

THE PURPOSE, ROLE, AND APPLICATION OF COACHING

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The Purpose of Coaching

Coaching is the dynamic/interactive science/art of facilitating client learning/development and mobility/change; and moreover, the process in which the client can close the gap between his/her actual/perceived and preferred life circumstances, and discover his/her own solutions from within (Downey, 2003; Gallwey, 2001; Nelson, 2010). Coaching is therefore a holistic and directed/personalized method of systematically raising client self-awareness in order to facilitate the identification/establishment and achievement of the client's personal, specific,

measurable, achievable/attainable, relevant/realistic, timely/time-bound goals (Martin, 2011; Neenan & Dryden, 2010; *The Goal Setting Matrix, n.d.*). The process involves a one-on-one partnership between the client and coach based upon and guided by the coaching contract, which establishes the ground rules of the coaching relationship, and culminates in the creation/facilitation of a process/environment in which the client, with the support of the coach, can explore new perspectives/alternatives and find/apply answers/solutions to the challenges/goals of his/her life (Harrold, 2001; Institute of Coaching, 2011).

The purpose of coaching is to facilitate self-awareness, self-exploration/discovery, auto-evaluation, and self-efficacy, i.e., the client's confidence in his/her own self-capacities to determine the events that affect his/her life, and ultimately, to identify/set and achieve his/her own goals (Mcgee, 2001; Vujisic, 2010a; 2010b; Watchel & Messer, 1998; Whitmore, 2009). Client self-efficacy/self-determination leads to success/efficacy, or the power to produce/achieve results. The coaching process is directed to assist the client who is 'stuck', and empower him/her to recognize/utilize his/her own self-capacities (Ellis & MacLaren, 1998; Watchel & Messer, 1998).

Coaching is client action/solution-oriented. It promotes innovative/creative thinking, and encourages the exploration of alternative perspectives (Landsberg, 2002; Nelson, 2010; Rogers, 2008; Whitmore, 2009). The client's values, or general standards of thought/behavior, which are deep-seated and which have been formulated by nature/nurture and developed/legitimized through the life processes of choice/adoption, are carefully identified and considered/respected (Baldwin, 1992; Baldwin et al., 1993; Briere & Scott, 2006; Corey, Corey & Callanan, 2003; Williams & Lloyd, 2005). The

purpose of the coach is to be the client's mirror/compass and facilitator, who assists the client in discovering how to proceed and set/achieve goals, which the client is responsible for achieving (Gallwey, 2001).

The coach is not an expert who relieves the client from formulating his/her own conclusions/solutions; the client is the expert on his/her own experience (Nelson, 2010). The coach's reflections therefore carry the message of empathic understanding and the explicit and/or implicit expectation that the personal meaning of the client's experience is in the experience itself, and that the client can grasp the meanings for him/herself through the coaching process (Nelson, 2010; Rogers, 1961). The client is the best judge of his/her own reality, which translates into the client identifying/setting and achieving his/her own goals (Nelson, 2010; Rogers, 2008). The conditions of congruence, unconditional positive regard, and accurate empathic understanding are then sufficient to release/foster the actualizing tendency/predisposition (Rogers, 1951; 1961; 1967). In an atmosphere of non-contingent caring, the client can 'get in touch with' and acknowledge his/her own inner experiences, and determine his/her own path (Rogers, 2004). The discovery of new methods/techniques to address/solve problems, enhance skills, and uncover unidentified skills/abilities is implicit to the role (Bluckert, n.d.; 2001; 2006). The exploration of new perspectives/alternatives can also lead to the development of new competencies and result in increased self-actualization (Passmore, 2010).

The client's goals are his/her ideas/dreams that have been subjected to concrete plans and time limits (*The Goal Setting Matrix, n.d.*). Client core beliefs/reality, which shape the client's opinions, are therefore identified to determine consistency with client goals, and questions are formulated to assist the client to explore/discover his/her beliefs

that may affect the areas targeted for action/change (Downey, 2003; Mulligan, 2007; Nelson, 2010). Heightened self-awareness can bring out definitions implicit in the client's beliefs/expectations and assist in further developing self-awareness/insight (Nelson, 2010; Skibbins, 2007). The purpose is facilitative, i.e., to help the client transcend his/her perceptions/perspectives and discover alternatives (Downey, 2003).

