



UNIT-3

Life Coaching Tools & techniques

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Discuss the most effective life coaching tools
- ✓ Understand the importance of values in life coaching
- ✓ Nurture motivation in clients to help them achieve their goals

Unit 3

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The Essential Life Coaching Tools

This section outlines tools that are often used often in a life coaching session. This is the essential tool set for a life coach and will be used in nearly every session:

1. **Clarifying Values.** Helping clients identify and clarify values is an important step towards fulfillment.
2. **Vision.** Imagining what is possible and filling out the details is a vital skill that has a big impact on a client's motivation as well.
3. **Perspectives.** The perspective a client takes has a big influence on the quality of action and follow through a client takes.
4. **Busting Limiting Beliefs.** Similar to perspectives, a negative assumption or stubborn limiting belief can derail wellintentioned action.Life coaching offers a way to bust lurking limiting beliefs.
5. **Managing Motivation.** Sparking and maintaining motivation is an essential step during the process of creating sustainable systems and habits.
6. **Accountability.**The art and skill of holding clients accountable for their action both builds the life coaching relationship as well as provides immense value to clients.

Clarifying Values

Value comes from the Latin word valere meaning to be strong or fare well. Values are literally those things in our lives that fortify us and we determine to have worth. Values are unique to an individual and represent what is most important in their life. A person can share values with other people, but their complete list of values is like a fingerprint. It makes their set of values unique from everyone else's in the world. By contrast, morals are customs and beliefs about what is right and wrong that are held by society. Ethics are a conformity with a code of conduct usually narrowed by a particular field or profession. Each society has its own moral code, and each profession has its ethical guidelines.

For life coaching purposes, values have four components:

1. **Worth.** A value is something that the client holds to be important and has worth to them. If something is worth it, they are willing to give or give up something for the sake of it. For example, if exercise is a top value for a client, they are willing to give up an extra hour of sleep in the morning.If spending time with their family is a value, they are willing to give their family

attention while giving up spending time with friends. Values inherently come with a sense of worth.

2. **Defined and clear.** From a life coaching perspective, a value is specific and clearly defined. As a value, “family” is not specific enough. Identifying the area of “family” as a value is a good start, but does not have enough clarity to be useful to the client. For example, “spending time together as a family” is a more powerful value than just “family.” Having a value for “that moment when family is together and everyone smiles and laughs at the same time” is a more powerful than “spending time together.” The more specific and clear a value, the more useful and powerful it will be in a client’s life.
3. **A name.** Having values with names fifteen words long is cumbersome and not as useful as having a list of values with unique names. Using the example above, the “moment when everyone laughs at the same time” could be termed, “Laughter Shared.” Creating a unique name gives a value more meaning and versatility for the client. For example, the client with the value “Laughter Shared” may also find ways to apply it at school with friends or work with colleagues.
4. **Inspires action.** Once a value is clear and has a name, the last criterion is that a value inspires and informs action in the client’s life.

Vision

Vision as a life coaching skill is the client’s ability to imagine an experience in the future. The basis of this skill is for the coach and the client to trust the imagination of the client. Vision is such a central topic in life coaching because coaches help clients see what is possible for them in the future and use their imagination to think of what it will actually be like to be in that position. It is one of the best tools that coaches have.

Helping clients use vision in their lives has five components:

1. **Imagination.** Imagination is central to the vision process and a client’s ability to trust their imagination is the most important component of vision. Jumping into a vision for the future is an act of faith and requires trusting the imagination and allowing it to take shape.
2. **Awareness of what is most important.** There is no right or wrong answers when it comes to vision and what a client wants in the future. Sometimes it is a challenge for clients to answer questions that have no right or wrong answers. Part of what makes vision as a skill so useful is that instead of looking for what is right or wrong, coaches look for what seems to have the most impact and what aligns with the client’s Values. Vision requires being aware of what are the most important things to the client.
3. **The bigger picture.** Vision often requires looking at something from a larger point of view and looking at the significance of the current action.

4. **Little details.** Vision sometimes requires looking at the little minute details of the future and making those little details more visceral.
5. **Stamina.** Using imagination requires energy and takes stamina. Especially if the client is not used to using imagination, staying focused on what will be like in the future can be a challenge. A coach's well-developed stamina and their ability to stick with clients for longer periods of time is a vital skill in the life coaching process.

Perspective

A Perspective is a set of beliefs and attitudes through which something is perceived and which also influences perception and the action taken. It has both a mental structure as well as a typical emotion associated with it. From a life coaching point of view, being able to identify the usual way a client sees him or herself, as well as the situation, is essential for helping clients increase their self-awareness and take more effective action.

Having a certain perspective is a large part of the human experience. Perspectives are incredibly useful clients because it affects their perception of reality. It is impossible for them to see reality objectively without the filter of perspectives.

