Essential Life Coaching

by John Andrew Williams

Also by John Andrew Williams

Future-Proofed: Your Guide to Acing High School, the College Application, and Beyond

Academic Life Coaching: The Workbook

Core Motivation: How Using Your Unique Motivation Style Can Set You Free
Dedicated to Gina Halsted,
an awesome coach and instrumental in expanding
the field of Academic Life Coaching

Thank you, Gina!
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Acknowledgements

First, I want to thank Gina Halsted. Thank you so much for your support and championing when I needed it most. You have been instrumental in supporting and nurturing the field of Academic Life Coaching. Without you, this book would not exist. Thank you! And thank you on behalf of Academic Life Coaching and the thousands of teenagers who have (and will) experience the benefit of this work.

Second, Meghan Sellars, my office manager in Portland, has been a tremendous asset to the Academic Life Coaching team. Thank you Meghan for the hard work, dedication, and creativity. It’s a pleasure to work with you!

And third, Amois Williams, my wife and business consultant. Thanks Amois for the advice, perspective, push to get me through this work, and love. This book is truly a product of us both.
About this Book

essential  |ɪˈsen ʃəl|
adjective
1 absolutely necessary; extremely important : [with infinitive ].
• [ attrib. ] fundamental or central to the nature of something or someone.
ORIGIN Middle English [in the sense [in the highest degree] ]; from late Latin essentialis, from Latin essentia.

This book addresses the essential elements of Life Coaching. Essential is derived from the Latin verb esse which means to be. This book is about the concepts and skills that are at the core of Life Coaching. It addresses each concept from three different but related points-of-view:

1) The component parts of each concept.
2) Why the concept is important and works.
3) How to use the concept in your coaching.

Breaking down each concept into its pieces, looking at the reasons why it works, and describing the steps is the best way I know to learn a subject.

I wrote it as a guide for coaches in a Life Coach training program and just starting out in the coaching profession. I hope this book eases the journey of overcoming that initial learning curve of mastering a new skill set.
Life Coaching

life coach | ˈlɪfˌkō ch | noun
A person who counsels or motivates others in the achievement of personal objectives such as choosing or changing careers, improving relationships, setting goals, and determining priorities.

DERIVATIVES
life coaching noun

What

“Life Coaching” is a professional relationship between a client and a coach designed to help the client generate learning as well as identify and accomplish meaningful goals. The etymology of coach comes from a metaphor of a bus that transports someone to someplace they want to go. A coach literally helps people get to their desired goal. The metaphor still holds, and a life coach is someone who helps clients determine their next stop and helps them get there.

Life coaching is about helping individuals become aware of their capabilities and available resources and apply it to their life. Coaching differs from consulting in that a coach does not advise or offer solutions for the client. Coaching differs from therapy in that life coaching does not focus on the past or offer a diagnosis. Coaching differs from mentoring in that mentoring attempts to link someone learning a craft with someone who is already skilled in it. In life coaching, the coach and the client work together to create a deeper awareness and design actions for the client.

Life coaching is effective for a number of reasons, the primary being that the life coaching relationship is a designed relationship where the coach and the client are considered equal partners in the coaching relationship. Such a non-hierarchical relationship provides a foundation for both the client and the coach to explore different areas and be creative in finding individual solutions that work specifically with the client. The three elements of life coaching are:

1) **The client.** The client is the focal point and driver of the life coaching relationship. The client sets the agenda and is an equal and active participant in the life coaching relationship.

2) **The life coach.** The life coach brings a professionalism and skill set designed to listen deeply to the client, generate learning and help design effective action for the client to take.
3) **The Designed Alliance** [see page 11]. The designed alliance is the understanding and design of the relationship between the coach and the client.

**Why**

Life coaching is effective for a number of reasons, and the most prominent are listed below. The central reason life coaching is so effective is because the client is at the center of the process. Everything revolves around the client. The following Chapter “Why Life Coaching Works” [see page 22] addresses the ways in which a life coach ensures that the client is the focus point and why that focus is so effective. Listed below are additional reasons why life coaching works so well:

A) **Addresses executive functioning.** Life coaching is effective because it provides a set time to focus on a client and their agenda. It places focus on the leverage point of executive functioning: what is most important, what to do next, what perspective to take, how to break up the action steps, what is in the way, what resources are needed, and other higher level thinking. Dedicated time to plan in such a way is rare.

B) **Two minds are better than one.** Working with a life coach, clients get twice the brain power focused on their agenda and life.

C) **Coach as mirror effect.** Sometimes it is a challenge to see ourselves. A trained life coach helps clients see themselves with more clarity and focus.

D) **Effective action.** Goals are great but often create more stress than they resolve [see Well-Designed Actions, page 80]. A life coach helps clients design action steps that are more effective and actually reduce stress.

E) **Follow through.** Accountability [see page 121] is a huge part of what makes a coaching relationship powerful as well as help clients follow through on their well-designed actions.

F) **Habits and systems.** In time, effective actions turn into habits and systems. Designing those habits and systems with a coach is a tremendous opportunity to take a struggling area and make it thrive.

G) **More fulfillment and meaning.** Working with a life coach helps clients become more aware of and take action steps based on their values [see Clarifying Values, page 89]. When clients become more aware of their reasons for taking action, they give a context to their actions. Such clarity and action result in more fulfillment and meaning.

H) **Hear yourself say it.** When a client hears him or herself say something that they needed to acknowledge, it has a big impact. A life coach supports the client as they break down internal resistance and open up new possibilities of action.

I) **Tailored solutions.** A life coach does not focus on “fixing” a situation. Indeed, any solutions created come more from the client than the coach and thus are perfectly tailored to the situation at hand.

J) **Get out of your own way.** By identifying and Busting Limiting Beliefs [see page 108] clients see where they are literally stopping themselves from being successful.

K) **Fresh start.** Working with a coach gives clients an excuse to try something different and open a new chapter in their lives.

**How**

Learning more about life coaching and getting started to be a life coach is an exciting and thrilling process. You do not have to jump
in all at once and enroll in the first training program you find. Learning more about life coaching, getting a coach yourself, and taking an introductory course are all great steps to deciding whether or not being a professional life coach is for you. Here are some recommended steps for learning more about life coaching:

1) **Gather written information.** Gathering written information, like this book and websites dedicated to life coaching, are great starting points and will give you a foundation for learning more about the profession.

2) **Interview life coaches.** Most coaches love the work they do and talking about coaching. A quick interview can give a great insight into what it is to be a life coach.

3) **Experience life coaching from the client’s side.** Hiring your own life coach to experience the process and benefits firsthand is an outstanding way to learn more about coaching.

4) **Enroll in a life coach training program.** Training is essential and will take your natural skill set, listening and curiosity to a new level. It is also a great way to start building your support network of other life coaches.

5) **Build your support network.** Starting out as a life coach can be daunting. Designing the best way to support you (and the support you can give back) with your family and friends are great conversations to have. Reaching out to other professionals is also an essential part of being a successful and fulfilled professional yourself.

6) **Start coaching, be kind to yourself.** When starting the coaching process, it helps to be kind to yourself as you climb the learning curve. Coaching is a challenging skill set to master, but with practice, it is possible.

7) **Get credentialed.** Getting credentialed ensures that you have a core competency in the life coaching skill set. The International Coaching Federation (ICF, a non-profit and a leader in setting the standards of Life Coaching) offers a solid credentialing program. This book is based on the standards and principles outlined by the ICF.
Designed Alliance

design |dəˈzīn|
noun
1 a plan or drawing produced to show the look and function or workings of a building, garment, or other object before it is built or made.
   • the art or action of conceiving of and producing such a plan or drawing
2 purpose, planning, or intention that exists or is thought to exist behind an action, fact, or material object.
   • (often be designed) do or plan (something) with a specific purpose or intention in mind.
ORIGIN late Middle English (as a verb in the sense [to designate]): from Latin designate, reinforced by French désigner. The noun is via French from Italian.

alliance |əˈliəns|
noun
a union or association formed for mutual benefit, esp. between countries or organizations.
   • a relationship based on an affinity in interests, nature, or qualities.
ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French alliance, from aliere 'to ally'.

What

The Designed Alliance consists of the details and steps that a coach takes to ensure that the client-coach relationship is strong and the environment of each coaching session allows the client to feel comfortable with taking risks and being courageous. The basis of creating a “safe space” is the client-coach alliance that a coach initiates and designs with the client. The designed alliance is the opportunity for the coach and the client to outline the ways that the coach can best serve the client. These are the elements of a designed alliance:

1) Same page. The biggest element of a successful designed alliance is firmly putting both the coach and the client on the same page. Being on the same page does not mean that the coach is the boss or knows more than the client. Being on the same page means that the coach and the client understands three things:
   A) Where both the coach and client are in the client-coach relationship
   B) Where the client currently is
   C) Where the client wants to go and what they want to achieve

2) Confidentiality. Confidentiality and establishing the professionalism of life coaching [see Logistics of a Coaching Relationship, page 17] is the basis of a designed alliance and the creation of a powerful coaching environment.

3) Safe space for ideas and emotion. Over time, a client learns to trust the coach not just outside the coaching relationship with confidentiality, but within the coaching relationship when a coach practices Structured Improvisation [see page 48] to move the client forward. The client understands that
they can take bigger risks because the coach’s role is not to judge the client but help them move forward.

4) **Safe space for the actual environment.** The actual environment in which the coaching occurs is an essential element to designing an alliance. A coach must also pay attention to possible distractions and quality of the environment in which the coaching takes place.

5) **Respect.** As the coach and client relationship develops, a sense of respect emerges. Such a respect also demands that the coach and the client are honest with each other and respect the coaching relationship.

6) **Magnificence.** The final piece of the puzzle for a designed alliance is the awareness of the client taking risks and being courageous. When the coach and client establish a strong relationship and space in which the client can take risks, the client’s magnificence naturally emerges. The coach is merely a facilitator and sets the stage for the client to perform.

**Why**

A) **Openness.** Rarely are two people so open about how they want to be in a relationship. By addressing the relationship itself, a coach and a client set a precedent for being transparent and open in their relationship. This openness forms the foundation of trust and allows the client to take risks and be courageous in their self-exploration. It also allows the coach to be more confident that they are providing the client with what they most want and need.

B) **Mutual support.** Like any great team, each teammate needs to support the other players on the field if the team is going to be successful. A chief aim of the designed alliance is to have the client understand their role in the client-coach relationship and work to mutually support the coach in designing the best way the coach can support them. Coaches find it easy to fully support their clients. It is a natural byproduct of being coach. When the client is proactive and understands that they also have the power to make their coach more effective, the designed alliance becomes strong. The client understands and takes responsibility for the strength of the relationship to be strong. Allowing clients to be proactive in establishing the coaching relationship sets a precedent for the client to be proactive in other areas of their lives as well.

C) **Freedom from judgment.** Coaching does not assume that something is wrong with the client or that something needs to be fixed. The client realizes that he or she will not be judged, the coach-client relationship will not be damaged if the client has certain requests, and the client also learns to not judge themselves so harshly. The incredible power of the approach to observe the client, bear witness to their growth, and not hold judgments but allow the client to explore areas where he or she can improve is a crucial element to a strong and powerful designed alliance.

D) **Coach’s skill.** The coach’s skill comes into play in the designed alliance and the ability of the coach to create a safe space for the coaching to occur. A skilled coach has a certain level of confidence that clients recognize and provides them with feelings of more security.

E) **Trained client.** Throughout the coaching process clients understand the style of their coach as well as the type of questions the coach asks. In essence, the client becomes a trained client and has a deeper understanding of the steps they can take between sessions to get the most out of the coaching relationship as well as what they need to say in a coaching relationship to make it work for them.
**How**

Your main objective in the designed alliance between the client and coach is to get on the same page with your client and keep open the channel of conversation about what you can do better.

1) Start by talking about what an alliance is and what you hope to get out of the exercise (such as being on the same page).

2) Go through the prompts and design your relationship with your client:
   - What best motivates you?
   - How do you move into action?
   - What requests do you have?
   - What do you think I should know?
   - What’s working so far?
   - What’s not working so far?
   - How will you know that this coaching has been successful?

3) After each session, you need to write a quick summary to the parents. It’s part of keeping everyone on the same page. The challenge is to write an email that is informative but doesn’t make your client feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Use your time at the end of the session to say something such as, “I’m going to write an email to your parents at the end of each session that tells your parents what we went over. I’m only going to write summaries that will support you and the process. If there’s anything you don’t want me to write, let me know. It’s also an opportunity for us to communicate with them what you think they could do to better support you. Do you have any suggestions?” They usually don’t. But it’s still good to ask and you can suggest some ways your client’s parents can help.

4) Tie up the session looking at your client’s Accountabilities [see page 121].

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Logistics of a Life Coaching Relationship

logistics  [ˈlɒdʒɪstɪks; lɔː-]  
plural noun [treated as sing. or pl. ]  
the detailed coordination of a complex operation involving many people, facilities, or supplies.  
• the commercial activity of transporting goods to customers.  
ORIGIN late 19th cent. (in the sense [movement and supplying of troops and equipment] ) ; from French logistique, from loger ‘lodge.’

What

Establishing a successful life coaching relationship begins with the first contact between a coach and client. Establishing the relationship creates the foundation for a professional and successful coaching experience for the client and is composed of seven different parts:

1) **Description of life coaching.** The client must have an accurate and complete picture of what life coaching is as well as expectations of what they will get out of life coaching.

2) **Expresses limitations of coaching.** It is equally important for the client to understand what life coaching is not. Life coaching is neither consulting or therapy.

3) **Decision of a life coach to work with the client.** For life coaching to be successful, the relationship between the coach and the client must be strong. In the back of their mind a coach must be thinking, “Am I a good fit and a good match for this client?” If the coach does not believe that they are a good fit or good match for this client then it’s a good idea to pass the client on to someone else.

4) **Decision of the client to work with a life coach.** The client has an opportunity to evaluate and decide whether they want to work with the coach or not. The client’s decision to move forward with the life coaching process represents a huge step forward for the client.

5) **Contract.** The life coaching relationship is a professional relationship and having a clearly defined contract brings a level of professionalism to a life coaching practice.

6) **Payment.** Payment represents the closed loop in the coach client relationship. The coach provides the client services, for which the client pays the coach.
7) **Designed Alliance** [see page 11]. The next step in establishing a strong coaching relationship is to consciously design the alliance between the coach and the client.

**Why**

A) **Establishes the coach is a professional.** It is important for the coach to be viewed as professional. The action of one life coach often represents the profession as a whole, and since life coaching is still a young profession, it is important for life coaches to be mindful of the impact that they have on the profession. The ethical conduct of the coach is the foundation for a successful life coaching practice and successful life coaching business.

B) **Frames the work.** Establishing a strong coaching relationship is the overall frame that will surround the rest of the work of the coach does, even designing alliance. The initial frame that a coaching client agreed to is extremely important because the rest of the work will in some way be affected by that current perspective about the work [see Perspectives, page 100].

C) **A natural fit.** A coach really only wants to work with the clients who are excited to work with them. The responsibility of the coach is to find clients whom they love to work with because as they get further along in the coaching relationship, they realize that there is a certain magic that happens when the coaching is going well and that excitement propels the work forward. When a coach is a good fit with their client, coaching feels natural and easy. It is exciting for the coach to work with their clients and deeply fulfilling when the fit is right.

**How**

1) Begin by establishing a relationship with your client and determine what the client is looking for.

2) Explain the benefits of life coaching and the description of what life coaching is. Also be clear with what life coaching isn’t.

3) An introductory session. Most coaches offer an introductory session that covers a few of the exercises of life coaching and aims to give their client an experience of what it would be like to be coached. It is also an excellent opportunity for the coach and the client to learn more about each other and to get a feel for whether or not this could be a good fit for them both. Introductory sessions are an important part of determining whether you and your new client are good fit.

4) Assuming that the introductory session went well and that you and the client established a good fit, the next step is to send a contract to your client and have the client return the contract with payment.

5) The next step is for you to also sign the contract and send a copy back to the client. Sometimes it’s useful to include an introductory letter or welcome letter to your client.

6) The last step is to create the Designed Alliance [see page 11], determine what is most important to your client, and commence coaching.
3 Reasons Why Life Coaching Works

Life coaching works because the client is the center of the process. While keeping the client and their agenda as the focus may seem simple, doing so goes against a natural instinct to offer advice and try to fix the problems in a client’s life. This Chapter covers:

1) **Hold the Client’s Agenda.** The agenda of a life coaching session comes from the client, and throughout the session, it is the coach’s job to stay focused on that agenda.

2) **Coach the client not the problem.** There is a natural tendency to get bogged down in looking at solutions to problems and creating a list of action steps. While resolving problems is an outcome of great coaching, the real power of life coaching comes from a coach’s focus on the client and trusting that when the client is on point, they can easily overcome whatever challenges arise in their life.

3) **Attend to a client’s Being, Learning, and Action.** The nature of a life coach’s focus on a client has three areas. The first is who the client is being. Identifying and maintaining an awareness of being is a powerful concept and one that often goes unaddressed outside of a coaching session. By becoming curious about the identity and inner qualities of a client, a coach can shed light on important aspects and offer valuable insights to the client. The second is the client’s learning. Growth and learning are a central part of a client’s experience and add a vibrancy and playfulness to life. The third is the client’s action. The components of Being, Learning, and Action are the central elements of the client’s experience and focusing on all three ensures your client gets solid value out of coaching.
Hold the Client’s Agenda

agenda | əˈjɛndə |
noun
a list of items of business to be considered and discussed at a meeting.
• a list or program of things to be done or problems to be addressed.

ORIGIN early 17th cent. [in the sense [things to be done]] :
from Latin, neuter plural of *agendum*, gerund of *agere ‘do.’

