

PART ONE

An Invitation to Coaching

CHAPTER

1

The Path from Therapist to Coach

I have written this book to help guide therapists who are interested in making the transition to the enjoyable, challenging, and satisfying work of personal and executive coaching. I have made this transition myself, and it has changed not only my psychology practice but my outlook on life as well.

Coaching focuses on helping people unleash their potential. I'm still helping people—as I did in my clinical work—but now I'm helping higher-functioning people move forward faster. My clients are extremely motivated and make progress quickly as a result of our coaching alliance.

I often work from home on the telephone. I love coaching and feel energized by my interactions with my clients. I also love helping other mental health professionals tap their strengths and help create a satisfying and lucrative coaching practice.

To help you decide whether coaching is for you, this chapter describes the path from therapist to coach. You will look at what coaching is, examine the differences between therapy and coaching, explore the characteristics of personal and executive coaching, and discover why therapists make excellent coaches. At the end of the chapter, you'll find a self-assessment to help you gauge your own readiness for coaching.

MY STORY

Let me begin by describing how I became interested in coaching and how I transformed from a therapist to a personal and executive coach.

I first began coaching after reading an article in *Newsweek* magazine about doing therapy over the telephone. I reasoned that therapy

conducted over the telephone carried too many risks for the client and the therapist, but I began to explore types of services that a therapist could provide over the phone that would be helpful to well-functioning people and that did not raise significant ethical issues.

I began to consult with higher-functioning individuals over the telephone to help them identify their most important goals that were congruent with their key values. I followed up with weekly calls to help them stay on track. In effect, I was already on the path from therapist to coach.

At the same time I was experiencing a busy psychotherapy practice, but my practice was becoming more managed-care oriented. I no longer had people coming to me because of my particular specialty. Instead, a group of family practice physicians would blanket-refer their patients to my office because they were pleased with my services. So my practice was busy but less satisfying. It became awkward to try to refer clients that weren't a good match for me to other therapists once they already had their "authorization for service" in my name. Also, I knew that just around the corner was the prospect of being "capitated." I definitely did not want to be in the situation of being ethically and legally bound to provide whatever treatment was necessary for one very low fee.

About that time I became more involved with the psychology department of a major medical center. My colleagues had an astonishing array of high-level training from respected institutions, comprehensive experience, and a history of positions of extraordinary levels of responsibility. However, my impression was that the breadth of my colleagues' abilities was not being tapped by their day-to-day clinical work.

Then, during my tenure as chief of the psychology department, our organization was thrown into a massive reorganization as a result of a hostile takeover. During that period of crisis the mental health professionals rallied. Many of my colleagues gave their hearts, and an extensive amount of their time, to come together to brainstorm and

collaborate on how best to help manage the change in a constructive manner for our clients' benefit.

Ultimately the administration of the hospital rejected the efforts of the mental health professionals. The knowledge base of organizational psychology, change management, team building, and executive development was ignored. During the ensuing two years almost two hundred mental health professionals resigned—one third of the staff. I saw my colleagues and support staff depressed and frequently in tears. The human cost of poor management affected hundreds of workers and their families.

This experience clarified for me how important it is for executives and managers to combine high emotional intelligence with inspired, effective leadership skills in order to ensure well-functioning organizations and to prevent unnecessary pain among employees. I realized how important it is for managers who lack emotional intelligence and effective management skills to get a coach to help them develop these skills. And I appreciated even more the powerful role that coaches play to help people adapt to change, create a meaningful and passionate vision of the next chapter of their personal and work life, and develop the skills to realize their vision.

Like most of you, I have always believed in a holistic approach to helping people. Now I began to see more clearly how much of our society is disenchanting with a "medical," illness-based model of health care. Yet our professions have for years been trying to appear more "medical" in the quest for insurance reimbursement. Of course, at this point insurance reimbursement and managed care have become sore points for many professionals. Not only is the "illness" model of questionable use in terms of maximizing health and recovery, but it is increasingly an outdated, unviable business model as well.

Our mutual interest in how to offer our services to the public in a manner that the public clearly values, and will gladly pay us out of pocket for, leads us naturally to the new, hot field of personal and executive coaching.