Since perspective shapes how a client perceives reality, its influence is undeniable. If the client has the perspective that they are a bad student and adopt a negative attitude, it is much harder for them to get the grades that he or she wants. On the other hand, if that same client were able to shift their perspective to realize that they have the tools needed to be a good student and can adopt an eager or even positive attitude, the client is able to take much more effective action and get better results.

The coach–client relationship is an outstanding tool for helping clients become aware of their default perspectives as well as help clients create and use more useful perspectives.

Busting Negative Assumptions and Limiting Beliefs

Assumptions and beliefs can either be useful or limiting, and life coaching is particularly effective at ferreting out client's negative assumptions and limiting beliefs in order to replace them with assumptions and beliefs that help them move forward. Replacing a Negative Assumption or Busting a Limiting Belief has three parts:

1. **Isolating the idea.** Identifying the essence of an idea is an important part of understanding the mechanics and system for replacing negative assumptions and busting limiting beliefs.
2. **Finding the disconnect.** Perhaps at one point the idea would have been useful to the client, but in the current circumstances, the idea limits and acts as a drag on the client's forward

movement. A limiting belief impedes and limits the client's progress precisely because it no longer makes sense.

3. **Busting the limiting belief.** Busting a negative assumption or limiting belief involves addressing the limiting belief directly and determining new beliefs and actions to take the place of the outdated limiting belief.

Managing Motivation

Managing motivation is a skill that a life coach uses to spark motivation and help clients maintain an action. Helping clients maintain their motivation comes down to understanding the types of motivation and helping the client find their motivation style. There are three distinct parts for a coach to address to help the client manage motivation:

1. **The action defined.** Helps clients become aware of an action they want to take that may be a challenge for them to follow through on.
2. **The hurdle or the obstacle that stands in their way.** Often, it helps a Client's Learning [see page 37] to understand what is stopping them or what is in the way of following through on an action.
3. **The drive or the reason for following through on their action.** A coach needs to help identify the particular motivation style the client uses. Each of these motivation types has its benefits and drawbacks. One style is not necessarily better than another. They each add to a client's available tools to get and stay motivated.

Accountability

Accountability is when a coach holds a client accountable for the action that they decided to take between coaching sessions. As a tool, it helps the coach manage a client's action, and from the client's perspective, it can be a powerful tool to keep them moving forward in their action.

Accountability, at its best, also serves as a structure to measure the effectiveness of a client's action as well as the systems the client has in place.

Here are the components of accountability:

1. **Measurable result based on Well-Designed Actions.** An accountability has the element of a clear and measurable result.
2. **Time set to take the action.** An accountability often includes a plan of when the client is going to take the action.
3. **Time set when action is complete.** An accountability also has an end point or a due date for the action.

4. **Direct Communication.** An accountability has a time and method for letting the coach know that the action was taken. Usually this is an email, text, or voicemail; or it can be a check-in at the beginning of next session.

Additional Tools

Acknowledgement

Acknowledgement is when a coach addresses the characteristics or qualities the client drew upon to make something happen or move forward or grow. It is speaking directly to who the client is. Acknowledgement differs from a compliment in that a compliment usually addresses what they did, action that they took, or something that they are wearing. A complement, although welcome, usually just skims the surface while an acknowledgment is more like a pause in the recognition of something deeper and more permanent. Acknowledgment also differs from Championing in that championing points to the action steps the client took to achieve a certain outcome. Acknowledgment looks at the specific characteristics of who the client is and the strengths of those characteristics.

- A. **It points to a deeper truth.** Acknowledgment works so well because it points to something deeper than just the action that the client took. With acknowledgement, the coach addresses who the client needed to be to take the action. Addressing the deeper truth adds power to the coach–client relationship as well as encourages the client to look more deeply and fully at who they are and what they are capable of accomplishing.
- B. **Nominalization.** Nominalization is the act of taking something an action and changing it into a noun. When clients are thinking about changing who they are or their characteristics it is much harder to change those things rather than changing behaviors or making a different choice. Part of what makes acknowledgement so powerful is that coaches reverse the nominalization process. The coach looks at who clients think they are, for instance a poor student, and turn that process on its head. A coach can pick apart the actions of being a poor student that are not successful and ask the client to change those actions. By changing actions, clients achieve a different outcome and thus can turn limiting beliefs into empowering beliefs that they take through the action. With an acknowledgment coaches are essentially creating a nominalization. They are taking a positive characteristic and changing it into an adjective or noun that describes who the clients are. It is an extremely powerful tool that needs to be used carefully, and it is one of the reasons why acknowledgment is so effective.
- C. **The coach as mirror effect.** Clients are sometimes so stuck in the details and the facts of what is in front of them that it is a challenge to see the larger picture, the deeper truth of who they are. Part of the value that the coach brings to a coaching session is the ability to be a mirror and to

say directly and genuinely what they see the client.