What

The central tenet of successful life coaching is the coach partnering with the client to look at the different areas in a client's life and a way to move forward. The client must take full ownership of the coaching session and understands what they are gaining from the coaching. Holding the client’s agenda involves these four components:

1) **Co-design action steps.** The coach helps move the client forward by giving them the freedom to stumble upon insights and gain a deeper understanding of themselves and their life.

2) **Coach must set aside their own agenda.** Whenever two people sit down to work through a challenge or a problem, there seems to be an impulse for the person who is helping to believe that they have a solution in their mind and subtly (or directly) push their solution or agenda onto the other person. It is a natural human impulse to empathize and apply our thoughts to the situation of someone else.

3) **Serving the client.** A coach needs to be conscious and aware that they are truly focusing on what is most pressing to the client. By getting clear and asking the client what agenda they have, the coach and client can act as partners and gives the client control of the conversation, sets the pace, and really sets the goals of the coaching work.

4) **Keep focused.** Holding the client's agenda also means sharpening the focus by becoming very clear on what it is the client wants and helping the client regain their focus when they lose it. The client is able to ramble a bit and to go off on a tangent since their coach is present, steadily holding the client’s overarching agenda and bringing them back to focusing on what they want to get out of the coaching. This
prevents the coaching session from turning into merely an interesting conversation without any real clear focus.

**Why**

A) It helps the coach get out of their own way and makes sure that the client is focusing on what it is they really want to focus on. By getting clear on what the client really wants, the coach allows clarity to guide the client's understanding and deepen their awareness of what's really important to them.

B) At times during a coaching session, the conversation can wander between topics or the client may feel an urge to jump off on a tangent. It's important for the coach to bring the client back to their focus, and holding their client’s agenda is a skill that facilitates a focused conversation with tons of value.

**How**

1) The first step is getting clear on what your client wants and the agenda they have in their life.

2) The second step is moving forward on that agenda and bringing your client back to their agenda if your client wanders off using tools such as Bottom Line [see page 140] and Intruding [see page 177].
At the bedrock of life coaching is a concept that the client has all the resources that he or she needs to meet the challenges in their life. A successful life coach needs to know:

1) **The client is not broken.** The coach must take a perspective that the client is not broken, but rather knows the solutions to what is in front of them as long as they have the motivation to follow through.

2) **Creating solutions, not fixing problems.** A life coach is not focused on creating a solution, solving a problem, or fixing the client. Rather they need to be more concerned with giving a client the insight and motivation to take powerful action. The core tenant of life coaching is that people do not need to be fixed, nor are they broken.

3) **Clients have the resources.** Coaching assumes that clients have all of the necessary resources that they need to manage their lives and overcome the challenges successfully.

**Why**

A) **Allows the coach to approach the clients from an empowering point of view.** A coach is not the expert with all of the solutions and they do not know things that the client does not. Instead, the coach forms a partnership with the client to help them move forward based on the coaching relationship.

B) **Coach as a mirror.** The coach in essence becomes a mirror to help the client understand themselves and the challenges they face.

**C) Assumptions are very powerful.** If the coach makes an assumption that the client cannot do something or that the client needs to be fixed, the coach often looks like they are trying to be clever or solve a problem for the client.

D) **Looking at who the client is being.** It is important for a coach to look deeply at who the client is Being [see page 32], what Perspectives [see page 100] the client is taking, and what is most important to the client. These are the core issues that life coaching addresses. Once these core issues are addressed, all of the other little details like finding a solution are much easier.

**How**

1) First, to really understand this concept you as a coach must have utter confidence in yourself and the coaching process. You must also have confidence that your client knows what she or he needs to do to be successful.

2) **Ask Powerful Questions** [see page 66] and be curious about what your client already knows to help them find a solution.

3) Lead your client to have a deeper understanding of him or herself and to hear the solution come out of their own mouth. During a coaching session, the most powerful words a client can hear are the words that come out of their own mouth.

4) **Trust that your client is resourceful.** It often feels like recovering the confidence in the abilities of your client. Allow the fresh point of view to open up possibilities and allow your client to learn more about themselves and obvious solutions for their situation.
Sample dialogue between a coach and client

Coach: So what do you want work on today?

Client: I am having a challenging time sitting still in class and staying motivated to take notes. It feels like I don't want to do the work.

Coach: What's stopping you from being motivated?

Client: I don't know. I mean, in some classes I pay attention and the teacher says I do pretty well. But other classes I just don't care. I think to myself, “What I need to know this for? There's no point in my life will ever need to know this.”

Coach: I can imagine it's frustrating.

Client: It's totally frustrating. I know that's part of the cycle.

Coach: So what is it you want?

Client: I think about my classes outside of school and think to myself, “I really don’t want to learn this and I really don’t want to go to class today.” I’ve had thoughts like that for a long time. It’s as if I just forget about in all the times that I want to go to class. I mean seriously, school is such a drag. I want to go to class and know that the notes I'm taking are going to be useful for getting a good grade.

Current: What is it you're really after?

Client: I want to feel good about myself and I want to feel like I can do this.

Coach: What is it you know you need to do?

Client: I need to sit in the front of the class. Last year I had my stuff together had good grades I definitely sat in the 1st or 2nd row in class. And then I know I got lazy or something, but I just got used to sitting in the back. Maybe the first day it was to just have a break. But I didn't realize that it really does mean something to me to know that learning is helping and to know I can get good grades. It's just something so simple that sitting in the back of class doesn’t help and I need to sit in the front of the class.

Coach: What does sitting in the front of a classroom represent to you?

The coaching continues from here and addresses the client’s specific action steps. At no point did the coach offer a solution or assume that the client was broken and needed to be fixed. The agenda was clearly set by the client, and the coach used powerful questions to get the client thinking about what was most important to them. Out of the learning came a natural sense of curiosity and client came up with solution. Ultimately it helps the client become more confident in himself and learn to align their actions, values, and solutions. The solutions are more powerful simply because the client creates them.
Attend to a Client’s Being, Learning, and Action

Being, Learning, and Action form the foundation for a client to engage in positive personal growth. Heavy doses of awareness of being along with learning and action leads to a circular philosophical discussion. Learning without taking into account the characteristics of the learner or action is much like asking students to learn something without giving them a context or explaining why the knowledge is important. Too many actions do not attend to the person and the opportunity to learn something new resembles a laundry list of tasks without much meaning.

Addressing each of these three areas with a client is one of the reasons why life coaching is so effective. The following sections look at each of these three areas in turn.

Client’s Being

being |ˈbɛiŋ| present participle of be.
noun
1 existence.
• living; being alive.
2 the nature or essence of a person.
verb
1 be present
2 [as copular verb ] having the state, quality, identity, nature, role, etc., specified.
ORIGIN Old English bēon), an irregular and defective verb, whose full conjugation derives from several originally distinct verbs. The forms am and is are from an Indo-European root shared by Latin sum and est. The forms was and were are from an Indo-European root meaning ‘remain.’ The forms be and been are from an Indo-European root shared by Latin fui ‘I was,’ fio ‘I become’ and Greek phuein ‘bring forth, cause to grow.’ The origin of are is uncertain.
What

A discussion on the nature of “being” is beyond the scope of this book. However, life coaching helps the client to address who they are being and is one of the primary reasons why life coaching is so effective. Identities, personality, characteristics, Values [see page 89], and habits all go into how the client views him or herself and how they show up in their life. Who they perceive themselves to be has a profound influence on the effectiveness of the actions they take and the success they experience in their life.

Most goals concentrate on what a client wants to accomplish or what they want to have. Those are useful goals, but turning attention to who they want to become adds another layer of meaning to their life.

The following kinds of questions point to a client’s being:

- What are the characteristics you most admire?
- In accomplishing your goal, who do you want to be?
- Who do you need to be to accomplish this goal?
- What does “being a good student” mean to you?
- What does “being a good fill in the blank” mean to you?
- When you are at your best, what characteristics do you naturally display?
- What do you think people most admire about you?
- What about yourself do you fear?
- What about yourself do you most admire?
- In your mind, what kind of person is capable of accomplishing this goal?

Why

Attending to the client’s self-knowledge as well as who they are being is so effective because it helps the client understand the characteristics they want to emphasize and often the action that needs to be taken becomes clear. These are the main reasons why focusing on a client’s being is so effective:

A) **Fundamental to change.** Often clients are simply are not aware enough of themselves or their situation to know what it is they really want, or the true impact that they are having on others or their situation. When a coach brings awareness to who the client wants to be, it is a fundamental step in the process of being clear on what the client really wants.

B) **Rare and often the missing piece of the puzzle.** Paying attention to being is rare, yet it is often the piece of the puzzle that makes everything else fall into place.
C) **Slows the pace.** The pace of life can be fast and clients rarely spend time thinking about and becoming more aware about themselves, what they are learning, and who they are becoming as they take action. When a coach focuses awareness on who the client is being, they help the client understand that who they are goes deeper than the actions they are taking. When a client slows down the normal pace of life for little bit during a coaching session they are able to directly address who they want to be.

D) **Fulfillment.** Too often, a client looks for fulfillment outside of themselves and wish that their situation was different. Of course, being motivated to make things different is one of the primary drives for a client to achieve goals and take action. Yet, having a strong sense of awareness is powerful in helping the client appreciate the present moment as well as the process of achieving a goal, which makes it easier to slip into Intrinsic Motivation [see Managing Motivation, page 116].

**How**

The biggest ways you help your client become more aware of being is by simply addressing it in your coaching session. Here are some tools that help:

1) **Ask powerful questions about who your client is, was, or will be.** When you are stuck on how to incorporate and build self-awareness for your client, asking direct, powerful questions about who your client was or is being is a great way to address awareness. Such questions also serve to deepen awareness of what your client is learning about themselves as well as the action that they need to take.

2) **Clarify Values** [see page 89]. Clarifying values is a powerful exercise for your clients to identify and build on what’s most important to them.

3) **Acknowledgement** [see page 126]. Acknowledgement can be used as a means of articulating what you see as a coach so that your client can become more self-aware and understand their impact more fully.

4) **Paraphrase** [see page 190] or **Articulate.** Similar to Acknowledgement [see page 126], paraphrasing what your client just said can serve as a mirror for your client to hear deeper into what they are saying.

5) **Bird’s-Eye View** [see page 136]. Bird’s-Eye View helps your client deepen their awareness by focusing on the larger picture and bringing into sharp relief what’s most important in the long-run.

6) **Metaphors** [see page 187]. Metaphors are a great tool that can capture the essence of who your client wants to be and the energy they want emphasize.
Client’s Learning

learning |ˈlɔrniŋ |
noun
gain or acquire knowledge of or skill in (something) by study, experience, or being taught.  
• commit to memory. 
• become aware of (something) by information or from observation.  
ORIGIN Old English *leornian* [learn] (in Middle English also *teach*), of West Germanic origin; related to German *lernen*, also to *lore*.

What

Client’s Learning is one of the three essential elements of a successful life coaching experience for the client. The other two elements are sensitivity and awareness of the client’s being and action along with motivation [see Managing Motivation, page 116]. The client’s learning is the knowledge a client is gaining about themselves, their situation, and what is possible for them. The client’s learning occurs both in the coaching session and between coaching sessions. It is facilitated by the coach, but mostly created by the client. A client’s learning has three distinct parts:

1) Concept. Learning happens when a client becomes aware of an idea or emotion or piece of information. The concept itself is the first part of learning. When people think about learning, most people think solely about the concept.

2) Context. Learning happens when a concept is placed within a larger context. In life coaching, the client’s life is the context in which all of the other learning takes place.

3) Meaning. The last piece of learning is the meaning that client becomes aware of when they learn a new idea or emotion or piece of information. A concept placed within a certain context that has a clear meaning encompasses the three essential aspects that make up learning.

Why

A) Learning is fun. The human brain is designed to learn and learning feels good [see Managing Motivation, page 116]. Being intrinsically motivated is a wonderful form of sustainable, long-term motivation. It is the way for clients to move forward. Learning about themselves and the world around them helps the clients stay motivated and it also
creates excitement about being alive and the possibilities that lie ahead.

B) Growth. Growing as a human being adds a richness to life. When a client is not growing, there is a dullness or listlessness to their experiences. Learning is so powerful because it allows the client to continue to reach new levels and they continue to grow and stretch in new directions.

C) Opens more possibilities. Such growth and new directions helps clients tap into a positive Perspective [see page 100] that opens up possibilities for more learning and effective action.

D) Gives action another dimension. In a coaching session, the coach and client will often create action lists. If a coach also Checks-In [see page 165] with what the client is learning, the coach helps the client add another dimension to the action. The actions become a way for client to explore and learn more about themselves and the world around them.

How

1) The most important thing to do to help your client develop their learning is to be aware of the three parts of learning and address each of the three with the client. For example, when you want to lock in your client’s learning, the first step is to clearly identifying the concept your client is learning. Maintain an awareness that there are many different layers to what’s going on and sometimes when working with clients, it is your ability to pull apart those layers and Making Distinctions [see page 181] that are helpful to your client’s forward motion.

2) The next step is for you to help your client clearly establish the context of the concept they learned. When the context is clear and your client understands that this concept exists within the context, it adds an element of understanding that is often missing.

3) The third step to lock in the learning is to help your client understand the meaning or the reasons behind the concept. The first two steps look at the details of what the concept is and the context in which it is placed. This step looks at the reasons why something happens. Once your client is aware of one of the details and the reason why it’s important, your client is taking huge steps towards understanding and learning.

4) The last step is for your client to apply what they have learned in their life and to move forward. Creating Well-Designed Actions [see page 80] helps your client use the learning that they have just accomplished.

Tools especially help develop a client’s learning:

1) Powerful Questions [see page 66]

2) Making Distinctions

3) Metaphor [see page 187]
Client’s Action

action [ˈækʃən]
noun
1 the fact or process of doing something, typically to achieve an aim.
2 a thing done; an act.
3 [usu. with adj.] a manner or style of doing something.
ORIGIN late Middle English: via Old French from Latin *actio(n-)*, from *agere* ‘do, act.’

What

Another key element that makes life coaching so effective is the attention a coach gives to helping a client move into action. Clients come to coaching because they want to achieve certain goals. Coaches help clients gain more clarity about those goals and design an effective plan of action. Helping clients take effective action involves these elements:

1) **A clear Vision** [see page 94]. A clear vision is a goal, but with more details and a specific time frame.
2) **Well-Designed Actions** [see page 80]. A well-designed action provides clear criteria to ensure that clients take effective action.
3) **Alignment with Values** [see page 89]. Aligning action with values adds another layer of meaning to those actions.
4) **Perspectives** [see page 100]. Perspectives have a profound influence on the success of action taken.
5) **Accountability** [see page 121]. Execution and follow-through are just as important as the original plan. Accountability helps keep clients on track and take meaningful action.

Why

A) **Makes the coaching real.** A coaching session is merely a great conversation if afterwards a client does not follow through on the action steps created with the coach. When a client takes action based on a coaching session, it makes the coaching real.

B) **Also incorporates being and learning.** Much of the power of well-designed actions in a coaching session is derived from
the coach also incorporating being and learning into the action.

C) **Naturally addresses fulfillment.** Actions taken in alignment with values are a recipe for fulfillment.

D) **Forms habits.** Taking effective actions are the first step to developing effective habits.

E) **Results are feedback not judgment.** From the point-of-view of life coaching, the results from a client’s action are merely feedback that provides valuable information for the client and coach. Without the weight of judgment of success or failure, the coach and client can more accurately determine which steps need to be fine-tuned and which can be tossed aside completely.

F) **Leadership element.** When a client takes action, they often impact more than just him or herself because many well-designed actions involve others and the community. Part of a client’s excitement about taking action is the impact that their action has on others and their step into personal leadership.

**How**

Many of the following skills and tools directly address helping your client take action. Here are the primary tools and steps:

1) **Brainstorm** [see page 144] a few possible actions and outcomes that your client wants. Pay attention to those that align with their values.

2) Based on the list you and your client create, choose a few to become the framework of a well-designed action.

3) **Watch out for Negative Assumptions and Limiting Beliefs** [see page 108].

4) **Pay attention to perspectives.**

5) **Discuss Accountability** [see page 121] to help your client follow-through on their actions and look at the results they are getting as feedback on their actions and the systems they have put in place.
The Essential Life Coaching Skills

The following Chapter outlines the seven core skills that must be present to be an effective life coach. These skills are interrelated and build on one another. For instance, the more confident a life coach is at empathetic listening [see Modes of Listening, page 55], the easier it is to ask Powerful Questions [see page 66] or use Direct Communication [see page 76]. The seven Essential Life Coaching Skills are:

1) **Structured Improvisation.** Since the client is the center of the life coaching relationship and sets the agenda, a life coach must be confident in being fully present in the moment and trust in their skill set and the natural value of Empathetic Listening.

2) **Modes of Listening.** Listening empathetically, from the point of view of the client, and focusing simultaneously on what is said as well as not being said are central skills for being an effective life coach. Understanding the difference between the different modes of listening empowers a life coach to be effective and truly puts the client at the center of the life coaching process.

3) **Curiosity.** Curiosity is a combination of caring for the client (the word curiosity is derived from the Latin cura meaning care) as well as wanting to know more for the sake of the client. It brings a playful yet powerful focus to a coaching session.

4) **Powerful Questions.** While curiosity is the driving force behind the questions a life coach asks, powerful questions are the form. Short and open-ended, these questions invite a client to learn more about themselves as well as open up possibilities for action.
5) **Intuition.** When listening deeply to the client, a coach may have certain ideas and thoughts that may not make logical sense, but still be valuable to the client. Being able to pick up on intuition as well as share it effectively with the client is an essential skill.

6) **Direct Communication.** Communication is the practice of transferring ideas and thoughts from one person to another. While life coaching offers a plethora of tools to choose from, they all share the same foundation of a life coach being confident and able to speak directly with the client.