Coaching employs a varied skill-set directed toward the raising of client self-awareness including: active listening; Socratic questioning; utilizing/implementing coaching models; contracting; providing/receiving feedback; reflecting, and summarizing/paraphrasing; mindfulness of culture and ethics/values; applying tools/techniques to enhance client self-awareness; facilitating creativity/ingenuity; building/establishing rapport; refraining from interference/steering; monitoring achievement of objectives/goals; identifying/addressing new objectives; utilizing silence; identifying learning/development needs/goals; noticing/identifying verbal/non-verbal cues; resolving distraction; demonstrating flexibility in meeting client needs; recognizing his/her own expertise, limitations/self-interest, and countertransference; and possessing knowledge/understanding of coaching/management theories/practice (*Coaching Competencies Framework*, n.d.; Litvinoff, 2007; Martin, 1996; McGee, 2010; Peltier, 2010). Additionally the coach must develop his/her awareness and ability to work with thoughts/feelings, compare multiple realities, and provide challenge/support (*Coaching Competencies Framework*, n.d.; Nelson, 2010; Parsloe & Leedham, 2009).

However, the principal/critical factor in facilitating change centers upon the nature of the relationship between coach and client. Rogers (1951; 1961; 1967; 1980; 2004) identifies these as respect for the client - unconditional positive regard,

genuineness/realness or congruence, empathic understanding, and communication of empathy/respect and genuineness to the client. As the client is accepted/prized, s/he develops a positive attitude toward him/herself. As s/he is empathetically heard, s/he listens more attentively/accurately to the flow of his/her own inner experiencings. As s/he understands/prizes him/herself, s/he becomes more congruent with his/her experiencings, and becomes more real/genuine. This enables the client to be a more effective self-growth-enhancer (Nelson, 2010).

Coaching and its Similarities / Differences with Counseling / Therapy

The comparative information in the following table was gleaned from Biswas-Diener and Dean (2007), Bluckert, (n.d.; 2006; 2011), *Coaching competencies framework* [pamphlet]. (n.d.), Downey (2003), Gallwey (2001), Green (2000), Martin (2011), Nelson, (2010), Palmer and Whybrow (2010), Peltier (2010), Rogers (1967; 1980, 2004), et al. In spite of the broader similar agendas, i.e., enhancing ‘quality of life’ and self-actualization, coaching and counseling/therapy differentiate in terms of focus, orientation, reality, models/methodologies, patients/clients, purpose, accountability, professional relationship styles/techniques, expertise, training/education, rate of change, and payment arrangements.

Coaching and Counseling/Therapy

	Counseling /Therapy	Coaching
Focus	Although some schools of counseling/therapy are present-centered and/or future-focused, (e.g., Person-Centered Therapy, REBT, etc.),	Coaching focuses on the client’s present, in order to facilitate his/her creation of a plan for achieving SMART goals in his/her

	counseling/therapy generally focuses on the patient/client's past with a view to resolve issues and unfinished business, and moreover, to address individual and/or relational behavior and/or emotional and psychological pain/conflict. Generally speaking, counseling/therapy starts in the past.	personal/professional life. The process involves mobility, momentum, and moving forward into the future. The past is addressed insofar as it assists in identifying limiting belief systems and core values that impact the identification/setting and achieving of goals. Coaching starts in the present.
Orientation	Counseling /therapy addresses patient/client thoughts, behaviors, feelings, and/or emotions.	Coaching is client action/outcome-oriented and addresses concrete goals. It is directed towards the unleashing of client potential/skills.
Reality	In counseling /therapy, reality is addressed in order to identify symptoms, establish a diagnosis, and develop/construct a treatment plan.	Coaching addresses goals prior to addressing 'reality'. Basing a goal on the client's perceived/present reality may negatively impact the coaching process and past performance may exercise influence/produce a lack of creativity due to extrapolation/projection. Reality is therefore only addressed to determine how it may impact the achievement of client goals.
Models/Methodology	Counseling /therapy primarily employs the medical/clinical disease model/methodology, diagnosing abnormal, pathological, and maladaptive/dysfunctional behavior, pain, and/or relational conflicts.	Coaching utilizes the educational/learning and developmental/growth models/methodologies, with a focus on goal achievement and self-actualization.
Patients/Clients	In counseling /therapy, the patient/client usually has identifiable abnormal, pathological, and/or maladaptive/dysfunctional behavior/relational conflicts.	In coaching, the client is functional; s/he desires and is capable of changing/transforming his/her own situation/circumstances.
Purpose	Counseling /therapy primarily assists patients/clients resolve deep-rooted pain and improve emotional states.	Coaching assists clients in learning new skills and applying new tools to build a more satisfying successful future, based on client self-capacities and self-efficacy in the achievement of SMART goals.
Accountability	In counseling /therapy, goals are often related to patient/client thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Change, therefore, can be identified by the patient/client internally but is not always readily measurable. With few exceptions, (e.g., Person-Centered Therapy, etc.), the counselor/therapist, as the expert, is responsible for the	In coaching goals are usually related to the client's external world and behavior, and are therefore readily measurable. This promotes client action/accountability. The coach is responsible for the process; the client for the outcomes/results.

