



# UNIT-2

## The Coaching Process

### Learning Outcomes

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

- ✓ Develop the coaching and mentoring skills that help improve individual performance.
- ✓ Demonstrate the behaviors and practices of an effective coach.

## Unit 2

### The Coaching Process

#### How Coaching Happens:

##### Conversations and Questions

By now, we've established the basics of what the coach does, along with some of the objectives of life coaching. But how does the life coach go about achieving all this? The short answer - life coaching follows a relatively simple framework, comprised of two important features:

1. Conversations
2. Questions

##### Conversations

The vast majority of the coaching process plays out in the form of meaningful conversation. Both the client and the coach may take part in dozens of conversations on a daily basis, but those that take place *between* the client and the coach are different. They are open, they are focused, they are goal oriented and they are powerful. Both the client and the coach are able to direct their energies in a specific and focused way.

One of the key differences between a standard conversation and a coaching conversation is the way in which the latter is typically planned in advanced. Coaches establish each session's key points of focus ahead of time, in accordance with what the client expects to achieve. There may also be a follow-up after the interview, which can be helpful in ensuring that the client has indeed benefited in some way from the conversation.

##### Questions

Questions are different to regular conversation, in that the coach plans and presents important and thought-provoking questions. Again, usually prepared ahead of time. The Socratic method of question-asking has been around for approximately 2,500 years, beginning when Socrates harnessed the power of questioning to help others evaluate their beliefs and find flaws in their logic.

Asking questions can be so much more powerful, influential and inspiring than simply sharing wisdom and providing instruction. This is for the simple reason that when we are asked a question, we have no choice but to think for ourselves. Rather than being told what to do or being handed the answers we're looking for, we have to find them and present them ourselves. Being told something is neither motivating nor inspiring - figuring something out for yourself is both.

Effective conversations between a coach and the client can bring to light important information on the client's views, inspirations and any obstacles that may be blocking their progress. Effective questioning on the part of the coach can help the client establish something of a road map to ensure

they achieve their objectives. As time progresses, the client is increasingly empowered to get things done without direct instruction.

This is why conversations and questions form the crux of all interactions between clients and coaches. It's also why coaching doesn't necessarily have to take place in person - it can just as easily happen online, or over the phone.

## A Life Coaching Philosophy?

### **So given all this, does life coaching have a common philosophy?**

The subject of best practices in the field of life coaching is highly debated. This is because every life coach will inherently have their own unique approach to the coaching process, in accordance with their preferred methodology and philosophy. The coach's personality will also play a role in determining their preferred approach.

That said, there are several common beliefs and coaching strategies shared by the vast majority of coaches. Examples of which include the following:

- 1. Concrete, workable strategies.**

Every life coach has the goal of assisting their clients in the establishment concrete, workable strategies, which will ultimately save them time, money and effort.

- 2. Someone to inspire, motivate and keep the client accountable.**

Coaches believe that having someone to inspire, motivate and keep clients accountable helps them save far more time and money than they spend on their services.

- 3. Clients have all the resources they need to succeed.**

The life coach believes that each client already has everything they need to grow, evolve and succeed. They believe it's simply a case of putting the pieces together in the right way to help them achieve their objectives.

- 4. Be flexible until a solution is found.**

Coaches also believe that the key to success lies in flexibility and tenacity. They believe there is no such thing as failure - if something isn't working, try something else until you find something that does.

- 5. Model successful performance.**

Most life coaches believe that if one person can do something, so can anyone else. A life coach helps clients model successful performance in order to reach excellence.

- 6. Taking ownership of results.**

Ultimately, coaches believe that it is up to the client to instigate change on their own behalf, rather than simply being provided with answers and solutions on a silver platter. They believe that the client can and should take control of their lives, rather than letting their lives take control of them.