WHAT IS COACHING?

The process of coaching is similar to therapy in the sense that it draws upon many of the same qualifications and skills. But it is also distinct from therapy in important ways. The Professional and Personal Coaches Association, now the International Coach Federation, succinctly described a view of coaching that is held by most personal coaches and executive coaches:

*Coaching is an ongoing relationship between the professional coach and the client, which focuses on the client taking action toward the realization of their vision, goals or desires. Coaching uses a process of inquiry and personal discovery to build the client's level of awareness and responsibility and provides the client with structure, support and feedback.*¹

A similar definition of coaching is “a powerful alliance designed to forward and enhance the lifelong process of human learning, effectiveness and fulfillment.”² Tim Gallwey, author of *The Inner Game of Tennis* (1997), describes the essence of coaching as “unlocking a person’s potential to maximize their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them.”³

Frederic Hudson describes a coach as a “trusted role model, adviser, wise person, friend, mensch, steward, or guide—a person who works with emerging human and organizational forces to tap new energy and purpose, to shape new visions and plans, and to generate desired results.”⁴

Whatever definition of coaching you incorporate into your own experience as a mental health professional, it will probably not be the type of coaching described in business books like *Crane’s Heart of Coaching*, that is, management coaching with an interpersonal transformational approach.⁵ The idea of managers as coaches, committed to bringing out the best in their teams, is an important one, but it pushes the boundaries set by our professional associations. Most personal and executive coaches operate from the assumption that the

coach does not have authority over the client because that would be seen by many as a dual relationship. If the coach does have authority, then the opportunity for the client to develop his or her own unique agenda with the highest level of inner commitment will be limited at best, or even undermined. As a mental health professional, you will most likely develop your coaching skills to broaden your practice opportunities but not move into a management role.

DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN COACHING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

The essential difference most often cited between psychotherapy and coaching is that psychotherapy usually focuses on resolving illness or trauma, whereas coaching focuses on enhancing achievement and fulfillment in a generally well-functioning person. Granted, some psychotherapists may have a humanistic approach that focuses on enhancing human functioning or self-actualization. But for most mental health professionals, billing insurance or managed-care companies for service by definition means certifying that they are treating an illness. Interestingly, the International Coach Federation contends that health insurance plans cannot be billed for coaching, although some companies now offer coaching to their employees as a benefit and many Employee Assistance Programs are now developing coaching services.

Professional associations and mental-health-related licensing boards will probably issue comments on the personal coaching field at some point, but at the time of this writing there are no official position papers. The American Psychological Association (APA) journal, *Consulting Psychology*, has carried many articles on executive coaching. Articles have also appeared in APA Division 42's *Independent Practitioner*, the *Psychotherapy Networker*, and other mental-health-related publications.

A dedicated group of volunteers created the International Coach Federation's *White Paper on the Nature and Scope of Coaching*. They describe coaching in a way that further distinguishes it from therapy.

This description is important for mental health professionals to be aware of, so key parts are paraphrased here with some adaptation and clarification after review from my editorial panel of mental health professional coaches. To view this document in its entire, original form, go to www.coachfederation.org.⁶

The coaching client is someone who wants to reach one or more of the following: a higher level of performance, enhanced learning, a new level of personal development, greater career success, or increased life satisfaction. The client is not seeking emotional healing or relief from psychological pain.

The coaching client takes action to move toward a goal, and often to reach higher levels of personal development, with the support of the coach. Clients who are appropriate for coaching can readily move from thoughtful reflection into action and are not significantly bogged down by "unfinished business."

Coaches and clients arrange the schedule and means of contact (e.g., in person, by phone, or via e-mail) that are most appropriate to the goals of the coaching. The coach and client create the focus, format, and desired outcomes for their work. The client and the coach share responsibility for the design of the coaching agenda.

Coaching is designed to help clients improve their learning, performance, and personal development and to enhance their quality of life. Coaching does not focus directly on relieving psychological pain or treating cognitive or emotional disorders.

