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30 Proven Benefits of Life Coaching & Mentoring

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 5

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Life coaching and mentoring are booming fields.

They are popular professions worldwide and show no signs of decreasing.

Certification programs abound, but as you will read, this is an unregulated field. Certification is not required. Testing and licensing do not exist.

Unlike people trained as psychologists or counselors who are licensed, life coaches are not therapists. A life coach could have no, some, or extensive education in almost any field and still hold the title of “life coach.”

Knowing this, why do people hire a life coach? Education does not equal wisdom, but experience often does in the minds of many.

Would you rather work with someone who has traveled the same path and succeeded or someone who has little-to-no real-world experience?

Regardless which you choose, you can reap the benefits of a life coaching or mentoring relationship.

Before you read on, we thought you might like to [download our 3 Positive Psychology Exercises for free](#). These science-based exercises will explore fundamental aspects of positive psychology including strengths, values, and self-compassion, and will give you the tools to enhance the wellbeing of your clients, students, or employees.

You can download the free PDF [here](#).

This Article Contains:

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What are the Proven Benefits of Life Coaching and Mentoring?

Should a person choose a life coach or a mentor? The answer depends on one's goals.

A life coach can help a person to identify strengths, develop them, and identify personal and professional goals. Their role is to assist the coachee throughout the change process. As you will discover, this happens in several ways.

A mentor's focus is partly on compatibility with the mentee. The mentor and mentee might engage with each other through social or professional events to determine 'fit.'

This is the initiation stage (APA, 2006) where the mentee must "*prove him- or herself worthy of a mentor's attention.*" There may or may not be money exchanged in a mentor/mentee relationship.

The three other stages of a mentoring relationship are:

- *Cultivation* – The mentee learns from the experiences of the mentor. The mentor gains insights from the mentee about new areas or emerging issues within the shared field.
- *Separation* – This is the end of the relationship. Challenges arise if one of the parties is not ready to end the relationship.
- *Redefinition* – The relationship reaches this level after successfully completing the separation stage. During this phase, the relationship evolves into a "collegial relationship or social friendship" (APA, 2006).

If a person chooses coaching, there are many benefits. Coaching conversations help a person focus attention on their desired goals (Moore, Jackson, & Tschannen-Moren, 2016).

Most of the session involves the coach listening, and then asking powerfully focused questions. Moore and colleagues offer several examples. Among them are:

- What was your best experience with your goals in the past week?
- What percentage of achievement did you reach for this goal?
- What contributed to this level of success?
- What did you learn from the experience?
- When you think about this goal, what feelings does it stimulate, and what needs does it meet?

The foundation of a good coaching relationship is trust and authenticity.

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2016). Researcher Kristin Neff (2019) defines this as a combination of self-kindness, mindfulness, and a sense of common humanity (Neff, 2019).

Positive psychology coaches pay particular attention to assisting clients to identify their strengths. Coachees learn to explore and develop them as a means to achieve their goals, and also to cultivate positive emotions (Moore, et al., 2016). Generating positive emotions leads to what Fredrickson (2013) calls, “an upward spiral.”

In her landmark work, she identified ten positive emotions:

1. inspiration
2. hope
3. pride
4. interest
5. love
6. awe
7. amusement
8. joy
9. gratitude
10. serenity

Coaching creates the space for clients to build on these emotions and flourish.

Most people do not like being told what to do or when to do it. Coaches who understand this will build coaching relationships that allow the client to act autonomously.

Autonomous motivation means the person controls the decision-making process. The coach provides resources and support and nudges as needed, but the coachee is in charge.

People who are autonomously motivated pursue actions that are of interest to them (Moore, et al., 2016). They view the actions as important. Behavior change happens when the client experiences greater autonomous motivation.

Moore and colleagues (2016) cite five benefits originally identified in Deci’s (2013) presentation, “*How do we support autonomy and build accountability?*” They are:

1. Positive behavior changes last longer
2. Increased creativity and flexibility
3. Improved performance
4. Making changes is enjoyable
5. Health and personal relationships improve

If coaching does not fit a person’s needs, then establishing a mentor relationship can also be beneficial. The APA (2006) defines mentoring as a “professional development relationship” having two functions.

The first is career-related placing the mentor as a coach dispensing

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Mentored individuals are more satisfied and committed to their work and have better performance evaluations (APA, 2006). Mentees are not alone in reaping the benefits of this type of arrangement. Mentors often feel reenergized and satisfied because they are helping someone become a leader.

