

# Coaching - frequently Asked questions

## What is a coach?

A coach is someone who aims to help and empower others to make, meet and exceed personal and professional goals - including excelling in the workplace, becoming happy and fulfilled in the home, exploring the self and the world, and achieving ambitions.

By harnessing specialist techniques based on core psychological principals and natural intuition, coaches provide clients with the tools to confidently face difficult situations, push past emotional barriers and eventually view life with fresh, hopeful and enlightened eyes.

Just as sports coaching enables athletes to hone themselves into the fastest, strongest, most tactical competitors in their disciplines, business and coaching helps people from all professional and personal backgrounds improve their strengths and build upon their weaknesses to make the most of their lives.

A coach will never try to be an 'agony aunt' - he or she will never attempt to give you advice because, firstly - giving advice is just a way of imposing a personal view of the world onto another person (who may or may not share the same view) and, secondly - it is not a coach's job to become personally involved in a client's life. Coaching is about objectivity, structure and empowerment, not instruction or indoctrination.

At the heart of coaching lies the idea that clients must be given the power to help *themselves*. Offering advice, opinions and judgements would undermine some of the basic principles behind coaching, which include:

**a) Subjectivity:** we all have different perspectives of the world - no one perspective is 'right' or 'wrong', but some perspectives are restrictive and can stop a person becoming who they want to be.

**b) Empowerment:** it is within everyone's capability to adjust the limits of their own perspective. With the help of coaching, anyone can learn to open their mind if they wish.

**c) Guidance:** there is a difference between an instructor and a guide. An instructor shows a person exactly what to do, whereas a guide provides the tools and support a person needs to do something for themselves. A coach is a guide, not an instructor.

The term 'coaching' itself comes from the Anglo-Saxon word for 'carriage', which is a means of transporting something from one place to another. A coach therefore, is an individual who guides another individual from where they are in their life to where they want to be.

## What happens during a coaching session?

Coaching sessions will typically be for a specific duration, often between 60 and 90 minutes. Sessions can be conducted over the phone, face to face, over email, via Skype and even through instant messaging.

During the session, your coach will ask you about what you want to get out of the sessions, what areas you're unhappy with and where you'd like to see yourself ending up. Although a coach will work with you, it's often up to you to challenge or reflect upon certain ideas to help you move

forward. You will never be forced to make any decisions you don't feel comfortable with and all sessions will be confidential, allowing you to explore your thoughts and feelings privately.

Coaching is often seen as a partnership between you and your coach, who will gently encourage you to explore how to make positive changes in your life. A coach should also offer support and feedback to help you to stay focused on your goals.

## **What will the client need to do?**

A coach will usually ask their client to keep a journal, where they can reflect after and in between sessions. The journal is private to the client and so won't need to be shared unless this is something that the client is keen to do. There may be practical exercises or work for the client to do, which will help them to gain insight and move forward towards their goals.

## **What is NLP?**

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) is thought to be one of the most effective and accessible self-help methods to come from modern psychology. Many coaches use NLP techniques to help 'reprogramme' clients' patterns of thinking and behaving. You can find further helpful information on NLP by searching Wikipedia.

## **How is coaching different from counselling?**

The fundamental difference between counselling and coaching is that counselling usually investigates the roots and causes of potential mental health problems, whereas coaching focuses mainly on the future to encourage personal-development and self-improvement. Coaches are not (unless specified) qualified to diagnose or treat any health-related problems, although if the situation arises they may suggest you see a GP.

## **What can a coach help me with?**

Coaches utilise effective techniques to help their clients in all aspects of life. If you've ever struggled with anything - whether it be sticking to a diet, learning a language, moving out of your comfort zone, standing up for yourself at work, keeping a stable love life, or achieving those things you always wanted to do (see a whale, go to Asia, climb a mountain and other so called 'bucket-list' activities), then consulting a coach could help you.

A coach will approach things pragmatically. Through questions and exercises, he or she will try to get a good idea of how you look at the world. From this they will be able to identify the most effective route to your goal. Some people feel intimidated by the idea of change and so need to take things very slowly to fulfil their goals. In this situation a coach might divide ultimate goals into smaller bite-sized pieces. Other people get impatient and lose interest if their dreams aren't realised immediately. In this situation a coach might suggest introducing stronger reminders and incentives to keep them on track.

However you approach life, your coach will be able to tailor your sessions to fit. Some examples of subjects coaches deal with are:

- **Relationships** - do you ever wonder why a particular relationship is not working well? A coach can help you to explore your relationships and to support you in resolving conflicts and difficulties.

- **Business life** – work can be challenging and coaching can help you to navigate your career. Coaches can help with confidence, leadership, decision-making and work/life balance.
- **Performance** - improvement is at the heart of coaching. Whatever your skill, coaching could help improve it. Whether you're an athlete, an artist, a writer, a performer or a musician - adopting specialist techniques will help you to push your limitations and exceed expectations.
- **Personal life** - perhaps you feel like you're not making the most of life. There's so much to see, do and learn in this world, but often a lack of confidence, time and will-power can cause us to stay inside not doing anything. Coaches use specialist skills to motivate their clients to do the things they want to do, so they can finally fight the urge to procrastinate.

## **Is coaching expensive?**

The cost of a coaching session will depend on a number of factors, including the type of coaching you require, the length of the session and location. Prices are available from your coach on request.

## **How many coaching sessions will I need?**

You can have as many or as few coaching sessions as you like. Because many coaches operate over the phone or via the Internet, the sessions can easily fit around your schedule. Some people have a coaching session once every few weeks and some people have a session once a week. The frequency and number of sessions are usually discussed and agreed with your coach.

## **How can I tell if a coach is any good?**

Coaching is currently an unregulated profession in the UK, meaning anyone can essentially design a business card and call themselves a coach. Because of this, it can pay to do your research very carefully. Look for a coach with membership with a recognised professional body.

Still, qualifications and memberships mean little if you don't get on with your coach. Rapport is one of the most important parts of coaching. If you feel uncomfortable with your professional, you are unlikely to gain much from the session. It is therefore advisable to get in contact before you book a session. Never feel obliged to continue if you don't want to – you are in the driving seat.

## **Can I have coaching online or by telephone?**

Lots of coaches offer online and telephone coaching for individuals who are unable to meet them face to face, or whom may simply find these services easier and more convenient. Online and telephone coaching can be offered in addition to one-on-one meetings or as the primary method of coaching.