Coaching concentrates primarily on the present and future. Coaching uses information from the client's past to clarify where the client is today. Coaching does not focus on the resolution of past trauma as a precursor to help the client move forward. Thus, compared to many forms of psychotherapy, coaching spends proportionally less time discussing past upsetting events. Instead, most of the focus is on designing the future, supporting current peak performance, and nurturing the client's emerging developmental edge.

Coaching assumes that there will be emotional reactions to life events

and that appropriate coaching clients are capable of expressing and handling their emotions. Coaching is not psychotherapy, and emotional healing is not the focus of coaching. Although coaching can be used concurrently with psychotherapeutic work, it is not used as a substitute for psychotherapeutic work.

Advice, opinions, or suggestions are occasionally offered in coaching. Coaches often make requests or suggestions of the client to promote action toward the client's desired outcome. Both parties understand that the client takes the ultimate responsibility for action.

The essence of why some people are interested in making a distinction between coaching and psychotherapy revolves around two issues and two camps. One camp, those who are not mental health professionals, want to ensure that there is a distinction between coaching and psychotherapy for a variety of reasons. Non-mental-health professionals do not want to be charged with practicing psychotherapy without a license. In addition, they usually have no interest in examining the past's impact on the present and future; they usually recognize that they are not trained or prepared to deal with emotional issues best treated by a psychotherapist; they know to refer clients when appropriate to licensed professionals; and they prefer to focus on vision, success, and the future.

The other camp, the mental health professionals, want to ensure that they have a way of distinguishing when it is appropriate to use a telephone-based coaching format when they may have never met the client in person. Therapists have a need for a valid and ethical method of determining which clients would be appropriate to work with solely over the telephone in contrast to in-office contact. The ethical issues of ensuring that the client receives the most appropriate service are important here, as well as the potential of liability if the coach engages in coaching when most peers would have concluded that psychotherapy was more appropriate and there is alleged harm. Generally, though, experts consider most coaching to have lower

liability risk than many high-risk psychotherapy situations such as child custody issues or coping with clients with borderline personality disorder.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PERSONAL COACHING

AND EXECUTIVE COACHING

The coaching process, then, has some similarities to therapy but is also a distinct type of professional work. Within the general field of coaching, there is a further distinction to be made between personal and executive coaching. Both offer opportunities to mental health professionals with the appropriate retraining.

Personal Coaching

Personal coaching involves helping generally well-functioning people create and achieve goals, maximize personal development, and navigate transitions on the path to realizing their ideal vision for the current and emerging chapters of their lives. Most personal coaching clients are focused on the development of an ideal future self, an ideal career, or an improved family life. The coach aids the client through the coaching conversation in developing a coaching agenda, incorporating values clarification, identification of strengths, and articulation of the client's current life and career purpose. The coach supports the client's efforts to engage in lifelong learning, navigate any obstacles, delegate or let go of energy-draining situations, honor challenges, and celebrate successes. Popular life coach Cheryl Richardson, author of *Take Time for Your Life*, describes her coaching as involving (1) asking provocative questions, (2) helping her clients access their own inner wisdom to guide their next action steps, (3) providing direct advice based on her experience of working with others, (4) providing focus and support to help clients keep moving forward, (5) celebrating their successes, (6) holding their hands when life gets tough, and (7) acting as a steward for the life the client wants.⁷

Helping a Client Tap Her Intuitive Strength

Jeffrey E. Auerbach, Ph.D., MPEC

A couple of years ago, a therapist colleague referred Lori to me. Lori was a 35-year-old divorced woman who was just starting out in the real estate business. She was excited about her new career and was determined to do well. Lori had been in therapy previously with the referring therapist, but the therapist felt what she wanted now was more coaching than therapy.

As I began working with Lori, I first clarified the differences between psychotherapy and coaching with her. I explained that I would refer her to a therapist if topics arose that were best addressed in a therapy setting.

We then explored her strengths, interests, and values. Next, we jointly created a coaching agenda. Lori created a personal vision early in the coaching alliance: "to live joyfully and cozily in my new home and help others do the same."