7) **Well-Designed Action.** Coaches help clients take effective action and it is essential for the client to put all the learning and value they derive from a coaching session into practice.

Without any one of these skills, powerful life coaching is not happening. These are truly the essential skills. Master these, and coaching abilities will rise to that next level and provide tremendous value to clients.

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**Structured Improvisation**

**structure** ['strək chər]
noun
the arrangement of and relations between the parts or elements of something complex.
• a building or other object constructed from several parts.
• the quality of being organized.
ORIGIN late Middle English (denoting the process of building): from Old French, or from Latin *structura*, from *struere* 'to build.'

**improvise** ['imprəvɪz]
verb
create and perform (music, drama, or verse) spontaneously or without preparation.
• produce or make (something) from whatever is available.
ORIGIN early 19th cent.: from French *improviser* or its source, Italian *improvissare*, from *improvviso* 'extempore,' from Latin *improvisus* 'unforeseen,' based on *provisus*, past participle of *providere* 'make preparation for.'
What

Structured Improvisation is a skill that enables a coach to be able to accept what happens in the present moment of a coaching session in a way that adds value.

Improvisation is the art and skill of creating with the unknown and the unforeseen. The first rule of improvisation is to accept the offer. In improvisation, there are two main guidelines:

1) Accept what’s offered
2) Add value

Life coaching (and life for that matter) operates effectively on those same two guidelines. A coach does not know what is going to happen in any session or how the client is going to be when they show up. But the coach can accept what’s offered. And the coach can go with it. It requires a coach to be grounded in the present moment and confident that they can handle whatever comes up.

There is a certain peace as well as excitement that a coach is capable of understanding when their client is getting value from the coaching experience. When the coach has learned to trust him or herself, their client, and whatever is happening in the present moment, there is a lot for the coach to work with to move the client forward.

The opposite of accepting what is offered is called blocking. Blocking denies the client’s idea or the premise of the scene. It can be blatant: “You can’t watch TV now, you have to study.” Or subtle: “I know that you have been putting in more time studying, but Math has always been your hardest subject.” Ouch. Sometimes blocking can really hurt.

Accepting versus blocking does not always mean that blocking is bad and accepting is good. Certain situations call for blocking (such as not watching TV and doing homework). However, it is most effective if blocking or accepting is used by the coach consciously and for a purpose. Far too often in a family, academic, or business setting people block out of habit.

In a life coaching session, it is essential for a coach to accept what is offered. Yet having a structure behind accepting the offer and adding value to it are equally important. The structure behind accepting the offer is for a coach to hold the focus on the Client’s Agenda [see page 23], ask Powerful Questions [see page 66], as well as any of the other life coaching principles and exercises.

Why

A) Structured improvisation works so well because it mirrors the natural flow of experience. Something comes up. A coach has a choice to block it and actively work against it. Or they can accept it and use it for future action. Sometimes it is best for the coach to block. Sometimes it is best for them to go with it.

B) Being both flexible yet having a useful structure is ideal. The life coaching process contains a balance between flexibility and structure, and it is one of the reasons life coaching is so effectively employed in a myriad of different areas.

C) Structure. The reason structure is so effective is that having a strong and stable structure, such as the Academic Life Coaching program with its core life coach principles and exercises that are based on the principles, enables the client the freedom and experience to handle more. A client becomes stressed when a system they have cannot handle the demands placed on it. Stress originated from a technical term meaning the strain placed upon a certain material, such as steel used in a bridge. A steel beam can easily support a great deal of weight, but when it reaches a certain point, it becomes
stressed and begins to bend. Psychologists applied the metaphor to human beings, and thus the idea of stress is introduced in everyday vocabulary.

D) Change the system. When dealing with stress, most clients take the same methods, tools or systems that they use every day and just try working harder. This is the, “I’ve just got to try harder” method. Such a technique may work for the client. It certainly requires the least amount of effort to solve the immediate problem. However, in the long run it would be so much more effective for the client to take time and create a system and a structure to handle more work. So instead of working the same system harder, a coach can help the client work on building a structure for a new system. Essentially, the core life coaching principles form the structure for the system to handle whatever comes up in client’s life. The stronger the structure and system the more client and the coach can handle.

E) Improvisation works so well because it’s unusual in most conversations. Most people in a conversation are thinking about “How does this apply to me?” It’s a perfectly reasonable way to listen to someone and relate to other people based on our experiences. However, in a life coaching setting the coach is able to accept what the client brings and whatever happens, then builds from it. When a coach can effectively improvise, it adds so much value to the conversation and takes what the client is already thinking and augments it with the coach’s natural Curiosity [see page 61].

How

The best way to practice structured improvisation is to practice the improvisation part. Much of the core life coaching principles and
thought that I should be doing my work and I don’t really 100% enjoy what I’m doing. I have to constantly look back over my shoulder to see if my mom is getting annoyed and ready to say something. I just don’t want that to happen. So, it’s really fun but also stressful.

**Coach:** You know enough tools to get around the stress. What tool would you use in the situation?

**Client:** I definitely want to get my work done and to fully relax and enjoy myself. Right now I think I never really get a break until the weekend.

**Coach:** So what tool would you use?

**Client:** You know it would really help if I could get my work done, I mean completely done, and then set aside some time to go on Facebook without my parents flipping out that I haven’t done my work. I don’t know what tool that would be but doing that would help the most.

**Coach:** It’s a big realization. That seems like something that’s totally achievable.

**Client:** I can’t believe I heard myself say those words, “I know that I need to do the work first...” out loud.

**Coach:** I’d call it a mini-breakthrough. Let’s craft a way for you to stick to a plan for the next week and see how it goes.

This session was so effective and worked so well because the coach let the client acknowledge the draw to being distracted and the benefit of TV and Facebook. The coach asked the question, “What
Modes of Listening

mode | mōd |
noun
a way or manner in which something occurs or is experienced, expressed, or done.
• an option allowing a change in the method of operation.
• a way of operating or using a system.
ORIGIN late Middle English (in the musical and grammatical senses); from Latin modus 'measure,' from an Indo-European root shared by mete.

listen | 'lisən |
verb [intrans.]
give one's attention to a sound.
• take notice of and act on what someone says; respond to advice or a request.
• make an effort to hear something; be alert and ready to hear something.
ORIGIN Old English hlysan [pay attention to] of Germanic origin.

What

The most common distinction made in listening is whether someone is paying attention or not, and listening occurs when someone is hearing the words and making sense of them. Paying attention is definitely required to listen, but in life coaching an important distinction is made by examining the perspective of the coach as they attend to the client’s words. The perspective the coach takes as a listener has a big impact on the client who is speaking. Those different perspectives make up the three Modes of Listening:

1) Mode one listening is listening for the sake of yourself. Mode one is when the coach listens for the sake of him or herself. It is necessary and it is useful when the coach is learning something and needs to know how this applies to their own life. When a coach is listening is in this mode, they are often asking themselves the following questions when the client is talking:
• Is this is really going to be useful for me?
• Oh, that reminds of me of that time when _fill in the blank_.
• When is it going to be my turn to talk?
• How does what they are saying apply to me?
• I wonder what I could say to look really good right now?

2) Mode two listening is listening from the perspective of the person speaking. It also relates to empathy, and coaches who are skilled at empathetic listening effortlessly offer their own Intuition [see page 71] and Curiosity [see page 61] for the sake of the client. Yet mode two listening goes further than just empathy, which is being able to identify correctly the emotion the client is feeling, to experiencing what they are saying from their point-of-view. Such listening is a powerful form of deep listening that gets the coach’s interests
out of the way. It forces the coach to be much more present and focus on what the client is actually saying.

3) **Mode three listening is listening from the perspective of an outside observer looking in on the conversation.** For a coach, listening in mode three feels as if they are standing on one side of the room listening to the client speaking, listening to their own words and ask his or herself the question, “How does what is being said relate to my client?” It is a powerful exercise to help the coach understand that when communicating this deeply with the client, they influence each other’s speech. As a coach, being able to hear the words are coming out of their mouth and examining their effectiveness is useful tool. At first it can seem surreal or little phony, but with practice it becomes comfortable for the coach to step outside the situation and be fully present with the client while simultaneously taking in the outside scene around them.

**Why**

Why mode two and mode three listening are more effective in coaching than mode one listening:

A) **Mode one listening does not serve others.** Most people listen in mode one most of the time. However, it can be easy for a coach to naturally slip into empathetic listening. For example, when two friends are talking and one is listening deeply to the other, they can move into mode two listening which better serves the speaker.

B) **Mode two listening is a gift to the speaker.** For the coach, it can almost feel like they are in some sort of a flow and transfer their focus to the client as if they are hanging on the client’s every word. This kind of listening is an acknowledgment that what the client is saying is so important that the coach is willing to set aside how this applies to them.

C) **Mode two listening takes practice and requires focus.** In most life coaching sessions, a coach will primarily be in mode two listening. Two things often happen they begin coaching other people. The first is that a coach realizes how challenging it is to stay in mode two listening. Most coaches tend to think about the next question that they are going to ask, or they get caught up in the client’s story and think about a similar story in their own lives. They might also be so concerned with doing the coaching “right” that they are more concerned about themselves rather than the client.

D) **Mode two feels good.** The other phenomenon that happens with new coaches is that they will slip into mode two for an extended period of time. It feels amazing. It feels like they can really understand the client on a deeper level and get lost in their words. It is a tremendously creative and fulfilling experience for a coach. However, along with that experience often coaches get a “dreamy look” and get so caught up in their client’s words that they forget to move the session forward.

E) **Mode three uses a third perspective.** Mode three listening is an important way for the coach to attend to the client-coach relationship. It helps the coach think about what they are saying from a different perspective and point of view to make sure that they are strengthening the relationship and the professional bond between a coach and client. It is also a useful tool if the coach feels stuck in mode two listening. It is a chance to shift slightly and expand a coach’s focus so they can be a more effective listener for the client. It is also a way to avoid the “dreamy look” when they get lost in a
client’s story. For good uses of mode three, see Bottom-Line [see page 140] and Intruding [see page 177].

How

An effective coach is self-aware and skilled in choosing which mode of listening is going to be the most useful and serve their client.

How to listen in mode two

1) Begin by paying close attention to the words that your client is saying.
2) Allow yourself to listen so closely that you could say the same words silently to yourself as you client says them. As you are listening that closely, it feels like an intense form of concentration. Allow all your thoughts to be center on the client.
3) Ask yourself, “How does what they’re saying apply to them?” and allow yourself to be curious for the client’s sake.
4) If you find that you have slipped back into mode one, simply consciously recover back to mode two. At times, mode two listening feels like you are constantly recovering from mode one back to mode two. Such an experience is OK, as long as you remember to recover. Over time, you will find it easier to be in mode two with your client for longer periods of time.

How to listen in mode three

1) Begin by listening deeply to your client in mode two.
2) As you listening, ask about something you are curious about.

3) When your client answers your question, imagine that you are on the other side of the room listening to both the client and watching yourself listen to the client.
4) Ask your client another question and try to stay in that 3rd-person point of view. It may feel a lot like mental gymnastics at first, but as you get used to thinking and listening in this way you will find it to be incredibly powerful and give you an important tool to actively listen to your client.
Curiosity

curiosity |ˌkəˈzərēˈəsītē| noun (pl. -ties)
1 a strong desire to know or learn something.
ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French curiosete, from Latin curiositas, from curiosus (see curious).

Essential Life Coaching

What

Curiosity is the skill of caring for and wanting to learn more about someone or something. It is one of the core life coaching competencies that must be present for coaching to take place, no matter what other skill is being used.

In a life coaching context, curiosity often takes the form of Powerful Questions [see page 66], but it is also present even when a coach is using other skills ranging from Future-Self [see page 206] to Asking Permission [see page 131]. Curiosity comprises three distinct parts:

1) Care. The origin of curiosity comes from the Latin word cura. Curia’s first meaning is care or concern for the well-being of someone or something. A coach cares about their client. The power behind curiosity from a life coaching point of view is derived from the natural fondness that a coach feels for a client and reverence for the coach-client relationship. The force behind a powerful question comes from the care the coach has for the client who is answering the question.

2) Desire to learn more. Curiosity is about wanting to learn more. The primary role of a coach is not an advisor who knows the “right answers” or the “steps to take.” Instead, a coach uses a desire to learn about the client, for the sake of the client.

3) Wonder and admiration. Curiosity is a natural emotion that also involves a level of wonder and admiration. The more a coach appreciates what may be obvious while still applying curiosity, the easier it is for a client to explore what they may have taken for granted with a new perspective. The coach’s sense of wonder and admiration for the client and their circumstances informs curiosity and provides another way for it to continue to move forward.
Why

A) **Trusts the client and coaching process.** Curiosity and coaching from Mode Two Listening [see page 55] with the client places a tremendous amount of trust in the client and the coaching process. The coach is trusting that the client will generate the knowledge, learning, resources, and action that they need to reach their next level. When the coach trusts the coaching process, they release control of the ultimate direction of the coaching conversation. Curiosity allows the coach to trust that the client will get exactly what they need out of the coaching session. Curiosity is an expression of that trust.

B) **Gets the coach out of consultant role.** Curiosity allows the coach to avoid the “I know all the answers” trap that shuts down a productive coaching session. The power of a coaching relationship is derived from the coach and client exploring the client’s situation together, with the coach acting more like a guide to develop a client’s awareness and learning as well as design actions [see Client’s Learning, page 35 and Client’s Action, page 39].

C) **Builds the coaching relationship.** Curiosity builds a life coaching relationship because of the care and attention a coach naturally has for a client. Such genuine curiosity feels fantastic for both the coach and client, and cannot help but build rapport and the coaching relationship.

D) **New possibilities.** Curiosity opens up new Perspectives [see page 100] as well as new avenues for learning and action. It focuses on solutions or ways of thinking that may have previously been closed and shows it in a new light.

E) **Actively moves the conversation forward.** Curiosity is not a passive skill. It requires the coach to actively think and question what may appear to be obvious as well as what may appear to be hidden. It involves using Intuition [see page 71] as well as Mode Two Listening [see page 55]. Curiosity in the form of Powerful Questions [see page 66] is a coach’s primary tool for directing the conversation and moving the conversation forward while still allowing the client to take an equally active role.

F) **Addresses both the big and small.** Curiosity is also powerful in its versatility to address the huge issues as well as the slightest sigh. When in mode two listening, a coach can pick up on small vocal clues or a brief looks on the client’s face. Such small signs are a gift to the coach (and client if acted upon by the coach) and an invitation to use curiosity to see if a shrug or waver in the tone of voice is an opening to something significant but often ignored by your client. Often it means nothing, but sometimes curiosity over little details leads to valuable learning.

G) **Addresses the obvious and obscure.** In the same way a coach addresses both big and small, curiosity is able to address what may be taken for granted or completely ignored by the client. It means asking “obvious questions” such as these actual example from coaching sessions:

- What does friendship mean to you?
- What does “doing your best” mean?
- What is important about getting good grades?
- How would you describe studying?
- What is the best part of school?

These questions may not be particularly insightful - and the answers may be obvious - but they allow the client to
question tenets of their belief system that may go unaddressed in their whole life. 

H) **Playful.** Curiosity is playful. Such playfulness allows it to address tough challenges for the client as well as adds a tremendous positive force to a coaching session.

I) **Relatively rare.** Curiosity in a conversation is sometimes present, but it’s also rare. Genuine curiosity, especially when combined with powerful questions and effective modes of listening, runs counter to another natural human desire to know the answer and to be the expert in a certain subject. People love to give advice and be helpful. Often, that takes the form of helping people figure out the answer or solving a problem. The rarity of curiosity makes a coaching session a unique experience as well as powerful.

**How**

1) Guided by your Intuition, asking clients Powerful Question are the primary way to express curiosity.

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**Powerful Questions**

**powerful |ˈpou(ə)rfl|**

adjective

having great power or strength.

• (of a person, organization, or country) having control and influence over people and events.

• having a strong effect on people’s feelings or thoughts.

**question |ˈkwes chən|**

noun

a sentence worded or expressed so as to elicit information.

**questionnaire (verb), from Latin quaestio(n-), from quaerere ‘ask, seek’**
Powerful Questions form an essential part of the life coaching skill-set. Powerful questions are short, direct, open-ended questions that are designed to elicit information from the client and provide insight and learning, as well as motivation to follow through with action. Powerful questions have the following characteristics in common:

1) **Open ended.** Powerful questions are usually shorter than ten words. They are direct in that they cut to the heart of the matter. In terms of being open-ended, powerful questions usually start with the words “what” or “how” and avoid yes/no questions that start with “is.”

2) **Has force.** Powerful questions also have a certain force about them that make clients want to answer the questions. They are usually questions that may have been roaming around in a client’s mind but haven’t been fully addressed or asked directly. Neither the client nor the coach knows the answer to the question until it is asked, but it’s a great question for the client to consider and hear themselves answer.

3) **Not about facts.** Powerful questions are not merely about factual knowledge or seek information, but rather they address thoughts, habits, and emotions that may not have any known right or wrong answers. When a coach asks a powerful question, the client has an opportunity to deepen their learning and to see what is most important to them. It is a chance to try out ideas and see which ones have the most energy or pop. It is also a chance for the client to explore an emotion or use their imagination to conjure up how great it will actually feel to reach their accomplishment.

4) **Based on Curiosity** [see page 61]. All powerful questions are based on an empathetic curiosity and being inquisitive for the sake of the client. It is a question that invites the client to become more self-aware as well as confident about the action that they want to take.

**Why**

A) **Powerful questions give the client space to create a solution.** The ideal solution for a problem comes from the client directly. Sure, general guidelines exist for what constitutes effective studying or the steps in building a successful business. However, the solutions to the deepest problems - and the ones most worth solving - come from within. The force of a powerful question comes from the invitation the coach offer to the client to explore what is really going on from their point-of-view.