Both **life coaching** and mentoring involve a willingness to learn, grow, and adapt.

A Look at the Research

Many of the effects of coaching or mentoring come from applying knowledge obtained from social science research. For example, the Self-Determination Theory of Motivation is “the end game of coaching” (Moore, et al., 2016).

The authors describe this as a person’s ability to reach their peak in “motivation, engagement, performance, persistence, and creativity.” The coach’s job is to ensure that the environment meets three psychological needs. They are autonomy, competence, and relatedness as defined by Deci and Ryan (1985).

According to Moore and colleagues, other areas affecting the growth and legitimacy of coaching include:

- Positive Psychology (for example, character strength research; the Broaden and Build Theory of Positive Emotions; specific interventions like gratitude journaling, and mindset research.)
- Appreciative Inquiry (AI) – A change process that explores and emphasizes the best in a person or situation; this can be especially useful for **organizational change processes**.
- Motivational Interviewing (MI) – This approach encourages people to develop their own reasons for change. Doing this often leads to less resistance and greater success while working with a coach. It has been tested in counseling people with addictions.
- Emotional Intelligence (EI) – EI includes four areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2017).
- Design Thinking – A human-centered method that helps people find creative solutions to problems (Bayer, 2018).
- Flow Theory – Also known as “being in the zone” this is an immersive experience that yields peak performance.
- Social Cognitive Theory – Postulates that learning happens in social contexts. It is the interplay between a person, their environment, and behavior (LaMorte, 2018).
- Adult and constructive development – Conceived by Bob Kegan, this theory focuses on “growth and elaboration of a person’s ways of understanding the self and the world” (Palus & Horth, 2016).
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy – This is a type of psychotherapy (talk therapy). It helps clients identify and overcome negative thinking

patterns. This helps the client better handle future challenges.

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Coaches who have knowledge, training, and practice in some of the above domains are in a better position to assist clients.

The focus of coaching falls into three categories that can overlap (Grant, 2005). Coachees can work in specific areas like sales, negotiation, or presentation skills. Coaches can address performance skills through goal-setting, monitoring, and accountability. Developmental skills target intra-personal and interpersonal obstacles experienced by a coachee.

Coaches also can use three approaches to coaching. Losch and colleagues (2016) investigated the effectiveness of these in a randomized controlled study. They wanted to know if any, or all, of the scenarios could reduce procrastination. The researchers divided the 84 participants into three groups:

1. Individual coaching,
2. Self-coaching, and
3. Group training

They found that individual coaching and group training reduced procrastination. People in the individual coaching group experienced greater satisfaction and goal attainment. Group training positively influenced pertinent knowledge acquisition.

The self-coaching group performed exercises independently. People in this group had difficulty attaining higher goals. The researchers determined that these participants needed coaching support.

The coach's leadership style also influenced participants' "perceived autonomy support and intrinsic motivation." Coaches used transformational and transactional approaches in individual situations.

The focus of transformational coaching is helping the coachee see themselves differently. The focus of transactional coaching is on actions and rewards. A transactional approach did not influence clients to the same degree that a transformational style did.

The Importance of Self-Coaching

Whether a person decides to hire a coach or not, one element of any coaching process is critical – the ability to self-coach.

Self-coaching is hearing and listening to one's inner voice. We all have one. We do not all hear, listen to, or trust it. Learning to do this one thing can make any other coaching experience much more powerful.

Dev Pathik explains this beautifully in his 2017 TED Talk, The Power of Self-Coaching. He says, "the best in you is waiting for the coach in you to speak up."

The Power of Self-Coaching | Dev Pathik | TEDxHilliard



The Dark Side of Coaching

Coaching is an unregulated field. Practitioners do not need degrees specific to coaching. They also do not need certifications of any kind.

Coaching, in general, has grown into a billion-dollar industry (LaRosa, 2018). It attracts people from various backgrounds, educational levels, and experience.

Along with this growing population of potential coaches are many opportunities for certification. LaRosa cites 500 programs worldwide writing that many “will certify you if you simply pay them a fee.”

Whether a coach or mentor can successfully use the research depends on their willingness to stay up-to-date and receive training.

People interested in pursuing a coaching partnership need to know their own objectives. To ferret this out, consider some of the following questions:

1. What do you need from the experience?
2. What do you hope to achieve by its conclusion?
3. What experience do you expect the coach to have?
4. How important is the coach’s certification to you?
5. If certification is important, then from whom and for what?

