



What is Coaching?

“Coaching is unlocking people’s potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them”

Sir John Whitmore

Coaching involves a series of developmental conversations in which a professional coach and client address goals and outcomes identified by the client that focus on their personal development or professional performance or both. Through this highly collaborative relationship, clients have a unique opportunity to think openly, test ideas, generate new perspectives and maximise their performance in whatever domain of their working or personal life is of central importance. Coaching has the scope, therefore, to address a broad range of issues such as a client’s leadership style, decision making, career choices, resilience and psychological well-being.

The process is structured and involves a high level of experimentation in which new ideas and approaches are tested and fine-tuned through an iterative process that gives life to the client’s skills, strengths and capabilities. Professional coaches draw on a range of approaches and methods to facilitate this learning process such as the cognitive and behavioural sciences, positive psychology, developmental psychology and psychoneurology amongst others. Ultimately, and regardless of the specific approach adopted, the overall aim is to expand awareness, generate greater choice, and maximise the client’s strengths and potential for greater fulfilment.

Notably, coaching is not counselling or therapy. In the coaching relationship, the focus is on the present and future rather than on addressing unresolved historic issues. Coaching is also not the same as mentoring despite sharing some common elements including the focus on learning. Broadly speaking in mentoring relationships, the mentor is more experienced than the mentee and there is a much greater degree of sharing of experiences. The relationships are also usually longer than in a coaching programme.

Professional coaches have undergone extensive training and are required to follow ethical guidelines as outlined by coaching bodies and allied organisations including the International Coaching Federation (ICF) and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC). Central to this code is the strict maintenance of client confidentiality aimed to ensure that a safe and discreet space is created to explore the client’s agenda.

What To Expect from Coaching?

The Coaching Programme:

Coaching programmes are structured with sessions delivered as part of a set number over a defined timescale. This could, for example, involve a programme of 5 sessions spread monthly with each session lasting an agreed length of time. In order that sessions are as productive as possible clients are invited to reflect before each session what they wish to spend their time focusing on which could include, for example, a recent significant event or the outcome of an activity undertaken since the last session. Ultimately the client sets the agenda, remains the expert in their life experiences and responsible for decision making whilst the coach expertly guides the process of inquiry and exploration.



Choosing Your Coach:

Choosing the best fit between coach and client is a critical first step given that at the heart of coaching is a close collaborative partnership. This is the role of the chemistry session. All of C4Cs coaches bring their own distinctive blend of life and work experiences, coaching expertise and personalities so as a first step new clients are invited to speak to a select number of coaches to ensure the chemistry works well for both parties before embarking on a programme.

Goals and Purpose:

Defining what success looks like is an important second step in the process and usually takes place at the first session. By crystallising high value goals and being clear about the central priority, plans can be developed and associated actions identified that are motivating and achievable. This also provides the basis upon which success can be measured.

Exploration and Discovery:

Once underway it is not unusual to experience some turbulence as old patterns of thinking and being become challenged and alternatives emerge. It is through such an iterative process of experimentation that fine tuning occurs and break-throughs are more often than not achieved. The client is guided through this process so that what emerges is desired and lasting.

Feedback and Alignment:

Feedback from the client to their coach is an essential ingredient throughout the coaching process. Whilst the coach seeks to apply their expertise the client has a role in providing invaluable guidance as to what is working particularly well and where adaptations could be helpful in terms of focus or approach. It ensures goals can be met and strengthens the relationship between coach and client. At the end of each session time is dedicated to this. There is also a more formal end of programme feedback process which provides scope for the client to reflect on their overall experience, a valuable learning experience for both the client and coach.



The mind is like a parachute;
it only works when it is open

Frank Zappa

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Our thanks to Mark Thompson for his continued support

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