite common, in that, you know, a lot of writers are now expected to do that, and, you know, have social media accounts and, and be really seen and out there and that a lot of uncomfortable feelings for a lot of people.

**Nelima Begum** 09:43

I imagine a lot of people feel that.

**Dominique De-Light** 09:45

Yeah, because, as writers, of course, we want our work to be seen and read, but that can really bring up lots of big feelings of vulnerabilities. So I might work with clients on that as well.

**Nelima Begum** 09:58

I think I mean, the last time we spoke, you used this really great example, with regards to managing expectations and priorities - about the pebble and the sand.

**Dominique De-Light** 10:10

Yeah, that's a great one for work life balance is a great metaphor. If you think about your life as a jam jar, for example, and you think that all those little life admin jobs, you have to do the emails, the answering bills, or doing the laundry, that's all sand. And then the things that are really important to you, you know, writing that novel, and creating that painting, whatever it is - that's the rocks. Then if you fill up your jam jar with sand, there is no space to put the rocks in, or the larger pebbles. But if you put the large pebbles in first, so you focus and prioritize those bigger tasks, those more important tasks first, and there is gaps in between, that the sound can fill into. So the idea is always prioritize what you really want to do. And you'll always end up with enough time to do everything else. But if you do it the other way around, you won't have any time for doing what you really want to do.

**Nelima Begum** 11:10

And that relates a lot to personal fulfilment, I think because it shows you that you can still find time and space for the things that fulfill you.

**Dominique De-Light** 11:19

Absolutely, you know, people go, Oh, I haven't got enough time, you know, and it's like, That's such a weird Western concept. Time is, you know, there all the time, it's just when we say you haven't got enough time, or I don't have the time, what we're actually saying is, I'm not prioritizing this task. And therefore, if you think that, it's like, well, if you want to do something, you need to prioritize it, to prioritize it, and you will find the time for everything else. It's amazing what little creative gaps of time can appear, when you really prioritize something that's really important for you.

**Nelima Begum** 11:56

On to the topic of coaching itself, and how can someone prepare themselves so that they get the most out of the experience? Like, is there a particular mindset you need to be in?

**Dominique De-Light** 12:11

Yes, I mean, basically, if you're clear, you don't have to have a particular mindset. And I'm not gonna turn you away at the door if you're not in the right mind. But the point is, if you're, the clearer you are about what you want to achieve from coaching, the more you're going to get out of the experience. You know, sometimes, I might have clients who bring a huge list of things they want to tackle in the sessions, and it might take us a few sessions just for them to work out what is their priority, and what they want to focus on. For example, you know, the client might say, well, I want to work on my cup, right, and I want to finish my novel, and I want to work out how to improve my publicity. And these things could all be linked, and we may cover aspects of all of them. But focusing on one, whichever they consider the most important, will probably be the most beneficial. And often in doing so they gain insight into the other issues. So maybe they can't write because deep down, they're scared of being seen. And they're worried of being exposed and vulnerable. And by looking and working on that issue, it frees them to write and that may enable them to think about how they'd like to market themselves authentically. So the most helpful mindset when you're being coached is it's just good to be as honest and authentic as possible. It's confident it's a confidential space, it's just like therapy. So if you're not being genuine, the work will take longer, there may be tears, there may be surges of motion. But that's just shows that the work is going deep, enhance the ability to shift behavioral patterns. And that's why it's really important to find a coach you trust that you can relate to whose values match your own, you know,

**Nelima Begum** 13:47

Coaching is one to one, but at Well Balanced Coaching, you also offer some group sessions. Could you explain the difference? Because I think that's something that a lot of people would be interested in, because there's somewhat of a networking opportunity or community building opportunity there.