Asking Permission

Asking Permission is the skill used by a coach to appropriately request a client's agreement to approach a certain topic. It is the art of empowering the client with the decision to tread on a possibly sensitive or challenging area. Asking permission is not a coach prefacing what they are going to say with anything about trying not to offend the client. If a coach opens a statement with "I don't mean to offend but..." it is likely that what follows will be offensive or verge on it. Asking permission has nothing to do with being offensive or not. It has to do with respecting the coaching relationship by granting the client power to determine the direction of the coaching, especially if it is a sensitive topic that the coach thinks needs to be addressed.

Asking permission consists of three parts:

1. Recognition by the coach that an area or question may be sensitive or challenging for the client.
2. Asking the client's permission to address the topic or ask a certain question about something.
3. The client's response. If the client says "yes" when the coach asks permission, then they can go ahead and address the issue. If the client says "no" then the coach must respect the client and move to a different topic.

Bird's-Eye View

Sometimes in a coaching session, a client can get caught up in details of a story or a certain perspective can sink in. The Bird's-Eye View is pulling the client's perspective up into the sky and taking a look at the situation from this point of view. Essentially, it is a predetermined, bigger picture perspective.

Bottom-Line

The Bottom-Line is when the coach asks a client to cut a story or an explanation short and identify the main point. It is a way to maintain focus in a coaching session as well as keep the pace of the conversation moving.

It consists of two parts:

1. Recognizing that the client is tied up in a story or off on a tangent.
2. Asking the client to identify the main point.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is the process of generating multiple outcomes, creating a list of options and possible actions, and developing solutions without judging the idea's usefulness. The primary use in a life coaching session is to get the client thinking about ideas and options that are outside of what they are currently thinking of. Brainstorming is a way of opening up and discovering more options and

opportunities which the client can later explore through their actions. Brainstorming has five distinct components:

1. **Creativity.** The basis of brainstorming is creating and thinking of new ideas. Often in life coaching sessions, a coach and the client will take turns generating ideas. But the fundamental basis of any brainstorm activity is that of creation. It is trusting the imagination and letting the imagination generate ideas.
2. **Release judgment, safe to create.** The second step in brainstorming is the process of releasing judgment by not censoring any of the ideas. It is a crucial component of brainstorming, because generating ideas is equally important as not judging those ideas during the creative process, creating an atmosphere of safety.
3. **Momentum.** When generating ideas, a certain momentum is created when a coach and client go back and forth in the creation process. That rhythm sets a pace, allows the creativity to flow and helps the client and the coach refrain from judging the ideas.
4. **Excitement.** Brainstorming is fun and creates a level of excitement. This excitement helps move the process forward and aids in momentum.
5. **A list.** The end result of a successful brainstorming session is a list of opportunities, ideas and actions that your client can take. This does not mean that the list is inclusive of all of the ideas generated by the coach and client. However it does form a foundation for the client to move forward and design an action based on the list that they just created.

Celebration

Celebration is fun. It is also an important skill that helps clients reach their goals. Celebration is the art of marking an accomplishment that propels one to even greater successes. From the point of view of a life coaching tool, celebration consists of:

1. An acknowledgement of some skill or effort.
2. Something enjoyable for the client.
3. A reminder of the work required to reach the celebration. Using celebration Champions the client because it reminds them what they accomplished and what is possible for the future.

Challenging

Challenging is when the coach asks the client to consider taking some action that is far outside their perception of what they are capable of and what is possible. Challenging often comes on the heels of Brainstorming and is an effective way to get the client to consider taking bigger action than they originally thought. It is a method coaches use to have the client discover the boundaries of what they think is possible. The individual pieces of challenging include:

1. Recognizing that the client can take action grander than what is being considered.
2. The coach must identify a boundary that they think the client has created.
3. Coach creates a challenge well beyond that boundary line.
4. Follow-up with Powerful Questions and Accountability

Champion

To Champion a client involves the coach directing their attention to a client's potential, especially when the client is stuck in selfdoubt.

Championing has three parts:

1. See the client's potential.
2. Recognize that the client has lost sight of that potential and cannot necessarily see their brilliance.
3. Coach must directly state what they see, like a mirror reflecting the client's strengths and abilities.

The word potential comes from the Latin root potent-, which means power. Potential points to latent power or abilities as well as what is possible for the future. To "reach one's full potential" may be overused in academic setting, but the meaning is clear: clients have talents and possibility for the future that far outpaces their current idea of what they think is possible. As a coach, to champion is to help the client cover the gap between their current situation and the reality that exists just beyond the next push.