process and the outcomes. However, the patient/client is accountable for his/her 'compliance' with treatment.

Professional Relationship Styles/Techniques

In counseling /therapy, the counselor/therapist advises, tells, guides, steers, offers perspectives, and helps patients/clients implement the predetermined treatment program/schedule (in accordance with the counselor/therapist's diagnosis of the client/patient's condition). Counseling/therapy is a 'push' process and ultimately involves direction. The ultimate question in counseling/therapy is: Why?

In coaching, the coach is a facilitator/compass and assists the clients in discovering his/her own answers. Coaching is a 'pull' process and the coach does not lead/direct the client. Indeed, the coach's perspectives are only proffered with the client's permission. The questions in coaching are: What? When? Where? Which? and How?

Expertise

In counseling /therapy, the counselor/therapist is the expert and provides professional treatment guidelines to effect healing.

In coaching, the coach is not the expert. His/her mastery is over him/herself. The client is the expert on his/her own experiencings and the best judge of his/her own reality, which translates into the client identifying/setting and achieving his/her own goals. The conditions of congruence, unconditional positive regard, and accurate empathic understanding are then sufficient to release/foster the actualizing tendency/predisposition, which enables the client to be a more effective self-growth-enhancer.

Training/Education

The counselor/therapist requires extensive subject matter expertise related to pathologies, dysfunction, diagnoses, therapeutic treatments, etc.

In coaching, the coach works with the process and the coaching relationship; and therefore does not require subject matter expertise related to pathologies, dysfunction, diagnoses, therapeutic treatments, etc. However, expertise/skill in coaching models and techniques/competencies, which s/he can use to assist the client in transcending realities and achieving client goals, are important/useful.

Rate of Change

In counseling /therapy, progress is often slow/painful as the issues dealt with are often subconscious/fundamental. The process can sometimes last for years.

In coaching, progress is usually rapid, (e.g., in a matter of weeks) and moreover, often enjoyable/motivational.

Payment

In counseling /therapy, payment is often covered by medical or other insurance.

In coaching, payment is not covered by insurance. However, in some circumstances employers cover the cost of coaching.

Coaching Qualities / Skills

The principal/critical coaching qualities/skills that facilitate/promote client mobility/change are related to the nature of the relationship between coach and client. Rogers (1951; 1961; 1967; 1980; 2004) identifies these basic qualities/skills as: (a) unconditional positive regard; (b) empathic understanding; and (c) genuineness/realness, or congruence. Of these, unconditional positive regard and empathic understanding will be discussed first, followed by a review of genuineness/realness or congruence, which leads to 'signature presence'.

Unconditional positive regard refers to the coach's acceptance of the client without evaluation/judgment, censorship, and/or disapproval of the client's feelings/actions and/or characteristics (Chi-Ying Chung, 2002). This is communicated to the client by the coach's willingness to listen without interrupting/judging, steering, or offering advice, creating a nonthreatening context in which the client feels free to explore/share potentially painful circumstances/situations without risking rejection (Bluckert, 2006; Peltier, 2010). Unconditional positive regard combines with accurate empathic understanding, which reflects the coach's ability to understand the client's point of view, displaying sensitivity for the client throughout the coaching session (Myers, 2000). Accurate empathic understanding is communicated through empathic reflection and other techniques that confirm that the coach is listening carefully/accurately and providing the client with opportunities to examine/re-examine his/her own thoughts/feelings as repeatedly paraphrased by the coach (Stein & Book, 2011).