## The Difference Between Coaching and Consulting or Counselling

There are various similarities between counselling, therapy, consulting and coaching. Each of which is geared towards helping clients in some way to get more out of life. Nevertheless, coaching is a unique profession that must not be confused with any other.

But what is it that makes coaching so specific?

In drawing a line between the different types of consulting, it can be helpful to consider three different consultation models:

### The Expert Model

In this instance, the provider simply 'sells' their knowledge and expertise to the client. Technically speaking, they may be completely disinterested in the final outcome and bear no responsibility for how their information is put to use. In a working example, you could hire a landscape garden designer to help create the garden of your dreams, purchasing their information and advice as a product. Irrespective of the outcome, it would be based entirely on their input and advice - not your own creativity and vision.

### Medical Model

With the medical model, it is similar story of seeking the input and direction of a professional service provider. A common example in this instance would be to visit a doctor, who could diagnose you with a condition and prescribe a course of treatment accordingly. They're again telling you what to do outright, but it is nonetheless up to you to follow their instructions and ensure you take your medication accordingly.

### Process Consultation Model

In the third and final model, it is said that the consultant does not work for the client, but instead works *with* the client. Thusly, the client plays a far more important role in the consultation process and isn't simply provided with answers or instructions. They're instead prompted to find their own answers and develop a deeper understanding of the issues.

### How is coaching different from consulting?

Almost all examples of 'consulting' in the traditional sense fall within the expert model. When you go to see a financial or business consultant, you expect to exchange money for expert advice and the answers you need.

By contrast, meeting with a coach is more about opening doors. It's about helping you identify any limitations in your own internal and external processes, in order to find more productive and effective ways of approaching life. You're not looking for easy answers, but rather the motivation and inspiration to establish goals and strive for them. Ultimately, the client wishes to cast off behaviours and approaches to life that are not doing them any favours.

As a result, there's absolutely nothing the coach can do to 'force' these kinds of results. They cannot be provided in the form of a list of instructions, nor can the coach tell the client what they should and shouldn't be doing. Instead, it's all about an extensive process of conversations, questions and general interaction.

You could compare it to the old adage regarding teaching someone to hunt, rather than providing them with a meal. If you inspire and motivate a client to take charge of their life and their goals, they're far more likely to achieve them than if you were to simply *tell* them what to do.

## How is Coaching Different from Counselling or Therapy?

Most forms of consulting are business-oriented or financial in nature, which is why they fit within the expert category. By contrast, therapy and counselling fall within the medical category. As a result, clients visiting with therapists or counsellors are typically referred to as 'patients'. As with consulting, the client approaches the expert looking for support, advice and instructions to resolve an issue.

Again, this is effectively the exact *opposite* of coaching. As previously touched upon, coaches believe that every client already has everything they need to achieve their goals. As a result, they don't necessarily have a specific 'issue' that needs to be resolved. Instead, they simply need to build the motivation, confidence and courage to make it happen.

Think of it this way - if you had a problem with one of your teeth, you'd be more likely to visit a dentist or than a doctor. If you were suffering from anxiety, you'd be more likely to seek counselling than physiotherapy. If you're serious about getting more out of your life in general, you'll benefit more from life coaching than counselling or consulting.

## The Basic Structure of a Coaching Session

While every life coach has their own unique philosophy and best-practice beliefs, the vast majority of coaching sessions share the same fundamental structure:

Prior to each session, the coach will ask the client to prepare a coaching plan, detailing all relevant challenges and accomplishments from the week prior. The coaching plan will also include intended areas of focus for the next session. The client will submit this plan to the coach shortly before the session, which will be used as a basic framework for the conversations and questions thereafter.

Initial discussion will typically focus on the client's achievements during the previous week, along with the progress being made towards accomplishment of their goals.

After establishing the core area of focus for the session, the client and coach will begin discussing the issue, which will involve the presentation of powerful questions on the part of the coach. If there's anything about the progress being made or the approach being taken that the client feels isn't working, this will be discussed and acted upon accordingly.

