



ARE YOU UP TO THE CHALLENGE OF COACHING?

It's not for everyone,
It may not be for you

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Before you begin reading, I want to warn you that this article may be dangerous to your peace of mind. If you continue reading, you may find yourself squirming in your seating, questioning yourself, and beginning to feel uncomfortable with what you've done with your life so far. That's my goal here because that elicits what coaching is truly about. If you're not in a place where you don't want or need to be shakened up, have your equilibrium disturbed, or being challenged about your untapped potentials, then quit reading now.

If you're still reading, then let's plummet into *the heart of coaching* and see if you're up to the challenge. Today the coaching revolution which is spreading around the world at lightning speed has become the second fastest industry after IT. Why is that? What's going on?

What's going on is a *change* in the way people are leading, managing, empowering employees, finding their true passions, and actualizing their talents. What's happening is a paradigm shift about how people live and work. It's a paradigm shift about how they are finding meaning in life.

Yet in spite of this revolution in business and self-development, *coaching is not for everyone*. It's not for everyone because not everybody can handle it. Not everyone is ready for coaching. For example, coaching is definitely not for people who are traumatized or psychologically damaged, nor is it for those without the necessary skills and competencies in a given area. And also, coaching is not for the faint of heart or those whose life goals is only peace and tranquility.

- Who then is coaching for?
- What is the population for whom personal, business, executive, or life coaching is

- designed?
- What does it take to be a good candidate for coaching?

If coaching differs from counseling and therapy, and it does,¹ then a person has to be psychologically sound to even begin coaching. That's because of what coaching *is* and because of *how* coaching works. And because coaching involves a tough challenge for those who are courageous enough to look at their performance and possibilities, to stretch to higher goals, and to reach within and demand the best of themselves.

So what in the world is *Coaching*?

Coaching is a methodology and process designed to do the following:

- 1) *Awaken* a person to all of the untapped potentials and possibilities asleep within ,
- 2) *Mobilize resources* for becoming more, feeling more, thinking better, experiencing more, having more, and contributing more,
- 3) *Challenge* a person to create new and more expansive description of a bold and compelling outcome that sets forth an exciting direction,
- 4) *Facilitate* the actualization of that new game into actual behavior to take performance to a new level of achievement in actual behavior and new habits.
- 5) *Unleash* new potentials, unique talents and aptitudes, and incredible possibilities.

In a word, coaching is all about self-actualizing. It is about enabling us to more fully *express* all that lies within so that we are more fully true to ourselves and our potentials. Coaching is about using our ego-strength to stretch forward, optimize talents into marketable skills, translate great dreams and visions into pragmatic actions and organizations, and embrace the chaotic and ambiguous nature of the future to leave a great legacy. Now, isn't that a great adventure?

Prerequisites for the Coaching Adventure

So what are the prerequisites for taking on a coach and entering a coaching program or relationship? There are several. If you think coaching may be the next step for you, then you will need the following.

1) Sufficient and robust ego-strength.

Therapy is the discipline, field, and profession for building up ego-strength when it is weak, fragile, or traumatized. Therapy nurtures and empowers clients to learn to accept and face the world and self for whatever it *is* without the ego-defenses of denial, rationalization, suppression, compulsion, etc. Therapy is the discipline for the re-parenting of those who have been wounded and who suffering from "parenting errors" from parents who didn't pass "*Parenting 101.*"

Coaching, by contrast, assumes that a person has sufficient ego-strength, not to just become "okay," but to fully actualize one's talents and aptitudes. Coaching assumes that a person has "dealt with the past" and is already fully in the present and ready to journey out to the future to create wild, ambitious, and even audacious goals. Coaching differs from therapy in that it is not so much about nurturing, re-parenting, or dealing with problems and hurts. Coaching is about challenging, pushing, awakening, and activating one's best dreams. And to do that a truly

competent coach will have a fierce conversation² that “quickly gets to the heart of things” to challenge the client. It takes a lot of ego-strength to face that.

2) A robust and positive attitude about mistakes.

Because coaching is future-oriented, about actualizing great dreams, and about stretching forth to achieve impossible goals, the coaching client has to have enough ego-strength to look at his or her weaknesses, failures, and mistakes full in the face without blinking, without caving in, and without becoming defensive. The coaching process *embraces* mistakes as part of learning. In coaching, a client learns to look for failures with excited anticipation for breakthroughs, learnings, and change.

This demands a whole new and radical *frame of mind*, a mental frame that knows that new opportunities for growth and development lie *inside* of our failures and mistakes. To be ready for full-on coaching, one needs a reframe of failure as learning and feedback that’s “in the muscles” so that failure is nothing to fear and everything to embrace.

