



WITH A LITTLE MAGIC – WHAT WOULD YOU WISH FOR?

The greatest of journeys may start with a single step, but how do you know which direction to take? **Rosie Nice** walks us through her MAGIC model which can reveal a way forward.

I recently enjoyed the privilege of a wonderful trip to South America, a mid-life sabbatical. We used an app to record and share our travels, which mapped each stage as a step, so when we returned, we saw the trip in its entirety, from the excited departure photo, the highs (and occasional lows), to the happy homecoming, with memories to last a lifetime.

I loved this concept of celebrating the steps in our adventure. It reminded me of my coaching conversations, planning, navigating and celebrating the steps on my client's personal journeys.

A key contribution of a coach is to help coachees identify their direction of travel and the destination they wish to reach. So often, I have seen coachees begin with what appears to be a clear objective, create some nice SMART goals, build a beautiful plan and then fail to execute any of it because they were aiming for a destination that was not right for them.

On a recent coaching course, an airline worker shared his goal: 'I want to give up shift work. No more early starts and weekend working.' He spoke about the perceived benefits of regular hours. 'I'll have weekends off. I'll be home in the evenings. It sounds great.' He was asked why he had done shift work for so long, and then he reflected on the upsides. 'I like the flexibility and avoiding rush hour... I swap shifts and have time off without using annual leave.'

He paused.

'Actually,' he said slowly, 'shift work is brilliant. Working 9-5 means traffic every day. I would never see my children during the week because I'd be gone early and back home after bedtime. I'd have to work school holidays.' He paused again. 'I've moaned about shift work for years, but I've focused on the wrong problem. I do need a new challenge, but shift work isn't the issue.' This revelation changed the whole conversation, and a radically different goal emerged as he realigned his destination.

You may have had similar experiences, with coachees who didn't know what they wanted, or who changed their goals along the way.

Most traditional coaching models start with goals, but what can we do when our coachees don't have a clear destination?

Here is a different approach: instead of future goals, focus on now. Understanding our present is critical when planning for our future, but its importance is often overlooked in our rush to get started.

If they want to start a journey but they don't know where to go, try this MAGIC pathway: travelling from **M**irror, to **A**spirations, **G**oals, **I**deas and **C**ommitments.

As we progress through the steps, consider the conversation as a bridge, crossing the gap from their current situation towards a new destination, from the past, to the present and the future.

MIRROR: REFLECT ON THE PRESENT

HOW WOULD YOU EVALUATE YOUR LIFE NOW?

This opening question holds up a metaphorical mirror and invites your coachee to reflect on their current situation, personally or professionally. What is happening right now, and why? What is going well, and what are they pleased with and proud of? What are their strengths and what do they love doing?

When I start a coaching conversation this way, it creates optimistic energy. People appreciate this acknowledgement of the positives, because they spend so much time thinking about challenges and problems.

Next, discuss what isn't going so well, exploring where they are less satisfied. Encourage self-compassion as they acknowledge elements of their life which feel less successful. The point is not to be negative, but to increase self-awareness and consider what they can learn, to build success in the future.

Spending time exploring the present is pivotal: Einstein reputedly advised, 'If I had an hour to solve a problem, I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and 5 minutes thinking about the solution.' If you allow time for people to explore their present circumstances, then a way forward will naturally emerge, and goals and a plan will follow.

REFLECT ON THE PAST:

What are the pivotal moments in their life that led them to where they are today? Can they pinpoint some 'Sliding Doors' moments where they took action and made decisions that brought them to their current situation?

Which past actions and decisions are they grateful for, leading to success? Are there actions or decisions that they aren't so pleased about, which were less helpful? Again, emphasise self-kindness here: this is not about regrets, but learning.

ASPIRATIONS: REFLECT ON THE FUTURE

WHAT WOULD I REALLY LIKE TO ACHIEVE?

The understanding brought by this self-reflection prepares you now to shift the focus forwards. We move up the bridge, exploring their aspirations and articulating a vision of their future. What would they like to see when they look in this mirror? What achievements are reflected back? If they could wave a magic wand, what would they love to achieve? Imagine living their best life; what are they doing, thinking and feeling?

We can discuss their personal values and what truly matters to them, because our values play a key role in determining our priorities and influencing our behaviour. Consider the relative importance of family, relationships, career, status, money, spirituality, health, and other factors. Gaining clarity here helps us make actions and choices which feel more meaningful, and our aspirations and goals become more authentic when they consciously align with our values.

Try creating a 'personal vision statement' or choose one word or image to represent this future.

GOALS: HOW CAN I TURN MY ASPIRATIONS INTO TANGIBLE GOALS?

By this stage, at the top of the bridge, people are ready for clarity. We have a clear view in all directions and are well placed to turn these aspirations into specific goals for the future. Identify exactly what they would like to achieve, breaking bigger goals into smaller milestones to mark their progress. Apply the well-known SMART mnemonic to check their goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound, so by the end of this step, they have a clearly defined destination, linked to their wider aspirations and aligned with their values.

IDEAS: WHAT IDEAS DO I HAVE TO HELP ME ACHIEVE THIS GOAL?

Now, explore a range of ideas for how they might achieve these goals. What options are available? Do they know anyone who could offer help and advice? Generate a list of ideas before selecting those which will work best for them and consider how they could overcome any obstacles or barriers they might encounter.

COMMITMENTS: WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?

This last stage completes our journey across the MAGIC bridge by incorporating the best ideas into a robust plan for reaching their destination, with some specific commitments. Ensure their first step is very clear and encourage them to start with some quick wins, which will generate the greatest reward for the least effort and encourage them to celebrate their achievements along the way.

So, if your coachee doesn't have a clear destination, this MAGIC framework can be your guide, with five steps, travelling from **M**irror, to **A**spirations, **G**oals, **I**deas and **C**ommitments, dramatically increasing your client's chances of a successful journey.

I wish you luck and I thoroughly recommend a mid-life sabbatical!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Rosie Nice is the founder of MAGIC Coaching. She runs coach training programmes and helps organisations build a coaching culture, sharing the transformational results coaching can create.

If you would like to learn more about MAGIC coaching, you can read Rosie's book, *The MAGIC Happens in the Silence*, a guide to the art of reflective coaching.

<https://magic-coaching.co.uk/>