B) **They are short.** Brevity is beautiful, and it focuses the client’s mind on one topic without too much extra information in the way.

C) **Chance to be creative.** Most powerful questions start with “what” or “how.” Being open-ended allows the client the chance to be creative with their answer and gets the coach out of the client’s way. The coach’s job is to tap into a client’s natural curiosity about themselves and point them in a direction that they haven’t looked at before. By asking an open-ended question, the coach ensures that they are allowing the client’s creativity and curiosity full-reign to explore and add value to the coaching relationship.

**How**

Powerful questions can take some practice, and it takes some time getting used to asking a question then stopping yourself from talking to give space for your client to answer. Watch your urge to
ask two questions at once, ask a question that is too long, or add a long explanation.

1) First, tap into your natural curiosity, perhaps through Mode Two Listening [see page 55].
2) Start your question with “what” or “how.”
3) Keep your question simple.
4) Just ask one question then stop talking. Give your client time to think. It may feel like an uncomfortably long amount of time, which is ok. From a client’s point of view, having that time to think and form thoughts is priceless.
5) Listen empathetically to their answer, then repeat steps 1-4.

**Examples**

What do you want to work on today?
What is the benefit?
How do you know it will be successful?
What stops you from getting the grades you want?
What is the best thing about using a planner?
What is the worst thing about using a planner?
How does that solution feel?

How do you know?
What else?
Who do you want to become?
Who do you most admire?
What values are most important to you?
What specifically about that value is exciting to you?
What else?
What is your ideal solution?
What is holding you back?
How is your action aligning with your intention?
Intuition

intuition |ˌɪnt(ə)ˈʃən| noun
the ability to understand something immediately, without the need for conscious reasoning.
• a thing that one knows or considers likely from instinctive feeling rather than conscious reasoning.
ORIGIN late Middle English (denoting spiritual insight or immediate spiritual communication): from late Latin intuitio(n-), from Latin intueri ‘consider’ (see intuit).

What

The skill of intuition is using the coach’s natural insight in service of the client. Intuition is a curious thing. Sometimes, as human beings, we know something is true before we have enough time to think about it. Sometimes we have an idea that does not make sense, or feels like a hunch, or just seems like it fits the situation.

Intuition is a skill in life coaching comprised of two distinct, but equally important skills:
1) The coach must trust that their mind, when listening empathetically, will have valuable insights to share with the client.
2) Second, the coach must let go completely of whether their insight is right-on or does not apply.

When a coach has the confidence to release expectation of being right or wrong, it opens the door for them to express their insights while empowering the client to then make the coach’s insights their own.

Why

A) Uses empathetic listening. Intuition works well in life coaching because a life coach listens empathetically to the client in Mode Two or Three [see page 55].
B) Insight. When a coach is engaging in that deep listening, insights and ideas will occur to assist them in the coaching process.
C) Value of insights, not advice. It is important for the coach to recognize the value of their insights, yet in order to avoid offering advice or pushing their ideas onto the client without
the client being a partner in the coaching, it is best if the
coach is not attached to their idea being correct. Allowing
the client to take the coach’s intuitive insight and either accept it
or make up their own, provides exceptional value and offers
the client a powerful tool to move forward.

How

1) Begin by actively listening to your client and allow your
mind to recognize thoughts that might not make logical sense
but may make sense on a different level.

2) Ask yourself if this insight may serve your client or add value
to the coaching session.

3) Share the idea with your client and release all expectation of
being correct or not.

4) Ask your client to make it their own insight or dismiss it.
   You can ask questions like:
   • I have this idea that my insight may be helpful in some
     way. What do you think about my insight?
   • If you were to apply my insight to you, how would you
     change it to fit perfectly?
   • What about my insight makes sense to you?
   • What do you like about it?
   • What do you not like about it?

5) Continue to coach. Use Curiosity [see page 61]. Ask
   Powerful Questions [see page 66]. And finally, allow your
   insights to add value to your coaching session.

Sample dialogue between a coach and client:

Coach: Now that we’ve addressed school let’s turn back to what
you originally wanted to focus on in the relationship with your
family. What would you like your relationship to be like?

Client: I have a pretty good relationship with my dad but have a
hard time with my mom. I like her, but we just don’t have that much
in common and it seems like we always get into weird arguments.

Coach: What stops you from avoiding arguments?

Client: She’s so… I don’t know… It’s her comments that just
sometimes get me so mad.

Coach: I have a sense, and I can’t shake it… In so many other areas
of your life, you have taken control. It seems like here you have
gone in the other direction and try to take no responsibility or
control.

Client: She doesn’t understand. She’s just so annoying.

Coach: How much control are you giving yourself?

Client: Ok, I know that she says annoying stuff, but I know I also
have a role to play too. And I do say some things that I wish I
hadn’t.

Coach: How would make the words in the insight “taking control”
or “responsibility” completely fit your perspective?

Client: What do you mean?
Coach: If you were to use your own words for your part in the relationship, what words would you use?

Client: I would say that I’m not doing much to make the situation better. Yeah, I think it’s that I’m not trying to make it better. I’m just allowing it to happen.

Coach: How do you want the situation to change, if at all?

Client: Yeah, I want to take more control.

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**Direct Communication**

**direct** | di’rekt; di- |
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**adjective**
- extending or moving from one place to another by the shortest way without changing direction or stopping.
- without intervening factors or intermediaries.
- (of a person or their behavior) going straight to the point; frank.
- (of evidence or proof) bearing immediately and unambiguously upon the facts at issue.

**ORIGIN** late Middle English : from Latin directus, past participle of dirigere, from di- ‘distinctly’ or de- ‘down’ + regere ‘put straight.’

**communication** | kəˌmiyoʊnəˈkɑː ʃən |
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**noun**
- the imparting or exchanging of information or news.
- the successful conveying or sharing of ideas and feelings.

**ORIGIN** late Middle English : from Old French comunicación, from Latin communicatio(n-), from the verb communicare ‘to share’ (see communicate).
Communication is about sharing ideas and information from one person to others. Direct communication is the skill of being able to communicate and move ideas from one person directly to another. Life coaches have the ability to use several tools to communicate directly with clients to provide tremendous value in a life coaching session. Direct communication has seven different components:

1) **Information.** The original idea, emotion, thought, or other information that a life coach wants to communicate.

2) **The sender.** It is obvious, but still useful to point out, that in order for communication to happen someone must send the communication.

3) **The sender’s intention.** When people are communicating information, there is both the original idea and the intention or how the sender wants the communication to be understood.

4) **The method.** The sender has a variety of choices about the method they use to send information and communicate directly. The next section outlines many of the methods that a life coach could use to communicate directly to the client and focuses on moving information from one person to another.

5) **The recipient.** Someone or a group of people who are receiving the information.

6) **The recipient’s understanding.** The meaning of the message is some mixture between the sender’s original thought and what the recipient understands. From the point of view of life coaching, basing the meaning of the communication on the client’s understanding is useful when thinking about what a message means.

7) **The relationship.** There is always some relationship between the sender and the recipient.

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**Why**

A) **Clarity.** Direct communication sends a clear message. Such clarity aids a client in cutting through the excuses, limiting beliefs, worn-out habits to focus on what is truly important.

B) **Fine-tuning.** Direct communication is incredibly powerful for a coach and client because a coach in Mode Two Listening [see page 55] is able to adjust communication for the client’s understanding. The coach can ask the client Powerful Questions [see page 66] to ensure that the communication has been understood in a way that aligns with the coach’s intentions for the original idea.

C) **Builds the relationship.** From a life coaching point of view, direct communication is not just communication for the sake of moving an idea from the coach to the client, but it also acts as a method for the coach to strengthen the coaching relationship.

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**How**

1) The first step in direct communication is being mindful of both the information you want to communicate as well as your intention for how you want your client to understand it.

2) Next, choose a tool. Sometimes direct communication is simply saying what you are thinking or it could involve the use of any number of these tools:
   - Intuition [see page 71]
   - Acknowledgement [see page 126]
   - Bottom-Line [see page 140]
   - Challenging [see sage 155]
3) Sometimes direct communication involves Risk Taking [see page 197]. Often it does not. The key is to speak clearly and confidently, and if appropriate, from mode two listening.

4) Closely watch the reaction of your client. The main benefit of a strong life coaching relationship is the opportunity for you to watch your client’s reaction closely.

5) Ask follow up questions to see how your client has understood what you were attempting to communicate, and help them make the idea or information their own.

Well-Designed Actions

well ¹ [wel]

adverb (better, best)

1 in a good or satisfactory way.
• in a way that is appropriate to the facts or circumstances.
• so as to have a fortunate outcome.
• profitably; advantageously.
2 in a thorough manner.
• to a great extent or degree.

design  [dэ'zin]

noun

1 a plan or drawing produced to show the look and function or workings of a building, garment, or other object before it is built or made.
2 purpose, planning, or intention that exists or is thought to exist behind an action, fact, or material object.

verb [trans.]

decide upon the look and functioning of (a building, garment, or other object), typically by making a detailed drawing of it.
• (often be designed) do or plan (something) with a specific purpose or intention in mind.

ORIGIN late Middle English (as a verb in the sense [to designate]) ꞏ from Latin designare ‘to designate,’ reinforced by French designer. The noun is via French from Italian.
What

Action is the ability of a client to follow through on ideas. Wisdom holds that the execution of an idea is more important than the idea itself. Life coaching can take that a step further by stating that an idea is not a good idea unless it is acted upon.

Notice the distinction between action and goals. Goals are important, and striving toward something greater is an essential part of being human. However, most goals create more stress than they resolve (just ask any high school student who creates a goal of getting good grades). Goals can create stress because they usually involve a final outcome that falls outside our control, they are enormous, and often are not measurable. It is stressful for a client to focus on a goal that emphasizes how much their fate doesn’t rest in their own hands.

Even more fundamentally, goals usually leave the client’s habits unchanged. Once a client achieves a goal, they usually don’t change habits, which is what will really get them to be effective and successful.

For the purposes of life coaching, goals and outcomes will be considered synonymous. Yet I prefer to use the term outcome because it comes with a fresh context and avoids several of the common problems with goals. There are three main problems with goals:

1) Most focus on the final result and do not address the change in behavior or action that must also take place.
2) Most have a portion of the goal outside the client’s control, which leaves the successful accomplishment of the goal up to chance.
3) When clients get into a goal making mode, the list seems to get so big that it becomes overwhelming and is soon ignored.

Using the term Optimum Outcome avoids these common traps. While setting goals does have some use, an optimum outcome with a system or well-designed action to achieve it, is more powerful and useful for the client. A well-designed action is a clearly defined step that will most likely lead to the optimum outcome. It is not a guarantee of reaching a goal or an optimum outcome, but it is the action determined to be the most likely to get the client there. A well-designed action has four criteria:

1) Stated in the positive. A well-designed action is something that the client wants to place their focus on, and focusing on something positive is a great mental habit.
2) Gives the client control. Getting started and following through with the well-designed action, as well as the success (or failure) of the optimum outcome, depends entirely on the client. The examples provided illustrate the difference between a goal, which involves a portion outside a client’s control, versus an well-designed action which emphasizes action that is totally within the control of the client.
3) Just the right size. Usually goals are huge. Get the promotion. Run a marathon. Get all A’s. Get into a certain university. Those are great goals, but they are also long-term goals and are too big for an optimum outcome. An optimum outcome takes a larger goal, like running a marathon, and breaks it down into many smaller little steps. Each of those steps become well-designed actions. Two weeks is usually a great size of action to time ratio.
4) Measurable and specific. When a well-designed action is measurable it is usually specific as well. Being clear on what constitutes success as well as how you know you are successful is an important piece of a well-designed action.
Examples

Goal: To get all A’s.
Well-Designed Action: To study for all my tests for one hour or more TWO days before the test date.

Goal: To not get a bad grade.
Well-Designed Action: To write in my planner each class, and if I don’t have any homework I’ll write “no homework.”

Goal: To not get yelled at by my parents.
Well-Designed Action: To ask my parents to do something fun this weekend.

Why

A) Focus. Because it is stated in the positive, a well-designed action provides a point of action that is useful for a client to keep in the front of their mind and focus on.

B) Meaning. Because a well-designed action plays a larger role in the overall Vision [see page 94] and Optimum Outcome for a client, well-designed actions have the added benefit of being placed within a context that makes the action more meaningful.

C) Control. Control is often an underrated element in achieving goals. Because so much in a client’s life is left up to chance, the biggest virtue of a well-designed action is that it empowers the client with full control of the success or failure of the Outcome. For example, it’s impossible for a client to control the grade that they may get on an essay. Yet so many students have a goal to get good grades. An optimum outcome, on the other hand, would focus the client on the actual process of writing their paper effectively and in a way that they know produces their best work. One of most valuable skills young people can learn is to turn their attention inward and focus on what they can control in their lives and to follow through on that action. The concept of a well-designed action helps students learn - and practice - that crucial skill.

D) Habits. Well-designed actions are based on changing the actual process the clients use and actions that they take. Over time, changing actions lead to the development of habits, which makes Managing Motivation [see page 116] easier and more effective.

E) Small victories. Because well-designed actions most often have short timelines, such as two weeks, they build a certain momentum. Building on the small victories of a well-designed action adds fuel for the next milestone.

How

1) Introduce the concept of the well-designed action to your client and explain the difference between a goal and an optimum outcome.

2) Use lots of examples. I use examples from my own life and from previous clients once I get their permission to share.

3) Brainstorm [see page 144] a list of goals and things that your clients want in their lives. For example, look at their Wheel of Life to get ideas. You can go around their Wheel to elicit goals to convert into well-designed actions.

4) Help your client look at what action they can completely control that will most likely lead to their goal being accomplished.
5) Take a step back and create the well-designed actions for each of the goals. A well-designed action will help your client determine what they can and cannot control, then to focus all their energy on what they can actually do something tangible about.

6) Make sure the actions are stated in the positive. This is usually the easiest change to make.

7) You will find that you’ll most likely have to break apart larger goals and optimum outcomes into smaller and smaller pieces. Do so. The smaller the time frame, even if it is just for one day, the higher the chances of success and the more likely the client is going to get a great result.

8) Use very specific well-designed actions, ones that the client can easily measure. The more specific and measurable, the better.

9) Go on to the prompts in the workbook, identifying several well-designed actions.

10) Jumping ahead in the program just a little bit, you have a chance to talk about creating a system and well-designed actions that will help your client achieve their outcome. Well-designed actions lead to thinking like a system. The prompts here support that kind of thinking, and addressing systems here even just a little, will make the fuller treatment of systems and organization much easier.

11) Success and knowing if they have achieved an Outcome is important and often overlooked. In the workbook there is a chance to identify what constitutes success. Celebration [see page 151] is a valuable skill, and often successes are overlooked. Here’s a chance to change that.
The Essential Life Coaching Tools

This chapter outlines tools that are often used in a life coaching session. This is the essential tool set for a life coach and will be used in nearly every session:

1) **Clarifying Values.** Helping clients identify and clarify values is an important step towards fulfillment.

2) **Vision.** Imagining what is possible and filling out the details is a vital skill that has a big impact on a client’s motivation as well.

3) **Perspectives.** The perspective a client takes has a big influence on the quality of action and follow through a client takes.

4) **Busting Limiting Beliefs.** Similar to perspectives, a negative assumption or stubborn limiting belief can derail well-intentioned action. Life coaching offers a way to bust lurking limiting beliefs.

5) **Managing Motivation.** Sparking and maintaining motivation is an essential step during the process of creating sustainable systems and habits.

6) **Accountability.** The art and skill of holding clients accountable for their action both builds the life coaching relationship [see Designed Alliance, page 11] as well as provides immense value to clients.
Clarifying Values

value |ˈvalyoʊ|
noun
1 the regard that something is held to deserve; the importance or preciousness of something.
• the usefulness of something considered in respect of a particular purpose.
• the relative rank, importance, or power.
2 (values) a person's principles or standards of behavior; one's judgment of what is important in life.

ORIGIN Middle English : from Old French, feminine past participle of *valoir* 'be worth,* from Latin *valere*.

What

Value comes from the Latin word *valere* meaning to be strong or fare well. Values are literally those things in our lives that fortify us and we determine to have worth.

Values are unique to an individual and represent what is most important in their life. A person can share values with other people, but their complete list of values is like a fingerprint. It makes their set of values unique from everyone else’s in the world. By contrast, morals are customs and beliefs about what is right and wrong that are held by society. Ethics are a conformity with a code of conduct usually narrowed by a particular field or profession. Each society has its own moral code, and each profession has its ethical guidelines. For life coaching purposes, values have four components:

1) **Worth.** A value is something that the client holds to be important and has worth to them. If something is worth it, they are willing to give or give up something for the sake of it. For example, if exercise is a top value for a client, they are willing to give up an extra hour of sleep in the morning. If spending time with their family is a value, they are willing to give their family attention while giving up spending time with friends. Values inherently come with a sense of worth.

2) **Defined and clear.** From a life coaching perspective, a value is specific and clearly defined. As a value, “family” is not specific enough. Identifying the area of “family” as a value is a good start, but does not have enough clarity to be useful to the client. For example, “spending time together as a family” is a more powerful value than just “family.” Having a value for “that moment when family is together and everyone smiles and laughs at the same time” is a more powerful than “spending time together.” The more specific and clear a
value, the more useful and powerful it will be in a client’s life.

3) **A name.** Having values with names fifteen words long is cumbersome and not as useful as having a list of values with unique names. Using the example above, the “moment when everyone laughs at the same time” could be termed, “Laughter Shared.” Creating a unique name gives a value more meaning and versatility for the client. For example, the client with the value “Laughter Shared” may also find ways to apply it at school with friends or work with colleagues.

4) **Inspires action.** Once a value is clear and has a name, the last criterion is that a value inspires and informs action in the client’s life.