This is not an exhaustive list; it is a jumping off point. One of the most important questions to consider is “fit.” Can you work with the person?

The Benefits of Career Coaching

If a person finds him- or herself floundering and unable to figure out their next career move, a career coach could help. Career coaches offer a safe space for the coachee to practice newly-acquired soft skills.

In fact, career coaches often use **similar tools** as career counselors. They might ask a coachee to take formal assessments like O*Net, DISC, or StrengthsFinder.

Their role is to assist the client by:

- identifying strengths,
- defining short and long-term goals,
- resume development, and
- assessing job readiness

You will notice that the first two practices are common among various types of coaches.



Workplace

The number one benefit to companies is the effect coaching has on their bottom line. When employees receive coaching, they are more likely to remain in the company. This means turnover reduces. By 2020, US companies can expect to pay \$680 billion in turnover costs (Work Institute, 2018).

Employees leave companies for a variety of reasons. The report cites the top three as, career development, work-life balance, and manager behavior.

Another thing to consider are the costs of hiring a new employee. In the US the hiring process costs more than \$4000 (SHRM, 2016) per new hire.

Retaining good employees and helping them to become great employees starts with the onboarding process. This should include three elements:

- Learning what makes the company unique
- Learning how s/he fits into the company's mission, and
- Instilling the company's vision, mission, and values into the new hire.

After this, coaching which involves consistent and frequent feedback is crucial. Employees need three things in the workplace: a sense of culture, connection, and contribution (SHRM, 2018). The easiest way to do this is through coaching.

Grant (2005) defines workplace coaching as “on-the-job coaching by line managers and supervisors with the aim of improving productivity and developing individual workers' skills and their understanding of job requirements.”

A workplace **coach understands the unique skills**, abilities, weaknesses, and strengths of their team members. They focus on opening up opportunities for team members to develop their strengths.

A Look at the Benefits of Creating A Coaching Culture

A coaching culture is “*an organizational development model that provides the structure that defines how the organization's members can best interact with their work environment*” (Vesso & Alas, 2016). It is easy to spot, but difficult to create, put in place, and maintain without effort from leadership.

Employees follow the lead of their supervisors, managers, and executives. If a company wants to change its culture, then it must begin at the top.

Here are a few telltale signs that demonstrate a coaching culture from Vesso and Alas' research:

- Empowered team members
- Multilevel and same level coaching
- Open, frequent, constructive communication from all stakeholders

- There is a sense of mutual ownership: It is an “all for one, one for

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- High employee satisfaction and commitment
- Increased productivity

Here are several more from Pullen and Crane (2011):

- A common coaching practice and language is evident
- Leaders are positive role models
- Change moves faster
- The alignment and integration of human resources is clear

A coaching culture is not an environment where everyone always gets along, and no one is ever unhappy. It is a culture in which employees at all levels have space to grow, receive honest, helpful feedback, and pursue professional goals.

Oftentimes, it also is a place where the employee’s objectives align with that of the company.

How Does It Benefit Employees?

As noted above, working in a coaching culture has many benefits for everyone involved. Besides those, employees feel supported and are willing to take calculated risks.

Because employees see that coaching is a valued company asset, they engage more. As the employee does this, s/he becomes more important to the business. Company leaders see the energy and commitment of the team member and strive to keep that person in the company.

As you have already read, hiring, training, and employee turnover affect the bottom line of every company. Creating a coaching culture is one way to manage those challenges. Increased employee satisfaction is a bonus.

The Benefits of Leadership Style Coaching for Managers

This type of coaching is slow and sometimes arduous. For these two reasons, it is an approach managers tend to shy away from. Goleman (2013) argues that this is a mistake.

This type of coach does all the typical things any coach does. They engage in strength identification, short and long-term goal planning, and provide feedback.

These coaches have an opportunity to highlight exactly how the coachee fits into the bigger company picture. They can form and create a bond with the employee, much like a mentor might.

Goleman points out that there is an ongoing dialogue between the two people. The coachee knows what to expect, and the expectations of the coach. Because feedback is frequent the employee “feels free to experiment.” The coachee knows that the coach cares about their development.

There are two instances when this approach works best:

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- If the coachee understands that developing new skills, soft or hard, will help them advance

What are the Benefits of Team Coaching?