3) A receptive openness to feedback.

The process of looking at failures and mistakes for the purpose of using them as stepping stones to the next level of development and achievement, a client has to have the ego-strength to be openly receptive to feedback about what didn’t work and what needs refining and correcting. It takes a solid psychological state to be able to look into a mirror that holds nothing back, that reflects back to you precisely how you’re doing, coming across, and being experienced by others.

Openness to feedback includes a willingness to be *held accountable* to what one says he or she wants. The power of coaching lies to a great extent in this accountability factor. In fact, a client contracts for it, contracts that the coach will *not* let him or her off the hook, but will hold the client’s agenda first and foremost and hold the client’s feet to the fire.

4) A passionate commitment to one’s full development.

Since coaching is not about the past, not about getting over old things, but about creating a bold, compelling, exciting, and challenging pathway to the future, it demands (yes, “demands”) a full commitment to oneself. This is where coaching frequently begins, awakening in a client a bigger vision and dream about what’s possible in order to get that commitment. Coaches frequently ask, “Are you willing to do anything it takes to make this dream of yours become a reality?”

This is also part of the accountability within a coaching relationship—to grant a coach the right to call one’s bluff and to keep having the fiercely focused conversations about what the client is doing or not doing that might be selling one short of one’s highest values and visions. In this a coaching client is willing to be open and *vulnerable* to his or her needs, drives, possibilities, beliefs, values, meanings, etc. And it is the embracing of this vulnerability that makes the coaching effective.

5) A passionate commitment to change and transformation.

While therapy is about remedial change, that is, remedying things that are not right and changing things so that they are right for a person to feel “okay,” normal, and ready to get on with life, coaching is about a different and higher level of change. Coaching is about *generative* change, that is, generating new patterns and lifestyle changes. It may be evolutionary change as one evolves in one’s self to become more and different. Or it could be revolutionary change as one changes one’s paradigms about life, self, others, and changes one’s very direction in life.

Coaching clients are *change embracers*. They are people who think about change, plan for it, and long for it. They are not satisfied with the status quo, and in fact, often embrace the ambiguity of the unknown for the joy of the adventure itself. This differs from the typical client in therapy who resists the very change that they need and may know that they need, and/or may relapse to a previous pattern.

6) A passionate embracing of ambiguity and dis-equilibrium.

When Abraham Maslow distinguished *lower* and *higher* needs, he distinguished two kinds of motivations, one to gratify needs so that they would go away and leave one in peace and equilibrium. The other, the meta-needs or self-actualization needs, which enables us to express our higher drives. This doesn’t make the drive go away as gratification does with the lower needs. Gratification of self-actualization meta-needs *amplify* the needs and creates even more dis-equilibrium.

Summary

If coaching is this challenging, exciting, disorienting, and dis-comforting, then obviously it is not for everyone. It’s certainly not for someone who needs therapy. It is rather for the courageous, the change-embracer, the person ready to actualize new potentials, the person ready to make paradigm changes and transformations and so for someone with lots of ego-strength.

Are you ready for coaching? Could coaching be the methodology to take you to the next level of your excellence? Are you ready for this adventure? In the Meta-Coach Training System™ we have a worksheet about *coachability*.³ You may want to take it to determine if you’re ready for the intensity and ferocity of a coaching relationship.

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End Notes:

1. Almost every book on coaching asserts that coaching is not therapy. For the specifics of how coaching differs from therapy, see the articles on this subject on this website as well as what we

have written in the books on Meta-Coaching, *Coaching Change, Meta-Coaching, Vol. I* (2005); *Coaching Conversations, Meta-Coaching Volume II* (2004).

2. See Susan Scott's book, *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work and in Life, One Conversation at a Time*. 2002, New York: Viking: Penguin Press. We adapted on of the conversations on the fierce conversation in *Coaching Conversations* (2003).

3. Coachable Questionnaire:

Yes/ No To What Degree?

Ego-Strength:

Do I have sufficient ego-strength for facing reality as it is? _____

Openly Receptive:

Am I open to change, learning and personal development? _____

Feedback openness:

Am I open for receiving feedback? _____

Committed to growth:

Am I committed and invested in my own development? _____

Relationship readiness:

Am I ready and able to enter into a coaching relationship? _____

Vulnerable:

Am I ready and able to make myself vulnerable to another? _____

Hungry for transformation:

Am I hungry for making a change or transformation? _____

Dreams and Goals:

Does the person have goals, hopes, and dreams? _____

Patience and persistence:

Do I have the patience to stay with the coaching process? _____