Why

**A) Guide for making decisions and Well-Designed Actions**
[see page 80]. Values are an effective guide to creating well-designed actions. Indeed, values act like a compass and a map directing a client toward the path that will move them forward. They also form the foundation for creating a compelling Vision [see page 94].

**B) Basis of fulfillment.** Having defined and clear Values - and taking action to honor those values in their life - is the foundation for clients to live a fulfilled life. Living their life aligned with their values does not always mean that a client’s life will be easy, but it does mean that they will know their actions are in alignment with what they know is most important to them. Even when action is hard, if it is in alignment with a client’s top values, a sense of peace still pervades.

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C) **Sense of purpose.** Having a defined list of the client’s top values as well as ordering that list gives their life a structured sense of purpose. They have identified what is most important to them and why. Of course, values can and do change, but having a clear list gives such a sense of completeness and purpose that it both simplifies and enriches the client’s life. A list of clear values is a panacea for a contemporary world that constantly spits out commercials.

How

1) Introduce the idea of values and finding those values that are unique to your client as a way for them to achieve more fulfillment and meaning in their lives. At this point in the program, your clients should be comfortable with consciously looking at different areas of their life. The values work to add further structure and give your client another tool for making meaningful decisions wisely.

2) Explore different areas of your client’s life, finding what is most important to your client. I often ask questions like:

   - When you were at your best, what were you doing?
   - Think back to a peak experience. What did you do to make it happen?
   - What do you really not like? [The opposite can elicit a value.]
   - If someone really knew you, what would they know about you?
   - What is the most important thing to you? What specifically is important about it?
• If you had to take just one thing with you on a trip, what would you take? Why?
• Who is a person you admire? What do you admire about that person?

3) Help your client brainstorm fun names for their values. If your client can name a value - and the name is a little weird, your client has a much better chance of remembering that Value and actually using it in their life.

4) Go into a further description of each value. This is where your coaching skills become crucial. The more detailed and meaningful the value, the more powerful it will be.

5) Once you have a list, order the list in terms of what is most important to them. Ordering can be a challenge, but it is a great one that really tests the importance of each value.

6) If a concrete accountability comes out of the coaching, great. If not, that is OK. The other exercises in the session lend themselves more to creating great coaching homework.

Vision

vision |ˈvi ʒən|
noun
the faculty or state of being able to see.
• the ability to think about or plan the future with imagination or wisdom.
• a mental image of what the future will or could be like.
ORIGIN Middle English (denoting a supernatural apparition): via Old French from Latin visio(n-), from videre 'to see.'
What

Vision as a life coaching skill is the client’s ability to imagine an experience in the future. The basis of this skill is for the coach and the client to trust the imagination of the client. Vision is such a central topic in life coaching because coaches help clients see what is possible for them in the future and use their imagination to think of what it will actually be like to be in that position. It is one of the best tools that coaches have. Helping clients use vision in their lives has five components:

1) **Imagination.** Imagination is central to the vision process and a client’s ability to trust their imagination is the most important component of vision. Jumping into a vision for the future is an act of faith and requires trusting the imagination and allowing it to take shape.

2) **Awareness of what is most important.** There is no right or wrong answers when it comes to vision and what a client wants in the future. Sometimes it is a challenge for clients to answer questions that have no right or wrong answers. Part of what makes vision as a skill so useful is that instead of looking for what is right or wrong, coaches look for what seems to have the most impact and what aligns with the client’s Values [see page 89]. Vision requires being aware of what are the most important things to the client.

3) **The bigger picture.** Vision often requires looking at something from a larger point of view and looking at the significance of the current action.

4) **Little details.** Vision sometimes requires looking at the little minute details of the future and making those little details more visceral.

5) **Stamina.** Using imagination requires energy and takes stamina. Especially if the client is not used to using

Imagination, staying focused on what will be like in the future can be a challenge. A coach’s well-developed stamina and their ability to stick with clients for longer periods of time is a vital skill in the life coaching process.

Three exercises that use vision

1) Future-Self [see page 206]
2) Bird’s-Eye View [see page 136]
3) Inner-Critic [see page 211]

Why

A) **Pragmatic.** Creating a vision is the first step in making an Optimum Outcome [see page 80] or any other outcome at the client wants to be real. Rarely does a client take the time out of their busy life to sit back and think specifically about what it is that they want for the future. When they do so, the client leverages their time by determining which is the best action for them to take and doing what they can to avoid wasting time on things that are not important to them or that will not ultimately lead to the larger vision that they have for themselves. So, while taking time to think about a vision does not seem to move a client forward quickly, is actually one of the most useful and pragmatic ways to spend their time.

B) **Hope and delayed gratification.** Creating a vision and adding lots of details, especially to one that has a lot of meaning for the client, is a way of making the future vision more real in the face of present circumstances. That hope for future helps the client keep moving forward and helps them cope with delayed gratification. The client learns the value of
putting work into their vision and actions now in order to achieve the vision in the future. A vision can become a central element to help with Managing Motivation [see page 116] in a positive and sustainable way.

C) **New perspective.** When using vision, paying attention to a new point of view is powerful for the client. For example, a Bird’s-Eye View from high up looking down on present life circumstances gives the client the opportunity to imagine all of the little details as well as look at the bigger picture of a situation. When looking at the Future-Self [see page 206], the software example [see Inner-Critic, page 211] is the opportunity for the client to imagine their perspective fifteen years in the future looking back.

D) **Practice.** Imagination gets better with practice, especially when the client starts by creating a vision for just a few weeks in the future and then takes steps to make their vision happen. Practice helps them get better and better at imagining what the future will be like and taking effective steps to make it real. Their experience can be surreal when they achieve the realization that it is possible for the vision they imagined to become real, that they are literally living their dream. Excitement also builds as a result of understanding the practice of creating a vision. That the practice of creating a vision helps build the client’s stamina and a successful vision will help them create even more vivid and useful pictures for what they want in the future.

E) **Identify potential obstacles.** During the course of creating a vision, clients can identify potential obstacles and create ways to overcome these obstacles while going over their vision during the coaching session.

F) **Identify resources.** In the same way that vision helps a client become aware of obstacles, it can also help them understand what resources they need to emphasize, or develop, or seek out.

G) **Pinpoints a specific action and when it needs to happen.** Often, the client feels “vertigo” when they become more aware of the steps necessary for something to happen. For example, a client might make the decision to get up early on Tuesday and go exercise. But that decision is not made on Tuesday morning, more likely the decision was made Monday evening when they were sitting around. Creating a vision helps the client identify when they are making a decision and when they are following-through. Vision can help the client create a system to make decisions that are based on their Values [see page 89].

**How**

Future-pacing is jumping to some point in the future and imagining what that reality will be like, an important part of the vision process. That timeframe could be two weeks, three months, or ten years.

1) With your client, introduce the idea of creating a vision and a structure then become clear on the timeframe. Starting with three months is probably the easiest place to start and provides a great structure to remind your client of an Optimum Outcome [see page 80] they want.

2) Ask your client Powerful Questions [see page 66] to elicit both the bigger picture view and the meaning behind creating this structure. You can also use the Wheel of Life [see page 221] as a starting point or look at one day in your client’s life three months from now.

3) Now that you have identified some point in the future, pace the reality. Take your client through the steps at the speed it
would really be happening to them and have them imagine what that would be like.

4) Imagine and capture the little details. Once the timeframe, bigger picture, and reasons are clear, the next step is to flesh out the vision with little details. Sometimes those little details are the most valuable and make the exercise come to life for your client.

5) Design the structure for your client to be reminded of this vision. Determine how your client wants to capture this vision. Do they want to create a sound recording of what a day in their life will be like? Do they want to create a series of images they draw or collect? How often will they be reminded of this vision?

6) Repeat the process. Three months will pass by and they will have the opportunity to be in the timeframe of their vision. Once a client has the experience of living one vision, they can fine tune their next vision and create a new structure for the next couple months or weeks or whatever timeframe makes the most sense.

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**Perspectives**

**perspective** | *pərˈspektiv|
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**noun**
a particular attitude toward or way of regarding something; a point of view.

* • true understanding of the relative importance of things; a sense of proportion

**ORIGIN** late Middle English (in the sense ‘optics’): from medieval Latin perspectiva (ars) ‘science of optics,’ from perspect- ‘looked at closely,’ from the verb perspicere, from per- ‘through’ + specere ‘to look.’

**attitude** | *ˈati(t)yōd*
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**noun**
a settled way of thinking or feeling about someone or something, typically one that is reflected in a person's behavior.

* • a position of the body proper to or implying an action or mental state.

* • informal individuality and self-confidence as manifested by behavior or appearance.

**ORIGIN** late 17th cent. (denoting the placing or posture of a figure in art): from French, from Italian *attitudine* ‘fitness, posture,’ from late Latin *aptitudo*, from *aptus* ‘fit.’
A Perspective is a set of beliefs and attitudes through which something is perceived and which also influences perception and the action taken. It has both a mental structure as well as a typical emotion associated with it. From a life coaching point of view, being able to identify the usual way a client sees him or herself, as well as the situation, is essential for helping clients increase their self-awareness and take more effective action.

A perspective also serves as a filter through which a client sees reality and often causes them to ignore things that do not fit with their perception, exaggerate things that do fit within their perspective, and make generalizations based on their experience and apply that to others.

Clients have a myriad of perspectives that they slip into throughout the day, depending on the circumstances they encounter, but they also have a handful of default perspectives that they use to make sense of themselves and the world. It is important for a coach and a client to be able to identify the client’s default perspectives as well as create and shift to empowering perspectives that both engage with reality meaningfully and lead to effective action.

Why

A) Having a certain perspective is a large part of the human experience. Perspectives are incredibly useful clients because it affects their perception of reality. It is impossible for them to see reality objectively without the filter of perspectives.

B) Since perspective shapes how a client perceives reality, its influence is undeniable. If the client has the perspective that they are a bad student and adopt a negative attitude, it is much harder for them to get the grades that he or she wants. On the other hand, if that same client were able to shift their perspective to realize that they have the tools needed to be a good student and can adopt a eager or even positive attitude, the client is able to take much more effective action and get better results.

C) The coach–client relationship is an outstanding tool for helping clients become aware of their default perspectives as well as help clients create and use more useful perspectives.

How

1) Often a perspective is so close to your client’s experience that it is difficult for them to identify what their default perspective is. The first step is to not get caught up in your client’s description of how they perceive reality, but rather listen carefully for the overlying perspective your client is using.

2) The next step is to identify or articulate the default perspective that your client may be taking. You can do this either by directly saying what you think using Intuition [see page 71] or by asking your client Powerful Questions [see page 66].

3) As a coach, you must pull apart your client’s default perspective surrounding a situation or an object. It is important to note that the core object or idea within the perspective should be as neutral as possible and does not have a built-in negative perspective. For example, if your client has perspective about being a bad student, the object should not be “how I am a bad student.” Rather, it must be something neutral such as "being a student" or "being in school" or perhaps "studying."

4) Clarify your client's understanding of their default perspective and how it influences their action.
5) Ask your client if they want to explore different perspectives. (They will usually say "Yes!")

6) With your client, generate different perspectives and ask your client about the kind of mindset and attitudes each perspective evokes.

7) Ask your client which perspective is the one they want to use. Deepen their understanding of it.

8) Ask them, "What action is possible from this perspective?" Then shift to creating Optimum Outcomes and Well-Designed Actions [see page 80].

Sample dialogue between a coach and client

**Coach:** How are things going?

**Client:** Great. But with one exception. I didn't do well my first semester. Basically got 2.6. [The client here's talking about his GPA, his grade point average on a 4.0 scale]

**Coach:** You seem really disappointed. What are you most disappointed about?

**Client:** I'm frustrated because it seems like my classmates don't have to work that hard. They don't really put in that much more effort than I do and yet they get A's and B's and I have to struggle just to get a B. I mean, I know I'm not a good student, I know I am a bad student, but I really did try hard that first semester to get above a 3.0.

**Coach:** It seems like you're struggling against yourself and the perception that you're not a good student.
Client: I like being with my friends.

Coach: Great. What’s the “friend” perspective of being in school?

Client: That part is fine, I really enjoy it.

Coach: What the part of you likes and appreciates learning?

Client: What you mean?

Coach: I know that there is a part of you that likes to be in school and who likes learning.

Client: Yeah. I almost forget about that part. I get so concerned about grades. It's so hard for me to stay motivated when I think about getting a grade on an assignment.

Coach: What perspective would you take if school was purely about learning?

Client: I would love to go to school and just think all I had to do was learn the material. I don't think I would mind doing homework. I like knowing stuff especially stuff that I care about. The problem is, I see a lot of what we learn in school just isn't useful for getting good grades and helping me achieve my goal of going to a good college.

Coach: So the perspective is that you doing this for the sake of a future?

Client: Yeah, sometimes I think about the future but I often get scared and feel upset.

Coach: It seems like whatever you think about your past performance affects how you see your future and creates a lot of stress.

Client: Totally.

Coach: What would be a perspective be that keeps you focused on the present moment and what's in front of you without the stress of the past or future?

Client: I know all I need to do is just learn it. If I learn it, I'm fine.

Coach: The “Just learn it” perspective?

Client: That works.

Coach: What's that perspective like?

Client: It's like the only thing I need to really focus on is just what's right there in front of me. I can just let everything else fall away and just focus on that assignment. Wow, I really like thinking about it this way.

Coach: Seems like there's a lot of focus here in this perspective.

Client: Yeah. In an odd way, I feel really calm.

Coach: What action naturally comes out of the “Just learn it” perspective?
Client: Well, first I need to make sure that I take better notes in class. I didn't take good notes during classes last semester and studying for finals was so hard.

The coach and client continue their session creating optimum outcomes and well-designed actions around taking notes, studying, and finishing homework assignments from the “Just learn it” perspective.

Busting Negative Assumptions and Limiting Beliefs

assumption |ə'səm(p) ən|
noun
1 a thing that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof.
ORIGIN Middle English (sense 3): from Old French asomption or Latin assumptio(n-), from the verb assumere (see assume).

belief |bi'lēf|
noun
1 an acceptance that a statement is true or that something exists.
• something one accepts as true or real; a firmly held opinion or conviction.
2 (belief in) trust, faith, or confidence in someone or something.
ORIGIN Middle English: alteration of Old English gelīf; compare with believe.
What

An assumption is an idea believed to be true without being tested. A belief is an idea that has been accepted as true, usually with some evidence (or at least the semblance of evidence). Making Distinctions [see page 181] and being exact is useful in the context of life coaching sessions, but for the purposes of this section, assumptions and beliefs will be treated as the same since the same procedure applies for busting both.

Assumptions and beliefs can either be useful or limiting, and life coaching is particularly effective at ferreting out client’s negative assumptions and limiting beliefs in order to replace them with assumptions and beliefs that help them move forward. Replacing a Negative Assumption or Busting a Limiting Belief has three parts:

1) **Isolating the idea.** Identifying the essence of an idea is an important part of understanding the mechanics and system for replacing negative assumptions and busting limiting beliefs.

2) **Finding the disconnect.** Perhaps at one point the idea would have been useful to the client, but in the current circumstances, the idea limits and acts as a drag on the client’s forward movement. A limiting belief impedes and limits the client’s progress precisely because it no longer makes sense.

3) **Busting the limiting belief.** Busting a negative assumption or limiting belief involves addressing the limiting belief directly and determining new beliefs and actions to take the place of the outdated limiting belief.

Why

A) **Human beings like to be right.** Human beings want their assumptions to be proven true, even if they go against what they want. The reason: it is extremely stressful to be inaccurate in the beliefs about ourselves and the world. A client’s assumptions give rise to a perspective, which when combined with action, has a strong influence on the final outcome. That outcome is usually taken as evidence to support the client’s original assumption.

This chart below helps the client get unstuck and stop spending energy working against him or herself. It works because it gets to the root of the problem: the assumptions that they make about who they are as a person, an area of their life, or a task they are trying to accomplish.

Assumptions quickly lead to Perspectives [see page 100], which influence the action taken. Those three - assumptions, perspectives, and action - determine the outcome which becomes evidence to support the original assumption.

It is why people with bad attitudes tend to have bad things happen and get bad results. Fortunately, the reverse is true for people with cultivate a positive perspective and attitude.
B) **Increases awareness.** Life coaching excels at helping clients become aware of outdated assumptions and beliefs. More often than not, simply becoming aware of the belief helps clients toss it aside.

C) **Idea upgrade.** Busting a limiting belief is like getting a software update. It is the new, 2012 (or whatever year it is), version of the client. They have the opportunity to choose those beliefs that really work and toss those that do not.

D) **Counter-examples always exist.** There are always examples, even the smallest examples or experiences, that run counter to a client’s limiting belief. Helping clients see that holding onto the limiting belief actually alters their perception to the point that it deletes examples that do not, and is a powerful tool for helping clients realize the power of assumptions and beliefs.

E) **Nominalization.** Nominalization [see also Acknowledgement, page 126] is the process of turning an action into an identity. For example, a client may receive a bad grade on a test or not perform well in school for two weeks. The stack of negative grades continues to pile up, and under the circumstances, it may seem natural and perhaps useful for the client to adapt the belief, “I’m a poor student” to lower their expectations in order to prevent further disappointment. However, changing an identity, like “I’m a poor student” is more challenging than changing actions. Identities tend to be deeply engrained, while actions can be more easily designed.

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**How**

**Changing a negative assumption using the Assumption Chart**

1) Explain to your client what an assumption is and the relationship between assumption and evidence.
   - **An assumption:** to take up a thought, unproven, and act as if it were true or taken for granted.
   - **The process:** an assumption quickly leads to a perspective, which has an impact on action taken.
   - **The evidence:** action based on an assumption directly leads to the results, which become evidence and almost always reinforce the original assumption.

