

# The Evolving Profession of Life Coaching

by Dr. Patrick Williams

Coaching has burst upon the scene internationally in the last 10 years and has evolved from an emphasis on executive and corporate coaching for performance and leadership to an awareness that all coaching is Life Coaching. No matter what the specialization or coaching niche, there is a person and a life within the identified client. Life coaching is like an **operating system** that is always working... no matter what the emphasis of the clients' goal(s), it is all a whole person approach.

At the same time, as coaching has gained momentum, the consumer appetite for products and services under the rubric of wellness is also growing. Coaching and wellness education intersect in the ways the public (individual consumers and corporations with wellness programs) learns to access the myriad of information, products and services available. In this way, coaching more strategically reaches a health-conscious public desirous of concepts and strategies for *living well*. Paul Zane Pilzer writes in *The Wellness Revolution*, "Wellness is the next natural step forward in our destiny and in the advancement of humankind. By extending your years of strength and wellness, you can accomplish those things you really want to accomplish."

## What Is Professional Coaching?

Just as the professions of personal trainers and other fitness professionals ascribe to standards and training, so does the coaching industry. Although a relative newcomer as an identified profession, the International Coach Federation has been active since 1996 and has set the standards and ethics for this growing self-regulated profession.

According to the publication, *Therapist as Life Coach: Transforming Your Practice*, "Life coaching is a powerful human relationship where trained coaches assist people to design their future rather than get over their past. Through a typically long-term relationship, coaches aid clients in creating visions and goals for ALL aspects of their lives and creating multiple strategies to support achieving those goals. Coaches recognize the brilliance of each client and their personal power to discover their own solutions when provided with support, accountability and unconditional positive regard."

Wellness and fitness professionals who want to expand their business and create new ways of serving their client base would be very smart to add coaching to their continuum of services. They may not be hired to be the life coach for their client, but coaching is a powerful added value they can offer to keep their clients in conversation and **committed** to the lifestyle and behavior changes they desire.

Life coaching or wellness coaching has revealed itself to be the missing ingredient in creating "lasting lifestyle change." Coaching helps results become sustainable over time. In other words, the accountability and the co-creative conversation that happens with a coach make it more likely that people will make lasting changes toward living well. The coach is like a wellness ally that clients often need to make lasting lifestyle changes. Many clients have been challenged for many years to adopt new behaviors and change unhealthy lifestyle habits. The fitness trainer/coach can actually help clients move through the change process, utilizing the coaching relationship, which actually deepens the trainer relationship.

The exciting news to fitness professionals is that coaching does not require extra contact in person, as most coaching is by phone. Coaching could be an added benefit to your clients that you bill for separately, but one which creates more follow-through and more client-centered conversations about where fitness and wellness goals fit in the client's whole life scenario. MY own personal trainer sends my exercises to me via email as attached

documents and offers email and phone support between sessions. For those who choose that package, there is an added cost... but also an added benefit! For those of you who have several clients interested in coaching as a follow-up to training, I suggest you consider group coaching. The clients get the benefit of group motivation and success stories, while the trainer/coach gets the leverage of group coaching for increased financial compensation for less charge per client. And group coaching can be done on the phone as a teleconference call weekly, bi-weekly or monthly. It is a powerful and practical service.

### **Are there Certifications and Ethical Standards in the Coaching Industry?**

Like any growing profession, life coaching has numerous schools and trainings available and certifications by the dozens. However, the most respected and evidenced based are the certifications and competencies created and researched by the [International Coach Federation](#). Even though as a fitness and wellness professional, you do not have to become certified as a coach to provide coaching, you should, in my opinion, get coach training from a recognized school endorsed by the ICF. If you learn to coach utilizing the 11 core competencies of coaching identified by the ICF, then you automatically increase your competence, your confidence and your credibility. And by joining the ICF, you can let your clients know you subscribe to the ethical standards of professional coaching.

As a fitness and wellness professional, you surely do not want anyone to be able to set up shop and not have the credentials to provide personal training. The same is true for the coaching profession. If you want to add a “coach approach” to your repertoire, get quality recognized training and then be proud to let your clients know you have an additional service to offer for their success. In fact, the high-quality coach training schools are not just book learning or self-study. They teach interactive, direct experience by live workshops or teleclasses that also improve your personal growth and development, even if you decide not to offer life coaching as a professional service.

### **How to Market Coaching and Get Extra Income**

As is true of any new service or product you have that may be helpful to current and future clients, you must not “be a secret.” That is the key to marketing

- **Be visible.** How do people know what you do and what you offer? How do you communicate that to a wide audience?
- **Be Viable.** Do you have testimonials or research to show why coaching is powerful and practical? Can you show or explain how coaching can increase the likelihood of the clients success?
- **Be Credible.** What allows you to offer coaching? Did you receive credible training? Do you think you know coaching, but you are really consulting or advising? Coaching is neither of those.
- **Get Coach-specific Training and Gain Confidence and Competence.** These are the keys to successfully building your business. Confidence in a new skill (such as coaching) comes from competence... and increased competence raises your confidence level. Then when you speak of your coaching service, it is something you can passionately and powerfully relate. As Peter Drucker said, “Marketing is what we do so we don’t have to sell.” Marketing in the human service professions is relationship based and must come from a place of high integrity.

### **The Future of Coaching and the Wellness Industry**

Wellness began as a movement in the 1970s and crept into corporate America as a way to improve the health of the workforce. While most programs concentrated on fitness, exercise and consulting to support healthy living such as smoking cessation, nutrition, etc. Many corporations today continue to develop wellness programs in a variety of ways.

Creating an increased awareness of the power of wellness coaching and life coaching to the consumer also helps fulfill the implied promise of the coaching industry. Many are training to become coaches, but few are busy. The adoption of health professionals and others to the field of coaching has been ahead of public awareness. The intersection of coaching with the wellness industry will soon create a demand for the *coaching approach* to be available in a variety of delivery models — online informative coaching, tele-coaching with an individual coach, in-person coaching and group coaching for people with similar goals. Just as personal trainers, yoga instructors and classes in fitness and nutrition have become popular and accessible, so will coaching for living well and living extraordinarily in ALL areas of one's life. Life and wellness coaching today are methodologies directed to the whole person, not just physical health, but to all the aspects of living well.

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