



Dancing between Cultures: Culturally Intelligent Coaching for Missions and Ministry
Tina Stoltzfus Horst ©2017

Monochronic and Polychronic Values

One additional set of values related to time is the Monochronic and Polychronic continuum. Polychronic organizations, businesses and clients will easily interrupt one task/event to attend to another. Attention can be given to many things at once. Monochronic cultures prefer to focus their full attention on one thing/relationship/event at a time for the duration of the segment of time or event.¹ Generational culture, as well as national culture, can vary with this continuum.

The primary way that this value continuum impacts the coaching relationship is expectations about interruptions. Polychronic culture clients will not feel it is abnormal or rude to take another call during their coaching appointment, attend to a crying baby, or answer the door. They may leave their email open during coaching appointments. It is not difficult for them to switch their attention. Nor is such activity considered to be impolite toward their coach or on the part of their coach, should the coach in turn engage in such behaviors. In contrast, Monochronic coachees will expect their coach to give them their full attention for however long the coaching session is. If the coach takes another call during the session from another client or a family member or gets up to get a cup of coffee or answer the door, this will be considered rude and unprofessional.

Coaches will need to adjust expectations regarding this time value in order to manage their own expectations during the appointment. For a Monochronic coach coaching a Polychronic client, be ready for your client to interrupt the session with other activities. Exercise patience. For Polychronic coaches coaching Monochronic clients, be disciplined not to take other calls or let other events or distractions interrupt the coaching session.

¹ Philippe Rosinski, *Coaching Across Cultures: New Tools for Leveraging National, Corporate & Professional Differences* (London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2003), 95.