

What is personal coaching?

(Adapted with permission from "The Coaching Manual" by Julie Starr, published by Pearson Education)

Coaching is a form of learning, where a person (a coach) supports someone else (a client) to create learning and self-development in a way that benefits them.

From early forms of transportation, i.e. stagecoach, or rail coach, the word 'coaching' literally means to transport someone from one place to another. One thing that all forms of coaching seem to have in common is that people are using it to help them move forward in a certain direction.

One simple example is probably that of a sports coach. Here, the coach supports the individual to improve their performance and get better results - depending on what they want to achieve. For a golfer, the goal might be winning a major tournament, or simply improving their grip. The role of the coach is to apply specific principles of success, in a way that creates experiential learning and improvement for the golfer.

Coaching is normally a discussion, or series of discussions, one person has with another. The coach intends to produce discussions that will benefit you, the client, in a way that relates to your learning and progress. Coaching discussions happen in many different ways, and in many different environments.

At Cobalt Coaching we design with you a coaching format that suits your personal style and requirements.

Why would you have coaching?

People enlist our coaching services because they want to improve their lives and achieve goals. They want to learn new ways of thinking and approaching situations, in order to get better results. Examples of goals are being more organized and effective at work, gaining confidence, or simply relating to other people more effectively.

Our coaches use a combination of observation, questioning, listening and feedback to create a conversation rich in insight and learning. You will experience a focus and attention that enables you to develop a greater awareness and appreciation of your own circumstances. In addition, you will also create new ways to resolve issues, produce better results and generally achieve your goals more easily.

Benefits people experience from coaching include:

- Improved sense of direction and focus.
- Increased knowledge of self/self-awareness.
- Improved ability to relate to and influence others.
- Increased motivation.
- Improved personal effectiveness, e.g. focused effort.
- Increased resourcefulness/resilience, e.g. ability to handle change.

What coaching is not.

Coaching is none of the following:

Structured training, e.g. classroom learning

Structured training relates to a fixed agenda of learning, and a prepared approach to making that learning happen. For example, if you were being trained in a classroom to use a computer, the trainer would often use a structured approach to making sure you learnt a certain amount of information, within a certain time frame.

Coaching follows a more flexible format, according to your objectives. Both you and your coach influence the direction and content of your sessions. Coaching also places real responsibility for learning on you and encourages learning to continue after the session.

Therapy, psychoanalysis, psychotherapy

Whilst coaching is not therapy, and should not be viewed as therapy, it does provide a viable alternative to people who may have previously considered some form of counselling to resolve a situation. For example, coaching promotes a greater self-awareness, and fuller appreciation of our own situations and circumstances. Sometimes, change can be promoted by a simple shift in perspectives. Barriers of self-belief such as 'I can't' or 'I don't' can be challenged in order to encourage fresh approaches and ideas.

A way of someone else solving your problems for you

Coaching is based on the principle that an individual is ultimately responsible for their lives and the results they're getting. If we acknowledge that we are responsible for something, it follows that we have power and influence over it. For example, if you're not getting the results at work that you want, a coach might encourage you to:

- Understand that situation more clearly.
- Develop new ideas or approaches for such situations.
- Take constructive action that gets you the results you want.

What a coach will not do is instruct you to go and do something specific, or go and do it for you. If they did, the coach would be taking responsibility - and so power - away from you.

What you can expect from your coach

Our coaches provide a kind of support distinct from any other. We will focus solely on your situations with the kind of attention and commitment that you rarely experience elsewhere.

Your coach will listen to you with a genuine curiosity to understand who you are, what you think and how you experience the world. He or she will reflect back to you, with the kind of objective assessment that creates real clarity. During conversations, your coach will encourage you to rise to challenges, overcome obstacles and get into action.

A coaching relationship is like no other, simply because of its combination of objective detachment and commitment to your goals.

Because the relationship is based on trust and openness, the contents of your discussions will be confidential. Where a third party has requested the coaching for you, we will agree with you the best way to keep them involved or updated.

What your coach will expect from you

In return, your coach will encourage you to stay committed to the coaching process. That means showing up for sessions, taking your own notes where appropriate, and keeping any agreements you make during sessions.

In addition, we need you to be open to the potential of coaching. That means contributing to conversations honestly and openly. For example, if something isn't working, your coach needs to know. If you have concerns or problems, voice them. If you know why a problem is occurring, say so. The strength and power of coaching relates strongly to the level of openness and trust between the coach and the client.

How might coaching benefit you?

The following questions will help you begin to form goals for a coaching relationship. They are not intended to identify specifics, but rather encourage thoughts or ideas.

Please take a few minutes to sit quietly with the questions, writing down your answers on a blank sheet of paper.

1. What current goals (if any) do you have relating to the following areas:

- (a) Your work, e.g.
 - Personal performance/effectiveness
 - Career development, progression
 - Ability to lead/manage others
 - Motivation, fulfilment.

- (b) Your lifestyle, e.g.
 - Work/life balance
 - Social life
 - Hobbies/Interests
 - Health/well-being

- (c) Your relationships with others, e.g.
 - Your partner
 - Your immediate family
 - Your friends
 - Your extended family, i.e. relatives.



(d) Your learning/development, e.g.

- Life experiences
- Formal training/development.

(e) Your sense of contribution, e.g.

- At work
- At home
- In your community.

2. Thinking about your current circumstances:

- What would you like to do less of?
- What would you like to do more of?

3. What would you most like to change right now if you could?

4. What's going really well for you right now and you'd like to build on? E.g. do more of it, or make it even better.

5. In what ways do you currently obtain learning?

- By experience, i.e. doing things
- Formal study, e.g. taking qualifications
- Through observation of others
- Reading, listening to audiotapes, etc.
- Structured training, i.e. courses
- Mentoring or coaching relationships, e.g. discussion, feedback.

6. How much does your level and style of learning support your goals and objectives?