

Coaching Across Difference: A Reflection Guide

For coaches who want to build trust, humility, and cultural awareness in every session

By **Gloria Custodio, Esq, PCC, [The Social Leadership Coach](#)**

Coaching across lines of race, culture, or identity isn't about having all the right answers. It's about showing up with presence, humility, and the courage to stay open. This guide offers a space to reflect on your practice and make intentional shifts toward more inclusive, identity-conscious coaching. Use it privately or in community with a mentor or a coaching circle. Use it imperfectly. Use it often.

1. Pause & Presence

Before your next coaching session, take a moment to reflect:

- What assumptions might I be carrying into this space?
- What lived experiences might my client bring that I haven't accounted for?
- What does it mean to *decenter myself* while still being fully present?

2. Identity Awareness Journal Prompts

Choose two or three to sit with this week. Come back to the rest later.

- What aspects of my own identity show up in coaching, whether I name them or not?
- When have I felt discomfort around race or culture in a session? What did I do?
- How do I respond when a client's experience challenges my worldview?
- What messages did I learn growing up about being "neutral," "professional," or "fair"?
- What would it look like to coach with more cultural humility and less fear?

3. Coaching Questions for Clients

Adapt these to your voice and your client's context. They are drawn from my *choice Magazine* article, "*Inclusive & Impactful Coaching: Practical Strategies for Bridging Racial and Cultural Differences*" (Vol 23 No 2)

- What aspects of your cultural identity feel most relevant to our work?
- In what ways have your racial or cultural experiences shaped your growth?

- What challenges have you faced related to identity, and how have you navigated them?
- What would an equitable and inclusive coaching relationship look like for you?
- How can I better support your experience as a full, whole person?

4. Watch for the Quiet Signals

Bias and resistance don't always announce themselves. Notice if you:

- Avoid identity even when your client hints at it
- Rush to reframe or “silver-line” stories of harm
- Default to examples, metaphors, or leadership models rooted in whiteness
- Center your own discomfort instead of your client’s lived experience

❖ *Let this be a space for noticing. No shame, no retreat. Just awareness and recommitment.* ❖

5. Practice Commitments

Pick one to explore for the next 30 days:

- I will ask at least one identity-aware coaching question with each client this month.
- I will debrief at least one session weekly through the lens of race, power, and culture.
- I will name one moment of discomfort and stay with it, instead of editing it out.
- I will read, listen to, or learn from someone whose lived experience differs from mine.
- I will invite feedback from a trusted colleague on how I navigate cultural dynamics.

Closing Reflection

Who do I want to be as a coach, not just when it's easy, but when it matters?

Connect with Me

If this guide resonated with you, I'd love to stay connected. Here's where you can find more reflections, resources, and upcoming offerings:

 **Website:** thesocialleadershipcoach.com

 **LinkedIn:** [Gloria Custodio, Esq, PCC](https://www.linkedin.com/in/gloria-custodio-esq-pcc/)

 **Facebook Page:** [The Social Leadership Coach](https://www.facebook.com/TheSocialLeadershipCoach/)

 **Amazon Author Page:** [amazon.com/author/gmcustodio](https://www.amazon.com/author/gmcustodio)

Let's keep building a more joyful, inclusive, and courageous coaching world together.