

Help your clients  
by becoming a  
life coach

# More than a Workout

By Sara D. Hauber

**C**oaching is the current hot topic in the fitness profession, just like functional training was in the '90s. As Americans increasingly suffer the many health effects of weight gain, longer work days and fewer vacations, coaching has quietly emerged as the answer to improving the lives of people.

Coaching originated in the corporate arena during the 1990s. Corporations began retaining business or executive coaches to help improve employees' productivity, efficiency and overall business and communication skills. The success of coaching in the business arena led to the introduction of life coaching. This type of coaching not only aims to improve a client's work life, but also targets challenges in a person's home and family life. A life coach helps clients see the "big picture" of their lives and then helps them repair the pieces that seem to be broken. Wellness coaches use the principles of life and executive coaching to help weight-loss and fitness clients reach their greatest levels of wellness. And existing fitness professionals are in a prime position to take these types of coaching to the next level. Traditional personal training has not been able to stem the growth of the overweight and unhealthy population; the number of obese people increases every year despite the fact that the number of people using personal trainers has risen steadily every year as well. Using coaching represents a promising avenue for clients who have tried personal training and have not realized their desired results and want more.

## So, What Is Coaching?

Coaching is a collaborative relationship between a client (a "coachee") who is ready to make changes in his or her life and a coach who facilitates such changes through goal-oriented conversations. The major difference between personal training and coaching is that coachees are the experts in their own lives, the coach is not.

As a personal trainer, you can and must educate your clients about the specifics of nutrition and exercise. As a coach, it is your job from the first encounter to turn the responsibility for your coachees' lives over to the coachees and allow them to make the choices that will — or will not — lead to success. What your coachees do with the information you provide them is their own responsibility. Only they can steer themselves where they want to go.

Personal training has traditionally been built upon the theory that you, as a fitness professional, know what is right for your client. The problem with this theory is that training in this way results in one outcome most of the time: Your clients become dependent upon you for "the answers" for the rest of their lives. Coaching steers clients in the opposite direction, ensuring that they become dependent upon only one person for their answers: themselves.

Coaching is different from another related field — psychotherapy — in two important ways: coaches assume their coachees are fundamentally healthy, and they focus on actions being taken in the present moment. Coaches bring to light what their coachees are doing and how those actions help or hinder the coachees' progress toward very

specific goals. Therapists can spend years talking about the past. Coaches only ask about the past if it directly relates to the present: "You tried that diet in 1996, how did it work for you? Does it make sense to try it now, given your long-term goals?"

## The Key Concepts of Coaching

Coachee self-responsibility is the most important component of a successful coaching relationship. Only when coachees take ownership of their choices and actions are they prepared to make lasting changes in their wellness. You cannot be with your coachees 24-7 and you can't be their parents. As a personal trainer, you have likely encountered (and been very frustrated with) those clients who do great work while in your presence, but never achieve their wellness goals because of their unhealthy actions away from the gym. Coaching helps stop that trend.

Compare your role as a life coach to that of a sports coach. Athletes are self-motivated and take care of their ends of the bargains when away from their coaches. Have you ever seen a successful athlete who only practiced when her coach was present to push her to do it? Of course not! Use this example with your coachees. They often need to realize how hard successful athletes (or successful weight-loss clients) work on their own in order to see that it is NOT the coach's job to make them lose weight or reach their goals.

Determining when coachees are NOT ready to change — or not ready to take responsibility for their actions — will save you months of headaches. By using Prochaska's Stages of Readiness to Change

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model — which is a cornerstone of every wellness coach training program — you eliminate potential coachees who are in the Precontemplative stage. As a personal trainer, you can work with people who are precontemplators because you can force them to exercise while they are with you. But you can not make people change their own self-motivated behaviors if they are in the Pecontemplative stage.

When you suggest opportunities for them to grow and change, precontemplators answer with “Yeah, but...” statements and they make excuses for why they have not changed or succeeded. Any time you hear someone making excuses or blaming other people for their current lots in life, that person is not ready to change. Because the success of a coaching relationship is dependent upon the coachee making changes and taking action, it is in your best interest to politely decline a coaching relationship with a precontemplator before it begins.

Once you've found a coachee who is ready to change, creating a coaching contract is a necessary part of your professional coaching relationship. In this document, you'll want to detail what the coachee will be expected to do: Choose and perform actions to create the life they want, own/accept their own choices, be honest with you and with themselves and understand that their relationship with you is confidential. Trust is extremely important in a coaching relationship because the coachee will be sharing some deep emotions and truths with you as the coach. This contract helps you build that trust with your coachee from the very start.