It may be necessary for the client to think carefully about the obstacles standing in their way, before defining strategies to overcome them. This is essential for establishing objectives, along with an action plan detailing what needs to be done and what should take priority.

Towards the end of the session, the client and coach will discuss what should be focused on and accomplished between now and the next session. Again, the coach will ask the client to keep a log of their progress and successes throughout the week, encouraging accountability and boosting motivation.

## Before and After the Life Coaching Session

It's often true to say that the most important aspect of the life coaching process isn't what takes place during the sessions themselves. Instead, it's how the client works on their progress independently in their own time. Each session has the potential to inspire, motivate and open doors - it's subsequently up to the client to take the required action.

### Before the Life Coaching Session:

#### The Coaching Plan

A coaching plan will be completed and submitted to the coach before every session, typically in the form of a templated question and answer document. Some of the information requested and recorded using a coaching plan may include:

- Ñ The client's successes and accomplishments over the past week
- Ñ Any challenges or issues they have encountered
- Ñ What the client would like to focus on in the next session
- Ñ New areas for discussion and ideas for exploration

The coaching plan is effectively a motivation and empowerment tool, used to help clients focus on their goals and take ownership of their progress.

### Immediately after the Life Coaching Session:

#### The Follow-up from the Session

The follow-up document created at the end of each session basically represents a summary of everything that has been agreed on and accomplished. It gives the client the opportunity to consolidate the questions and conversations from the session, along with a weekly plan of action and any strategies agreed upon during the session.

Coaches also encourage their clients to keep a note of any questions they would like to ask, or issues they would like to raise at the next session. They may also be asked to indicate which aspects of the session were most effective, along with anything they found less helpful or counterproductive.

Overall, it's a case of encouraging the client to stay focused on their progress and remain as motivated as possible.

## The Coaching Process

As for the actual coaching process, there are distinct variations in the logistics of the session from one life coach to the next. However, there are certain standards that perpetuate in most instances, which include the following:

### 1. Clarifying what the client wants

Before moving any further, it is important to establish what the client wants to achieve. Some coaches perform initial assessments on their clients, in order to gain insights into their long-term goals and objectives. The idea being that rather than allowing client to focus only on what they consider to be realistic, coaches encourage clients to think big and dream big. The objectives and goals established early on in the coaching relationship will then be revisited on a regular basis, forming the basic framework for everything that happens thereafter.

### 2. Assessing where the client is right now

In order to get where you want to be, you must first consider and accept where you are right now. This means being able to acknowledge your current reality in a detached and unbiased way. The life coach will therefore encourage the client to describe their current position in a formal, specific and descriptive way, rather than being judgemental or biased. This is also the stage at which habits and behaviours that may stand in the way of their progress are brought to light. Examples of which may include pessimism, perfectionism and self-doubt.

### 3. Reviewing resources and options

After which, it's a case of the coach starting a process of considering all options and resources available, which prove helpful for the client. Brainstorming is a common approach, wherein critical judgement is eliminated and replaced with logic and quick thinking.

In the field of life coaching, 'resources' refers to the available resources on the part of the client. Examples of which include everything from influential people to mentors to personal experience to skills to specialist knowledge to books to music and so much more besides. Essentially, anything that inspires and motivates us represents a resource - one that could help us accomplish our objectives.

If meditation and relaxing music work for you, they'll play a bit part in the life coaching process. If you're more about gardening and self-hypnosis, you'll find them included in your action plan.

#### 4. **Creating an action plan**

Speaking of which, the life coaching action plan is effectively a roadmap, guiding the client from where they are today to where they want to be. Every step within the action plan will be carefully discussed and agreed upon, though will probably be revisited and revised on a regular basis during the coaching sessions.

