

# Great Coaching Podcast Transcript

- Person Centred -

(Series 1 Episode 1)

## Voices of the Podcast

**Intro / Outro Theme:** Craig Blain, UK Coaching

**Narrator:** Craig Blain, UK Coaching

**Guest:** Helen Holmes, Swimming Coach

**Guest:** Karla Burton, Get Out Get Active Programme Manager

**Guest:** Professor Sophia Jowett, Loughborough University

**Coach Developer:** Mark Bateman, UK Coaching

## Podcast Transcript

### **Guest: Helen Holmes**

You've got to know the people in your group and you've got to understand where they are coming from, otherwise you can be academically the best coach in the world but if you don't get down and get your team or your people, or whoever they may be to want to do it A) for themselves and B) for you, then you haven't got a partnership.

### **Intro Theme:**

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This is the great coaching podcast. A series dedicated to exploring the Great Coaching Principles from UK Coaching. Episode 1: Person Centred.

#### **Narrator: Craig Blain**

Being able to create a person-centred experience for those taking part in your sessions is key. The fundamental approach of coaching the person in front of you falls under three key areas, it's about creating connections, developing understanding and using that to create an environment in which people can thrive. Speaking to swimming Coach Helen Holmes, I first wanted to understand what Person Centred meant to her.

#### **Guest: Helen Holmes**

Person centred to me is to make that person feel like they are the most important person there. To do that you have to understand where they are coming from and stand in their moccasins kind of a thing and say, yeah I get it, I understand!

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### Coach Developer: Mark Bateman

I'm Mark Bateman, a Coach Developer from UK Coaching. It is important to reflect on the positive aspects of your coaching and make time to understand your strengths and how these will impact others. I will be providing some reflective questions to help you make sense of the conversation you will be listening to.

### Narrator: Craig Blain

The relationship you can create with those who attend your sessions is key. As Helen alludes to, being able to create connections both empowers us to tailor our approach and the activities we use to create a person-centred experience. But what do we actually mean by the term 'relationship'?

### Guest: Professor Sophia Jowett

A relationship in general terms refers to a connection, an association, a link of some sort. My name is Sophia Jowett, I am a Professor of Psychology at Loughborough University. The coach-athlete relationship is the combined interrelating between interpersonal thoughts, feelings

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and behaviours. Closeness, Commitment and Cooperation form the back bone of quality relationships. Feelings of closeness are reflected in coaches and athletes' behaviours such as trust, respecting and even liking one another. Commitment reflects thoughts of maintaining a close relationship over time. During this time coaches and athletes experience highs and lows such as performance slumps, or even injury. All of which have the potential to detract focus and destabilise the relationship. Commitment is the glue that keeps them together. Cooperation is reflected in behaviours that are cooperative and highlights another dimension of their connection. This is manifested through coaches and athletes capacity to adapt, to be open, friendly and relaxed in each others presence.

#### **Coach Developer: Mark Bateman**

What do you do to create connections with the people in your sessions?

What might this look like in communication, body language, or the way in which you listen?

#### **Narrator: Craig Blain**

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Considering the translation of theory into practice. I wanted to understand what Helens priorities were when developing relationships with her participants.

#### **Guest: Helen Holmes**

Standing in somebody else's moccasins is something I learned when I learned to become a Counsellor. It isn't putting somebody else's shoes on because their shoes are very hard and structured. When you put someone's moccasins on they are comfortable, and that's where they live, that's where they are and that's where they feel everything. Think about where they are coming from, if you can do that then you are already on a sort of level with them, and then you can start to build on solid ground.

#### **Coach Developer: Mark Bateman**

What types of questions could you ask to further develop your understanding of the people participating in your sessions?

#### **Narrator: Craig Blain**

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Understanding the theory of coach-athlete relationships, I wanted Helen to help demystify what creating a relationship meant. What is the top priority for her?

#### **Guest: Helen Holmes**

Remembering their name. Just having that inner spark of knowledge of something personal to them, they immediately feel important. How much nicer is it when you go into a shop and someone calls you by your name? - you think “how do they know my name?”, oh I’ve got a name badge on, they bothered to read it. - Just these little tiny things that make us all just, you’re stroking somebody’s ego each time. You’re already bringing them onto your page and you’re involving them, and they start to feel “I kind of belong here”.

#### **Narrator: Craig Blain**

And the theory supports this, with regards to developing commitment and cooperation between coach and athlete as Sophia Jowett explains.