Lori was a pleasant and warm person to those she knew well, but she was not outgoing. In fact, her Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® indicated her introverted and intuitive preferences. We both wondered how she would fare in the intense sales environment of the real estate business.

Midway into the coaching process, Lori wasn't accomplishing one of the primary action goals that she had identified for herself—meeting ten new people a week. After a few weeks of her reporting her difficulty in connecting with enough new people, I borrowed one of the questions that I had developed in my therapist days. "Since we know you have a strong intuitive side," I said, "for homework this week would you like to pose this question to your wise self: How will my intuitive wisdom help me come up with a way to connect with more of my potential customers?"

I received an e-mail from Lori a few days later. "Jeff, I went for a walk on the beach and reflected on your question. I can't wait to tell you what I came up with!"

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During our next telephone coaching session, Lori said, "Do you remember how I told you I enjoy making chocolate tortes? I decided that I will spread the word via my newsletter to everyone in my territory that I'm going to be raffling off a chocolate torte every week, and that if I pick their name out of my hat, I'll come to their door and award it to them!"

Of course, almost everyone loves chocolate, so Lori's brainstorm became a huge success. She became known as the "dessert agent" and even became something of a local celebrity. Now she had an icebreaker to make it easier to meet new people. She had developed a way to create new relationships in a manner that was fun and clever.

This example of the pleasant and helpful interchange I often have with my clients illustrates why I find coaching so uplifting and satisfying. I enjoyed this process with Lori because it affirmed for me how my faith in the positive power of my clients resources, along with the clients' intent to actualize their most important dreams, leads to enjoyable and rewarding work-and to powerful results for my clients.

Often, an important aspect of personal coaching is aiding a client in transition. Coaches frequently are involved in helping people move from one phase of development to another, which parallels Erik Erikson's idea that development is a lifelong process that involves resolving successive crises.

In this connection, an understanding of Arnold van Gennep's *Rites of Passage* can be helpful to coaches.⁸ Van Gennep explored how rites of passage facilitate development and transformation. He described a rite of passage as involving (1) a separation from the status quo, (2) the transition into a learning phase, and (3) the adoption of a new way of being and learning. In some ways, a rite of passage is what individuals experience when they are a member of an organization that is going through a downsizing experience or when they go through a traumatic separation such as a divorce. The coach can aid clients by

framing some life experiences as rites of passage and supporting them appropriately during the transition.

In *Seasons of a Man's Life*⁹ and *Seasons of a Woman's Life*,¹⁰ Daniel Levinson explains that transitions are normal and inevitable. Since many coaching clients are going through transitions, Levinson's work is particularly relevant to coaches. Levinson describes how individuals have several developmental challenges that coaches can assist with. The five developmental components that he describes for males are forming and then modifying a dream; forming and modifying an occupation; love, marriage and family; forming mentoring relationships; and forming friendships. All of these challenges can present their own difficulties at different times in a person's life, and all are commonly discussed in coaching relationships. The fact that Levinson identifies forming mentoring relationships—which are similar to the coaching relationship—as a key element contributing to optimal development, may help explain the attraction of coaching.

In *The Handbook of Coaching*¹¹ and *The Adult Years: Mastering the Art of Self-Renewal*,¹² Frederic Hudson describes his view that adults experience their lives in one of two patterns: at any given time, people are either in a life chapter or in a life transition. According to Hudson, when people are in the first phase of a life chapter, they usually feel good—enthusiastic, energetic, and optimistic. Changes feel like opportunities to fulfill a life purpose. An example is a young woman just entering her career out of business school who feels challenged, energized, and excited about her future. However, when people are in the second phase of a life chapter, they feel bored and dissatisfied. Often they respond to their dissatisfaction by making a mini-transition to “tune up” their current life chapter, for example, by changing jobs (but not careers) or otherwise trying to improve what is working and change what isn't.