Team coaching involves working with a group of people who share a common goal or result. In Hicks' (2010) review of the literature, he provides a snapshot of what team coaching is.

Compared to one-to-one coaching, team facilitation, or team building, it is:

- Emergent within the team
- An extended period of intervention
- Thinking based
- Focus on building longer-term skills and capacity

There is not much academic literature specifically about the benefits of team coaching. Much of what is available hinges on case studies rather than empirical evidence (Hicks, 2010).

The case studies do point to how team coaching could provide benefits to companies. For example, Hicks, borrowing information from Clutterbuck (2009) suggests that team coaching could:

1. Improve team performance
2. Make things like stages of team development move faster, and
3. Support individuals and teams through the change process, thus, allowing the change to pass more quickly

It is important to note that there are several theories about team coaching that could form a basis for empirical studies (Hicks, 2010; Pliopas, Kerr, & Sosinski, 2014). Also, of note is that researchers are exploring innovative ways to use team coaching (Petty & Lingham, 2019).

Maseko, van Wyk, & Odendaal (2019) found that an analysis of the organization is paramount to the success of team coaching. Their findings include a breakdown of how the following areas affect the success of team coaching.

- Organizational context (leadership support and trust in team members; well-structured teams; trust in coaching relationship)
- Team effectiveness (alignment with organizational strategic objectives)
- Employee engagement (With increased trust in employees comes increased productivity)

The bottom line is that leadership must “buy-in” to the process. If this does not happen then getting team “buy-in” becomes almost impossible.

The Benefits of Executive Coaching

Executive coaching gained ground several decades ago. It continues to

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There is no universal definition of executive coaching. Bozer and Sarros (2012) identified themes or commonalities while reviewing the literature. Executive coaching relationships always or often include the following:

- a highly confidential relationship between the coach and coachee
- a focus on interpersonal and intra-personal issues
- a third party – the organization for whom the executive works
- a clear link between the goals of the individual and the organization
- an assumption that the coachee is mentally healthy
- an assumption that the coachee is resourceful
- a view that the coach and coachee are equal and that the coach might not have expertise in the coachee's field, and
- a view that the coach is a facilitator in the process

Based on several studies, we have a better idea of what executive coaching is. Now we can examine the benefits. Simpson (2010) found that coachees in leadership positions experienced several perceived benefits:

- improved personal skills and behavior
- more considered work-life balance
- better decision making
- improved interpersonal skills
- better career planning
- increased confidence
- enhanced self-awareness

Using a case study approach, he also determined that the company benefited. The 2000+ employee company saw the following results:

- better organizational development
- increased value for the money spent
- day-to-day networking and flexibility improved
- retention of quality team members improved
- stronger recruiting position due to a perception of valued, strong leadership
- improved performance
- better risk management

Bozer & Sarros (2012) state that “*executive coaching may be a mechanism by which executives could be helped in improving and maintaining a high level of career satisfaction.*”

Many years later, Burt & Talati (2017) conducted a meta-analysis to assess the relationship between interventions and outcomes. The researchers included only those studies or dissertations that utilized randomized controlled trials (RCT).

There are many qualitative studies investigating interventions, but RCT studies are still rare. Their analysis included 11 with a total sample size of 696 participants.

One of the big questions in the coaching literature is whether

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analysis:

1. Which outcomes are most affected by coaching, and
2. Which factors influence (or moderate) the effect of coaching.

Their review revealed improvements in five areas: self-regulation, change in attitude, better coping, performance, and **well-being**. They remarked that “coaching interventions have significant positive effects on all outcome categories.”

The high-demand, high-pressure, high-stakes nature of C-suite positions, can cause challenges. To address these, researchers identified five **coaching tools** and techniques. Coaches can use these with any client.

- Relaxation
- Self-talk
- Imagery
- Goal-setting
- Concentration

The Benefits of Peer Coaching in Education

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) defines peer coaching as, “*a confidential process through which two or more professional colleagues work together to reflect on current practices; expand, refine, and build new skills; share ideas; teach one another; conduct classroom research; or solve problems in the workplace.*”

Peer coaching activities can be formal or informal. Some examples of formal practices are co-teaching lessons, co-planning lessons, and coach as a mentor.

Examples of informal activities include study groups, materials development, videotape analysis, and problem-solving. The emphasis in peer coaching is on the teacher as a learner (ASCD, 1991).

