

# Live and lead your best life

## - Use coaching as the key

**‘Success begins the moment we understand that life is about growing, it is about acquiring the knowledge and skills to live more fully and effectively. Life is meant to be a never-ending education and when this is fully appreciated we are no longer survivors, but adventurers. Life becomes a journey of discovery, an exploration into our potential. Any joy and exuberance we experience in living are the fruits of our willingness to risk, our openness to change and our ability to create what we want for our lives.’ - David McNally, author of ‘Even Eagles need a Push’**

How often do you come back from holiday, a weekend away, or a similar break from routine, all fired up with enthusiasm and determined to make some changes? Whether your aspirations involve career change, work-life balance, personal fulfilment, or some other issue, you probably find that once you’re back, your motivation fades away. Dealing with the present day gets in the way of change.

One-to-one coaching, with its emphasis on individual development, unlocking your unique potential, and overcoming real and perceived obstacles, can be a highly effective tool for developing and sustaining a huge range of qualities relating to personal and professional development, regardless of the age, gender, or situation of the individual concerned. Far from being some sort of fashion or fad, it’s an incredibly effective process. Most of those who have been coached genuinely report “it was the best investment I ever made”.

### What is coaching?

You can’t have failed to have heard about coaching. Articles, TV programmes and advertisements for life, business and executive coaching abound. But what does it actually involve? What can it really do? Is it worth the money? Is it something we should be taking seriously?

Coaching is a process of unlocking an individual’s potential to maximize their own performance. It works by helping and supporting them to achieve, rather than by teaching them how.

Regardless of the issue(s) involved, coaching can help you:

- clarify your goals
- decide the steps to take to achieve those goals
- be clear about what or who might hinder you
- be sure you’re pursuing the right goals
- maintain the motivation to keep you moving in the right direction

What coaching isn’t – but which it is often confused with – is either counselling or therapy.

Generally, coaching helps in three ways:

### 1. Clarity and focus

Coaching helps you decide *exactly* what it is that you *really* want. Many of the difficulties people experience with moving forward and achieving their aims and ambitions come from lack of clarity and precision about what their goals actually *are*. Until you can put your goal into words and see clearly what you need to do (or stop doing) in order to achieve it, it’s often impossible to change. Coaching not only facilitates this process, but thereafter acts as a ‘route map’, helping you decide the way forward and the pace you need to maintain.

### 2. Confidence

Although they may present a brave face, many people suffer from lack of confidence. At times feelings of inadequacy and fear can be crippling, yet as a mature person operating in today’s highly competitive environment, it can be impossible to reveal how you truly feel. Denial leads to increased stress, tension in relationships, and certain types of avoidance behaviour.

Ultimately, lack of confidence can greatly hamper your prospects and your ability to lead the life you want whether it involves a career or relationship change, a new behaviour or simply the ability to feel differently about certain things.

### 3. Support

Unswerving support from someone with no agenda of their own is a particular strength of the

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coaching relationship. At work, you may be able to ask for training in areas in which you feel your performance needs improving but training tends to be a one-off, skills-transfer process. At the end of it you're left by yourself to get on with things.

In respect of life in general, there is very often no one we can turn to for objective help unless the issue has escalated to such an extent that it becomes a medical or legal problem.

Coaching can provide you with a constant source of support and motivation, enabling you to keep going, growing and developing in whatever areas are appropriate for you. By helping you to break down the achievement of your goal into small, manageable steps and continuously supporting and encouraging you, your coach can help you progress along what may seem - if viewed in its entirety - a long and impenetrable path.

Your coach can also be a great objective sounding board for your thoughts, aims and ambitions. Although you may bounce ideas off friends, family or colleagues, they will often just tell you (with the best possible intentions) what they think you want to hear. Your coach, however, is completely impartial and their focus is entirely on getting you to clarify how *you* feel about things, *your* perceptions of reality and how your ideas relate to what you are attempting to achieve.

### What does it involve?

One of the great strengths of coaching is that no one need ever know you are being coached. Although coaching sessions can take place face-to-face, they are more commonly conducted over the telephone. Timing is to suit you – evening and weekend calls are obviously popular – and sessions are generally weekly, taking place over a number of weeks or months (although some people find they need only one session.)

Each session is generally around an hour in length and the cost varies according to whether it is face-to-face or telephone, and of course, the number of sessions.

In between sessions, you will probably be required to undertake tasks or activities related to the achievement of your goal. Depending on the issues involved, the coaching process can last from one session to several months or years (the choice is yours).

### Is coaching for you?

Frankly, coaching isn't for everyone and there are three golden rules that you have to accept for it to be successful. You must:

- ❑ Take the time to understand what coaching is

- ❑ Really want to be coached, and want to change
- ❑ Be prepared to work towards achieving your goals outside the coaching sessions

Any good coach will be prepared to spend time in advance discussing your needs and should also offer you a free initial session enabling both of you to judge how well you work together.

Coaching, if you're prepared to commit to the process, can generate remarkable results. But it takes time, energy, and perseverance. If you're considering whether the effort is worthwhile, you might do well to ponder on the words of Robert Kennedy: *'Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly'*.

### When is coaching most appropriate?

There are a plethora of issues to which coaching can relate and many different reasons why people find it a highly effective process. For example, in the workplace, greater demands than ever are being put on us to deliver more, keep up with new skills requirements, improve leadership abilities - all on top of doing a full day's work. In our personal lives we are expected to juggle our roles as partners, parents, friends and community members... The expectation to deliver can be enormous, and for some, the consequences of failure can be catastrophic.

Would coaching be right for you? Here the specific detail of the issue is less important than the process, so if you feel you have a need for the following, the answer is probably 'yes':

- ❑ Support – having an objective third party talk to, bounce ideas off and encourage you
- ❑ Focus – clarifying and concentrating on what you really want to do
- ❑ Motivation – working towards whatever you want to achieve or change
- ❑ Personal fulfillment – realising what is really important
- ❑ Work-life balance – managing how to have it all

Whatever the issue, don't dismiss coaching because you think you're too old or can't change. It simply isn't true! Coaching can generate remarkable results for almost anyone at any age. Still not sure? Just remember the old saying: *"If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got"...*

For further information about coaching, contact <a href="mailto:enquiries@inmyprime.co.uk">enquiries@inmyprime.co.uk</a> or see <a href="http://www.inmyprime.co.uk/ourServices.html">www.inmyprime.co.uk/ourServices.html</a>
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