**Dominique De-Light** 14:04

Yeah. So in one to one coaching, you are the sole focus of the coach's attention, and you're getting coached probably on a monthly basis, you're gonna have an experienced skilled coach working with you deeply on your issues. So the progress and impact is quicker and deeper. But, you know, coaching is it's expensive, let's let's be honest about that. And it's not everyone can afford that. So I wanted to offer something that was more affordable. And some people want more of an ongoing support group as well. So I deliver peer coaching training, which results in peer coaching groups. So traditionally, in the past, they've been commissioned by organizations working with artists or writers or sets of people that work together. But I'm looking into how to set this up so individuals can self refer. But what happens in a peer coaching group is that participants have something in common. I work with them for around eight sessions. And in the first three, they learned basic coaching techniques and the peer coaching structure. And then from sort of session four to eight, they practice peer coaching, where one member of the group is coached by the group. And after session eight, they often continue meeting to provide a monthly peer coaching support group. So that not only makes it more affordable, because after the initial eight sessions, the coaching is free and lasts as long as the group chooses to meet. But obviously, with that, you have the also the added benefit of peer support the sociability of meeting others with similar interests, the sharing of knowledge and experience, but you might only get coached once every three to four months, depending on the group size. And the quality of the coaching depends on the skill of the participants. So you're unlikely to go as deep and progress will be slower. But you get those added benefits of being with other people who are probably like minded individuals with.

**Nelima Begum** 16:05

So there's added support there.

**Dominique De-Light** 16:07

Yeah, exactly. And people really like that sociability and knowing they're meeting once a month, and they can share an issue. People often say how much they learn from coaching and listening to other people's issues. So the one that I had the other day someone was talking, you know, about this classic how, how do I fit creativity into my life, I'm not getting to do as much as I want. And, you know, there was five people in the group, and four of them all really related to that issue. So by working with one person on that issue, they were getting ideas themselves about how they could make changes in their own life. So because you're not being coached that session doesn't mean to say you're not getting a lot from it.

**Nelima Begum** 16:49

Okay, so, I think that's nice that there's like a, somewhat of a support bubble there. And you can, there's still opportunities to just learn from everyone else and apply it to yourself.

**Dominique De-Light** 17:00

Absolutely. And, you get the added benefits of learning some coaching skills, and a lot of people say is they think they're good listeners, and then they do the training. And they realize that, you know, they haven't been listening, and as much as they thought they had, and that's really improved their other relationships in their life, whether it's their children or their partners or their friends. So it has a much bigger impact than just having a peer support group.

**Nelima Begum** 17:27

This leads on really nicely to my next question, actually, which is, how can writers take what they learn in the coaching sessions, be it one to one or as part of a group and apply it to their wider interpersonal relationships?

**Dominique De-Light** 17:42

Well, this really sort of touches on what I love about coaching in that people often think they're just looking at one issue. And then they suddenly realize that the impact of is far greater than what they were focusing on. So like the suggestion I made before about, you might have someone who's holding back in their writing, because they fear exposing themselves too much. But then by through working on them, working with them on how it feels to be vulnerable. And reframing their vulnerability as a strength, it can really help them be much more confident and open in their everyday lives and reduce their sense of imposter syndrome maybe, or feeling that they have to be a certain way with certain people. So it can help them be more authentic and open and make them more self aware. Say, for example, I worked with a poet who was self publishing a collection of their life's work, it was really important to them because it was their creative legacy, trying to design a cover using templates found on the design website, and she was really struggling with the technicalities. So in exploring how she could resolve this issue, which was purely the cover design of her pamphlet, in a coaching session, she realized that she believed asking for help was a real weakness. And so we we worked on that and reframing that belief. And after the session, she went and got help to finalize a cover design, which was great, she meant she could enter the work into the competition because she had finished it. But then in an email sent me a week later, she told me the session had changed her life, because she was now finding it possible to ask for help, you know, work live with her family commitments. And suddenly she didn't feel so overwhelmed anymore and alone with everything she had to do. So there's a case of, you know, what seems like one small little tasks that we're dealing with having a huge impact on lots of different things.

**Nelima Begum** 19:30

That's really nice that it has been the coaching itself has this really lovely domino effect on every other aspect of your life.

**Dominique De-Light** 19:40

And that's not that's not unfamiliar, because I think coaching is really empowering and makes you realize that you have the solutions to your own issues. And so that can really increase your confidence. And obviously if your confidence increases that can impact many areas of your life.

**Nelima Begum** 19:59

Confidence is such a, I mean, it's often the barrier for a lot of writers and artists and people in general. I mean, that's the thing that is holding them back.

**Dominique De-Light** 20:08

Yeah, absolutely. And, you know, writing is such an exposing thing, I think many people would agree that, you know, when you're putting your work out there, you really feel like you're sharing your soul. So, you know, if you can feel more confident about it, and yourself and realize that vulnerability is a positive thing, it's not something that will hold you back. Or it doesn't have to hold you back, then that can be really freeing.

