

COACHING I

4. LIFE COACHING & PERSONAL COACHING

4.1. Life Coaching and/or Personal Coaching

Personal coaching or 'life coaching' as it is commonly described and promoted is a quite recent area of learning and development. Life coaching can be effective in many situations, for example in helping a person's career direction and development, or for personal fulfillment or life change more generally. Life coaching, or becoming a personal coach is also a career opportunity in itself that interests many people from a wide variety of backgrounds. In recent years a big industry has grown under the heading of 'life coaching'. For this reason the term 'life coaching' appears widely in related marketing and publicity, which can create a perception that 'life coaching' is in some way quite different from other forms of personal coaching. In fact the term 'personal coaching' can be equally descriptive of what 'life coaching' entails: many personal coaches have capabilities which match those of 'life coaches', and many clients of personal coaches experience exactly the same coaching effects as in the 'life coaching' industry. Accordingly, throughout this document, the terms 'life coaching' and 'personal coaching' are inter-changeable, and mean the same. Life coaching/personal coaching is interesting from the standpoint of being coached, and also becoming a coach. This research aims to cover both angles.

Life coaching and personal coaching are interchangeable terms, they mean the same. Life coaching aims to draw out a person's potential rather than put in aims and knowledge from outside. It develops rather than imposes. It reflects rather than directs. Effective life coaching or personal coaching is a form of change facilitation - it enables people, rather than trains them. Life coaching is reactive and flexible - it allows for personal transition on an individual basis. Coaching of this sort makes no assumptions - it's not judgmental, nor is it prescriptive or instructional. Empathy is central to the coaching process. Good personal coaching seeks to help the other person's understanding of himself or herself. Life coaching is rather like a brand or label of the life coaching industry, but it potentially covers virtually every aspect of personal development that an individual might aspire to for career direction and development, management, executive and leadership, business start-up and entrepreneurialism, life skills, personal fulfillment, life-

balance, and the acquisition of specific skills or knowledge. Life coaching can be this adaptable because it is not concerned with delivery and specialized training it focuses on enablement and reflection, so that the individual decides and discovers their required progression themselves.

4.2. Purposes of Life Coaching and Personal Coaching

People use life coaches and personal coaches for various reasons, for example as a sounding board, for career help, and/or career direction. Coaching is about getting the very best out of someone and enabling them to make decisions that will improve their life. Coaches are hired for very many different and diverse reasons, for example: to climb the career ladder faster; to feel more fulfilled at work; to improve relationships with family and partners; to learn parenting skills that benefit both the child and parent; to gain a spiritual meaning to life, or a desire to 'get sorted'. The profession is growing and coaching is becoming widely acknowledged also because people realize just how effective coaching is. Coaching is a relatively new and different profession - different to psychology, counselling or therapy. The big difference between coaching and these professions is that coaching doesn't claim to have the answers. A coach's job is not to go over old ground, be past-orientated or to force-feed information, but to work with clients to help them find the answers themselves. Also, when a person experiences being coached, their motivation comes from working with a coach who is him/herself an upbeat, positive role model. In this way coaching is a unique way of developing people. Coaches agree that helping clients to reach their full potential through this approach produces great satisfaction.

Many people enter the life coaching profession having been coached first, enjoying and benefiting from the experience, and feeling inspired to help others in a similar manner. Life coaching offers a potentially rewarding additional or alternative career to people of all sorts. Whatever the reasons for people deciding to work with coaches; whatever the type of coaching given, and whatever results clients seek from coaching, a common feature in all coaching relationship is that coaching is a two-way process. The two-way partnership is a main attraction for people to coaching. Both coach and client benefit. Personal development for the coach is a huge aspect of learning coaching and all coaches find that they themselves grow yourself, before starting to help others to do the same. An excellent coach finds out new things about themselves and is on a continuous learning journey. Indeed, becoming a coach means a lifelong quest for personal excellence. For many this quest is the motivation to become a coach in the first place. Helping clients

discover where they want to go and helping them to get there is now a proven methodology, which is fuelling the increasing popularity of professional coaching.

Significantly, good coaches are never motivated entirely by money. The very nature of coaching means that it's a profession that is centered around 'making a difference' and helping people. Focusing mainly on making money generally leads to a lack of concern for the client, with the result that the client exits the relationship, not surprisingly. Happily, coaches who enter the profession chiefly for financial gain leave coaching quickly - which helps to maintain the integrity of the coaching professional reputation. Common factors and reasons for coaches entering the profession:

- **they like people and want to bring out the best in them**
- **they want to do something more fulfilling in their lives**
- **they want personal and financial freedom**
- **their family, friends and colleagues previously turned to them for advice and help - they have natural 'people' skills.**

Coaching entails helping yourself grow and become more self-aware, at the same time, helping others to overcome problems in their lives.