Skills Related to Unconditional Positive Regard and Empathic Understanding

Coaching Skills	Results in Client
If the coach understands/accepts and affirms/confirms the client's self-efficacy and that s/he is capable/responsible for identifying/establishing and setting/achieving his/her own goals, then...	the client will develop/enhance achievement motivation and a positive attitude to the coaching process by acknowledging his/her responsibility and power/control.
If the coach communicates to the client his/her belief in the client's drive to be independent, productive, self-directed, and if the coach relies on the client's abilities/capabilities, rather than upon his/her own coaching skills for change, then...	the client will explore his/her own attitudes/behaviors in a more comprehensive/systematic fashion and will develop the necessary awareness/self-awareness.
If the coach creates a warm, nondirective, and nonjudgmental environment in which the client can freely self-disclose and express his thoughts/feelings and actions/behavior, then...	the client will discover/develop a clearer understanding of his/her attitudes and accept him/herself more completely.
If the coach sets limits on behavior but not attitudes/feelings (e.g., the client may not be permitted more than 15 minutes telephone contact between sessions, but there is full acceptance of his/her desire for more time), then...	the client will develop a clearer perception of him/herself in relation to irrational beliefs/expectations and will choose new goals, disregarding unachievable/maladaptive goals.
If the coach employs procedures/techniques in the coaching process that convey his/her psychological-mindedness, understanding of client emotionalized attitudes, and unconditional acceptance (but not approval/disapproval) of client emotionalized attitudes, then...	the client will choose to act/react differently in order to reach his/her goals, and the learned behavior will reflect emotional/psychological growth, reveal increased spontaneity, less stress, and more harmony/alignment with the social needs of others, represent an increased adjustment to the realities of life, and 'flow' or produce integration.
If the coach does the aforementioned, then...	the client will be able to release his/her own growth competencies and identify/realize his/her own goals.

Congruence refers to the coach's realness/willingness to openly/authentically and genuinely relate to the client (Rogers, 1961) and is the product of 'flow', i.e., alignment/integration of the coach's intent/purpose, cognizance/awareness, emotions/feelings, attitudes/mindsets, actions/behaviors, and core values, which result in self-actualization (Bluckert, 2006; Stein & Book, 2011). This 'emotional intelligence' is therefore the foundation/basis for 'signature presence' (SP), which is the ability to see,

perceive/apperceive, connect/relate, and interact in a powerful, convincing, and meaningful way. SP includes the self-confidence that emanates from the alignment of principles/values and actions; and allows/facilitates the communication of authority, authenticity/genuineness, realness, validity, self-belief, enthusiasm/excitement, zeal and commitment, evoking a similarly enthusiastic and wholehearted response from the recipient of the communication (Leary-Joyce, 2007). Ultimately, SP is a distinctive set of assets, and moreover a set of characteristics/core skills or qualities/virtues, that make the coach unique and effective (Leary-Joyce, 2007; Nelson 2010). SP develops in the context of 4 vectors (a) relationship, (b) communication, (c) 'present moment mindfulness', and (d) accurate self-concept/worth.

In coaching, SP is initiated within the context of the first vector, the coaching relationship. The basis for the establishment of the relationship is fundamental, and a clear/precise contract/agreement is an important point of departure. The contract/agreement will facilitate the establishment of a rapport between the coach/client, and thereby create an atmosphere in which the coach's SP can develop/expand (Leary-Joyce, 2007).

The second vector of SP is communication. In coaching, quality/success depend upon the coach's ability to effectively communicate thoughts/ideas, dreams, feelings, and emotions. Communication determines SP and is enhanced by the coach's ability to use the appropriate tools/techniques efficiently/successfully.