2) Using an area in your client’s life that may or may not be going so well, ask them about some of the original assumptions they have made - or perhaps an assumption they have of what it would be like to talk with a teacher, bring up a certain topic with their parents, or try something new. [Sometimes the assumptions get mixed together with a limiting belief. It is completely OK if that happens. For the sake of these exercises, assumptions and limiting beliefs may be considered synonymous. However, once your client understands the difference between assumptions and beliefs, it helps them avoid negative assumptions even before they get the chance to become entrenched as limiting beliefs.]

3) Isolate one assumption. Usually the assumption is something like, “Talking to teachers is difficult.”

4) Explore what perspectives arise out of that assumption, and write it down in the square in the bottom-left of the chart below.

5) Next, explore what kinds of actions are mostly to be taken from that perspective. Write it down in the bottom-right.
6) Determine what kind of results will most likely occur from the action, which quickly becomes the evidence that reinforces the assumption.

7) This exercise can bring up a lot of great insights and material to use as a basis for coaching. Coach away!

8) Repeat the process using the assumption chart with a positive assumption, starting with the assumption then going counter-clockwise through the assumption chart.

9) Have your client compare the two charts, and coach around:
   - How will they know which chart they are in?
   - What can they do to remind themselves to act from the positive assumption?

   Any other coaching questions that compare the two states of being are great to use!

10) Create coaching “homework” around being in the positive assumption chart for the next two weeks and seeing what happens.

**Busting a limiting belief**

1) Explore a few areas in your client’s life that are not going well and getting the results that they want. [This often has to do with grades, relationships with their parents or friends, getting into the university they want to attend, or sports.]

2) Pick one area to start with.

3) Help your client with Brainstorming [see page 144] a list of beliefs they have either about themselves or about the topic. Feel free to participate fully in the brainstorming, throwing out possible ideas that your client may or may not have just to help the process along. Intuition [see page 71] is powerful, and the brainstorming often leads to great insights.

4) Circle the helpful beliefs. Cross out the limiting beliefs with a single line so they can still be read.

5) Next to the crossed out limiting belief, write the opposite belief. It is important to have fun with this next step and to encourage your client to suspend judgment and go with the process.

6) Ask your client, “In what ways is the new empowering belief true?” The key here is to look for the counter-examples in their life when the empowering belief is true, even if it is just a small example, or even if it is true just for a little bit. This step is crucial to the success of the exercise, and this is where your coaching skills really come into play.

**The Key to Making the Busting Limiting Beliefs Exercise Work**

1) Find the counter-examples: those little examples that fly in the face of limiting beliefs. Even a small example can create a crack in the previous limiting belief and offer a small gap for another belief to take its place. Create and look for those small cracks.

2) Be mindful of nominalization: the process of turning an action, such as getting a poor grade on a test, into a noun, such as a poor student. The Busting Limiting Beliefs exercise is designed to reverse this process and help students realize the results they are getting are a result of the beliefs and system they are using, NOT their innate self-worth or talent.

3) After the exercise brings up insights and aha-moments for your client, go with it. Jump to other exercises, such as creating a system or a structure, to lock in the learning. Soon that belief becomes a perspective, and perspectives are extremely habitual.
7) After you have identified several areas in which the new empowered belief could possibly be true, take it to the next level by asking your client, “What action would you take if you fully believed new empowering belief?” Write out the actions in the space provided.

8) Create accountability with the beliefs and give your client some coaching homework to employ their new empowered belief.

Managing Motivation

motivation |ˌmōtəˈvā shən|
noun
the reason or reasons one has for acting or behaving in a particular way.
• the general desire or willingness of someone to do something.
ORIGIN late 19th cent.: from motive, reinforced by motivate.
What

Managing motivation is a skill that a life coach uses to spark motivation and help clients maintain an action. Helping clients maintain their motivation comes down to understanding the types of motivation and helping the client find their motivation style. There are three distinct parts for a coach to address to help the client manage motivation:

1) The action defined. Helps clients become aware of an action they want to take that may be a challenge for them to follow through on.

2) The hurdle or the obstacle that stands in their way. Often, it helps a Client’s Learning [see page 37] to understand what is stopping them or what is in the way of following through on an action.

3) The drive or the reason for following through on their action. A coach needs to help identify the particular motivation style the client uses. Each of these motivation types has its benefits and drawbacks. One style is not necessarily better than another. They each add to a client’s available tools to get and stay motivated.

Here are the three different distinctions to make in styles of motivation:

1) Intrinsic versus Conditional. Intrinsic motivation is motivation for the sake of itself. In this style, the client wants to do something because the reward and the action are the same thing. Often clients who are intrinsically motivated feel like they get into a flow which makes the experience of the action itself is very enjoyable. Conditional motivation is motivation for the sake of a reward or something happening when the action is complete.

2) Motivation Towards the Reward versus Motivation Away From Pain. Another type of motivation is being motivated toward something good happening or being motivated away from something bad happening. When clients are motivated toward something good happening, it is usually because they have a vision of what is possible and they are excited to work towards that vision. When clients are motivated away from something it is most often because they do not want something bad to happen. Motivation away from pain is usually accompanied by a quicker action, but it is less sustainable because it does not necessarily look at creating a long-term system for the action.

3) Motivation for the Sake of Self versus Motivation for the Sake of Other. The last important distinction in motivation styles is the client understanding the difference between being motivated for the sake of self as opposed to doing something for the sake of someone else. Being motivated for the sake of oneself is not necessarily bad or selfish. It is just that some people are more motivated when they think that they are doing an action for the sake of other people. Generally speaking, people use both.

There are also hybrid forms of motivation. A client could easily take any one of these styles and match them with the other two. For example, a client could be intrinsically motivated towards a benefit for the sake of himself. Or he could be intrinsically motivated towards a benefit for the sake of someone else. Understanding these motivation styles and the specific kinds of motivation helps the coach identify the specific drive and the reason that the client is following through on their action.
Why

A) Awareness of what style the client uses and when it helps them have more control. When the client is more aware of the specific obstacles that stand in their way, as well as the different types of motivation open to them, they have more control. Before encountering life coaching, clients often think that there is only one type of motivation, either being motivated or not being motivated. But really, when clients dig a little deeper, they realize that there are many different kinds of motivation available to them and certain kinds simply work better for them. Once a client is aware of and understands the different types of motivation available to them, they can discover what types of motivation might work better for them in different circumstances.

B) Forms habits. Motivation, just like any thought or action, is habit-forming. When clients get into the habit of performing actions and adopting effective styles of motivation they are able to move forward more quickly. When a coach really understands motivation, they help their client achieve what is in front of them as well as the bigger picture of becoming a more motivated person. Forming the habit is crucial for the client especially in the context of forming Well-Designed Actions [see page 80] which are designed to build on one another and require motivation.

C) Motivation integrates with other skills. All of the other skills in life coaching require the client to face obstacles and determine actions that will stretch them and challenge them. Being challenged while facing the question of motivation does not mean that a client is not on the right track. It means that a client is doing something that they are not currently comfortable or experienced doing on their own yet. When the client is pushing the limits of his or her comfort zone, it is a sign of progress and a great place for a client to be. Being motivated also integrates with exercises such as Accountability [see page 121].

How

1) Identify the steps that your client is going to take.
2) Use Powerful Questions [see page 66] to create awareness about what specific style of motivation your client is using to keep themselves moving forward.
3) Make Distinctions [see page 181] between the different kinds of motivation if applicable. By making distinctions, you are helping your client gain a level of awareness and understanding of their motivation.
4) Ask your client to develop other kinds of motivation as well. Design with your client a plan to use different styles of motivation at different times to see what works best for them. Then check-in during the next session to fine tune their approach.
Accountability

accountable | əˈkounəbəl |
adjective
1 (of a person, organization, or institution) required or expected to justify actions or decisions; responsible.
2 explicable; understandable.

What

Accountability is when a coach holds a client accountable for the action that they decided to take between coaching sessions. As a tool, it helps the coach manage a client’s action, and from the client’s perspective, it can be a powerful tool to keep them moving forward in their action. Accountability, at its best, also serves as a structure to measure the effectiveness of a client’s action as well as the systems the client has in place. Here are the components of accountability:

1) **Measurable result based on Well-Designed Actions** [see page 80]. An accountability has the element of a clear and measurable result.

2) **Time set to take the action.** An accountability often includes a plan of when the client is going to take the action.

3) **Time set when action is complete.** An accountability also has an end point or a due date for the action.

4) **Direct Communication** [see page 76]. An accountability has a time and method for letting the coach know that the action was taken. Usually this is an email, text, or voicemail; or it can be a check-in at the beginning of next session.

Why

A) **Gives structure to action.** Accountability is effective because it serves as a benchmark and a structure by which the client can gauge the success (or failure) of an action. It gives well-designed actions as baseline for measurement.

B) **Feedback on the system.** Systems are crucial to success. Accountability is as much about a client following through on specific actions as paying attention to the learning and the effectiveness of a system that is in place.
C) **Managing Motivation** [see page 116]. Sometimes having the coach know that the client is going to take an action is wonderfully motivating for the client.

D) **Strengthens the Life Coaching Relationship** [see page 17]. Accountabilities are also an opportunity for the coach and the client to redesign their relationship and alliance to best serve the client. If a client is having a hard time following through on accountabilities, it is an opportunity for the coach to address that in the context of the life coaching relationship.

**How**

1) Help your client come up with a clear action and establish the next action steps.

2) Determine how your client wants to be held accountable. Do they want to email, text, or just check-in at the beginning of next session?

3) As a coach, you also have an accountability to follow-up with your client!
More Tools for a Life Coach’s Toolbox

Acknowledgement

acknowledgment | akˈnälijmənt | (also acknowledgement)
noun
1 acceptance of the truth or existence of something.
2 the action of expressing or displaying gratitude or appreciation for something.
• the action of showing that one has noticed someone or something.
What

Acknowledgement is when a coach addresses the characteristics or qualities the client drew upon to make something happen or move forward or grow. It is speaking directly to who the client is. Acknowledgement differs from a compliment in that a compliment usually addresses what they did, action that they took, or something that they are wearing. A complement, although welcome, usually just skims the surface while an acknowledgement is more like a pause in the recognition of something deeper and more permanent. Acknowledgment also differs from Championing [see page 160] in that championing points to the action steps the client took to achieve a certain outcome. Acknowledgment looks at the specific characteristics of who the client is and the strengths of those characteristics.

Why

A) It points to a deeper truth. Acknowledgment works so well because it points to something deeper than just the action that the client took. With acknowledgement, the coach addresses who the client needed to be to take the action. Addressing the deeper truth adds power to the coach–client relationship as well as encourages the client to look more deeply and fully at who they are and what they are capable of accomplishing.

B) Nominalization. Nominalization is the act of taking something an action and changing it into a noun. When clients are thinking about changing who they are or their characteristics it is much harder to change those things rather than changing behaviors or making a different choice. Part of what makes acknowledgement so powerful is that coaches reverse the nominalization process. The coach looks at who clients think they are, for instance a poor student, and turn that process on its head. A coach can pick apart the actions of being a poor student that are not successful and ask the client to change those actions. By changing actions, clients achieve a different outcome and thus can turn limiting beliefs into empowering beliefs that they take through the action. With an acknowledgement coaches are essentially creating a nominalization. They are taking a positive characteristic and changing it into an adjective or noun that describes who the clients are. It is an extremely powerful tool that needs to be used carefully, and it is one of the reasons why acknowledgment is so effective.

C) The coach as mirror effect. Clients are sometimes so stuck in the details and the facts of what is in front of them that it is a challenge to see the larger picture, the deeper truth of who they are. Part of the value that the coach brings to a coaching session is the ability to be a mirror and to say directly and genuinely what they see the client.

How

Acknowledgment rests your coaching ability being grounded and listening for the qualities behind your client success. Your client may be describing a story or a particular success or accomplishment, and you can pick out the inner qualities that were required to achieve that success and speak to those qualities.

1) While your client is relating their success or specific story, listen for the deeper qualities and identify who your client had to be in order to be successful or achieve that accomplishment.

2) Tell your client the specific characteristics you see in them, especially those that were required for them to achieve what they just achieved.
3) Notice the impact that you have on your client. Follow the acknowledgment with a Powerful Question [see page 66].

**Sample dialogue between a coach and a client**

**Coach:** Anything else you want to focus on?

**Client:** You know that brings up something that happened today that was hard for me to do but I did it.

**Coach:** What happened?

**Client:** Well I told some girls who didn’t want to invite this other group of girls to a party— but I was invited to the party— that wasn’t fair that they weren’t inviting the others. They got kind of mad at me and made me feel bad for standing up for those other girls. But I didn’t care. I didn’t think it was good that they would invite some people but not others. And I guess I realized that I didn’t want to be friends with those girls if they were being exclusive. I just got tired of everything and I finally said something. Afterwards a couple of people came up to me and said that they were really happy that I said something. But that main group of girls said that I wasn’t invited either. I totally didn’t want to go anyway and told them I didn’t want to go anyway.

**Coach:** It must’ve been hard standing up to them. What in you gave you the strength?

**Client:** I felt like I had to defend my other friends. I really did it for them. And a part of it I did for me because I knew that I wanted the group of girls to be more inclusive.

**Coach:** You were courageous. I really admire the strength and integrity that you demonstrated.

**Client:** Thanks.

**Coach:** In what other areas of your life can you use that courage?

**Client:** Definitely talking to my teachers. I know I need to talk with them more, and I do but I don’t let them know how much I don’t understand about the subject.

In the coaching session continued on how the client could apply the characteristic of being courageous to talking to teachers and admitting how much she didn’t know about the subject.
Asking Permission

permission |pərˈmi ʃən|
noun
consent; authorization.
ORIGIN late Middle English : from Latin permissio(n-), from the verb permettere 'allow'.

What

Asking Permission is the skill used by a coach to appropriately request a client’s agreement to approach a certain topic. It is the art of empowering the client with the decision to tread on a possibly sensitive or challenging area.

Asking permission is not a coach prefacing what they are going to say with anything about trying not to offend the client. If a coach opens a statement with “I don’t mean to offend but…” it is likely that what follows will be offensive or verge on it. Asking permission has nothing to do with being offensive or not. It has to do with respecting the coaching relationship by granting the client power to determine the direction of the coaching, especially if it is a sensitive topic that the coach thinks needs to be addressed. Asking permission consists of three parts:

1) Recognition by the coach that an area or question may be sensitive or challenging for the client.

2) Asking the client’s permission to address the topic or ask a certain question about something.

3) The client’s response.

If the client says “yes” when the coach asks permission, then they can go ahead and address the issue. If the client says “no” then the coach must respect the client and move to a different topic.

Examples

“It appears that we’re dancing around the issue of exercise. Would you like to address the issue directly?”

[In this case, the answer was an enthusiastic “Yes!”]
“I know your parent’s divorce is hard - and you’re in the middle of it. Do I have your permission to ask you questions and explore how you can manage it?”  
[In this case, the client said “No” then decided to address the issue the next session]

“I want to make sure that this coaching is serving your needs. Can we address our designed alliance?”  
[In this case, the answer was, “This coaching is serving my needs. But I want to look at this topic before we do a designed alliance.”]

**Why**

A) **Respect.** Through showing conscious respect for the client, the coach is granting power to the client and the coach-client relationship.

B) **Framing.** Asking permission is a way of framing a subject or topic and adding an extra level of care. Putting that frame around an issue can be a really useful way for the client to understand that the coach is treating the issue with increased consideration.

C) **Decreases risk.** Asking permission also decreases the risk that the coach is going to approach a topic that the client does not want to address.  [See also Risk Taking, page 197]

**How**

1) Determine an area or topic that you believe would be beneficial for your client to address but also recognize that it may be difficult or that client may not want to directly address it.

### Sample dialogue between a coach and client

**Coach:** At the end of last semester you did so well earning above the 3.1. What were you doing that helped you get there?

**Client:** I was using a lot of these tools. I was using my planner. I was studying. I was doing my work. It seemed easy.

**Coach:** So what happened at the beginning of this semester? It seems like your grades have fallen back to where they were first semester last year. [The student went from earning a 1.9 GPA to a 3.1 GPA over the course of the previous year in a life coaching program]

**Client:** I’m not sure. It seems like things just aren’t falling into place for me. I’m still doing the same things, but only kind of.

**Coach:** You mentioned last session about your parents getting divorced over the summer, and it seems like it could have a pretty big influence on how things are going. I know your parent’s divorce is hard - and you’re in the middle of it. Do I have your permission to ask you questions and explore how you can manage it?

**Client:** No. I’d rather not look at it right now.
Coach: I understand. When you’re ready to talk about it, let me know. In the mean time, do I have your permission to ask you again in future sessions to approach the issue?

Client: Yes, I think I’d appreciate that. But right now I’d rather just focus on academics.

In the next session the client did bring up the issue of his parent’s divorce and wanted to address it. The result: a great session in which the client chose when to address a tough issue.

Bird’s-Eye View

bird’s-eye view
noun
a general view from above.
• a general view as if from above: the map gives a bird’s-eye view of the route.
• a broad or general consideration of something.

view
noun
1 the ability to see something or to be seen from a particular place.
• the visual appearance or an image of something when looked at in a particular way.
2 a particular way of considering or regarding something; an attitude or opinion.
verb
1 look at or inspect something.
2 regard in a particular light or with a particular attitude.

ORIGIN Middle English: from Anglo-Norman French vue, feminine past participle of voir ‘see,’ from Latin videre. The verb dates from the early 16th cent.
**What**

Sometimes in a coaching session, a client can get caught up in details of a story or a certain perspective can sink in. The Bird’s-Eye View is pulling the client’s perspective up into the sky and taking a look at the situation from this point of view. Essentially, it is a pre-determined, bigger picture perspective.