**Nelima Begum** 20:38

I agree. With coaching, how can we manage expectations to get from where we are to reaching that goal or dream that you're kind of helping us pursue?

**Dominique De-Light** 20:50

Well, a good, a good coach will help you manage expectations by checking in regularly with your goals and your action plan are realistic. I mean, my job is to help you succeed. If I set you up for failure, then I'm failing at my job and no one's going to want to come to me. So it's really important that I do that. But it's not my role to tell you what is realistic, that's for you to work out. Because, you know, someone may come to me and say, Well, I want to finish my novel and, and have it ready for publication in five months, but I haven't actually started writing it yet. Now, I have to put my own experience aside here, because personally, I would find it impossible to write a novel in five months with my workcommitments. But you know, they may have the time in the world to write, they may be far more talented or experienced than me, they may be able to write 10,000 words a day. So for them, that target may be realistic. So it's my job to get them to check in with where they are, and where they're going. And really enable them to be honest with themselves. And if not look at why they're setting unrealistic goals or failing to achieve what they're saying to achieve. So, you know, that's, that's my job. And sometimes the most rewarding work is not when people achieve their goals. So obviously, that's, that's great for both me and the client. But working out why clients are not achieving the goal, what is holding them back, you know, what the stuckness is caused by? And because by working on, that the clients can achieve so much more. So people often come to coaching because they're stuck, because they've not achieved what they want to achieve. I mean, if it was easy to achieve, why would you pay for a coach? So often, I see people at their lowest that they're most frustrated. And my job is to help them realize they have the solutions and resources within themselves. So you know, I said, it's really empowering because people have regained faith in themselves, building up confidence, and seeing solutions where they might have only seen problems in the past.

**Nelima Begum** 22:51

I mean, it's interesting that you've just mentioned the whole being stuck and experiencing lows, because we know that success is not linear. And there can be quite a few lows along the way. And a fundamental aspect of coaching is helping the person understand that they have the resources and capacity within themselves to find the solution. But how do you handle this, when someone has a particular issue that you might be tempted to almost problem solve for them?

**Dominique De-Light** 23:19

You're right - the writing journey is really full of highs and lows, and it is a natural part of the process. I mean, indeed, one could say it's an essential part of the process in all those who might feel stuck. But research has shown that when we're stuck, and bored and frustrated, we're often on the brink of a breakthrough. So being stuck can be a sign that we need to work something out to improve our work. So my job is to explore that stuckness and that in a way that taps into the subconscious and reveals what needs to change. And unless that can be really highly motivating. And human nature often wants us to problem solve, you know, everyone wants to help someone that's having difficulties, unless you're a psychopath, obviously, but if you if I give you a solution to being stuck, it may not work for you, because my subconscious is not the same as yours. While if you come up with a solution, it's far more likely to work and so it'll be so much more empowering for you. And you're much more likely to follow it through.

**Nelima Begum** 24:20

Because it I mean, it always goes back to that concept of having a reflective space and, you know, answering to yourself before anyone else.

**Dominique De-Light** 24:29

Yeah, absolutely. But it's also like, I don't think any of us like being told what to do. You know, it goes back to, I guess, being a child, I mean, and being told what to do as a, you know, as a toddler, whatever, when we have no power. You know, I think it can be useful if you're seeing a mentor and then really experienced, you know, they say, Oh, well actually, you know, you don't need to waste your time doing this, do this instead. And that that can be really helpful. But if you're working out problem that is related to your own stuckness and your own unconscious, no one can really tell you how to do that apart from yourself because it's in your unconscious.

**Nelima Begum** 25:12

Okay, would you say the problem solving element is perhaps the greatest challenge when it comes to being a coach? Or is there something else?

