

1. Before joining the ILM Level 7 coaching and mentoring programme, what challenges or needs were you experiencing?

I was in senior and executive roles in higher education and government, and over some decades had implemented various methods to move to a less directive and more empowering management style for my staff. While there were many successes (and failures) and years of mentoring experience, I still felt there was something I struggled to understand and implement that I saw other respected leaders doing. I was still not satisfied about the balance of my listening versus talking or questions, where solutions came from and how I was enabling others to develop further and faster as leaders themselves.

2. What made you choose this programme and to work with us over other options?

I was introduced to Claire for coaching when I was making a significant career change from a permanent senior role in a large organisation to my own business. Working with Claire I realised she had the skills I wanted and was prepared to teach them. She modelled effective intelligent interactions that caused me to grow, without requiring experience in my domain of expertise, without creating solutions for me, and without awkwardness, interrupting or power imbalance. I realised advanced 'coaching' skills were the missing piece I had been looking for to fully satisfy my drive to authentically empower and lead people, and to develop leaders. In my new consulting business, coaching skills were going to be vitally important to support leaders to be more sustainable, ethical and strategic. When I was offered the opportunity to join the programme it was a 'no-brainer'. I spent little time exploring other options as I had seen the quality and impact of Claire's skills and approach first-hand, and the programme was comprehensive in the development areas I wanted to explore.

3. Can you say a few words about your experience during the programme?

Being on the programme was a masterclass in how people can learn so much with so few directions from the 'trainer'. While there was some knowledge transfer, we were coached, big time. Learning came from an enormous variety of sources, from the brilliant structuring of the course and sessions, pivotal questions, intriguing guest experts, constantly trying things, hearing each other, reading from books and online, the support of the cohort, assignments, observation, supervision, reflection and getting out and doing it for real. Alongside enjoyment of the course content was the satisfying quality of professional delivery, an elegant venue with woodland trees, and a perfectly-sized group of diverse and astonishingly experienced participants who set goals and learned too, and who each now matter to me.

4. What's changed for you since completing it?

The comprehensive coverage of coaching skills and related facets of reflective practice, ethics supervision, accreditation, business practice and so on enabled me to feel very confident with all the practical elements required to be an effective coach at senior and exec levels, to the extent I felt I could legitimately make leadership coaching the foundation of my consulting business.

It's a cliché to say things are life changers, and of course I joke to say, 'my life is complete', but in a funny way my professional life now is. A meaningful gap has been filled. I felt frustrated and slightly inadequate for decades as a leader because I couldn't quite teach myself these skills to the level I wanted, and couldn't quite work out what it was I didn't know or wasn't doing, to be the leader I wanted to be for others. I feel an enormous sense of fulfilment now when I coach that I have not felt for a very long time. There's a deep sense of satisfaction in supporting people to grow before your very eyes. Oh, and I don't interrupt.

5. What would you say to someone thinking about joining this programme or a similar one with us?

This is not a throw-away, tick-the-box course. It does take effort and commitment and the practicalities of carving out specific segments of time to complete course work and to coach. It's worth knowing what you are truly up for before you start and clearing space mentally and in your year's schedule. Having said that, if you don't have time, you need this more - empowering others frees you up. In exchange, you experience real learning at an advanced level, develop skills that make a real difference for you and others, and get qualifications you know you have earned. You are supported by Claire and her team and the cohort in every way possible to make that learning attainable. Don't expect to come out as the same person you went in.



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