**Ultimately, an action plan is used to establish:**

- The intentions of the client and a timescale for their activities/efforts.
- The obstacles and challenges they expect to face and how they will be overcome
- How their actions and efforts will help them achieve their objectives
- How the client's commitment and motivation will be measured along the way

Coaches may work with clients on the creation of short-term and long-term action plans, establishing smaller and more immediately-reachable goals along the way. For example, an action plan for the week ahead may be created during each coaching session.

#### 5. **Instilling motivation and commitment**

At all stages during the coaching process, extensive efforts will be made to boost the client's commitment and motivation. Again, it is the job of the life coach to motivate the client to work towards their goals and objectives - not to provide them with easy answers or direct instructions.

Instilling motivation and commitment also means addressing any limiting beliefs or fears that may be holding the client back.

#### 6. **Calibrating and keeping the client on track**

It's important to remember that keeping the client on track between sessions can be one of the hardest parts of the job. Even with an action plan for the week ahead, there are no guarantees the client will stay on track and stick to their commitments.

This is why coaches generally ask their clients to keep a journal of their experiences, encouraging them to take an interest in their progress throughout the week. By taking the time to step back and consider their successes and challenges, they gradually get into a mindset of elevated self-awareness. Over time, they remain on track and focused on their progress, not because they feel they have to, but instinctively.

## Core Coaching Models

The life coaching industry recognizes several core coaching models, of which the following are the most common of all:

### **GROW model**

The GROW model is an abbreviation of a coaching model that includes creating Goals, assessing the client's Reality, brainstorming Options, and ultimately deciding What they will do.

### **Coactive coaching**

One of the most common approaches to life coaching is 'coactive' coaching, wherein the coach focuses on creating a strong alliance with the client and asks powerful questions to help change their perspectives.

### **NLP coaching**

Neuro linguistic programming can be used to establish rapport, encourage clients to see question things from a different perspective and eliminate limiting beliefs.

### **Positive psychology coaching**

This coaching model focuses on the theories of Martin Seligman and is geared towards helping clients create authentic happiness.

### **Ontological coaching**

Ontological coaching focuses on the identification of breakdowns in their client's life, with the goal of identifying the obstacles standing in their way of addressing these breakdowns and overcoming them accordingly.

## Life Coaching Tools And Techniques

### **1. Journaling as a life coaching tool**

A simple journal can be an incredibly powerful and effective life coaching tool. To encourage a client to keep a journal is to provide them with the freedom to record their feelings and share their thoughts in an open, honest and constructive manner. Over time, the client's journal becomes an exceptionally important and insightful resource for both parties.

### **2. Goal tracking in life coaching**

The objective of life coaching is to help clients on their journey from where they are today to where they would like to be in the future. Establishing goals and objectives is similar to setting a final destination for the journey, along with a series of important stop-offs along the way. Every goal and objective established must be meticulously tracked and revisited on a regular basis.

### 3. Life coaching homework assignments and action items

Again, what happens between coaching sessions can be far more important than what happens during the sessions themselves. This is why specific and measurable homework assignments will usually be set by the coach, encouraging accountability and ensuring the client remains focused on their progress at all times.

### 4. Life coaching assessments and forms

Life coaches often use assessments to take a 'measurement' of where the client is at any given point in time. The findings of life coaching assessments can be invaluable in the creation of action plans and the establishment of objectives,

When a client completes an assessment, it provides the life coach with a snapshot of their current position. It also gives them an important insight into their values, their goals and their personal vision. It's effectively a form of self-assessment, providing clients with the opportunity to evaluate their position, measure their progress and move a step closer towards both establishing and achieving their objectives.

#### Further Reading:

- ✓ Coe, Cindy, Dennis C. Kinlaw, and Amy Zehnder. *Coaching for Commitment* (3rd Edition). Pfeiffer, 2007.
- ✓ Emerson, Brian, and Anne Loehr. *A Manager's Guide to Coaching: Simple and Effective Ways to Get the Best From Your Employees*. AMACOM, 2008.