

**Diploma in
Life Coaching**

**Unit 1
Introduction**

Introduction

Life coaching is spreading in popularity and entering many areas of our personal and business lives. It originated in the USA over 10 years ago but has recently become very popular here in Britain where it is enjoying phenomenal growth as more and more people discover the advantages for themselves.

As there are many individuals who are eager to become professional coaches or learn coaching skills, we have developed this life coaching course where we'll look at what life coaching is, how it differs from other forms of personal development, how it works and what benefits it can offer. We'll look closely at the coaching process itself, at some of the areas it can be applied to, and we shall see how different coaching styles can affect the process.

What life coaching is

“You don't get to choose how you're going to die or when. You can only decide how you're going to live”

Joan Baez

Life coaching, in simple terms, is a process of helping people to move from where they are now to where they want or need to get to.

Life coaching is a practical, forward looking way for an individual to gain clarity on what they don't like about their lives and what they can do about it. It's also a powerful support system to keep a person moving in the right direction.

Coaching is a **process**, not an event. It is the **ongoing** and **consistent** way in which we present ourselves, and through which we build and maintain relationships with others. Coaching is not a heavy-handed action to you use on a subordinate. Coaching is a **partnership** designed to make use of the knowledge, information, synergy, and talents people bring to the problem solving process.

Coaching provides a confidential, non-judgemental, impartial and completely personalised support structure that enables individuals to achieve far more than they ever would on their own.

Clients come from all walks of life and are unique in their desires, priorities and needs.

Coaching requires:

- Effective two-way communication and dialogue
- Observation of performance, followed by constructive feedback
- An investment in helping others succeed
- A focus on performance and achieving results
- Courage to address difficult issues, and engage others in growth opportunities
- Time to help people improve

The aim of coaching

The aim of the coach is to create a partnership in which the coach helps guide the client to realise their full potential and achieve success in both their personal and business life. This is accomplished by creating a harmonious balance between all the different aspects of an individual's life, together with developing clear directions to take that person to a happier new future.

Life coaching is both a professional and a personal **relationship** between two otherwise unconnected people. It relies on the development of a special relationship between the coach and the client (designed and managed by the coach) which, rather than looking to the past, plans for the future in such a way as to help the client

improve one or many aspects of their lives, independent of the pressures of the past and the present.

Coaching is a facilitative process whereby the aim of the coach is to stimulate **new thinking** in an individual and to challenge their existing thinking. It is not a means of providing answers and solutions but to motivate the client into new ways of thinking for solutions. As it encourages independent thinking it therefore has a lasting impact on performance.

A life coach will help an individual clarify their **ambitions** and identify the strengths that they already possess. They can develop new empowering beliefs, create new strengths and build upon them to provide a strong foundation for a better life.

Coaching will help the client set compelling and achievable **goals**, and help to develop clear **action plans** to achieve them, whilst keeping them **motivated**, focused and overcoming any obstacles that stand in their way. This is done through helping the client to understand what it is they want to achieve: by setting goals which are realistic and which will help them to achieve their higher level ambitions; by helping them to believe they can achieve their goals and their ambitions; by guiding them as to how they can achieve their desires; and by encouraging them to go out and do it for themselves.

This is the important point - a life coach will not go out and improve a client's life for them, but the coach will help the client to decide and to act. They will encourage the individual to overcome the apathy that is deep-seated in their life. The coach will help the individual to convert dream into reality and self-doubt to self-belief.

It is therefore one of the most powerful learning tools of change within an individual. Not only is that person learning how to tackle change, but they are also learning new mental approaches that will make them more self-aware and give them confidence to approach challenges in the future.

Coaching also incorporates learning and yet a coach is not a teacher and will not necessarily know how to do things better than the client - this does not matter. The coach will observe patterns, provide an environment for new actions and then work with the client to put these new, more successful actions into place. This involves learning through various coaching techniques such as listening, reflecting, asking questions and providing information.

Finally, and most importantly, the process involves coaching the client to access what they already know. The coach will help the client learn how to become self-correcting and self-generating. That is, the client will learn how to:

- Generate their own questions
- Find their own answers
- Correct their own behaviour

The coaching sessions

Coaching sessions can be conducted by telephone, over the Internet or face to face. Sessions usually take place once a week, lasting about 45 minutes to an hour. Some people have one session; some have a course of 4 or 8. Others may stay for many months, lowering the frequency of visits as their goals and progress become clearer.

It usually takes a month to six weeks to start achieving the desired results, though the client will often start to feel the benefits of the life coaching approach more or less straightaway. It is unusual for a coaching process to last longer than six months without a break, but it is not uncommon to have a series of coaching relationships, each one building on what has been achieved before.

Coaching may also involve the client in assignments, which allow them to enhance their learning in some way. These might be to write a reflective essay, to keep a diary, to read a book or join a club, for example.

Some individuals choose to build a very rewarding part-time or full-time career as a life coach. Others have seen that life coaching skills are being actively sought as a 'qualification' by companies wanting well-trained, skilled personnel, supervisory, customer care or management staff.

Summary

Coaching is a practical tool for personal exploration and development. A coach can unlock and release the potential within clients, to bring about major positive improvements in their lives.

Activity 1

By using the Internet, library or local newspapers research what life coaching services are available, how the sessions are held, the duration of the sessions and how much they cost.