**Dominique De-Light** 25:24

I think definitely. I mean, as a coach, I, I see myself as a mirror, reflecting back the thoughts of my clients. And I'm trying to remain as neutral as possible and being non judgmental, and not projecting my own experience onto them. And when I'm working with writers, because I'm writing myself, it can be really tempting to problem solve, especially if they're talking about issues that I've grappled grappled with myself. But you know, my experience, people often come up with various solutions, I've thought of telling them when they've been given enough time. So by coming up with the idea, rather than me telling them, they're much more likely to follow it through. So experience has taught me to stay quiet. But yes, it is that the other thing I find really difficult is wanting to get on Yes, I know exactly what you mean, I've been there myself, but then I'm bringing me into the, into the session, and the session isn't about me. It's about the person I'm coaching. And so I have to keep myself out of it. But yes, I'm thinking, I might be aware of my voice in my head saying that, oh, I've been through that too.

**Nelima Begum** 26:30

It's is key to maintain a level of distance from, I guess.

**Dominique De-Light** 26:36

yeah, because then the danger is that then you start getting into sort of comparing notes. And it's an it's an, it doesn't become about the client anymore, it just becomes about you. And they're not paying to hear you talk about your experience.

**Nelima Begum** 26:52

So what for you is the greatest highlight of coaching?

**Dominique De-Light** 26:56

For me, it's the fact that coaching is so empowering. So you really see people grow in confidence and seeing them find solutions where they just saw problems before. So for example, I the client, who was an artist, and she was really worried because she was going to have a cataract operation and she wouldn't have a normal sight for six weeks. And, you know, doing art daily was really important for her mental health and, and, and our artistic practice. So we did a lot of work around, you know, what, what could you do with limited sight. And she worked out some really experimental ways of working, which then led to a whole new style of painting for her that led to a whole new collection. So what had seen this insurmountable problem, how does an artist work without sight, became this really liberating thing that, you know, created this whole bunch of new work for us, that was amazing to work with her. And I also just find it really meditative during the work, I just become completely zoned in on that person and their thoughts listening so deeply that I'm, you know, not listening, just their words, but their body language that I go into a sort of state of flow. That's that beautiful, lovely state of flow that you get when you know, your writings really going really well. And, you know, that's just joyous. And, and I just feel really honored and privileged that people, you know, share and open up with me. And, and so authentic, because people are so rarely truly listened to that. It just makes me enormous job satisfaction, to be able to do that for people, and then to see the benefits of that once they work through their issues.

**Nelima Begum** 28:47

That's lovely. And I think it also relates to this idea that, you know, you feel trusted as well. Yeah. So kind of keeping with your own relationship to coaching, have you applied the methods that you've amassed from your coaching as well as the experience and work with creative future to yourself and your own creative practice in any way?

**Dominique De-Light** 29:12

Yeah, definitely. Working with so many writers and artists really made me realize that, you know, most of us suffer a crisis of confidence at some point, some more than others, but it's really made me realize how important it is not to take rejection personally. So you know, it feels so personal, to work out in the world, and then someone's saying no to it. But you know, whether it's a publisher or a competition, there's so many reasons for rejection, whether it's that they've published too many similar types of stories or your story doesn't quite feel fit the feel of the competition. What the organizers are looking for, or readers taste is different to your own. And learning that has really helped me cope with knockbacks. I used to judge The creative futures writers award and that, you know, there was so many great pieces that didn't win the awards. But that was because it didn't, you know, it didn't quite fit in with the theme, or it didn't quite work with the other pieces, there was lots of reasons, it wasn't that the writing wasn't good enough in itself. And now, when I struggle with issues in my writing, whether it's, you know, a tricky structural issue or characters or something, I will do a bit of self coaching. And I will also when I'm thinking about how on earth am I going to fit my writing into my life, I will, you know, work out what my creative goals are for the year and how to fit them in, which has really helped me create space for my creativity, and, you know, really progress my writing much quicker than then I would have done in the past, or because, you know, I've found a really good structure for me in my life. And I'm much more motivated to do so.

**Nelima Begum** 31:05

So it's kind of helps you find an approach that works for you.

**Dominique De-Light** 31:10

Yeah, exactly. I mean, especially in lockdown, you know, I'm working full time I'm running to businesses, I'm homeschooling, where on earth is the time for writing. You know, I'm getting up at 5:30 in the morning and doing a couple of hours before I start work. That's not going to work for everybody. But you know, I naturally wake up really early at the moment. So I might as well just use that time. And actually, it's quite good, because I haven't quite woken up. And so I can access my subconscious mind much better. So I might only get like an hour and a half a day to write, which is very little when you're working on a big project. But you know, it's chipping away at the coalface and progress is happening. So, yeah, it's just as I say, finding those slivers of time that you didn't think were there.