4.3. How Life & Personal Coaching Operate and Challenges

Interestingly, most life coaching and personal coaching is conducted on the telephone. Many coaches never actually meet their clients. For several reasons coaching is just as effective over the telephone as it is face-to-face. In fact, many clients prefer to speak over the telephone. This makes the process very convenient for both coach and client, and it offers greater flexibility for people with a busy lifestyle. Coaching using the telephone offers other obvious advantages:

- coaching can be conducted wherever coach and client happen to be - anywhere in the world
- there's no travelling time or cost involved
- since little preparation needs to be done, telephone coaching sessions can be arranged with minimum prior notice
- coaches do not need offices, meeting rooms, staff or other expensive overheads

A coaching session is typically thirty minutes and rarely longer than an hour.

On a day-to-day basis, coaches face many challenges. Coaching is an ongoing process, a method of continuous development and a significant learning experience for coaches and clients, so it's important to learn from 'mistakes'. The key to this is realizing that these aren't 'mistakes' or failings in the first place. What many people regard as mistakes are lessons, experiences, and opportunities to learn and develop. Cherie Carter-Scott in her book 'If Life Is Game, These Are The Rules' has some helpful things to say about mistakes and learning. So does Don Miguel Ruiz in his book 'The Four Agreements'. See also the inspirational quotes, many of which help to approach mistakes and learning experiences positively. Perhaps one of the most powerful examples is "What does not kill us makes us stronger." (attributed to Friedrich Nietzsche, based on his words: "Out of life's school of war: What does not destroy me, makes me stronger." from *The Twilight of the Idols*, 1899). A coach must demonstrate resourcefulness and help people to see that if they think they have failed in the past, this bears no bearing to what they can do in the future.

John Cassidy-Rice is a qualified coach who has been working in personal development for many years. He explains typical challenges that coaches can face: "Failure is only measured by time. If you look at the bigger picture, it's the 'failures' in our life that can actually turn out to be our greatest successes. What we learn from failure is invaluable. To give an example, when a football team loses an important match, they may regard themselves as failures; it's a natural thought process to go through. However, if they take it one match at a time, and look at where they went wrong in the game, and indeed, how they can improve for the next one, it means that these mistakes won't be made again - and they'll be successful in the future games they play. It can be a challenge to remove the 'failure' thought from clients. And showing them that it doesn't mean they can't achieve success in the future."

Listening skills, and resisting the urge to give advice are key attributes and methods of successful coaching, and central to truly helping people find their own direction and solutions. Listening is the most important ability and behavior of a coach. This takes patience, tolerance and practice, especially in order to develop real empathic listening techniques. Communicating fully and expertly is a quality that most good coaches will possess. Many coaches draw on the techniques and principles of Neuro-Linguistic Programming to assimilate and master these important communicating capabilities.

Understanding the client's needs is also pivotal to the coach-client relationship, and a prerequisite for avoiding difficulties in the relationship and coaching support process. It is essential that coaches coach and do not give advice. There's a huge difference between coaching and advising: Coaching is centered around the client; whereas advising tends to be based on the beliefs, values and opinions of the advisor. In this respect a coach is most certainly not an advisor. The coach's role, and the coaching concept, is to help the other person find their own solutions, not to have them follow an advisor's recommendations or suggestions. This is a fundamental principle.

4.4. Becoming a Life/Personal Coach

The following guide is offered as a way for persons who are interested in becoming a life or personal coach.

Step 1: Find courses in life coach training. There are a variety of methods through which you can take training courses to become a certified life coach. Many training centers offer a combination of these methods for life coach training.

- **Online training modules.** Participating in live online training sessions allows you to take the training modules in the convenience of your own home if there is not a training center location close to you. You will participate through web conferencing technology with life coach teachers and other students.
- **Distance learning courses.** Similar to online training courses, you can often find distance learning training courses that allow you to work through self-study guides/software in addition to online chat forums and virtual classrooms. Again, the advantage of this is that you do not need to live near a training center in order to participate. This method also allows you to work at your own pace.
- **Workshops.** Some training organizations offer training to become a life coach through workshops of varying duration.
- **One-on-one mentorship.** Another way to get life coach training is through one-on-one mentoring with a qualified professional. You can meet with a life coach either in person or over the phone to get training tailored to meet your needs.

Step 2: Get your certification credentials. Life coach certification is administered through the International Coach Federation. This organization sets

the standards and training requirements in order to achieve their credentials. Once you have taken your training courses and achieved your coaching experience, you can apply for these certifications, take the required exam and pay the fee to become a certified life coach. These are 3 levels of certification to be a life coach:

- Associate Certified Coach (ACC). This credential requires 60 hours of coach training, 100 hours of client contact.
- Professional Certified Coach (PCC). This credential requires 130 hours of coach training, 750 hours of client contact hours.
- Master Certified Coach (MCC). This credential requires 200 hours of coach training, 2,500 hours of client contact hours and 10 hours of work with a qualified mentor.

Step 3: Specialize and find a certified life coach job. Once you have been certified as a life coach, you can work in many different areas, in different capacities. Many life coaches will likely start their own practice, working with clients directly. Other life coaches might choose to be motivational speakers, or specialize in other coaching areas, such as business coaching, career coaching, time management, health and wellness coaching or academic coaching.