Less frequently, instead of entering a “mini-transition” people will enter a more profound life transition. Hudson explains that a life transition is “a transition time for starting over, while deepening the ma-

turity of the self and its dreams." Like life chapters, life transitions consist of two phases. The first phase involves reconstructing the self, and the second includes training, experimenting, and networking. The life transition leads to a fundamentally new life direction. During a life transition people may experience feelings ranging from anger, sadness, and fear to relief and a sense of distant anticipation. This is an opportunity for deeper exploration of one's values and beliefs, which can lead to a spiritual renewal and a new sense of purpose.

In order to best address clients' needs, Hudson advocates determining which of these four phases of adult life a client is in and then tailoring coaching interventions to the unique needs of the specific life phase. For example, in phase one of a life chapter Hudson identifies assisting the client in reaching goals, taking risks, and focusing on career advancement as common coaching areas. In contrast, in phase two of a life chapter, when the client may be experiencing fear, anger, or relief, it may be more appropriate to assist the client in structuring a sabbatical, connecting with new friends, and exploring a new sense of purpose.

Transitions are often a time of soul searching. My style of coaching, which I call Holistic, Values-Based Action Coaching, rests on a foundation of the client's most important values. In this regard, I advocate incorporating a values-clarification process early into the coaching relationship to ensure that the coaching is in line with the powerful, meaningful forces operating within the client.

Coaches who work with clients in transition help them clarify their personal identity, integrate a new sense of purpose, and experience increased confidence. Through coaching, clients learn to live the "being" of their life so that their actions are integrated into a sustaining pattern of their current or emerging core values and purpose.

A key characteristic of coaching is the orientation to help clients "forward their action." Rather than exploring pain or trauma, the coach helps clients maintain focus on their ideal vision of their future. So, for example, I help my clients craft a strategic life plan to give them a

map to navigate to their consciously chosen future.

Executive Coaching

Executive coaching is similar in many ways to personal coaching, but it focuses especially on issues related to effectiveness and fulfillment at work. Common themes in executive coaching are developing key executive and managerial skills, enhancing teambuilding and leadership qualities, identifying and optimizing the use of key strengths, and building the competencies of emotional intelligence.

Executive coaching makes unique demands on the coaching professional. In *Behind the Closed Doors: What Really Happens in Executive Coaching*, Hall and colleagues report on the results of their interviews with seventy-five executives who were surveyed about their coaching experience.¹³ Their survey led to the conclusion that the two most important factors in effective executive coaching are honest, reliable feedback and good action ideas. Twelve other qualities rated as important by the executive clients were approachability, self-knowledge, comfort around top management, intellectual horsepower, compassion, interpersonal savvy, creativity, listening, customer focus, political savvy, integrity and trust, and ability to deal with paradox.

Most of these executive clients reported that they were “very satisfied” with the coaching experience. They reported that the coaching led them to develop new skills, abilities, and perspectives, that were helpful in their careers. Moreover, the authors report that the clients experienced improvements in adaptability, identity, patience, confidence, and executive performance.

Who Can Benefit from Executive Coaching?

At this point, it’s appropriate to stop and ask what an “executive” is. Peter Drucker writes in *The Effective Executive* that any knowledge worker is an executive who “by virtue of his or her position or knowledge, is responsible for a contribution that materially affects the ca-

capacity of the organization to perform and to obtain results."¹⁴ When Drucker says "responsible for a contribution," he is implying that a key role of executives is making decisions, not just carrying out orders. Also implied is that the executive will be able to make better decisions than others because of his or her knowledge and skill.

A distinction is typically made between managers and executives. Managerial functions are often considered to be controlling, planning, and administrating. Leadership functions are usually considered to be influencing values, motives, and vision. Executives are typically required to combine these functions in day-to-day roles, but there are many managers who are not executives. Some managers may supervise many people but lack the authority to make decisions and in effect are just serving to pass on the orders and decisions of others.

Some individuals attempt to differentiate executive coaching from other forms of coaching by specifying that executive coaching means working with the most senior leaders in a large organization. However, I believe that many entrepreneurs leading small, rapidly growing start-up companies, as well as other individuals who lead complicated lives, with multiple areas of responsibility and multiple complex decision-making challenges, also benefit from working with an executive coach.