**Why**

A) **Clarity.** Sometimes when a client gets so tied up in irrelevant details, pulling back and getting a larger picture perspective shines a light on what is really important.

B) **Speed.** The bird’s eye view is a ready-made perspective. A coach or client does not have to go through the whole process of generating different perspectives to use. The bird’s eye view is ready to go out of the box.

C) **Change-up.** If a coach does not know where to go with their next question, a change-up is a great tool to have. The bird’s-eye view is an effective change-up and often provides insight into where to take the coaching session.

**How**

1) Recognize the value of bird’s-eye view and decide that now would be a great time to pull back and ask questions from a larger perspective. It is especially useful if you feel the client is constricted or overly tied up in details.

2) Direct your client to take a bird’s-eye view. “For a moment let’s take a bird’s-eye view. If you were to look down on this situation from far up in the sky, what would occur to you?”

3) Be in Mode Two Listening [see page 55]. Then take the coaching conversation wherever your client needs to go next.

**Sample dialogue between a coach and a client**

**Client:** Sometimes I get so frustrated with grades and I don’t really know what I could do different.

**Coach:** What’s the ideal?

**Client:** Getting all A’s and B’s.

**Coach:** What stops you?

**Client:** I get too tied up in everything. My mom can’t pick me up until 5 so I stay at school. I have soccer from 7 to 9 most nights, which doesn’t give me a lot of time to do my school work, which I start at 9. And then from after school to 5, I have conditioning and take a break to hang out with my friends. It’s like this every week. I know that I could do more school work, but I feel like I’m bouncing around from activity to activity trying to keep track of all these assignments and then when I start I’m exhausted.

**Coach:** Maybe we can look at this from a longer-range perspective. If you were way up high looking down on the situation and saw yourself go through this same process day after day, what occurs to you?

**Client:** That I’m continually tired. I never really get a break, and then on the weekends....

**Coach:** Yeah...
Client: I guess I crash. It’s like I spend all week going as fast as I can and then do nothing on the weekends until Sunday night.

Coach: What do you want to change?

Client: If I could do just a little more work on Sunday, start earlier rather than 8 or 9 when I start to feel stressed out, that would really help.

Bottom-Line

bottom line
noun informal
the final total of an account, balance sheet, or other financial document.
• the ultimate criterion.
• the underlying or ultimate outcome.
**What**

The Bottom-Line is when the coach asks a client to cut a story or an explanation short and identify the main point. It is a way to maintain focus in a coaching session as well as keep the pace of the conversation moving. It consists of two parts:

1) Recognizing that the client is tied up in a story or off on a tangent.

2) Asking the client to identify the main point.

**Why**

A) **Focus.** Stories and explanations can lead to tangents that take away the focus and the time of a coaching session. Asking for the bottom-line preserves focus.

B) **Saves time.** Time in a coaching session is precious, and as fun as a good story is, serving the client by asking them questions that they have not considered or pointing them in directions that will help them get to another level. It is simply a better use of time.

**How**

1) While listening in Mode Two or Three [see page 55], recognize that your client could benefit from cutting their story short and getting to the main point.

2) Interrupt [see Intruding, page 177] your client. If you feel the need to explain, tell the client that you are interrupting to keep the focus and maintain the pace of the session.

3) Ask them to identify their main point.

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Sample dialogue between a coach and client

**Coach:** So now that we got that covered, what do you want focus on next?

**Client:** I’d like to focus on how I can move my speaking project forward. I wanted to invite a few professional speakers to this event and I’m not sure the best way to do that.

**Coach:** What was the first thing that came to mind?

**Client:** Well, I was thinking I could send them an e-mail and explain what we are up to. I know that in the past when I’ve e-mailed professors it seems to have worked out fairly well. Although the one-time I e-mailed my American Civics professor it didn’t go so well. I never really got a response and then when I went into his office and asked him if he got my e-mail, he looked really annoyed with me and it was really awkward. I didn’t really feel like it was worth it and looking back on it I shouldn’t have been so concerned just about my grade, but rather the class. I mean I liked his class, but-

**Coach:** What point are you going after?

**Client:** I guess it’s that I think e-mail may be the best way to get in contact, but I’m worried that it won’t work.

**Coach:** Great. Let’s address e-mail and contacting these professionals.
The coach and client go on to address the client’s Limiting Belief [see page 108] around making contact with teachers, e-mail, and being effective.

**Brainstorming**

**brainstorm |ˈbrænˌstôrm|**

noun
1 a spontaneous group discussion to produce ideas and ways of solving problems.
• a sudden clever idea.
2 a moment in which one is suddenly unable to think clearly or act sensibly.
verb
produce an idea or way of solving a problem by holding a spontaneous group discussion.
Brainstorming is the process of generating multiple outcomes, creating a list of options and possible actions, and developing solutions without judging the idea’s usefulness. The primary use in a life coaching session is to get the client thinking about ideas and options that are outside of what they are currently thinking of. Brainstorming is a way of opening up and discovering more options and opportunities which the client can later explore through their actions. Brainstorming has five distinct components:

1) **Creativity.** The basis of brainstorming is creating and thinking of new ideas. Often in life coaching sessions, a coach and the client will take turns generating ideas. But the fundamental basis of any brainstorm activity is that of creation. It is trusting the imagination and letting the imagination generate ideas.

2) **Release judgment, safe to create.** The second step in brainstorming is the process of releasing judgment by not censoring any of the ideas. It is a crucial component of brainstorming, because generating ideas is equally important as not judging those ideas during the creative process, creating an atmosphere of safety.

3) **Momentum.** When generating ideas, a certain momentum is created when a coach and client go back and forth in the creation process. That rhythm sets a pace, allows the creativity to flow and helps the client and the coach refrain from judging the ideas.

4) **Excitement.** Brainstorming is fun and creates a level of excitement. This excitement helps move the process forward and aids in momentum.

5) **A list.** The end result of a successful brainstorming session is a list of opportunities, ideas and actions that your client can take. This does not mean that the list is inclusive of all of the ideas generated by the coach and client. However it does form a foundation for the client to move forward and design an action based on the list that they just created.

**Why**

A) **Safety created when judgment is placed aside.**

Withholding judgment is a key component of brainstorming. It is made so effective because it creates a safe atmosphere for the client to generate ideas. That safety is essential and helps strengthen the coach-client relationship.

B) **Breaks the creative process into two parts.** Brainstorming is also effective because when ideas are usually created, there are two steps: the creation of the idea and then the judgment of that idea. Those two actions usually occur at the same time and sometimes clients even judge the idea before they say it. The problem is that the client’s internal editor or Inner Critic [see page 211] may be harsh and judge the idea before it is created, which does not allow for the free flow of creation. It is crucial for the coach and client to be able to approach the creative process in two steps and set aside final judgment of an idea when looking for more options and trying to be more creative.

C) **Builds on others’ ideas.** Part of brainstorming is that it builds on the ideas of other people. An idea generated by either the coach or client may spark an idea for the other. Then those ideas continue to get bigger and bigger, especially when an atmosphere of safety is created and the process of judging an idea is separate from its creation.

D) **Stretches the creativity muscle.** Successful brainstorming stretches that creative muscle. It is an exercise that happens...
naturally when withholding the judgment about whether or not something is worthy or unworthy. Both stretching the muscle and withholding judgment are part of the same process. In brainstorming, it is a skill that gets better with practice.

**E) Taps into a positive perspective of possibility.** The simple act of brainstorming puts both the coach and the client in the Perspective [see page 100] that all of these ideas and actions are possible. It happens naturally as a result of working in an atmosphere of safety and delaying judgment during a brainstorming session. The power of a positive perspective is that it helps clients align the Assumptions [see page 108] that they are making. It also helps them identify more resources that they have available to them and it aligns their action with that assumption and perspective. When action is aligned with a positive perspective, it is likely the clients will get the outcome they desire.

**How**

1) Recognize when it is a good opportunity to brainstorm some solutions. As a coach, you have an understanding of the different perspectives that your client is in or can use. Understand that when you are starting a brainstorming session, you are automatically tapping into a positive perspective that opens up many possibilities.

2) Ask your client if they want to brainstorm some possible actions, perspectives, values, or structures.

3) Explain to your client that the process of delaying judgment acts as an aid to the creative process that you are separating the creative and editing process.

4) Briefly design with your client how you want to proceed with the brainstorming. Most often a coach and client will take turns coming up with ideas. Sometimes the client will get on a roll and throw out several ideas in a row. Sometimes a coach will start with two or three ideas before the client gets warmed up to. Design the process with the client.

5) Start creating ideas. Pay attention to the pace and the tendency to judge the idea as soon as it comes up. As a coach you can also short-circuit the judgment instinct by generating crazy ideas and continuing to move forward with new ideas not allowing time for the Inner Critic to get their hands on the creative process.

6) Let your client choose the actions/perspectives/structure/ideas that they want to embrace.

**Sample dialogue between a coach and client**

**Client:** I can completely see how this last week was so good. I know the next step for me is being able to talk to teachers with more ease and not get so caught up in my grade.

**Coach:** We've identified some great perspectives. Which one do you want to use in this next week?

**Client:** I really like the “Shiny Chrome” perspective. [The shiny chrome perspective for this client means a perspective in which he imagines that the homework assignments he has to do have a shiny chrome appearance with a little sparkle in the corner. It’s his perspective that helps them enjoy the actual process of doing the work that he has to do, as well as enjoy the moment when everything is finished and polished like shiny chrome.]
Coach: I think that’s a great perspective. Do you want to brainstorm some possible actions in some structures that you create to help remind you of the perspective?

Client: That would be great. How do I start?

Coach: How do you want to start? Usually I find it best if we just trade ideas back and forth.

Client: Sounds good.

Coach: You could get a piece of shiny chrome and put it on your desk.

Client: I love it. That’s perfect.

Coach: What’s your next idea?

Client: I could get my alarm clock to wake me up in the morning and have its title be “shiny chrome.”

Coach: You write out the words “shiny chrome” on your computer and print it out on shiny photo paper.

Client: I could write the words on the outside of my planner.

Coach: After you complete a homework assignment, you could pretend to polish it like it’s shiny chrome.

Client: That’s awesome.

Coach: Let’s keep it going...

Client: After I write an e-mail to my teacher I could pretend to polish the computer screen.

Coach: You could keep a little a cloth in your pocket and after you create something you could pretend to polish it.

Client: That’s awesome, that’s what I want to do.

Coach: We got some great structures to remind you of the your perspective. The actions that you can create from the shiny chrome perspective.
Celebration

celebration |ˌseləˈbrā ʃən|
noun
the action of marking one's pleasure at an important event or occasion by engaging in enjoyable, typically social, activity.
ORIGIN early 16th cent.: from Latin celebration-, from the verb celebrare (see celebrate).

What

Celebration is fun. It is also an important skill that helps clients reach their goals. Celebration is the art of marking an accomplishment that propels one to even greater successes. From the point of view of a life coaching tool, celebration consists of:

1) An acknowledgement of some skill or effort.
2) Something enjoyable for the client.
3) A reminder of the work required to reach the celebration.

Using celebration Champions [see page 160] the client because it reminds them what they accomplished and what is possible for the future.

Why

A) Motivation. Celebrations are powerful because they help the client motivate themselves by going after what it is they want, rather than being motivated only by avoiding what they don’t want. It gives the client something that they can look forward to when it seems that they are still far from their goal, yet they need to do the work now.

B) Recognizes small accomplishments. It is helpful to celebrate small things and small accomplishments with small celebrations. At its best, a well-designed celebration reminds a client of what is possible for them to achieve. Celebration becomes a structure for certain kind of positive perspective and empowering belief that the work they undertake is worth it.

How
1) Determine the action that your client wants to take and become clear on what constitutes success. The success of an action needs to be measurable.

2) Explain to the client the importance of celebration and how it helps to keep your client in a positive, “motivation towards what they want” mindset [see Managing Motivation, page 116].

3) Ask Powerful Questions [see page 66] about what would be an appropriate and meaningful celebration.

4) Build in a feeling of excitement as well as an acknowledgment of the work that will be required. Allow the celebration to act as a structure to champion your client.

Sample dialogue between a coach and client

**Coach:** I think you have a solid plan to earn the grades you want.

**Client:** Thanks. It looks really good.

**Coach:** And it seems like you’re excited about it. Ready to go.

**Client:** You know, I actually am. I was so frustrated about last year. This year seems different and this plan seems different.

**Coach:** When working a plan like this, it’s useful to have an end celebration in mind to keep you focused on what you’re trying to accomplish here and acknowledge all the effort that you’re going to put into this. If you were to design a little celebration when you earn the grades you want, what would be?

**Client:** Aside from holding the report card and seeing that I got above a 3.75, nothing that makes sense really comes to mind.

**Coach:** What you think the biggest challenge is going to be?

**Client:** Making sure that when I get home I spend that first 15 minutes, just looking over all my notes before I go off and get a snack. I know that if I can do that, everything else will be easy.

**Coach:** It’s perfect. Your snack can be a daily mini-celebration that means you’ve been following through on going over your notes for 15 minutes. What would you do to mark the end of the quarter?

**Client:** My dad always has this tradition - whenever he has a big deal go through, he takes everyone out to dinner. It’d be great to go out to lunch with him or something.

**Coach:** That’s perfect. When do you want to talk to your dad about it?

**Client:** I’ll try to talk to him tonight, but it may be late. If not tonight, I’ll definitely have a chance by tomorrow.
Challenging

challenge ˈchæləndʒ noun
1 a call to take part in a contest or competition.
2 a task or situation that tests someone's abilities.
verb invite (someone) to do something that one thinks will be difficult.

ORIGIN Middle English (in the senses [accusation] and [accuse]): from Old French challenge (noun), challenger (verb), from Latin calumnia 'calumny,' calumniari 'calumniate.'

What

Challenging is when the coach asks the client to consider taking some action that is far outside their perception of what they are capable of and what is possible. Challenging often comes on the heels of Brainstorming [see page 144] and is an effective way to get the client to consider taking bigger action than they originally thought. It is a method coaches use to have the client discover the boundaries of what they think is possible. The individual pieces of challenging include:

1) Recognizing that the client can take action grander than what is being considered.
2) The coach must identify a boundary that they think the client has created.
3) Coach creates a challenge well beyond that boundary line.
4) Follow-up with Powerful Questions [see page 66] and Accountability [see page 121].

Why

A) Discovers boundaries. Part of what makes challenging effective is its ability to uncover boundaries in what a client thinks is possible. Clients often respond to a challenge with disbelief, but their boundaries of what they think is possible have been expanded. Most clients reject a challenge at first. (If they do not, the challenge is not big enough.) In response, most clients respond with an action smaller than the challenge, but bolder than they would have originally considered.
B) **Expands the Brainstorming process.** A client may not accept the coach’s original challenge but come up with equally grand action.

C) **Underscores the coach’s belief in the client.** A challenge points to the coach’s belief in what they think the client is capable of.

D) **Adds excitement.** A challenge is exciting, and depending on the client’s Core Motivation Type [see *Core Motivation* by John Williams], a challenge can be a boon to their excitement level.

**How**

1) While listening to your client describe the action they are going to take, think about what would go four or five levels bigger than they are currently describing.

2) You can Ask Permission [see page 131] or simply jump to your challenge.

3) Pay close attention to your client’s reaction. Disbelief? Curiosity? Excitement? Stay in Mode Two Listening [see page 55]. Resist the temptation to go to mode one listening and check in with how you are doing as a coach.

4) Follow up by asking your client if they have a different action they want to take. If they do not want to meet the challenge, what steps are they excited to take?

5) Ask Powerful Questions [see page 66] to explore any Limiting Beliefs or Assumptions [see page 108] of previous boundaries they had.

6) Help your client create a Well-Designed Action [see page 80] and Accountability [see page 121].

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**Sample dialogue between a coach and client**

**Coach:** Seems like you’ve done a fantastic job following through this past week.

**Client:** Thanks! For the most part I’ve been reviewing those notes daily, and it’s really helping. It’s like I’m able to go deeper into what I’ve learned that day and it really helps when I’m looking over the notes later and studying.

**Coach:** What’s the next step for you?

**Client:** I want to keep up the habit and I’m not sure what else. I know that I’m studying well, but I still feel pressured by tests.

**Coach:** What makes you feel the pressure?

**Client:** I’m still waiting the night or two before tests to study, but I don’t really see any way around that. I’m pretty busy as it is...

**Coach:** What if you created your study notes - basically the guide that you’ll use for tests - right after class? Or the first opportunity that you had a break?

**Client:** No way. Sure that would be awesome, but I just don’t see myself having that kind of discipline.

**Coach:** What stops you?

**Client:** I’m not sure. I just know that when I’m finished with class, studying is the last thing on my mind. I really want to take a break.
Coach: What could you fit in your day?

Client: Here’s what I can do. I’ll keep to the 15 minutes review. That’s been working. And I’ll make the more detailed notes the same night as the class. You know, that’s actually a little exciting.

Coach: What’s exciting about it?

Client: I’ve been wanting to do something like this, and I’ve just felt so bad about myself that I can’t get myself to disciplined enough to ask professors about questions I have because it always seems like it’s too late and the test is the next day.

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**Champion**

champion | ˈchampɪən |
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noun
a person who fights or argues for a cause or on behalf of someone else.

verb
support the cause of; defend.

ORIGIN Middle English (denoting a fighting man): from Old French, from medieval Latin *campio(n-)* 'fighter,' from Latin *campus*.

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**Potential**

potential |ˈpəʊtən ch əl|
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adjective
1 having or showing the capacity to become or develop into something in the future.

noun
2 latent qualities or abilities that may be developed and lead to future success or usefulness.

• the possibility of something happening or of someone doing something in the future.

