



The second reading

A workbook for coaches who are willing to turn the lens around.

Companion to *What If You're the One Avoiding Feelings?*

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The card didn't change.

You did.

You looked at an image and read it as a way of seeing your emotions. Then you looked at the same image and asked what it would mean if those emotions were *helping* you coach. Nothing about the picture moved. The story did.

Researchers call that cognitive reappraisal — intentionally choosing the meaning we assign to a feeling. Alexander Stover and colleagues pooled fifty-five studies covering nearly thirty thousand people and found that changing the story reliably changes the response, and builds resilience after difficulty.

Which lands on a single point, and it is the point of the whole session:

The stories we tell ourselves about feelings shape the way we experience them — and how they guide us.

For a coach, that has a specific consequence. If your working story is that your feelings in the chair are noise to be managed, you will spend the session managing them. If your story is that they are information about the relationship, you will spend the session listening to them. Same feelings. Different practice.

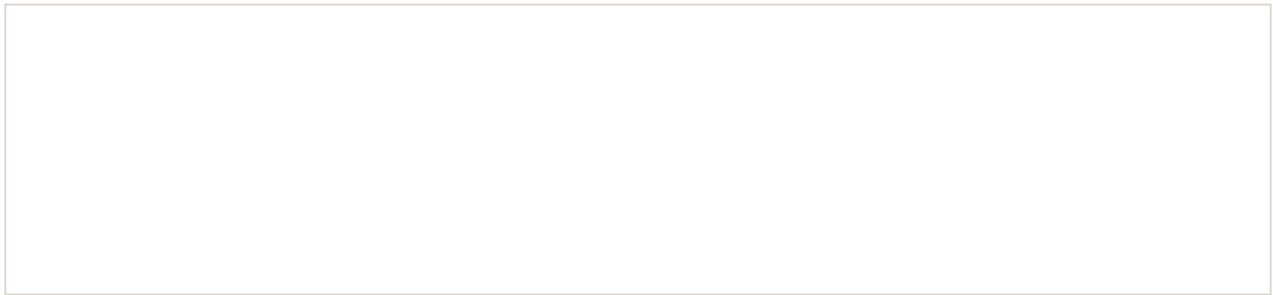
The three pages that follow are the tools for building the second story. Write in them.

Your feeling metaphor

The way you picture emotions shapes the way you treat them.

Emotions are visceral, so we reach for images to talk about them. Trouble. Traps. Messages. Weather. Weight. Each metaphor makes some part of emotional life visible and hides another. There is no correct one — but there is a current one, and it is worth knowing yours.

1 · Your metaphor right now. When you think about your own emotions in a coaching session, what image comes to mind? A few words, or a sketch.



2 · What it says. Is this image helpful? Overwhelming? Protective? Motivating? What does it suggest about how you treat your feelings when a session gets hard?

3 · The second reading. If this same image were a way your emotions *serve* your coaching, what would it mean?

The coach's decode sheet

A hypothesis, not a verdict.

What you feel in the chair is data about the relationship, not a conclusion about your client. Emotions make great advisors and terrible bosses — the discipline is to consult the feeling rather than obey it. When something moves in you mid-session, one of these is usually the question underneath.

Boredom

Is anything real happening here — or are we in the safe story?

Irritation

Whose boundary just got crossed? Whose pace am I defending?

Anxiety

Am I attached to an outcome? Whose agenda is this?

Urge to rescue

Do I doubt their capacity right now?

Sudden tenderness

They just touched something true.

Yours. The feelings that actually show up for you, and the question each one might be asking.

Four ways to change the story

Not spin. A frame that honors what's true and still lets you move.

These are the reappraisal strategies the research finds most effective. They work on your own difficult feelings, and every one of them is also a move you already make with clients.

Self-distancing. Describe the situation as though you were watching it from outside. *"I notice she's working hard to stay with this."* Loosens the grip of the immediate reaction.

Contextual reframing. Place the moment inside a longer story rather than treating it as the whole story. Connects a hard experience to future meaning.

Positive reappraisal. Without denying the difficulty, notice what is genuinely workable or good. Restores balance and the motivation to keep going.

Decentering. Treat what's happening as an experience, not an identity. *"I'm having a hard session"* rather than *"I'm a struggling coach."*

When something strong arrives, three questions are usually enough:

What story am I telling about this feeling?
Is there another story that's also true?
What meaning would help me move forward?

Try it on the moment you found in the room.

If you want to keep going

Where this work lives

Six Seconds is the world's first and largest organization dedicated entirely to emotional intelligence, working in more than 100 countries. The tune-in you practiced today is the core of what we do inside organizations like FedEx, Siemens and Accenture — training coaches, and bringing a coach-approach to leaders.

For coaches specifically, we build the assessments and tools that make this measurable: the SEI suite, the Brain Brief Profile, and a certification path that runs from practitioner through to ICF-accredited master coach.

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Connect with me on LinkedIn. I curate the Emotional Intelligence Network there — I'd genuinely like to know what you tried and what happened. linkedin.com/in/freedman

The book. *Emotion Rules: The Science and Practice of Emotional Wisdom*, where these practices come from. emotionrules.com

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