Within education, there has been a debate about using the term “coaching” to describe this relationship. Some feel that it implies that one person is a “coachee” and thus unequal to the “coach.”

There are two key benefits of peer coaching:

- refining, expanding and enhancing one’s knowledge
- creating a climate of collegiality

10 Benefits for the Coachee

Coaching, whether it is executive, life, peer, team, or another type provides several benefits.

As mentioned above, these include:

1. A safe space for exploring options and growing

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4. More job satisfaction
5. Flexibility
6. Better networking opportunities
7. Goal attainment
8. Strengths identification
9. Focused use of strengths through interventions
10. Increased Camaraderie

Everyone can benefit from working with a coach. That coach might be someone you hire, a colleague, a family member, or a friend.

No matter who your coach is, their role is to be “*your external eyes and ears, providing a more accurate picture of your reality*” (Atul Gawande, 2017).

If you want to get great at something, get a coach. At least, that is what Gawande advocates in his 2017 TED Talk.

Want to get great at something? Get a coach | Atul Gawande



A Take Home Message

The point of life coaching is to assist the coachee to move from stagnation to growth. The coach does not establish the goals; the coachee does. The coach helps shine a light on strengths that can help the person achieve their goals. Respect for the coachee’s autonomy is paramount. Many different types of coaching include these elements as part of the process.

Life coaching, mentoring, **executive, team**, and peer coaching all work to help the individual flourish. Sometimes these are formal relationships with start and end points. Other times they are informal, starting and stopping naturally. ‘Fit’ is important to a successful coaching partnership whether it has a formal or informal status.

Anyone can say they are a coach. Some pursue specialized training and certification. Others leverage their years of experience in a particular field, or extensive life experiences. It is an unregulated profession.

What are your thoughts about life coaching and mentoring? How have

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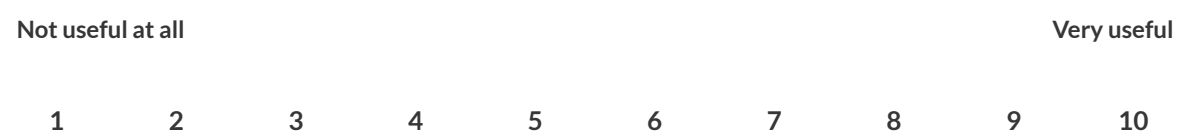
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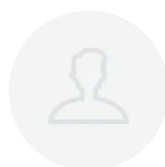
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About the Author

Kori D. Miller, MA, is a habit change aficionado, facilitator, and coach. Kori loves helping others achieve their goals one bite-size step at a time. She completed graduate-level coursework in positive psychology through the University of Missouri-Columbia and is completing a master's program in Educational Psychology with a specialization in neuropsychology.

Comments



Alice Carroll on 3 July 2020 at 07:11

Thanks for pointing out that private life coaching can help me better understand what long-term goals I would want in life and decide my career based on that. I recently started on my second college degree because I'm still not quite sure of what kind of job I want after college. Maybe a life improvement coach is really something I would need during this confusing time of my life.

<https://enoughlabs.com/programs/>

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Nicole Celestine on 4 July 2020 at 03:21

Hi Alice,
Glad this article gave you something to think about. Yes, life coaches can be very supportive in helping you find some career direction.

I hope you find the clarity you are looking for!

– Nicole | Community Manager

[Reply](#)

Reuben S. Tinio on 16 February 2020 at 18:47

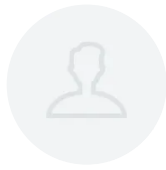
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Thank you very much for sharing your article. It was insightful and

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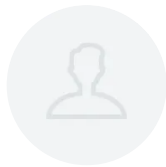


Katherine (Kathy) Mackintosh on 13 September 2019 at 20:57

You are correct that coaching is a largely unregulated field, and that it is up to consumers to do their own research. However, there is at least one significant exception: the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) have been in partnership with the National Consortium for Health and Wellness Coaching, and in 2017 started certifying health and wellness coaches through a nationally administered, rigorous examination process. There are significant requirements to even sit for the exam. So one credential a consumer can count on is NBC-HWC, which stands for National Board Certified Health and Wellness Coach. There are also re-certification requirements every 3 years.

Katherine Mackintosh, NBC-HWC (2017)

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Rey Carr on 28 July 2019 at 20:37

Thanks for this comprehensive article. You've done a great job identifying issues and supporting research and citations.

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