**Nelima Begum** 31:59

Okay, so coaching is also kind of encouraging you to just find those windows and those methods that work specifically for you.

**Dominique De-Light** 32:08

Yeah, but also, you know, when you wake up at 5:30, and you've probably not had a good night's sleep, it really helps me go. Don't feel like you have to do this. Don't feel like you know, you can't take a rest today, if you want to just be kind to yourself, because forcing yourself and pushing yourself is just going to lead to burnout. So it's, it's finding the slivers of time but not feeling guilty if you don't use every sliver, because great creative productivity comes when you're at your best health as well. And that's why I often say that my that's why I'm called well balanced coaching. I do a lot of work with creative people. But it's really important that your mental health and well being is looked after if you're going to be your most productive self.

**Nelima Begum** 32:57

I mean, I agree, but on the topic of kind of your relationship with coaching and creativity has becoming an accredited coach affected how you approach creativity, in general.

**Dominique De-Light** 33:10

Yeah, I've done a lot of learning from the latest neuroscience, which I just find fascinating coming from an interesting, yeah, coming from a creative background, I never was that interested in science, but there's been so much fascinating research on how the brain works these days, and how our bodies are also really influential in the way we think. And our nervous systems that I've discovered ways to sort of hack into the creative flow, as it were little tricks that help instantly relax my nervous system, which obviously then is more productive for creativity. So there's lots of research out there about the Vegas nerve and how to use it to calm our nervous system, which, you know, I teach some of this stuff on my workshops. And so that's enables me to use that for reducing any anxiety or stress that I might be feeling. I've used it to work out which time of day, I'm the most creative. And it's made me a lot more optimistic that I can achieve what I want to achieve creatively. So yeah, there's, it's, it's, I find the science really interesting. And it can definitely, definitely help your creativity. So I've been I've been using those little bits that I've learned for that.

**Nelima Begum** 34:27

That's great. And does it ever, like filter into what you do with your clients as well?

**Dominique De-Light** 34:32

Oh, all the time? Absolutely. Yeah. You know, I use a lot of the techniques for hacking into the nervous system. I will I will teach clients, I will, I will always at the start of every session, do a little grounding exercise, which is a way to make the nervous system as calm as possible. Because when we are calm where we think much more deeply and we also have much more of that big picture mind where we can solve bigger problems. Because if you think about it, when you're stressed, you tend to focus in on the problem, and you find it really hard to think around a problem. And it's when we're relaxed, that ideas come to us, you know, that eureka moment coming in the bath, for example, is the classic one, isn't it? And so what I'm trying to do a coaching session is to get my clients as relaxed as if they're lying in the bath, and thinking freely. So I will use, say those those latest, that latest knowledge to create that sense of trust and relaxation, so those ideas can come up.

**Nelima Begum** 35:36

That's a really interesting way of looking at it.

**Dominique De-Light** 35:40

Yeah, well, I think it's that thing of our nervous systems are really brilliant things, and they protect us. But when we're, when we're stressed, it means that our whole focus narrows, and that's really important for whatever we have to get away from and deal with. But it just closes down our thinking, which is really unhelpful, when we've got a problem to solve. So the more relaxed we can be, and the more you know, open to new ideas, the more we're going to be able to solve our problems, that is always my aim in a in a session to get people to that state.

**Nelima Begum** 36:16

Wonderful that you kind of facilitate that state of being.

**Dominique De-Light** 36:21

Yeah, but yeah, and when I'm doing my workshops is, it's it's so fascinating how, for example, if you wrinkle your nose, like you're pretending to be a rabbit, and you can feel really stupid doing this!

**Nelima Begum** 36:35

I'm doing it right now!

**Dominique De-Light** 36:37

So apparently, the Vegas nerve, which, you know, connects to lots of different parts of our bodies, is connected to our facial muscles. So a little hack to try and create more relaxation in our nervous systems is pretend to be a rabbit and wrinkle your nose, which is just so mad, isn't it? Another one is if you if you look to the left with your eyes, so that your eyeballs are really focusing to the left as much as possible for 30 seconds. And then you look to the right for 30 seconds. Same thing, it kind of hacks into the nervous system and tells it to calm down. And so there's, there's numerous things like that are deep breathing, three really big, deep breaths, where you out breath, be longer than the in breath, can also immediately help you calm down, which is great, you know, if you're feeling anxious or worried, I mean, I even was doing that just before this podcast just to call my system down. So you know, those things are just really great little tricks that, you know, you can easily do to help you feel calmer and more confident, whether it's going in for a job interview, or whether it's, you know, working out what next to do in your book.