Intruding

Intruding is when the coach interrupts a client's story or tangent for the purpose of focusing the client on what is really important in order to deliver as much value as they can in a coaching session.

The three elements of intruding are:

1. Noticing client's story or tangent or a negative pattern that the coach wants to interrupt.
2. Interrupting the client.
3. Redirecting the client and focusing on what is most important.

Making Distinctions

Making Distinctions is a coaching skill that helps clients pull apart two concepts that may be combined together. Or confused. Or confused and combined. The art of making a distinction is about the coach noticing the different details and making a distinction between two different concepts then pulling the concepts into parts that the client can use to make better choices about the concept. Distinctions are

made all the time and often once a distinction is made, it helps clients understand.

There are two types of distinctions:

1. The first distinction is between what a client is doing and what a client thinks he or she is doing. Making this distinction can be very important for a coach because they offer their clients tremendous value when they offer their observations about how the client is impacting other people. This kind of distinction often takes the formula of “this is what you think you are doing” versus “what you are actually doing” [see the sample dialogue below about reviewing versus studying]. The distinction has more to do with the coach observing behavior and being a mirror for the client to see him or herself in a different way
2. The second distinction is similar but it has more to do with what the client is thinking or who the client is being. The distinction can be made almost between any two concepts, such as what is the doing of acting like a good student versus the being of being a good student

Metaphor

As a life coaching skill, the use of Metaphor creates an image in the client’s mind that captures a thought and makes it more memorable and useful for them. An outstanding metaphor can help the client wrap their mind around something that may have been difficult. It is also a useful tool when a coach tries to explain something difficult and helps the client take that first step towards gaining understanding.

The three elements of using a metaphor are:

1. **The object or action.** An understanding of the original object or action that a client is describing.
2. **Imagination.** Employing imagination to use something as a symbol for that original object.
3. **Invitation** to the client to make it their own.

Risk Taking

Risk Taking is when a coach says or asks a question that could bring up an unpleasant experience, emotion, or thought for the client, yet could also lead to something useful and positive. When a coach constantly plays it safe, they do not provide the most value to the client. Taking acceptable risks is an essential part of being a coach and building a strong coach-client relationship.

A coach is not a consultant. A coach is not expected to know all the answers. In fact, a coach provides value to the client especially because a coach does not know all the answers. An effective coach uses Intuition, Powerful Questions, and the other core coaching competencies with skill. Making the distinction between an appropriate and an inappropriate risk is crucial.

An appropriate risk is one that has a clear and probable benefit. It is also a risk taken when the coach is listening empathetically in Mode Two or Three and is confident in helping the client work through what

arises for them. An inappropriate risk is one that does not have a clear benefit, makes the client extremely uncomfortable, or is taken when not listening empathetically. A coach may also use Asking Permission to mitigate the risk and put the risk you are about to take in a useful context.

Appropriate risk taking for a coach involves four distinct parts:

1. Confidence in the strength of the coaching relationship. A successful coach takes some risks by asking difficult questions or stating something from their intuition. Their confidence in taking that step is essential for the client to feel emotionally safe to take steps to move them forward.
2. Empathetic or mode two or three listening. When asking a powerful question that may seem pointed or open up Essential.

Future-Self

The Future-Self is essentially a Perspective [see page 100] from the client's point of view, ten or fifteen years in the future. It is part of a series of exercises that rely heavily on using the client's imagination to create an image of a version of him or herself in the future.

The future-self exercise has five different components:

1. **Image of who they are going to be.** When most clients think of the future, they only think of what they are going to do. The future-self is an exercise that focuses on who they are in the future. It looks more at their characteristics than actions.
2. **Description.** The future-self has a description of their clothing, geographic location, description of their house, and lots of little details that are associated with creating an image and using their imagination effectively. The description can also include favorite things to do, top values, or the typical day.
3. **Nickname for your client to use.** Creating a nickname, a name that only the coach and client will use to refer to the client's future-self, is often the key to helping distinguish the current perspective of the client from that of their future-self. Of course, the client is still going to be called their name when they are older, but the nickname is a name for them to use now to refer to the future-self. It essentially is a structure to refer to their future-self easily and effectively.
4. **Positive perspective.** A future-self includes a positive perspective that offers wisdom to your client.
5. **Relationship** between present and future-self.

The futureself represents a relationship between the client's current, default perspective and their perspective years in the future looking back. The gap between those perspectives is personified in the relationship between present-day client and future-self client.

Further Reading:

- ✓ Emerson, Brian, and Anne Loehr. *A Manager's Guide to Coaching: Simple and Effective Ways to Get the Best From Your Employees*. AMACOM, 2008.
- ✓ Kimsey-House, Karen, Henry Kimsey-House, Phillip Sandahl, and Laura Whitworth. *Co-Active Coaching (3rd Edition)*. Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2011.