The third vector of SP is 'present moment mindfulness', which requires stillness/focus, (Gallwey, 2000; Kline, 1999; Leary-Joyce, 2007; Vujisic, 2010a). In order to accomplish stillness/focus, internal scripts/self-talk must be controlled/regulated

(Vujisic, 2010b). This watchfulness facilitates the formation of a clearer picture/vision of the core energies of people and situations/circumstances, and how these impact the coach and his/her own experience. Rationalizations/judgments and fears/doubts will dissipate with the development of ‘present moment mindfulness’, resulting in a supersensory flow that foments a satisfying and meaningful existence, without attachment, and moreover, with quality presentation (DiLeo, 2007; Downey, 2003; Leary-Joyce, 2007). This results in stillness/focus, and heightened awareness, and a deep state of calmness and sense of ‘present moment mindfulness’ (Vujisic, 2010a).

The fourth vector of SP is accurate self-concept/worth, which is intrinsically linked to self-awareness (Leary-Joyce, 2007). This is related to the quantity/quality of self-talk and to an inner sense of wellbeing. Ultimately it is connected to the coach’s value system, particularly to his/her cultural/religious values and his/her deep-seated values, of which s/he must be acutely aware, and which provide a basis for (a) time-focus, (b) human activity, (c) social relations, (d) people/nature relationships, (e) integrity/wholeness, (f) self-awareness, and (g) ‘unstuckness’ (Baldwin, 1992; Seligman, 1998). Poor, or over-inflated, self-concept can foster fragmentation and a major disconnect/dissociation with reality. Integration provides the coach with confidence/presence, and enables him/her to work with clients across a range of issues competently.

Finally, in order to develop SP, which is an essential coaching skill/quality, the coach must foment his/her own personal growth across the 4 vectors, i.e., (a) identify/classify and formalize coaching relational contexts; (b) augment his/her coaching theoretical/practical knowledge and communication skills; (c) develop stillness/focus,

which will enable the coach to have a better perception/experience of his/her own reality, and that of others; and (d) enhance accurate self-worth/self-awareness through input/feedback from personal/professional relationships (Leary-Joyce, 2007; Nelson 2010). Development in these vectors will result in the coach's own inner peace/confidence, and moreover, a sense of authenticity, which will be experienced by the client as strong SP in the coach (Leary-Joyce, 2007).

Rogerian Therapy and Life Coaching

Rogerian Therapy, (which is also known as the client/person-centered or non-directive approach) emphasizes client responsibility/control in treatment, and therapist non-directiveness. It promotes increased/enhanced self-esteem, openness to experience, harmony/integration of the client's self-perceptions, self-understanding, positive/constructive interpersonal relationships, and the capacity to experience/express feelings (Corsini & Wedding, 2000; Watchel & Messer, 1998). It also cultivates diminished/decreased defensiveness, guilt, and insecurity (Vujisic, 2010b).

Rogers' approach is an alternative to the psychoanalytic belief that personality/behavior are totally determined by childhood/life experiences, and the behaviorist doctrine that behavior is a set of conditioned responses to stimuli (Corsini & Wedding, 2000; Watchel & Messer, 1998). His core presupposition is that wo/man strives to fulfill his/her potential (Cain, 2001). Rogers rejected the detached-therapist role model, and promoted a supportive and close relationship between client and therapist (Willis, 2008). The therapist and client must come together as equals, with the client

determining the direction of therapy, and the therapist undertaking to facilitate client's insight/self-understanding through questions that promote clarification, explore assumptions, probe reasons/evidence, examine viewpoints/perspectives, analyze implications/consequences, question the questions, and promote synthesis (Corsini & Wedding, 2000; Rogers, 1951; 1961; 1967). Rogers views human nature as intrinsically good, motivated by a drive to self-actualize which focuses on strengths, not deficiencies (Corsini & Wedding, 2000).

According to Rogers, self-actualization is impeded by negative self-concept (Vujisic, 2010b). Therefore, the deciding factor in successful therapy is not skill/training, but attitude (Corsini & Wedding, 2000). The three interrelated therapist attitudes linked to successful therapy are: (a) congruence, or the therapist's realness/willingness to openly/authentically and genuinely relate to the client (Rogers, 1951; 1961); (b) unconditional positive regard, or the therapist's total acceptance of the client without evaluation/judgment, censorship, and/or disapproval of the client's feelings/actions and/or characteristics (Chi-Ying Chung, 2002); and (c) accurate empathic understanding, or the therapist's ability to understand the client's point of view, displaying sensitivity for the client throughout the therapeutic session (Corsini & Wedding, 2000; Myers, 2000; Stein & Book, 2011; Watchel & Messer, 1998). These are more than preliminary steps that facilitates therapy; they constitute the therapeutic work (Stein & Book, 2011; Walker, 2001) and are communicated through empathic reflection (Rogers, 1951; 1961; 1967; Stein & Book, 2011).

