

An Introduction to Coaching

Coaching means different things to different people. To ensure we have a shared understanding, this document:

- Gives an overview of coaching, what it is, how it works and the potential benefits.
- Describes what you can expect from your coach and what your coach will expect from you.
- Encourages you to think about how coaching might benefit you.

What is coaching?

Coaching is a form of learning where a person (the "coach") supports someone else (the "coachee") to generate new thinking, create learning and self-development, and promote focused action in ways that benefit the coachee.

"Coaching" essentially means to transport someone from one place to another. In today's context, it's about generating shifts, moving forward and creating change.

Coaching is most often delivered as a conversation, or series of conversations, between coach and coachee. A coaching conversation will differ from day-to-day conversation, marked by its structure which is thoughtfully architected by the coach to benefit the coachee's thinking, learning and action.

What is coaching not?

Coaching is not consulting, counselling, mentoring or training: a coach will not instruct you to do something specific or go do it for you. (That would be taking responsibility away from the coachee.) Rather, coaching is "self-directed", focused on drawing-out what's already there.

This is quite different from simply saying: "what do you think?" Coaching will provide structure and process. And whilst my instinct as a coach says I help you best by coming to your ideas first, I'll also be contributing my insights and experience; and sharing with you a wealth of tools and techniques from my development toolkit.

Why do people have coaching?

People come to coaching to make positive changes, achieve goals and create better results. Common goals might be to be more effective at work; feel more confident in certain situations; have more influence and impact when working with other people; to develop their career with a new job or promotion; or to make a career transition to something entirely different.

Coaching has wide application. But the focus will always be your agenda; and the objective will always be transformation. Common benefits people experience from coaching include:

- Greater clarity for an improved sense of direction and focus.
- Increased self-awareness and responsibility.
- Improved ability to relate to and influence others.
- Increased confidence, motivation and conviction.
- Improved personal productivity and effectiveness.
- Increased resourcefulness and resilience.

How does coaching work?

Any coaching relationship starts with a chemistry session: an exploratory coaching conversation between prospective coach and prospective coachee to establish the potential for coaching. This initial exchange will tell both coach and coachee whether they are right for one another.

A coaching programme usually takes place over a number of weeks, depending on the goals of the coaching. The engine room of the programme is the coaching session: a confidential 1-2-1 conversation between coach and coachee. Over the course of the programme, sessions will be used to set goals and manage progress towards achieving them.

Why does coaching work?

Coaching works by bringing to bear all the resources and resourcefulness of a coachee in focused and motivated effort to progress goals. It creates an environment conducive to new insight, creating the space to think deeply about the topics that matter to you; and in the way most appropriate for you.

Within coaching, Coachee's experience a focus and attention that enable them to develop greater self-awareness and a deeper appreciation of their circumstances: both challenge and opportunity. Coachees create for themselves new ways to resolve issues, produce better results and generally achieve their goals more easily.

As a result of coaching, coachees break out of their deeply hardwired autopilot into conscious thought and deliberate action; and embed new and positive habits to achieve long-lasting change.

What can I expect from my coach?

A coach provides a kind of support distinct from any other. You can expect your coach to focus solely on you and your situation; and with an attention and commitment you will rarely experience elsewhere.

You can expect from your coach the perfect combination of objective detachment coupled with complete commitment to you and your goals - making the coaching relationship like no other.

Your coach's role is to listen, observe, question and - where it will be of benefit to you - provide challenge and stretch. Your coach will reflect back to you with the kind of objective assessment that creates real clarity. And will encourage you in a way that has you rising to challenges, overcoming obstacles and getting into purposeful action.

What will my coach expect from me?

Your coach expects both your full commitment to the coaching process and your openness to the potential of coaching. That means showing-up *for* sessions; and showing-up *in* sessions.

Between sessions, your coach expects you to complete your agreed actions and assignments to move you closer to your goals. And throughout the journey, your coach expects you to be honest and open.

How might coaching benefit me?

Coaching is a powerful experience that can literally change people's lives. But each of us has to decide for ourselves whether coaching is the right option at any given moment.

The following questions will help you begin to form potential goals for a coaching relationship. And whilst they are not intended to identify specifics, they will encourage thoughts and ideas that you can take to a chemistry session with your prospective coach.

Please take a few moments to sit quietly with these questions and reflect on your thinking.

- What goals (if any) are you currently working on?
- What project would you love to spend time working on and moving forward?
- What's going really well for you right now that you'd like to build on?
- If you could change one thing about your current situation, what would you change?
- What do you really want?