#### **Guest: Professor Sophia Jowett**

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Relationships are important as they satisfy a basic human need, namely connectedness. We all need and want to feel connected. Relationships offer us a sense of safety and security for us all. When athletes feel connected to their coaches, when they know their coaches have their best interests at heart, when they know that their coaches believe in them, then they are more likely to go the extra mile, to try harder, and for longer and accept the challenge and support coaches offer them in order to achieve.

#### **Narrator: Craig Blain**

To set some of the context for the programme that Helen is part of, we spoke to programme manager Karla Burton to understand how people can get involved.

#### **Guest: Karla Burton**

There's no actual structure to it. Its just really social sessions. It's all about interacting with the people and that's what comes before the activity. If someone wants to have a couple of weeks out, they can slot back in really easily. We target inactive people. So, it's really important

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from when they come in to make sure that they are welcome, to make sure they know that you want to know them on a personal level. So, you're not interested in them coming and swimming, you want to know how they are and why they've come. That's essentially what brings people back each week, because they think "I want to go and speak to the coach or other people because they care".

#### **Narrator: Craig Blain**

Understanding the context in which Helen is coaching gives an appreciation of the challenges she may face. With the drop-in drop-out nature of the sessions I wondered if this created any challenges for her with regards to the amount of time she needs to spend with different individuals.

#### **Guest: Helen Holmes**

It's about reading your students or what ever you want to call them. Being there for them as an individual, because it's not a group process is it, it's a one on one. It doesn't have to be 40 minutes, it could be 14 or four minutes. If it's the right empowering conversation for that person

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that ticks their box for that day, then you're making a difference. It's about them walking out of that pool and saying, "do you know what, tonight I did that, yeah I got it." Then they go out and they've achieved something, and that makes them feel, YES!

#### **Coach Developer: Mark Bateman**

How can you use the planning process to create connections with people in your sessions, as well as achieving your main session outcomes?

#### **Narrator: Craig Blain**

A key component of any relationship is that of understanding. Our ability to empathise with those that we are coaching helps us to provide that person centred experience. But I was curious, what if we haven't experienced some of the challenges our participants face? I was keen to understand how Helen approached this?

#### **Guest: Helen Holmes**

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We've all been scared about school exams, we've all been scared about the dentist when we were little. It's a life skill of knowing, so for me all those little upheaves of the stomach and all those things that concern you like "oh gosh I've got a match next week or I've got a gala next week, am I going to do this." All those experiences help us to understand that feeling for someone else, we don't know how they feel. To put their moccasins on just gives you a taste. Body language is really important, as you can see how people will back off, even if you say a couple of words, you can see them stiffen and take a deep intake of breath. And you think, "ah that's it, that's what we've got here to get over, that's where this person needs some support."

#### **Guest: Professor Sophia Jowett**

Openness is important, it is a collective endeavour where coaches and athletes work together to bring about change. Openness is evident when coaches are prepared to see the world to their athletes' eyes and willing to take their perspective. Openness is evident when athletes freely offer their insights, ideas or thoughts. When athletes hold back, the value of

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their knowledge is being lost. Yet an athletes knowledge can be invaluable for coaches.

So how can we create openness in the coaching environment. There are three simple steps that we can take; Firstly, stage the scene: explain to your athletes that speaking up, sharing information and being honest are important aspects that you value. Secondly, ask them to share their input, their feedback, their thoughts. Remind them that their views help you coach them better. Afterall, you only have a limited view and your athletes can help you put the missing pieces together. Thirdly, respond productively to their input. When ideas are shared, show your appreciation.

#### **Guest: Karla Burton**

I used to coach Back to Netball sessions, so I had a group of ladies that would come every week and I would have new ladies coming every week. The person centred approach is really important because every lady came for a different reason, and if I didn't get to know them on that level I couldn't coach them properly. Some would come for fitness, some would come for social, some could take praise well, some wouldn't take

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praise well. So, if you don't understand them, you can't adapt your coaching to that person. So, when I had 14 or 20 women in there, I would have to react to everyone differently. So, I think if you're a coach, it doesn't matter how good you are at your activity or sport, if you don't know every single person in that room and how to react to them, you won't get the best out of them.