**Nelima Begum** 38:06

That's incredible. There's so many things I didn't know. You heard it here first writers - pretend to be a rabbit. This is the way forward.

**Dominique De-Light** 38:15

Rabbits have got knowledge.

**Nelima Begum** 38:17

Rabbits know what they're doing. You've shared a couple of really great stories already about your work. But within the bounds of confidentiality, of course, is there a positive story that you were able to share with us that illustrates the change that one to one support can facilitate for an artist?

**Dominique De-Light** 38:36

So I worked with someone who was incredibly creative and had so many different ideas. And every single idea was brilliant, absolutely brilliant. And they wanted to write a radio play, and they wanted to write a screenplay, and they were writing a monologue for the stage. They were writing a book of short stories. They were you know, they were really talented. And they had loads of different projects all on the Go at once. And, you know, I was just in awe of their creativity and their talent. And much at the same time, was that they were never really polishing them off to be good enough. And so they were getting lots of agents and interested third producers saying, Well, yeah, this is great, but it's just not quite there. And so they were getting incredibly frustrated with the fact that they weren't just wasn't getting out there. And I could understand why because they have this huge pile of amazing ideas. And so we spent our six sessions together, really focusing on what they wanted to work on. And they had when I first met them about 10 projects, and we focused it down into three. And that was because one piece was, was pretty much finished, but they just needed to research where they were going to send it out. And another piece had been commissioned, so that they had to finish it. And then the final piece was like, a lifelong sort of ambition to do a sort of, you know, comedy show, for radio and, and through the work, they got to the point where they finished these three pieces. And, and they got the work that was commissioned, went out on air. And they finally found all the places where they could send the other piece of work. And they had finished the first draft of their life's ambition piece. So by the end of it, they really felt like Finally, they were fulfilling their potential. And by doing that, it was really great to see because they'd spent so many years sort of earning money from that they didn't really like doing and doing all their creativity on the side. And by the end of it, they're able to go, actually, now I can, you know, now I've got work permission from my writing. And now I've got places that are accepting my work, I can give up those jobs that I really am not keen on. And they were earning money from their writing and seeing a real positive future, and actually being able to live just off their writing earnings. So that was, that was huge. So it I mean, it was just an amazing experience. Because it was great to see that someone who is so talented finally achieve their potential, it would have been such a shame for someone with so much talent and so many great ideas to have spent their life you know, doing a job they hated and never seen that work come to fruition. So, yeah, it was it was really great. I was really proud of them for doing the work they did. And achieving that.

**Nelima Begum** 43:04

I think all the stories that you've mentioned today have just been really lovely in highlighting how the use of listening or having someone to listen to you. makes such a world of difference.

**Dominique De-Light** 43:46

So I really believe that if people truly listened to each other, they would be greater world peace in general, whether that's between countries or in relationships, because so often, we only really half hear what someone's saying, because we're thinking about our own agendas, or what to say next, or how to solve someone else's problems. So we're not really listening to what the person is saying. Right. So yeah, really deep listening is, is a privilege. And it's quite rare in our world, and it can make huge changes when it's when it's done properly.

**Nelima Begum** 44:26

Right. And coaching does a center artistic practice, necessarily. I mean, as you say, on your website, it's about inner purpose and outer clarity. But as we know, often imbalances in one's personal life can block creativity. Would you say this is key to why it is suitable for creative people?

**Dominique De-Light** 45:03

So we've we've already said that the creative life is a roller coaster full of highs and lows. And, you know, it can be seen by society or our loved ones is not that important as our day job or family commitments. And that's where coaching can be really key in enabling you to find a time to be creative and establish some boundaries, to protect your creative space and support you through the highs and lows. So you'll be creating an action plan, and coming up with solutions that's tailored to you. So though it doesn't center artistic practice off, it can really, you know, help artistic practice thrive, because you're creating space for it, or you're developing ideas, and developing projects. And so, you know, there's lots of, there's lots of ways that creativity can really, really be helped by coaching.

