

# True Transformation, A Coaching Triumph – Ken Buist

## How coaching produced both attitudinal and physical transformation in an angry CEO

I was engaged to coach the CEO of a tyre company, I will call him Fergus. He chose coaching because he was prone to outbursts of anger during board meetings and several of his staff had become fearful of him. He realized this was making him a less effective leader and he wanted me to coach him on behavior change that would make him a 'more peaceful and pleasant guy'.

During our first meeting and with the aid of a previously taken on-line character assessment I realized this outward anger was rooted in trauma which had occurred in the past. Certain triggers caused him to react with immature behaviors, rather than respond appropriately. My task, I explained, was to help him respond in a mature manner by helping him remove the emotional triggers, both current and in the past, which caused these outbursts.

Fergus had been one of four siblings and had been his mother's favorite. He explained how his mother, an excellent cook, would always cook filet steak when he visited, whereas the other siblings would have to make do with mince and potatoes. All was fine till Fergus and his mother fell out over money. The picture painted was that of a devoted mother who in return for making her son special, expected what she expected, when she expected it - after all it was her due (thought she). On the other hand, a devoted son who enjoyed the special treatment, but was a strong-minded individual who was used to having people do as he said yet felt controlled by his mother.



## Never seen alive again

He never saw his mother alive again after the fall out over money. Fergus learned of his mother's death a few years later when he read the announcement in the newspaper. He learned from his older sister that on her deathbed, when asked whether she wanted to see her son, his mother replied, "no let him read about my death in the newspaper". Who can know what drives a mother to act in this way towards someone who had been her pride and joy? It is not for me to judge but I saw before me the impact which that bitterness and unforgiveness had contributed to another person's deterioration. His mother was not responsible for his current behaviour; however, there were some important clues as to why this man had ended up in my office.

Fergus was angry and bitter towards his mother for what she had done. He was deeply hurt and incredibly stressed because both back then and now there were situations over which he felt powerless. He was used to being in control; not being so was realizing one of his worst fears. Deep down he hated himself. If only he had behaved differently he could have been reconciled with his mother. He could have avoided all this pain, he would have had better relationships with his wife and with all the people he encountered – it was all his fault; at least that was his perception and therefore his internal dialogue.



## The Angry Outbursts

The angry outbursts which were intimidating to colleagues were simply a tapping into a reservoir of pain from the unresolved conflicts which were very near the surface and obvious to the trained eye. A few well-chosen questions quickly established a connection with the pain. He had never talked through these events, so this became a catharsis where I was a supportive onlooker to the expression and partial expelling of pain, anger, bitterness, and fear.

When the emotion had subsided, and objectivity had begun to return, we turned our attention to 'what now'. Having the revelation that it was the events of back then that were the root cause of the here and now, Fergus was prepared to take responsibility and do what was necessary to move on.

## The Power of Forgiveness

Step by step we went through the forgiveness process, giving up all right to revenge, forgiving unconditionally rather than just excusing. Firstly, he chose to forgive his mother for her part in the whole painful episode. Although dead, it was not that she needed to hear this forgiveness, but that Fergus had come to a point where he was able to release this forgiveness and wipe the slate clean. It did not make what his mother did right, but it did set him free from the pain and control of bitterness.

Next, having owned up to his responsibility in the whole affair, Fergus was ready to forgive himself. This he did whilst being encouraged to cover off each individual aspect of a relationship having gone sour. He emerged from this time-consuming exercise a free man. Free from the bitterness that had poisoned him for so many years and had, in turn, affected so many other relationships. Free from the involuntary angry response which reflected the pain and guilt that he felt, and now at peace with himself, with the seeds of contentment firmly planted.

## Then the exciting surprise

It didn't end there though. A couple of weeks later I received a call from an excited Fergus who was having difficulty constructing the message he wanted to communicate. He was so in awe of what he wanted to tell me. When we first met he struck me with his presence. Tall and slightly stooped, the one flaw was the obvious crippling effect of arthritis as he reached out to shake hands. This he did by clasping my hand in both of his as he was unable to open his hands any distance to achieve a normal handshake.

As he managed to get the message out, I also began to get caught up in his excitement, in the end being reduced to tears. Arthritis had become his constant companion as had pain, disfigurement, and disability. The prognosis was not good with an anticipated steady decline into even more pain. Fergus was both shocked and elated when after our time together, after releasing the bitterness and anger, his symptoms of arthritis began to subside. Gradually the pain had become less and less and gradually he had been able to straighten his fingers and hand, the symptoms of arthritis were disappearing. When he addressed the 'twisting and contortion' in his soul caused by anger, fear & bitterness, then the outward expression of this, the arthritis began to disappear from his body. For me, it demonstrated the very real link between body and mind.



## Maybe Helpful for you

Fergus had become truly 'Transformed'. It started on the inside and went on to significantly affect the outside for good. Since this event, I have discussed with others who have had similar experiences regarding arthritis and there appears to be some evidence that this can happen. However please do not read what I am not saying. I am not saying all arthritis is caused by bitterness and unforgiveness. What I am saying is if you have a client who is suffering from arthritis I would always examine any retained bitterness or unforgiveness that is present. If that proves to be the case, you may wish to take them through [The Forgiveness Pathway™ HERE](#) which you can download from my website with my compliments.