The communication of these attitudes by the therapist, enables the client to freely express him/herself without fear of rejection (Vujisic, 2010b). The therapist makes no

attempt to change the client's thinking/behavior, and undirected/uncensored and unrestricted self-exploration advances alternative ways of thinking/behaving, promoting personal growth/self-actualization (Stein & Book, 2011; Walker, 2001). In short, the therapist provides the environment in which the client can engage in focused/in-depth self-exploration (Rogers, 1951; 1961; 1967; 1980; 2004).

Rogers focuses on problem-resolution, not causative factors, and proposes that the client can solve his/her own problems once s/he accepts that s/he is in charge of his/her own life (Vujisic, 2010b). He proffers that every wo/man, under apposite conditions, can become aware of his/her own perceptions of inner/outer reality, and can guide his/her own life choices in fulfilling directions (Corsini & Wedding, 2000; Walker, 2001). Optimal conditions must be established for inner exploration over against providing insight, trying to understand the choices that the client needs to make, or pushing for choice (Bluckert, 2006). Rogers submits that empathic reflection, i.e., the practice of reflecting back the desires/emotions of the client, is viewed as the most effective way of enabling the client to discover for him/herself the 'gift of awareness' that will motivate and guide his/her choices (Corsini & Wedding, 2000;).

Rogerian Therapy therefore provides the theoretical/conceptual framework for coaching, and the viewing of the client as the expert on his/her own experience is central to the coaching process (Nelson, 2010). The coach's reflections must therefore carry: (a) the message of empathic understanding, (i.e., 'simply understood – not evaluated, not judged', but 'simply understood from the client's own point of view'); (b) the explicit and/or implicit expectation that the personal meaning of the client's experience/experiencing is in the experience itself; and (c) the client can grasp the

meanings for him/herself through the coaching process (Nelson, 2010; Whitmore, 2009). The coach conveys to the client that it is the client him/herself that is the best judge of his/her own reality, which translates into the client identifying, establishing/setting, and achieving his/her own goals (Nelson, 2010; Rogers, 2008). This is a very important ingredient of coaching, which comes to the profession from Rogerian Therapy. The conditions of congruence, unconditional positive regard, and accurate empathic understanding are sufficient to release/foster the actualizing tendency/predisposition. In an atmosphere of non-contingent caring, the client can 'get in touch with' and acknowledge his/her own inner experiences, and determine his/her own path/goals (Whitmore, 2009)

In addition to the theoretical model inherited from Rogers, numerous techniques employed in person-centered therapy can be, and are, used by the coach, including Socratic questioning, active listening, empathic reflection, grouping, summarizing, paraphrasing, proposing, feedback, and other targeted restatements to challenge the client, and stimulate focus, concentration, critical thinking, and creativity (Nelson, 2010; Rogers, 2008; Whitmore, 2009). During the process, the coach identifies the core beliefs that shape the client's opinions to determine their consistency with the client's goals (Gallwey, 2000). The questions are formulated to assist the client to discover his/her beliefs about the areas targeted for action/change. The purpose is to help clients transcend their perspectives and discover options in achieving goals (Downey, 2003). The insistence on seeing people holistically/purposefully, the appreciation of other ways of knowing beyond rationality, the respect of what it means to be a person, the emphasis on individual freedom/responsibility, the affirmation of individual choice and the capacity to

change, and the potential to act and make decisions in spite of the circumstances are among the positive influences that Rogers has had on coaching (Green, 2000).