#### **Guest: Helen Holmes**

And I think if you can get that two-way relationship with your swimmers, your runners, your footballers, or whatever, they will want to do their best, they absolutely want to do it. We don't do anything we don't want to naturally as human beings, we will dig our heels in. It's just a case of answering peoples, doubts?!. You can't do that without knowing the people in your group. You've got to know the people in your group and you've got to understand where they are coming from, otherwise you can be academically the best coach in the world but if you don't get down and get your team or your people, or whoever they may be to want to do it A) for themselves and B) for you, then you haven't got a

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partnership. And you have to have a partnership with each and every individual that you coach.

#### **Coach Developer: Mark Bateman**

What do you take notice of in your sessions to support you achieving a person centred experience for others?

#### **Narrator: Craig Blain**

And as Sophia explains, these benefits are not limited to the participants themselves.

#### **Guest: Professor Sophia Jowett**

If there is a good quality relationship, where there are high levels of closeness, commitment and cooperation, then athletes are more likely to perform better and feel happier. Coaches are also more influential, transformative and productive. Good quality relationships not only result in better coach leadership, but in coaches feeling fulfilled, rewarded and satisfied. Good quality coach-athlete relationships are important

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because they create a positive relational environment in which coaches and athletes strive and thrive.

#### **Narrator: Craig Blain**

Coaching is fundamentally about Plan, Do, and Review. I wondered what the impacts of trying to follow a person centred approach might be on the planning process.

#### **Guest: Karla Burton**

Some coaches get very professional, they spend hours and hours doing a session plan. But when the group get together, and they actually have the coach interacting with them, that's actually more important than a massively structured session. So that's why a person centred approach is so important.

#### **Guest: Helen Holmes**

I'm not constrained into having to have a set plan, some coaches have to achieve something by a game or whatever it may be, I am fortunate enough that I don't have that. However, I believe in in the moment

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planning. With a person centred approach, it's about what can you do, not what can't you do. Let's make it be the most positive experience that it can be. Let's share that time and get something out of it, both of us. I want you to go away feeling, "I'm really glad I went".

#### **Coach Developer: Mark Bateman**

Like Helen, what strategies do you have for evolving your sessions from the moment they start?

#### **Narrator: Craig Blain**

Its more about clear communication of the plan, than the plan itself. As Sophia shares an analogy of how communication plays a critical role in relationships.

#### **Guest: Professor Sophia Jowett**

If the coach-athlete relationship is a vehicle that transports them from place A to place B, where coaches and athletes find success and satisfaction, then communication is the fuel that activates, energises and moves the coach and the athletes from place A to place B.

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Talking, acting together, making joint decisions, even arguing are key processes of good communication. These processes help coaches and athletes to increase their knowledge and understanding for one another.

#### **Narrator: Craig Blain**

It was obvious speaking to Helen that a Person-Centred approach sits at the heart of her coaching values. I wanted to finish our time together with an understanding of what her top tips for others might be?

#### **Guest: Helen Holmes**

Get down on peoples level, that would be my biggest teaching to anybody! So where ever you are, go to that persons level and speak to them on their level. If they're in the pool, get in the water. If you're not in the water sit on the side. Because none of us like to be towered over, none of us like to feel that the coach is the all seeing all cumbering power that is. I don't like saying to somebody "you got something wrong", I like to say, "we didn't quite get that right did we, we can do better. So, let's have a different way of looking at it." And I think if you can share that with other people, when you've not got something right

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and you've learned from it, they will go "ah, well coach learned that way, they didn't get it right first time that's OK. I can take my time to get it right too, I don't have to succeed first time."

#### **Narrator: Craig Blain**

As a final point of interest, I wondered whether Helen had a different perspective when considering her own wellbeing.

#### **Guest: Helen Holmes**

I refuse to have a bad day, I might not have as good a day as I had yesterday, but I still learn every day. It's about you as a person bringing out the best in people through you. And you can only do that by being you.

#### **Coach Developer: Mark Bateman**

Taking time to reflect on the positive aspects of your coaching is important for both the continued development of your coaching practice and your own wellbeing. What opportunities can you think of to self-reflect or connect with others to explore this?

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### Guest: Helen Holmes

I love getting in my car on a Friday night, with all my wet woggles and everything on my back seat. And I go home, and I think, I love my Friday night, I absolutely love my Friday night.

### Outro Theme:

This has been the Great Coaching Podcast from UK Coaching. If you would like to find more episodes on the great coaching principles, search for the Great Coaching Podcast on the UK Coaching website [ukcoaching.org](http://ukcoaching.org).

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