A Solid Coaching Foundation

Since the first modern coaching models were developed during the latter half of the 20th century, coaching has rapidly spread across the world as both a profession and a communication technique that has been applied to everything from corporate management to personal growth. ***Life and business coaches have helped countless clients realize that they themselves hold the keys to success in both their professional and personal lives.***

Today, the coaching industry is ***growing faster than ever*** as more and more professionals become certified coaches in order to improve their own leadership and mentoring skills or build a rewarding coaching practice of their own.

The Origins of Professional Coaching



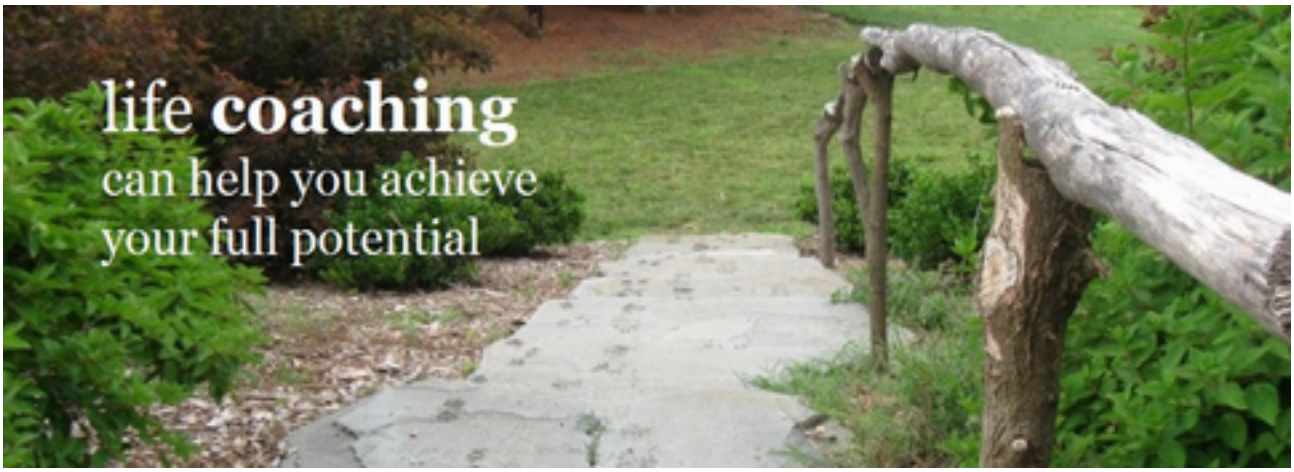
While coaching has existed in some form or another since the dawn of civilization, the roots of professional coaching did not catch hold until a series of books by W. Timothy Gallwey called *The Inner Game of Tennis* and *The Inner Game of Skiing* started appearing on shelves during the 1970s. Up to that time, tennis and skiing instructors had approached coaching these sports by teaching athletes how to master the physical techniques that have proven to be successful over time. After becoming captain of Harvard's tennis team and spending learning how to use meditation to improve his athletic performance, Gallwey presented the argument that ***an equal amount of emphasis must be placed on coaching athletes to overcome their own fears, doubts, assumptions and other inner obstacles.***

In the years to come, this novel approach began to be applied to pursuits outside of sports, and soon everyone from music instructors to corporate leaders were ***developing new coaching techniques that were designed improve performance by taking on their own inner games.*** Sir John Whitmore (*Coaching for Performance*) is widely recognized as being the one of the first to expand coaching to the business world, while others like Alan Fine, Graham Alexander and George T. Doran developed instruments like the SMART and GROW models that fine tuned the essence of coaching. By the turn of the century, these basic tools and techniques had been improved and expanded upon to become the core of the coaching process.

What is Coaching?

Coaching is a process of questioning, listening and assessing that leads clients to clarify their goals while determining the best method of overcoming obstacles and making their aspirations a reality. Although most people have a general idea of what they want out of life, professional coaches are trained to ask the right types of probing questions in order for clients to clearly articulate exactly where they want to be in the future.

At the same time, many people have a muddled view of what has been holding them back, and coaches know how to lead the clients toward taking a good look at precisely what obstacles are standing in the way and the best way to begin moving forward.



The coaching process is centered entirely on the clients themselves and is focused on overcoming inner doubts and limiting concepts in order to for them to recognize their true potential. ***When coaching is done right, the client is always behind the wheel while the coach asks him where wants to go next and how he plans on getting there.***

What isn't Coaching?