The T-GROW Model

As stated above, Rogerian Therapy provides a well-defined theoretical framework for use in the T-GROW coaching model, which is directed to the raising of awareness/self-awareness in the client (Nelson, 2010). The discovery of new methods/techniques to address/solve problems, enhance skills, and uncover unidentified skills/abilities is implicit to the model; and the exploration of new perspectives/alternatives can lead to the development of new competencies and result in increased self-awareness/self-actualization (Bluckert, n.d.; 2001; 2006; Passmore, 2010). The T-GROW model is simple/straightforward, and therefore popular with coaches. As described below, it includes: (a) identifying the ‘Topic’; (b) establishing ‘Goals’; (c) addressing ‘Reality’; (d) exploring ‘Options’; and (e) determining ‘Will’, or ‘What’s next?’

Topic

The client often comes to coaching with a vision of the topic or area of concern. Nevertheless, the coach assists the client in clarifying that vision (Biswas-Deiner & Dean, 2007); thereby identifying a concrete area of concern that can be addressed by the establishment of objectives/goals.

Goals

The coach then focuses on assisting the client in breaking down and analyzing/synthesizing the vision, and setting manageable SMART goal(s) (Parsloe & Leedham, 2009; *The Goal Setting Matrix, n.d.*). The fact that life coaching addresses goals prior to addressing ‘reality’ differentiates life coaching from counseling/therapy (Gallwey, 2001). Basing a goal on the client’s perceived/present reality may have a negative impact on the coaching process and past performance may exercise influence/produce a lack of creativity due to extrapolation/projection or result in a hasty/impulsive response to a short-term problem (Downey, 2003). Short-term, sequential, and manageable SMART goals based upon a long-term ideal assist the client in keeping track of his/her progress and foment motivation/momentum (*The Goal Setting Matrix, n.d.*)

Reality

Subsequently, the reality of the client’s current situation/circumstances is addressed (Parsloe & Leedham, 2009). Core values that support the achievement of client goals are identified, together with resources that can be activated to pursue those goals (Williams & Lloyd, 2005). This assists in closing the gap between the client’s actual/perceived and desired/projected situation/circumstances (Palmer & Whybrow, 2010). An important aspect in examining reality is objectivity. The coach comes with an open mind, recognizing/minimizing prejudices, opinions/judgments, and concerns/fears (Nelson, 2010; Parsloe & Leedham, 2009). In this way the client is enabled/empowered to explore his/her reality from new perspectives (Nelson, 2010).

The reality element/check provides the client with the opportunity to consider the thoughts and actions/behaviors that directly affect the realizing of his/her goals (Nelson, 2010). Reality questions are structured to inspire the client to think/examine, feel, and be engaged (Nelson, 2010; Parsloe & Leedham). The questions are focused/specific, detailed/descriptive, and non-judgmental. Their quality/frequency promote forward momentum/mobility (Williams & Lloyd, 2005). During the 'reality check', defining/limiting beliefs can be brought to client's awareness/self-awareness (Williams & Lloyd, 2005). Any question that challenges the client to look at what is keeping him/her stuck is useful (Nelson, 2010).

Options

The coach then encourages the client to explore options/alternatives and create multiple possible courses of action (Gallwey, 2001; Nelson, 2010). With the client's permission, it may be appropriate for the coach to think creatively with the client, especially if s/he is 'stuck' (Parsloe & Leedham, 2009). However, when the client has identified/established options/alternatives, s/he selects the option(s)/alternative(s) that appeals most to him/her and the coaching process continues non-directively.

The client has been provided an environment in which s/he can explore his/her own ideas and options/alternatives without fear of failure, ridicule, or rejection/censorship before s/he makes a decision on the best option/alternative (Nelson, 2010).

Will, or What's next?

In the final stage, the client makes a choice as to his/her preferred option/alternative, establishes the way forward, and agrees on an action plan (Parsloe & Leedham, 2009). The discussion has been transformed into decision. The client is encouraged to summarize the process and commit to the chosen option by stating exactly what his/her intended actions are, the time-frame for completion, and the means of evaluating success (Nelson, 2010). Obstacles are discussed and the client describes the support that s/he needs to achieve his/her SMART goal(s) (*The Goal Setting Matrix, n.d.*). Notwithstanding, the skill/techniques implicit to the T-GROW model, the principal/critical factors in facilitating mobility/change and maintaining momentum center upon the nature of the relationship between coach and client as proffered by Rogers (Gallwey, 2001; Nelson, 2010).

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