

Coaching Basics

Whether you are an experienced or novice coach, it is always helpful to review the coaching fundamentals that support the coaching relationship/partnership.

Coaches Do:	Coaches Do Not:
Coaches are partners to their clients, with the deep understanding that the client is already creative, resourceful, and whole.	Coaches do not show up as an expert, giving advice, telling clients who they are or should be.
Because coaches are partners, and not experts, they are willing to be stumped. They are willing to take a pause and reflect on how they can best serve their client. They are willing to share their process with the client so the client can guide them into the most useful direction. Coaches, to the best of their ability, focus their attention on their client, not on their “performance.”	Coaches are not focused on being smooth or on how they are appearing to the client.
Coaches use reflective listening. Skillfully mirroring what they’ve heard and getting to the bottom line helps the client to see things more clearly. This skill comes with practice. Notice how other coaches do it.	Active listening is not repeating over and over what the client has said in a rote manner.
Coaches use skillful open questions. (See below). Powerful questions are those that help a client to make a leap in awareness. Often the most powerful questions are the result of the coach being in learning mode and simply following his/her curiosity. Notice how other coaches do it.	Coaches use few closed questions, though they are at times useful when applied skillfully.
Remember that as the coach you can’t know everything that the client does. They are the only experts in their life. Your questions should help them advance their awareness toward what is most important to them now and in their future. When you ask questions, ask yourself if you are asking for yourself or for your client.	Asking for all the details can lead a client into their old worn out story that they’ve told a hundred times. The old story doesn’t have life in it. Their curiosity and new awareness has life in it. It’s unmistakable when they reach it.

<p>Coaches follow the client's lead concerning what the client wants to work on. The client sets the agenda and the coach structures the session. The client is the only expert on his/her life. The coach can make suggestions about ways to explore the client's agenda for the session, but the client always has the final say. Coaches request permission to explore new territory or propose experiments.</p>	<p>Coaches do not tell clients what they should do or lead the client with the coach's agenda. As the coach, you may think you understand what the client should be, do, or have. Even if you are right (though you are probably dead wrong) it's not helpful to the client. The best way is to open the space for the client to discover for themselves what is right for them. Remember, it's the client's life and it's their session.</p>
<p>Clients do the work and the majority of the talking. If you find yourself talking a lot, you probably are not coaching. In Wellness Coaching, there is the proviso that there are times when the coach imparts information to assist the client to achieve his/her goals. But it is only with the permission of the client. Coaches can also share personal experience as long it is infrequent and in the service of the client's goals and with permission. Remember that coaching works because the coaches use their skill to help the client be in learning mode. Deep listening and inquiry opens that pathway. Lecturing closes it.</p>	<p>Coaches do not lecture clients. Remember that the natural human tendency is to push back if you are being pushed. So if you are pushing your client in a direction, he/she will naturally resist or push back. That doesn't help the client to achieve his/her goals. Both are a result of protecting mode.</p>
<p>Coaches assist clients to design action steps that support them in their goals. A good ending question from which action steps arise is "What are you taking away from the session?"</p>	<p>Coaches do not assign action steps.</p>
<p>Coaches assist clients to design methods of acknowledgement or accountability concerning their action steps. If action steps were completed, the coach acknowledges it appropriately. If action steps were not completed, the coach acknowledges it appropriately, keeping in mind the client's stated goals. The coach does his/her best to stay in learning mode, without judging the client. Inaction is fertile territory to explore and is an opportunity for the client's deeper awareness.</p>	<p>Coaches are not action step cops. Remember that shame is the greatest impediment to wellness and lifestyle change. We change when we have set up enough support and are focused on strong motivations for change. Shame completely dismantles all of that.</p>