While the true coaching process is essentially simple, you should recognize that there is a lot of misunderstanding out there about what coaching entails. Clients frequently seek out professional coaches without knowing exactly what the process entails. ***As a coach, you must be able to spot some common misconceptions immediately in order to correct their perception of what coaching is all about.*** In a nutshell, coaching is not:

- **Therapy** - Many people who have not been exposed to professional coaching before incorrectly assuming that the process is essentially a less formal version of psychological therapy. While clients do discuss some of the obstacles that they are facing with their coach, life and business coaches are focused on the present and the future rather than resolving issues from the past.

- **Counseling** - Counseling deals with treating a specific issue such as bereavement or marital distress by providing patients with advice and suggestions for moving forward. Coaches deal with a client's personal or professional life as a whole and refrain from giving direct advice or guidance.

- **Mentoring** - The coaching and mentoring processes have a few things in common, but they are not interchangeable terms. Mentors frequently use coaching techniques to help their students, but they also provide them with tutelage and direct advice. The purpose of coaching is based solely on guiding clients to overcome obstacles and reach goals on their own.

- **Training** - Training is a process that assumes that a person does not already have the experience, knowledge and resources necessary to reach their goals. Coaching is a process that's based on the assumption clients already have what they need to succeed and just need someone to help them realize it for themselves.

- **An Activity** - ***Lastly, coaching is neither an activity or an event; it's a process.*** Coaches help clients change their perspectives on their goals and obstacles, and the process is about much more than attending a coaching session itself.

Why is Coaching Effective?



The profession coaching industry has been growing exponentially during the last decade for one reason: ***Coaching works.*** Other approaches like counseling and mentoring are designed to address patterns of behavior or telling people what they need to do in order to improve themselves. Coaching is based on allowing clients to set the agenda themselves and find the perfect trigger points that will unleash their true potential.

Most clients seek out a life or business coach to address one particular obstacle or aspiration that they would like to confront. However, they nearly always find that the recognition of their own inner capacity serves as ***a catalyst that has a systemic effect throughout the personal and professional lives.***



The Coaching Relationship

Professional coaches must know how to foster and encourage a professional coaching relationship in order to reach a positive outcome. At the heart of every successful coaching relationship is a dialogue between a coach and a client that dates back to the days of Socrates in ancient Greece. ***In the coaching relationship, a coach asks a client a series of poignant, probing questions and listens while a client searches within to find the answers.***



When you are working with a new client for the first time, asking some solid, direct questions is the best way to build the foundation for a healthy and productive coaching relationship. You will find that some clients prefer to start a session with some idle chit chat, but be sure to open up the coaching dialogue with the right questions as soon as they have made themselves comfortable.

Life and business coaches ensure that their coaching relationships remain professional. Having a pleasant, informal style can be helpful when establishing trust with your clients, but they should understand implicitly from your behavior that you will maintain your role as their coach and cannot be their personal friend. Make this clear to new clients by explaining the nature of the coaching process, and no misunderstandings about the nature of your relationship will arise in the future.

The Four Core Components of Professional Coaching



Understanding Personality Styles - No matter how many coaching models and techniques you master as a professional coach, the truth of the matter is that there is no one size fits all approach to successful coaching. You will need to be able to customize your coaching methods and style to match each client's unique personality. Many coaches use personality tests such as the DISC assessment to zone in on the proper approach for each client.

- **Asking Probing Questions** - The central premise of professional coaching is asking clients questions that lead them toward delineating goals and finding solutions on their own. Posing probing questions that delve past your clients' limiting assumptions and concepts allows them to discover answers to problems that they may have had at hand all along.

- **Listening Effectively** - Solid questioning techniques may be the cornerstone of effective coaching, but experienced life and business coaches spend a good 70% of their time listening to and assessing what their clients have to say. Learning how to become an active listener will keep your clients engaged and keep yourself focused on the path that your clients are choosing to take when moving forward.

- **Goal Setting and Strategizing** - By listening closely to your clients and asking the right kinds of questions, you will help them to realize precisely where they want to be and how they are going to get there. Professional coaches may not provide clients with advice or suggestions, but they do not allow a session to be completed until a client has clearly outlined their goals and a measurable, attainable strategy for making progress in the immediate future.