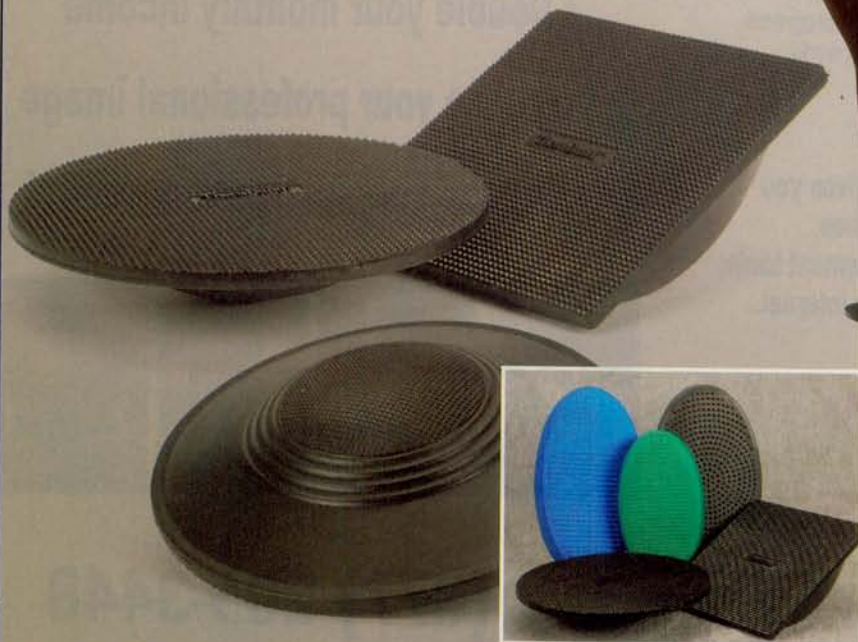
## What Does a Coach Do?

As a personal trainer, you are not yet fully qualified to coach your clients. As a life coach, your responsibilities are simple, but not easy. Your main responsibility as a coach is to listen to your coachees! This is often the most difficult part for trainers to learn, because we are trained to have all the answers and tell clients exactly what they need to get fit. As a coach, you must give a safe, supportive environment in which they feel comfortable finding their own answers.

Coaches do this by asking open-ended questions. These are the backbone of quality coaching. Asking “how” and “what” questions eliminates your ability to lead the coachee. Remember, you do NOT know what your coachee needs or wants. By asking “how” and “why” questions, you allow them to reach their own conclusions.

For example, instead of asking “Why did you eat that cheesecake last night?” which is a question you might ask as a trainer, a coach would ask “What does eating a cheesecake at 9PM do for you?” Then, listen to your coachee without “having the answers.” Remove your own agenda from the conversation and be open to hearing what your coachee says. Sometimes it is best to just listen, even when there is a long silence after you pose a question. People make breakthroughs when forced to think for themselves. Successful coaching depends upon being honest and upfront with what coachees are telling you and always being present to the current situation, statement or issue at hand. You must create a safe and supportive environment in which your coachees can explore issues.

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## Training and Coaching: A Perfect Marriage

If you're like me, you have tried to "coach" your fitness clients during their training sessions. Offering coaching as a separate billable service gives your clients the level of focus their wellness deserves. You can finally listen to your clients without worrying about counting reps or trying to speak in low tones so other gym members can't hear your private conversations. You can set aside an entire 30-minute coaching slot each week to help your clients reach their goals outside of their training appointments.

Imagine that you have a client who is trying to lose 40 pounds, but continually drinks too much. You've given this client detailed information about how alcohol affects metabolism and abdominal fat, why working out will result in weight loss and why drinking less alcohol is important. You have fulfilled your obligations as a personal trainer and the client still won't work out on his own and won't drink less.

During a training session, your client says "I drank another bottle of wine last night."

Your priority for the next hour of training is to make sure that client gets a good workout. How can you possibly delve into the topic of your client's drinking when you are focused on his workout?

This is your opportunity to offer the client coaching sessions so he can come up with his own answers to the questions: What do I really want, and why won't I drink less to get there? Some questions a coach would ask in this situation: "How does drinking a bottle of wine affect your weight loss plans? How important is that weight loss? What areas of your life will change if you lose weight? How will your life change if you drink less?" and so on. Notice that all assumptions and leading questions are left out of this line of questioning. This is the art of coaching that can be taught by proper coach training programs.