**Nelima Begum** 46:31

Lovely, and that one thing leads to another. Just to round off, I think this one would be a really nice one to round off with. What advice would you give to anyone who is considering coaching at the moment?

**Dominique De-Light** 46:48

Well,I would say find a coach who you relate to, you know, who shares your values, because you really need to trust that person. And if they're using language that you don't really use, or their life experience doesn't really, you know, gel with you. It's not that you need to know what their life is like, for example, but you know, when we talk to people, we immediately know whether we have an affinity with that person or not, right, and you really have to feel that you can work with that person, because you're going to possibly open yourself up to some deep emotion. So you want to be able to trust that person. And also try and be as clear as possible about the goal you want to achieve and, and think whether it's realistic, the clearer you are, the more realistic The goal is, the more likely you're going to achieve your goal with your coaches support. So, you know, ask yourself, What do I want? What do I need from coaching?

**Nelima Begum** 47:46

I think that's really great advice, actually, in that, you know, it's key to find someone that you could possibly relate to in some way or another, just because they'd be better understanding.

**Dominique De-Light** 47:57

Yeah, exactly. You know, it's like, there's business coaches out there. And they are really great for working with people in the corporate sector. And they may well use the sort of jargon and the language of the sector that they're working in. But that may not fit with you, even if you work in the corporate sector, in your day job, it might be that actually, what I want to talk about is, is my writing about my work life balance, and I, I want someone that, you know, feels like more of the person I talk to when I'm in the pub, you know, on a weekend or whatever. So, you know, and on the other hand, you might be a high flying lawyer who wants, you know, to talk about your lawyer firm development, and you might not feel that I've got the right experience or using the right language. And that's fine. I'm not going to be for everyone. Everyone has their own sort of niche and need to go to people who they can relate to. Because that's when the best work will be done.

**Nelima Begum** 49:03

I mean, absolutely.

**Dominique De-Light** 49:05

Yeah. And as a coach, I want the best work to be done. You know, it's, that's, that's the most important thing for me. Because that's when I get happy clients. And that's when they make referrals. And that's when I get more business. And that's where I get my job satisfaction from because there is success.

**Nelima Begum** 49:24

That's brilliant. And I'm, I'm you know, based on your experience, I'm guessing you've come across so many different kinds of clients and organizations.

**Dominique De-Light** 49:33

Yeah, I mean, I work with people mainly in the arts or the public sector. But, you know, within that I might work with NHS commissioners or, you know, directors of social services or charity managers, or, you know, arts, freelancers or professional writers or people that are just starting out writing their first novel. You know, I've worked with teams Youth in London social services that have been, you know, excluded and abandoned by most of society, you've come out of prison for knife crime and all the rest of it. I've worked with a really, really broad range of people in coaching. And that's what I love about it, because it can really help all sorts of people. Whether it's, you know, someone wanting to get a really big job, or whether it's someone just working out, you know, how to rebuild their life after a prison sentence.

**Nelima Begum** 50:31

Right. So no matter the goal, coaching creates a safe space and a reflective environment for everyone to kind of just use to reach their goal.

**Dominique De-Light** 50:42

Yeah, exactly. And provides, you know, we don't often have times in our lives where we really spend time reflecting on where we want to go and, and how to get there. You know, we're so often wrapped up in the day to day that we, that we often lose sight of where the longer the longer goal is, and what our purpose is and what we feel really passionate about. And yet if we know those things about what we're really passionate about, and where we want to go in life, then all the other little things can really fall into place.

**Nelima Begum** 51:17

That's lovely. Dominique, thank you so much for joining us for this podcast. I know I've learned a lot and I hope the writing community will take something away from this as well.

**Dominique De-Light** 51:26

Well, thank you. And if you're a Being a Writer member, you can actually get 15% off your first five one to one coaching sessions with me. So if you fancy a bit of coaching then please do look at my website.

**Nelima Begum** 51:43

As her coach, she is brilliant. Thank you so much, Dominique. It's been an absolute pleasure having you on.

**Dominique De-Light** 51:52

Thank you so much for having me. I feel honored to be featured