Using a question for homework

At the end of last week's coaching session, the coach left the client with a question to ponder—a question that could have many different answers at different levels. The homework question was, "Where do you abandon yourself?"

Client: Well, at first, I didn't see anything. And then I started noticing my helplessness around my time — how I never seem to have enough time because I'm always busy with other people needing things.

COACH: "Abandon yourself" in the sense of giving away your time to other people. What's it like when you give away your time?

Client: I noticed I had this habit of saying, "I can't do anything because I don't have time"—until I finally noticed that it is MY time. I get to decide what I agree to.

COACH: Where else do you abandon yourself?

Client: I also noticed it in my relationship. When my partner gets upset with me, I withdraw, disappear, or cave in. I'm getting better at taking a stand, but it's an old pattern.

COACH: What else did you discover with the question?

Client: Well, I just kept looking at it. I also noticed where other people give away their power.

COACH: Where was that?

Client: At a meeting last week. We had different professionals review my child's EHCP, and one of the professionals was really nervous in the meeting. They looked like they had completely lost their self-confidence and authority. It was fascinating.

COACH: Was that true for you, too?

Client: More than I'd like to admit. I thought I was more beyond that than I guess I am.

COACH: Is there more?

Client: No, I think that covers it. Thanks.

COACH: So here's your homework question for next week: where do you take an uncompromising stand?

Client: Okay. I'll reflect on that one.

Adapted from Coactive Coaching, Whitworth (2007), p83