### How Do I Get Started?

If you decide coaching is right for you, your first step is to get the proper education. Along with at least one major fitness training certification (preferably two), you need coaching experience and practice, practice, practice.

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## Certified Professional Coach A New Approach to Personal Training

By Rebecca Evans, Certified Personal Trainer & Certified Empowerment Coach

For years my clients have followed my advice on exercise and nutrition, achieving short-term results and coming close to reaching their goals – but then they would stop. After more than 20 years in this profession, I began to realize there was a deep internal resistance that was holding many clients back. It wasn't about their bodies. It was about how they perceived themselves, and I knew I didn't have the skills to help them with the inner work they needed to do.

### A Life-Changing Decision

That's when I made a decision that changed my life. I decided to become a Certified Empowerment Coach and enrolled in iPEC Coaching's accredited coach training program. It was a phenomenal experience, both personally and professionally. But, most importantly, iPEC's coach training helped me create a whole new system for training my clients.

### A Cutting-Edge Approach

I now combine my fitness training and coaching skills to empower my clients to work with me in developing unique lifetime fitness programs based on their lifestyle and the exercise programs and healthy foods they love. Through live and telephone sessions, I coach them to success and hold them accountable for their results – and those results are lasting! Incorporating coaching into my program has enabled me to increase the value I bring to my clients and increase my income. Now you can too!

### Differentiate Yourself in Your Marketplace

By becoming a Certified Empowerment Coach, you can add a new and exciting dimension to your personal training practice. Through iPEC's training program, you will learn leading-edge coaching skills that will help you take your clients and your practice to the next level! For details on iPEC's Certified Coach Training program, call 866-72COACH or visit the website at [www.iPECcoaching.com](http://www.iPECcoaching.com).

Coaching is a very attractive pursuit for trainers who have become stuck in a rut: You have all of the same clients month in and month out because they only work out with you, they don't eat right, they don't take any initiative on their own time. They are totally dependent upon your presence to "make" them exercise and be healthy. In effect, they have turned their life over to you.

And it can drain you! By adding coaching to your list of credentials, you open yourself up to an additional revenue stream — and many happy years of working in the wellness profession.

*Sara D. Hauber is a certified wellness coach and a fitness industry consultant. She can be reached at saradwell@yahoo.com. ■*

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# The New World of Coaching

By Margaret Moore

## What Is Coaching?

- A close relationship and partnership with a coach, providing the structure, accountability, expertise and inspiration to enable an individual to grow and develop beyond what she or he can do alone.
- A coach helps the individuals identify and clarify the priorities and areas for development.
- Coaches employ a diverse array of assessment, psychological and behavior change tools to empower clients to take charge, connect with their deepest motivators and learn how to grow and change.
- Scheduled coaching sessions by telephone or in-person, for three months or longer, to help clients clarify where they want to go, and work with them to get there.

## What Kind of Coaches Are Out There?

- **Life Coaches** — Life coaches work with individuals to help them improve the quality of life and happiness. Coaching topics include career, transitions, life balance and strengthening and adding "reserves" in all aspects of life — including financial, career, community, family, spiritual, hobbies and physical well-being. Their backgrounds are diverse and include life coach training and certifications.
- **Wellness Coaches** — Wellness coaches work with individuals to help them improve all areas of wellness including fitness, nutrition, weight, stress, health and management of the life issues that impact wellness. Wellness coaches are health and fitness professionals who have also completed wellness coach training and certifications from leading organizations.
- **Health Coaches** — Health coaches are health care professionals, including nurses, nurse practitioners and physician assistants, who work with individuals to help them manage their medical conditions and health risks. Health coaches have also usually completed coach training and certifications from leading organizations.

## What Are Important Traits in a Wellness Coach?

- Health/fitness university degrees and credentials in physical fitness, rehabilitation, nutrition/weight and health.
- At least two years experience working one-on-one with clients and patients by phone or in-person.
- Wellness coach training/certification from leading organizations, which teach coaching psychology skills (drawing from behavioral science, counseling, motivational interviewing, future-oriented therapy models and life/corporate coaching) and a standardized coaching methodology and process. This methodology of wellness coaching should focus on delivering sustained health behavior change.

*Margaret Moore is the founder and CEO of Wellcoaches. For more information, please visit [www.wellcoaches.com](http://www.wellcoaches.com)*