



At “otcoach” we offer a free consultation: why not find out what coaching could do for you.

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Coaching for Wellbeing

First a word about coaching.

Most people know what a sports coach and a business coach is and it is from these roots that life and wellness coaching sprang. An evolving profession, coaching offers many models of practice and ways of working and it may be helpful to clarify aspects of wellness coaching.

Traditional health services offer help to people with health problems. Individuals consult clinicians for help whether it is alleviate symptoms, diagnostic purposes, to access cure or for therapeutic purposes.

Coaches do not work in this way. They work on the assumption that the client is whole and at some level knows the answers to whatever is being sought. The client is the “expert” in his or her own life and the coach uses various tools and techniques to facilitate the process of the client’s exploration. The coach doesn’t have the answers, the client does – at some level.

So what do health and wellbeing mean to you?

How do you rate your health? What does being well, being really well mean to you?

The answer to this can be as simple or as complex as you like. The World Health Organisation makes this definition:

“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” WHO 1948

This definition was made in 1948 and other dimensions of health are now seen as vital such as spiritual health and a sense of meaning and purpose.

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Indeed Margaret Newman, a nurse theorist, suggested health as expansion of consciousness, "Health is the process of transformation to higher levels of consciousness" (Newman, 1979, 1986)

The 'wellness' literature provides us with other definitions:

"Wellness is the experience of living life with high levels of awareness, conscious choice, self acceptance, interconnectedness, love, meaning and purpose" (Arloski 1999)

"Wellness is a choice, a way of life, a process, an efficient channelling of energy and integration of mind, body and spirit and a loving acceptance of self." (Travis 2004)

Essentially wellness is everything about living well in a truly conscious way!

Traditional health promotion

From 'prescribe and treat', 'educate and implore' to 'advocate and inspire'

I am sure we can all recall adverts and literature that seemed to be trying to scare us into changing ourselves...arteries being squeezed and producing fat clots, the blackened lungs of a dead smoker, horrific pictures of HIV patients dying.

How effective is this approach? Think back to how you felt when you encountered these types of publicity. Did you immediately feel motivated and inspired to stop smoking? Did you immediately put down your chips and pick up a healthy hummus and cottage cheese wrap?

Is it fair to say that health promotion based on these techniques does not work at all? No - there are some successes but more women are smoking than ten years ago and obesity is reaching epidemic proportions. However there is an alternative!

Advocate and Inspire; Wellness coaching

Many types of coaching exist but they are all based on a positive connection, a supportive relationship, between the coach and the person who wants to make a change.

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“That connection empowers the person being coached to recognise and draw on his or her own innate ability and resources to make lasting changes for better health and well-being” (Anne Helmke 2006)

Wellness coaching is the application of the principles and processes of coaching to the clients’ goals of lifestyle improvement towards higher levels of wellness. Wellness coaching combines coaching with health promotion theory, behavioural change theories and personal growth.

Vital to wellness coaching is the readiness and commitment for change by the individual, and the alliance between the coach and the client. If the individual has not reached a state of being where they are ready to change, long last changes may not happen.

What could coaching help people to do?

Life coaching has been described as “the single most powerful, most methodical system ever devised for releasing human potential” (UKCLC 2001)

In terms of wellness, wellbeing or health there are many areas in which people may choose to make change. When asked about their health many people say they wished they could lose weight, get more exercise or give up smoking or other addictive behaviours.

How these translate during the coaching process will be unique for each individual and will take very different forms.

The areas most commonly identified are;

- Cardiac (Heart) health
- Spiritual health; meaning and purpose
- Healthy relationships
- Weight loss
- Fitness
- Giving up smoking
- Stress management; work-life balance
- Environment; physical and social

Sometimes people don’t have a goal or area identified and they work with the coach to try and identify themselves what they need. Wellness

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assessments are available which aim to evaluate a person's whole life in terms of their health so that they can identify areas where they seek improvement. This can be useful but most people know what they really need. They might ask themselves: "What do I need to improve my health and wellbeing? What can I do to give to myself the gift of high energy levels, clear thinking and experience, quite simply, the joy of being well and feeling on top of the world?" This is what wellness is about.

The coaching process enables the person to find out whether or not they want to make these life changes. Do they really want to give up smoking? Do the benefits of giving up outweigh the benefits of not giving up? Is this their goal or someone else's? What barriers to giving up are there? How could these barriers be overcome? What support will be needed? The whole process builds up to the client being able to make their own choices based on what they want and to clarify their intention to take action. The powerful alliance between the coach and the client enable this process to be monitored and developed in a non-directive way whilst maintaining the client's agenda.

What prevents people from taking and sustaining lifestyle changes?

It is very easy to put "failure" to change ones life down to lack of motivation. But there are complex forces at work which act to hinder progress; these need to be addressed during the coaching process. Often these can be turned around and act in favour of the client.

Most of us assume that everyone wants to be healthy. However sometimes there are inner barriers to wellbeing and achieving good levels of health.

For example, habits related to ill health can sometimes become intrinsic to a person's identity and role in life. For others illness, whether it has a label or not, plays a part in their life which cannot be easily replaced. Coaching as discipline has firm boundaries; professional standards require the coach to refer the person on if coaching was judged inappropriate.

Sometimes, simply identifying an issue during the coaching process, may be sufficient. Sometimes by addressing another area of their lives, for example, relationships and finding more balance, the client may discover that improving their health becomes possible. Coaching affects all areas of a person's life simultaneously and often one change impacts upon another aspect of their life creating more change - a sort of domino effect!

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For some people resistance to change is due to values conflict. Different values tug in opposite directions. One example may be that a person wants to reduce his alcohol intake but he really values his friends and his only social outlet is the pub. Coaching can work to identify such “conflict of values” and help the client towards resolution so that change can take place.

What we believe about ourselves and our ability to effect change is important to success or failure. Valuing ourselves and having a strong sense of self esteem triggers our willingness to make choices and put ourselves first. By accepting that basically we are fun, creative, strong, loving and wise – and that’s it’s OK to take care of ourselves as a matter of priority - we can start to put aside self doubt, take courage in both hands and commit to making real and lasting changes in our lives.

We are creative unique beings. Building our lives, step by step, consciously aware and expressing ourselves in the world, we begin to enjoy the fulfilment that gives a sense of meaning and purpose to each day.

At Intention Coaching we work with people from all walks of life including health and social care professionals, managers and leaders and patients/service users. We offer coaching and training to suit all needs.

Call or email us today for a complimentary session and find out how we can help you.

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