The Roles of an Executive Coach

Richard Diedrich, a senior consultant in the coaching field, has identified six major roles that executive coaches play:¹⁵

- Identify and modify managerial style to improve the effectiveness of individuals and teams.
- Aid the adaptation to change.
- Identify and utilize key strengths.
- Create and monitor developmental plans.
- Improve organizational performance.

- Help clients learn effective executive skills.

My research involving nineteen executive coaches from the 2000 International Coach Federation Executive Coaching Summit in Vancouver, British Columbia, sought to identify the top four executive coaching roles. I found that the four most common executive coaching roles, in order of frequency, were (1) aiding in the development of effective executive skills, (2) identifying and modifying managerial style to improve the effectiveness of individuals and teams, (3) helping executives identify and utilize key strengths, and (4) aiding in the adaptation to change.

Increasingly leaders recognize that the best way to develop leadership in their organizations is to structure challenging assignments, matched with the individual's strengths, and complement those assignments with coaching. Executive coaches can help identify strengths and explore potential areas for development through an assessment process. Then coaches create a development plan and coach the client through the plan to facilitate leadership and business success.

Executives are often faced with an overwhelming set of responsibilities, challenges, and decisions. The executive coach often serves as a strategic ally who can help executives maximize their performance by keeping them focused on their primary agendas and helping them delegate or eliminate distractions. Executive coaches facilitate conversations with their clients to help sort out the complexities in their dilemmas. Coaches serve as collaborative thinking partners and encourage the exploration of their clients' rationales, a process that can uncover errors, biases, and opportunities.

One of the most satisfying elements of executive coaching is being a part of a creative and collaborative process where extraordinary results occur. The executive coach helps to draw out creativity, innovation, and teamwork. The coach engages in this process with the executive and models a process the executive can use with his or her team. Executives need to learn how to identify and recruit exceptional

contributors to their team to focus on a particular business challenge and craft a dialogue that leads to innovation. Properly trained executive coaches can help in assessing candidates for desired competencies, draw out individuals' strengths and passions to promote a best fit in the organization and facilitate maximum contribution, engage with the leader in creative collaboration, and coach the team to aid in focus, innovation, and team building.

Executive coaches can also help executives by having conversations about what leadership styles are appropriate for their situations. The coach can help executives consciously choose when, and in what combination, to

- promote an ethic of questioning
- engage in a leadership development role
- adopt a coaching and teaching role
- utilize a forceful, execution role
- foster a collaborative process
- take a hands-off approach
- focus on a supportive, encouraging role¹⁶

WHY THERAPISTS MAKE GREAT COACHES

One morning the faculty of the College of Executive Coaching gathered around chips and salsa at a local Mexican cantina to discuss how training in psychology and the experiences of being a therapist can help create great coaches. We identified thirteen reasons why your training and experience as a therapist gives you the foundation to be an exceptional coach:

1. Unique insights into human motivation and behavior
2. A broad perspective on the depth and breadth of human experience

3. A less judgmental interactive style than the average person
4. An understanding of people's life transitions
5. An in-depth understanding of human development
6. Experience helping people manage crises
17. The ability to balance an objective understanding of human experience with the subjective experience of others
18. An understanding of the importance of maintaining work/personal life balance
19. An ethics code that affirms the dignity of all human beings
10. An ability to help people understand that many of their thoughts and feelings are within the normal range of experience
11. An understanding of how individuals and organizations fit together
12. Training in the use of assessments to help individuals understand their personality type preferences, strengths, and areas that need extra development or management
13. Extensive experience in helping people communicate more effectively

In addition to these characteristics of therapists that would contribute to a coach's competency, our psychological literature is flush with humanistic, growth-oriented theorists who argue that healthy people can consciously choose and nurture their behavior and development¹⁷—ideas that provide guidance for coaches.

For example, in *The Undiscovered Self*, Carl Jung emphasized that people are motivated to develop all their capabilities.¹⁸ He believed that our personalities continue to grow and change throughout our

lives, contrary to Freud, who argued that our personalities are formed by age six. Jung asserted that our behavior is determined by our goals. In fact, Jung believed that people don't usually achieve ideal functioning until their forties as they develop and integrate all their capabilities. Jung discussed how adults often experience a spiritual awakening in the second half of life, and coaching clients are often going through this process. Also, Jung's focus on myths can inform coaches about common compelling stories in people's lives. Coaches often encourage clients to develop their own rituals to assist in a transition, an approach that mirrors Jung's interest in rituals.