What life coaching is not

There are many paths to personal improvement and not all of them are coaching. Coaching has a few characteristics that set it apart.

Therapy

Therapy (and counselling) are much more focused on overcoming problems and tend to look to the past rather than the future. Often, therapy will focus on a single aspect of the client and work solely on producing improvements in that area.

In contrast, coaching will focus on an aspect of the person's life, but they'll comprehend the whole person's performance within that focus area. Life coaching is very much focused on the present and the future; it is about finding out where you want to be in life and how to get there. Sometimes a coach will attend to specific areas (typically self-esteem for negative beliefs) in order to free up progress, but the emphasis is on moving the whole person forward in life.

Fundamentally, however, coaching deals with what is happening now and in the immediate future.

Counselling

In many situations, a counsellor will look at the past to try to formulate a specific solution to a particular problem.

Unlike counselling, coaching is primarily present-oriented. The coach will come to have an understanding of how the client's past has shaped their present, but the focus of life coaching is on where they are now and where they are aiming to be in the future. Every situation, every client and every coaching session is unique, and the overall aim is to enable the individual to take control of their life by accepting responsibility for all that they are and all that they do.

Unlike counselling, coaching is for those who are moving forward from a reasonably stable base. So it is not appropriate, for example, for the mentally ill, those in crisis, with drug problems, crippling financial hardship or a history of abuse.

Teaching or Training

Teaching and training are about transferring skills or knowledge to students. A life coach's role is to guide the client to clarify their own desires, to create their own compelling and achievable goals and to build and maintain motivation and focus.

Consultancy

Consultants are generally asked to look at particular work-related issues. They usually gather data, analyse functions and quantify requirements, to support proposals designed to create operational or structural change. Their focus is generally on resolving particular functional issues. The life coach adopts a different approach; one where people and personality are paramount and where the changes sought are at a personal, psychological level. Coaching in a business environment is not a form of consultancy. Life coaching with its degree of understanding about the attitude and desires of the individuals involved will often enable a company to achieve change in a faster timescale and with longer lasting benefits than those resulting from a standard consultancy approach.

Mentoring

Mentoring is also frequently confused with, or referred to as being interchangeable with, coaching. But the two processes are very different.

A mentor will generally be there to help someone to learn a particular task or to acquire a specific skill-set. The mentor will have a lot of experience in a particular area and will be able to help the client to find short cuts and to learn how to gain specific results in specific areas. The mentor will generally know the ins and outs of a specific job-related situation in advance.

Unlike mentoring, coaching is not instructional. It does not bestow new vocational skills or provide "answers" through the teachings of an expert, though coaches may provide some learning experiences that equip the client with some new tools. Coaches help the client to find their own way; they do not give directions.

Life coaching does not require that the coach should have personal experience of a client's industry or occupation. Indeed it may be that the absence of experience adds to the effectiveness of coaching in this area - a mentor already knows the answers but a coach may not. The coach works with the individual so that they can first discover the questions for themselves and then find their own answers.

Activity 2

Describe in your own words how life coaching differs from counselling and under what circumstances life coaching is more appropriate than counselling.

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ACPD Assignment 1

Question 1	In your own words, write a brief summary of what life coaching is designed to achieve.
Question 2	Write a paragraph about what you think life coaching involves for both coach and client.
Question 3	List five of the requirements for life coaching and in your own words describe how each one would be useful in helping the client with their personal development.
Question 4	Write a brief summary of the format the coaching sessions may take.
Question 5	List five alternative methods of personal development and in your own words describe how life coaching differs from these methods.

If you would like this assignment to be marked and to have feedback on your work, please send your answers to your ACPD tutor. Details on how to send in work can be found in the Start Book that came with this course.

If you are working towards the ASET Diploma, it is important that you take your time and answer the questions fully. The mark you get for this work will count towards your final assessment.

Please remember that there is no obligation to submit work for marking if you would prefer not to.

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Unit 2

What makes an effective coach?

Life coaching is a suitable profession for people from all walks of life, regardless of whether they have previous knowledge or are a complete novice or whether they have experience of the subject or in a related profession.

Could you be a successful coach?

Provided that you have the desire and drive to do so, you can train to be a successful coach. Ask yourself the following questions, and if the answers are YES, then coaching is for you.

- Are you a good listener?
- Do you want to make a positive difference to people's lives?
- Do you want to develop emotionally and spiritually as a person?
- Do you like people?
- Do you have the ability to build a good rapport with people?
- Do you feel able to encourage others?
- Would being part of another person's success give you a feeling of reward and pleasure?

If you are interested in people, are open-minded and truly want to help others to achieve their dreams then you are most of the way there. But you must be enthusiastic, be able to communicate well and have a rapport with your clients without getting too personally involved.

Competencies of Coaching

- Create a supportive presence

- Skilled in giving and receiving feedback
- Effective listening skills
- Effective questioning skills
- Motivate members to set goals that are a stretch
- Ability to challenge
- Be supportive during psychological state change
- Open minded

A good coach:

- Encourages constructive and open conversations
- Accepts differences
- Is respectful of others
- Builds a comfortable environment for interaction, disclosure, and communication
- Shares views, facts and information in a non-threatening manner
- Concentrates on change and learning
- Enjoys strengthening and empowering others
- Maintains high expectations and performance standards
- Unleashes motivation and creativity

Activity 3

What personal characteristics do you possess that you think would help you be a successful coach?