

## Embracing The Past

Personal history is a valuable resource for co-creating your clients' desired future

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**C**oaching is about co-creating a future for your clients. And while coaching does not focus on a client's past as psychotherapy might, the client's personal history is part of who they are and will impact who they want to become.

Whether we like it or not, all the experiences we had in the past have resulted in who we are today as individuals. Certainly some of our past experiences may have been painful, even tragic. Some of them may have been highly pleasurable. Regardless of the nature or quality of our past experiences, they are all contained in our memory. Some behavioral scientists believe that every informational message sent through our five (or more) senses are recorded somewhere in our memory. Everything we've ever felt, thought about, learned, read ... it all lives on in our conscious and subconscious mind.

Both conscious and subconscious memories impact and influence who we are and how we function today. Memories are like physical scars. Some of them are exactly the same as they were when we first had the experience. Some scars heal perfectly and disappear. Some of our memories, however, have been modified by the

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intensity of the initial experience, by our perceptual abilities and habits, and by further experience subsequent to the initial one. Some scars heal differently than the original tissue and remain visible for the rest of one's life. Regardless of how we have healed (or not healed) from past experiences, the memories contained in our unique personal history continue to influence how we experience our current situation or state; our current reality.

When consciously creating our future, we need to be selective and discriminating about what memories we will keep (e.g. what we have learned) and what ones we will forget. We can choose to use past memories, or use new experiences to support the creation of our desired future. None of us has to remain a “victim of your past” unless your past experiences prove useful to creating what you want now and what you want in your future.

Authentic life coaching always remains focused on the client's present and future, unless remembering the past is useful to enhancing the client's current reality or increases the probability he will create the future of his dreams (envisioned).

If however, a client's past experiences negatively clutter up his present-day functioning or hinder his creation of his desired future, then he needs to be coached on how to modify his memory.

Few people aspire to become isolated in their current condition or situation. Your clients probably hired you to assist them in discovering a direction for their lives, based upon a desired destination. Focusing on a client's past history in an attempt to heal from it is the model for therapy, not for authentic life coaching. Understanding your clients' past however, may prove useful in identifying their talents, strengths and abilities which

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## Coaching Tips

Here are some tips for coaching your clients to make the best use of their personal histories to assist them in generating a fulfilling current lifestyle as well as directing them toward manifesting their genuinely desired future.

### Invite your clients to:

- Periodically re-clarify their personal priorities, values and guiding principles they are using. As change inevitably occurs, these aspects of their lives may also become different from what they were in their past.
- Realign their priorities, values and habits with how they are currently spending their time and energy.
- Make regular adjustments in their course direction based upon their own sensitivity and awareness, as well as feedback they receive from others.
- Determine the types of contributions they wish to make to their world and the legacy they wish to leave, then create a realistic (written) plan and strategy to make them happen.
- Identify a minimum of three ways to spend more time doing what they really care about, enjoy and love doing. Do this every six months.
- Identify the skills and abilities they have developed in the past that will be most helpful (or necessary) for attaining their success in the future. Ask others for their ideas on how they can learn or develop relevant new ones.
- Spend at least 15 minutes a day working on personal development and expanding personal awareness.
- Daily (preferably) or weekly (certainly) reflect on what they learn from each day. Carry a pocket-sized notebook or recording device to document new "learnings."
- Cultivate interests, friendships and activities outside their work, in order to create a balance between their work life and their personal life.
- Coach others on their creation of their desired future, life planning, or career development. One of the most effective methods for permanent learning is to coach others to witness what they are learning as they are learning it.

they can use to consciously create their desired future. It may also prevent them from going to work at jobs or careers they "fell into" rather than determining for themselves what they really want by way of a lifestyle.

Powerful and influential people are aware of their past and how it has influenced, if not determined, their current way of living. They are aware of who they are, where they came from, what drives them now, and what values and principles guide their current choices, thinking and actions. They shape their own lives and their future by using their past as a guide and a fundamental foundation upon which they will build their current reality and their anticipated future. ●

*Adapted from lesson 58 in Total Life Coaching: 50+ Life Lessons, Skills and Techniques to Enhance your Practice and your Life by Patrick Williams and Lloyd Thomas, W.W. Norton Books, 2005, New York, NY.*

## COACHING QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF AND YOUR CLIENTS

1. What skills learned in childhood do you still use in your daily life?
2. What habits learned in childhood are no longer serving your best interests? With what do you want to replace them?
3. What skills learned in childhood do you want to continue to use throughout your life?
4. What kinds of abilities are required to create your envisioned future?
5. What aspects of your memory do you want to modify (erase)?
6. What memories do you want to "keep green?" How will you maintain or strengthen them?
7. With what memories will you enrich your present?