D. Schultz described four characteristics of Jung's well-functioning person, which can provide guidance to us as we develop our own coaching style.¹⁹ They are:

- a high level of self-knowledge
- an acceptance of oneself, including weaknesses as well as strengths
- an acceptance and tolerance of human nature in general
- an acceptance of the unknown and mysterious, a willingness to heed "irrational" factors without abandoning logic and reason

Victor Frankl in *Man's Search for Meaning* emphasized humans' need to make sense out of the world, to discover the meaning of the situations we find ourselves in—an idea he called the "will to meaning."²⁰ Coaches often are engaged in discussions about how to help people find meaning in their lives and work. Frankl's three approaches to discovering meaning can help guide coaches:

- through what we give by our creative endeavors, work or service

- through what we take from the world in way of appreciation, such as appreciation for our spouse, children or music
- through the attitude we adopt in response to suffering

Frankl believed that ideally functioning people

- have achieved a sense of meaning in their lives
- are free to choose their course of action
- take responsibility for conduct of their lives
- are involved with something beyond themselves

Frankl's qualities of ideally functioning people parallel common coaching philosophy in that (1) clients are presumed to have their own unique answers that coaches help them discover through inquiry; (2) clients are presumed to be emotionally healthy and willing able to make choices that steer them toward their preferred future; and (3) coaching often involves a holistic, "greater purpose" dynamic.

Abraham Maslow explored what motivates behavior among people who already have their basic biological and physical safety needs met.²¹ The lower level needs on Maslow's hierarchy are characterized by deficit motivation to obtain needed resources. Self-actualization, the highest level on the hierarchy, is different in that people are not trying to avoid discomfort but rather are striving to achieve a positive goal—the goal of realizing, of making actual, all of their abilities and potentials, to be all they can be.

In order to understand how people achieve self-actualization Maslow selected people who were seen by others as "fully human" and especially "alive," who had become "the best they could be." Some

of the individuals, such as Abraham Lincoln, were famous, and some were unknown to the general public. Based on his research Maslow said that self-actualized people

- are realistically oriented
- are spontaneous
- are accepting of themselves and others
- have a need for privacy
- are task-centered rather than self-centered
- are autonomous and independent
- have close, intimate relationships with a few individuals
- are able to appreciate people as unique individuals rather than as stereotypes
- identify with humanity and are interested in the welfare of others.
- have (most of them) profound mystical or spiritual experiences
- do not confuse means with ends
- respect individuals from all racial and economic groups
- are creative
- have a non-hostile sense of humor
- resist conformity to their culture because they see its limitations
- transcend the environment by acting upon it rather than simply reacting to it²²

Maslow's ideas about self-actualization can spark a wealth of coach-

ing questions to help stimulate discussion and thought that will further our clients' development and life satisfaction. Further, his ideas provide inner guidelines for our own conception of how to help steer our clients' explorations.

Carl R. Rogers's work on how certain relationships promote good psychological functioning is fundamental to a positive coaching alliance. Rogers's three growth conditions (warmth, empathy, and genuineness) ideally underpin our coaching and personal relationships.²³ Although a few recent studies claim that these growth conditions have not proved to be consistently linked to best outcomes in psychotherapy, Rogers's ideas are central to most coaches' philosophy about creating an effective coach-client alliance.

Rogers believed that well-functioning people are open to new experiences. Although they are aware of their own feelings and attitudes, they are also aware of other elements of the world. Rogers stated that the well-functioning person "sees that not all trees are green, not all men are stern fathers, not all women are rejecting."²⁴ He also emphasized that individuals with high self-esteem rely upon their own personal standards instead of the approval or disapproval of others when evaluating possible courses of action. Creativity—being able to produce new, effective thoughts and actions—is another characteristic of well-functioning people. (Recently the value of creativity in business innovation is getting increased attention.) Rogers also said that fully functioning people feel free to choose between alternate courses of action. Finally, Rogers believed that a key quality of effective individuals with high self-esteem is being able to understand and accept other people as well as themselves.

These contributions of the humanistic growth theorists can help us form our own approach to personal and executive coaching, one that supports people in having conscious control of their own lives, accepting themselves with their strengths and weaknesses, using positive goals for motivation rather than just avoiding distress, and being able to change in important ways throughout their lives. Involvement

in a vibrant coaching relationship taps into a person's dreams and strengths, so the coaching relationship certainly can help move a client toward Maslow's concept of self-actualization.

COACHING ORIENTATION ASSESSMENT

By now you should have a good sense of how your education, training, and experience have prepared you for the field of coaching.

To assess your initial strengths in the coaching arena and to develop a sense of areas you may want to put concerted effort into developing, rate yourself on the following items on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being lowest and 5 highest.

1. I believe strongly in lifelong learning. 1 2 3 4 5

2. I am effective at building personal relationships,
and other people recognize this quality in me.
1 2 3 4 5

3. I have strong "wisdom" skills that other people
acknowledge. 1 2 3 4 5

4. I enjoy exploring future possibilities. 1 2 3 4 5

5. I am strong in helping others clarify action steps to
move toward a goal. 1 2 3 4 5

6. I listen well without judging others. 1 2 3 4 5

7. I easily give people supportive feedback.
1 2 3 4 5

8. I want to do something new with my skills. 1 2 3 4 5

9. I have a strong orientation to helping people grow in new ways. 1 2 3 4 5

10. I can give people specific feedback about how their behavior is impacting negatively upon others or their work. 1 2 3 4 5

11. I am able to grasp the overall big picture of complex situations. 1 2 3 4 5

12. I enjoy helping others achieve specific results that they have designed. 1 2 3 4 5

13. I generously and genuinely give my ideas, expertise, support, and warmth to others. 1 2 3 4 5

14. I have special knowledge or a special interest that suggests a unique niche coaching area. 1 2 3 4 5

15. I am able to deliver clear and powerful messages that others can understand easily. 1 2 3 4 5

Review your responses to the preceding items, look for patterns in them, and ask yourself questions like these:

- What have you learned from this exercise?
- Look at the items where you chose 4's and 5's. What are a few strengths for coaching that are suggested by your responses? Generalist strengths? Specialty strengths?
- Look at the items where you chose 1's, 2's, and 3's. What are some aspects of yourself that you would like to develop further?

SUMMARY

The field of personal and executive coaching offers exciting opportunities to trained mental health professionals. Although coaching draws upon the skills and experiences of good therapists, it is distinct from psychotherapy. In general, coaching is a process of helping otherwise well-functioning people achieve key personal or professional goals — sometimes focused more on performance, sometimes focused more on developmental goals.

Personal coaching focuses on helping an individual identify and achieve important goals and often relates to individual development, balance, health, career, and life satisfaction. Often personal coaches aid clients facing a transition in their lives.

Executive coaching focuses on issues related to performance, development, and fulfillment at work. Executive coaches may be involved not only in helping individuals with issues like development of their leadership style but in coaching other areas related to enhancing personal development and the successful functioning of organizations and teams.

Historically, typical executive coaching clients have had a high level of responsibility in their organizations. However, I advocate that executive coaching need not be limited to only the most senior people in large firms. Moreover, individuals who lead complicated lives, with

high-level, diverse responsibilities, may benefit from having an “executive” coach, whether or not they are executives or managers in an organization.

Therapists’ education, training, experience, and personal qualities all make them excellent candidates for the role of a coach. In addition, the humanistic tradition in the psychological literature provides useful insights and guidance for coaching.

In line with our ethical guidelines of not engaging in professional work outside of areas where we have had training, experience, or supervision, an appropriate amount of retraining in coaching is required. I encourage you to assess your own readiness to transition into coaching and to identify areas of potential strength as well as areas you may want to work on developing. In the next chapter, you will take a closer look at coaching philosophy and models of coaching.