ORIGIN late Middle English: from late Latin *potentialis*, from *potentia* ‘power,’ from *potent-‘being able’. The noun dates from the early 19th cent.
What

To Champion a client involves the coach directing their attention to a client’s potential, especially when the client is stuck in self-doubt. Championing has three parts:

1) See the client’s potential.
2) Recognize that the client has lost sight of that potential and cannot necessarily see their brilliance.
3) Coach must directly state what they see, like a mirror reflecting the client’s strengths and abilities.

The word potential comes from the Latin root potent-, which means power. Potential points to latent power or abilities as well as what is possible for the future. To “reach one’s full potential” may be overused in academic setting, but the meaning is clear: clients have talents and possibility for the future that far outpaces their current idea of what they think is possible. As a coach, to champion is to help the client cover the gap between their current situation and the reality that exists just beyond the next push.

Why

A) The coach can act like a mirror. Sometimes a client has a hard time seeing themselves and the potential that is just around the corner. Having a mirror showing them what can happen is a priceless tool.

B) Can expose Limiting Beliefs [see page 106]. In the process of working through several action steps, a client often confronts some limiting beliefs. A coach must pay close attention to the response that the client gives them after being championed. Sometimes clients respond with a limiting belief, and it is a wonderful opportunity to expose that limiting belief to help the client move forward.

C) Can act as a reminder. At its best, championing acts as a reminder for the client that they can achieve what is it they are setting out to do. Instead of being faced with one big mountain that seems insurmountable, the coach helps them see that their situation is more similar to a series of small, but surmountable hills of challenging (but totally doable) tasks.

D) Feels great. It feels great. Having someone Champion us feels good. It reminds the client that the coach is someone who they know believes in them.

How

The best championing comes from a genuine vision of who your client is and what the client is capable of accomplishing. It is also a tool that adds power to your coaching range. Sometimes the Powerful Questions [see page 66], Risk Taking [see page 197], Challenging [see page 155], and other coaching tools really stretch and push your client. Championing gives your client the reassurance in your belief that they can achieve what they are setting out to achieve.

1) Determine where your client needs to go. Recognize that there is a gap in your client’s belief about themselves, who they really are, and what they can do.
2) Gain clarity on the actions steps that your client is willing - and really wants - to take.
3) Tell your client the strengths and the positive characteristics you see in them and what they are capable of accomplishing.
4) Pay close attention to your client’s reaction. Listen for any limiting beliefs or signs your words resonated with your client.

5) Ask a powerful question and continue on with the coaching.

Sample dialogue between a coach and client

Coach: What do you want to focus on today?

Client: The new classes I am starting tomorrow. I was looking at different office supplies this past weekend and was thinking I wanted a completely new and different way of managing my files this semester.

Coach: What kind of filing system are you after?

Client: I want to find a system that can keep my classes individually filed as well as keeping the most important stuff on top. I know the last semester I had a really good handle on what I needed to do all the time and I really want to improve that.

Coach: What specific things do you want to build on?

Client: I know I was so close to being completely organized last semester, but it seems like in the long run I lose focus somehow.

Coach: The last semester was one of your best. I don’t understand why you think you need to revamp your filing system.

Client: Thanks. I know. I did really well this past semester and it’s unusual for me and I’m not used to it yet.

Coach: It seems to me that instead of completely redoing your systems you can simply refine them. What actions do you take?

Client: I want to get back into some habits for each week. I know it worked really well when I set aside some time every Saturday to look over everything and get ready for the next week. It also works well for me that we have our sessions every Tuesday at 1:30. I also know that a couple of guys talked about working out at the same time every week. All these things would really help.

Coach: Yes, you have this. You’re going to get to the next level and is could be even easier than you realize. Let’s get clear on your action steps and what you want to produce by next week to keep you on track.
Check-in

check-in
noun [often as adj.]
the act of reporting one's presence and registering, typically at an airport or hotel: the check-in counter.
• the point at which such registration takes place.

check | ch ek |
verb [trans.]
1 examine (something) in order to determine its accuracy, quality, or condition, or to detect the presence of something.
• verify or establish to one's satisfaction.
• examine with a view to rectifying any fault or problem discovered.
noun
an examination to test or ascertain accuracy, quality, or satisfactory condition.

What

During a coaching session, at times a coach will see a need to raise the client’s awareness of what they are thinking or feeling. A Check-In is a form of Powerful Question [see page 66] that invites a client to increase their awareness of themselves or what they just learned. A check-in is especially useful after an exploration or discovery, such as exposing a Limiting Belief [see page 108] and working towards an empowering Perspective [see page 100]. It can also be used to pause the flow of the coaching session to revisit the Designed Alliance [see page 11]. Here are the elements of a check-in:

1) Coach’s awareness. Listening empathetically and using Intuition [see page 71] gives the coach a high degree of awareness about what a client may be thinking and feeling. A check-in requires a coach’s awareness that a client may need to take stock of their thoughts.

2) Pause. A check-in requires a pause in the flow of a session and aids a coach in addressing a client’s Being, Learning, or Action [see page 31].

3) Powerful question. A check-in takes the form of a powerful question.

4) New direction. After the check-in, a coach and client usually have more clarity in the direction that the coaching session needs to go.

Why

A) Increases awareness. Checking-in is a great tool to help a client increase their self-awareness, a key component of emotional intelligence.
B) **Reinforces learning.** The client has just experienced something. Checking-in with them prompts them to think about that experience, review it, and articulate it.

C) **Increases focus.** Checking-in helps clients clarify and crystallize what they are getting out of the coaching session. It can bring back the focus to the Client’s Agenda [see page 31] and what the client really wants to address.

D) **Provides feedback.** Checking-in provides feedback to the coach and derives value from the coaching for the benefit of the client.

**How**

1) Recognize the need for your client to check-in with what they are thinking or feeling.

2) Take a brief pause and consider what you want your client to address.

3) Ask a powerful question.

4) Incorporate their answer in the flow of the session. Sometimes checking-in opens the door for another area of exploration. Other times, it serves as a chance to underline learning and a great way to close a coaching session.
What

Sometimes a client shows up to session with something on their mind that gets in the way the coaching session. For example, a client gets a speeding ticket on the way to the session and is annoyed and frustrated with themselves, but they really was to focus on something more important instead. Clearing is the skill of allowing the client the opportunity and space to vent their emotion with the intention of getting it out of the way to focus on something else. Clearing consists of these five components:

1) Recognition that something is in the way. It is often obvious when the client has something in the way. A coach listening in Mode Two [see page 55] can easily tell if the client seems distracted or annoyed by something.

2) Intention to clear. It is important that the client has a chance to vent their feelings of frustration or emotions with the intention to get it out of the way and focus on something else. If they do not have the intention to move on to what is important, clearing turns into complaining and there is a danger of the client seeing him or herself as powerless in the situation.

3) Permission to let it all out. The coach and the client quickly design the clearing exercise, with the coach underlining that the client has permission to let out whatever emotion or frustration they have to get it in the open then out of the way.

4) Time limit. Setting a time limit on clearing helps provide a structure and understanding that there is a definite beginning point and end point. In other words, the client has to get down to the Bottom Line [see page 140] and get it out of the way.

5) Coach as witness. The coach’s role is to listen empathetically and with the understanding that the client just needs to get it out in order to focus on something else. Something may come up that coach may follow-up with Powerful Questions [see page 66], but the coach’s main role is to simply to listen and then trust the client will be prepared to move on to what is important.

Why

Sometimes a client just has to let it all out and having a trained coach witness their emotions and frustrations is a tremendous help. Clearing is effective for the following reasons:

A) Builds the alliance between the client and coach. Quickly designing the clearing exercise between a coach and client is an opportunity to remind both of the designed alliance and successfully do the exercise with focused intention. Quickly designing parameters of clearing offers both the coach and client the opportunity to revisit the designed alliance.

B) Get stuff out of the way. Clearing is effective for helping a client recognize what is in the way and get it out of the way. It is a great skill to have in the back pocket, especially because the understanding is that whatever is in the way does not necessarily need to be worked out or have an intense focus.

C) Time limit. The time limit gives an understanding that this is something that will eventually end. It empowers the client with the ability to be aware that after venting within the time limit, they are going to shift their focus to something else. It gives the client tremendous control over their self-awareness and be in control of their emotions and where they ultimately want to place their focus.
How

1) Recognize that there is something your client needs to clear. It is usually obvious, but sometimes there seems to be something nagging in the back of your client’s mind and trusting your Intuition [see page 71] to ask about it is a good first step.

2) Briefly explain the exercise of clearing and invite your client to clear.

3) Begin designing the exercise by setting a time limit. Make sure your client knows that your role is simply to witness and listen empathetically.

4) Let it rip. Listen to your client vent their emotions and frustration but keep an eye on the clock.

5) After the time is up, ask your client powerful questions or give them permission to focus on something completely different. At this point, it becomes obvious if your client has really cleared what they need to with the follow-up questions.

Inquiry

inquiry | in'kwɪə(r)ɪ| noun
an act of asking for information.
• an official investigation.
ORIGIN Middle English enquere [later inquire], from Old French enquère, from a variant of Latin inquirere, based on quaerere ‘seek.’ The spelling with in-., influenced by Latin, dates from the 15th cent.
What

An inquiry is a question designed for the client to ponder. In the context of a coaching session, a coach may leave the client with a Powerful Question [see page 66] for them to consider several times between the end of the current session and beginning of the next.

1) Inquiry is designed not to have one final definitive answer, but rather the act of asking the question leads to several different insights and several possible answers depending on the circumstances and the Perspective [see page 100].

2) Short and open-ended.

Inquiries are especially useful to quickly conclude a coaching session. For example another appointment is coming up, and the coach wants to give the current client some value as a tool to address the topic. The best inquiries tie together a theme that the client has been addressing.

Examples

At what point in this situation do I trust it and release control?
When studying what distracts me?
What keeps me focused?
What do I really want out of this experience?
Who do I have to be in order to be effective?

Why

A) Rely on client's strength. Inquiries are effective because they rely on the client’s natural strength to come up with the answers to a question. As a coach, inquiries are best if they are short, open-ended and designed to help a client approach a situation from many different points of view.

B) Addresses who the client is being. Inquiries are also useful because they address the client’s core beliefs [see also Limiting Beliefs, page 108] and Motivation [see page 116] that they have. Inquiries are often more about who the client is rather than what the client does. Coaching is so effective because the coach looks at both as well as the Client’s Learning [see page 37]. The best inquiries include all three.

How

1) First, recognize that your client may benefit from asking him or herself a question between now and next session.
2) Ask your client if they would like to look at a question between now and when you meet next.
3) Ask two or three powerful questions to use as the first draft of the inquiry. Ask your client which one they would want to use or if there is anything they would want to change about it.
4) Make sure you have got a clear inquiry.
5) Design how you want to follow-up with the inquiry next session.

Sample dialogue between a coach and client

Client: I know that I want to have a great relationship with my teacher, but it’s just so frustrating. And I think that talking to her from that point of view is hard. I don’t like talking to teachers, especially when my grade is so low. It’s embarrassing.
Coach: I know. You’ve got your work cut out for you, but you also have some great tools. I know that you’re going to see results. What’s the embarrassing part about talking to teachers?

Client: I don’t want to be seen as someone who just does something because they want a better grade. I don’t want to be a kiss-up.

Coach: This is a pretty heavy negative point of view. Based on our work just 20 min. ago and the perspective that you want to be in, you are clearly motivated not just for the grade but to actually to learn the material.

Client: Yeah, of course, but it seems so easy for me to fall back into that kiss-up perspective.

Coach: Oh, wow, we’re running short on time. Yet I think there’s a lot of juice here for you. Let’s get a good inquiry for you to consider this next week and we’ll pick it up from there.

Client: Ok.

Coach: How about a question like this, “Who do you want to be as a student?”

Client: [Chuckles] Seriously? That sounds so cheesy.

Coach: What would make it less cheesy and a better fit?

Client: How about, “What kind of student am I?”

Coach: I’m seriously impressed. That’s awesome.

Client: Thanks.
Intruding

intrude  | ˈɪntrōd|  
verb  
put oneself deliberately into a place or situation.  
ORIGIN mid 16th cent. (in the sense [usurp an office or right]; originally as entrude); from Latin intrudere, from in- 'into' + trudere 'to thrust.'

What

Intruding is when the coach interrupts a client’s story or tangent for the purpose of focusing the client on what is really important in order to deliver as much value as they can in a coaching session.

The three elements of intruding are:

1) Noticing client’s story or tangent or a negative pattern that the coach wants to interrupt.
2) Interrupting the client.
3) Redirecting the client and focusing on what is most important.

Why

A) **Focuses on what the client wants.** In a coaching session, a coach does not need to know a lot of the details of the story or information that the client already knows. The main value a coach can offer a client is asking the client questions or for information that the client may not have considered yet. When the coach keeps the focus on what the client really wants, they can help the client put time and attention into the things that really matter.

B) **Takes charge.** Being held captive by a story or a tangent does not empower the life coaching relationship. It does not serve the client. It does not serve the coach. By taking charge, the coach not only demonstrates that they able to take the client to the next level, they can also be confident in the view that they achieve that aim by directing the client’s focus. The coach is also training the client that when necessary, they will take charge and steer the relationship. It actually gives the client more permission to take risks and to be more
courageous because the client knows that the coach is competent and strong enough to manage the coach-client relationship.

C) **Saves time and maintains the pace.** The time in a coaching session is precious. By wisely using intruding, a coach helps the client use their time and mental energy effectively and make the most of the life coaching session.

D) **Short-circuits negative thought pattern.** Intruding can be especially effective when the client is in the act of supporting a Limiting Belief [see page 108] or cycling through something that is not useful to them. By showing the client in the moment that the thought cycle is not helpful to them and redirecting them in a beneficial direction, it helps the client increases self-awareness about what is most important to them and what they can achieve.

**How**

1) The first step in intruding is being in Mode Two Listening [see page 55] with your client. When you are in mode two with your client and your client is telling a story or going off into negative thought cycles, it becomes increasingly clear that you need to interrupt the thought. As a coach, it is important that you give yourself permission to do so because it really will serve your client and the coaching relationship.

2) **Jump in and interrupt.** If you are mode two and you know that your client is spinning their wheels it is necessary to step in. When you hear a gap in their story, you can seamlessly jump in and interrupt your client.

3) **Redirect the client back to what it is your client wants to focus on using Powerful Questions [see page 66].** Asking...
Making Distinctions

distinction  | dis'ti ng k sh ən |

noun
1 a difference or contrast between similar things or people.
• the separation of things or people into different groups according to their attributes or characteristics.

ORIGIN Middle English (in the sense [subdivision, category]): via Old French from Latin distinctio(n-), from the verb distinguere (see distinguish).

What

Making Distinctions is a coaching skill that helps clients pull apart two concepts that may be combined together. Or confused. Or confused and combined. The art of making a distinction is about the coach noticing the different details and making a distinction between two different concepts then pulling the concepts into parts that the client can use to make better choices about the concept.

Distinctions are made all the time and often once a distinction is made, it helps clients understand. There are two types of distinctions:

1) The first distinction is between what a client is doing and what a client thinks he or she is doing. Making this distinction can be very important for a coach because they offer their clients tremendous value when they offer their observations about how the client is impacting other people. This kind of distinction often takes the formula of “this is what you think you are doing” versus “what you are actually doing” [see the sample dialogue below about reviewing versus studying]. The distinction has more to do with the coach observing behavior and being a mirror for the client to see him or herself in a different way.

2) The second distinction is similar but it has more to do with what the client is thinking or who the client is being. The distinction can be made almost between any two concepts, such as what is the doing of acting like a good student versus the being of being a good student.

For example, a client may be really stressed out about earning a bad grade on a final. The client is also concerned about the stress of learning the material and making sure that they know the material next year so they can continue to do well. A coach could help make the distinction for the client between the stress of learning the
material and making sure that they knows material for next year versus the stress of what grade they are going to get on the final. By making the distinction, the client now understands that they can control how well they learn the material and study, but they cannot control their stress and concern about what grade they will receive on the final. They cannot control that stress directly, but by the coach helping the client focus all of their energy on learning the material as best they can, they can put aside the stress and worry about the grade.

By making the distinction, the coach allows the client to address what seemed to be one thing, stress around learning the material and stress around getting a good grade, is really two things: learning and retaining the material on the one hand and getting a good grade on the other. The key here is that learning the material will lead to the good grade and any energy spent worrying about the grade is energy misspent.

Also by making this distinction, the coach may be providing the client with an understanding of what they need to do, as well as shift the perspective of who they are as a student, which provides immense value.

Why

A) **Coach as a mirror.** Making distinctions works so well because it is sometimes difficult for client to see themselves. They can often think that they are performing in a certain way or doing what needs to be done, but in reality they are still well short of the mark. Such a transmission of understanding goes back to the original meaning of communication: to take an understanding that one person has and making it common between the two. A coach shares an insight that furthers the client’s understanding.

B) **Deal with pieces first.** The concept also works well because clients have many motives, ideas, and solutions wrapped up together. By making distinctions, the coach is helping the client pick apart the different areas of their experience and to dealing with them individually. Doing so is often more effective and ultimately more efficient.

C) **Deeper understanding.** Making distinctions is a powerful tool and can sometimes be the key that the client needs in order to move forward. Once a coach makes a distinction, it is best to turn the conversation over to the client through asking Powerful Questions [see page 66] and helping them understand the distinction.

How

1) The first step in making a distinction is recognizing the value of the skill and the opportunity to use it for your client.

2) Next, explain the difference between the two actions or concepts to your client.

3) Last - and this is crucial - ask your client a question to allow them the opportunity to incorporate the distinction in their Perspectives [see page 100], Values [see page 89] and actions.

**Sample dialogue between a coach and client**

**Coach:** So you want to focus on studying and getting prepared for this next test?

**Client:** Yes. A chemistry test is coming up and although it is early next week, I know I really want to get studying now but I have so much other work to do and I'm super stressed out.
Coach: If you had an ideal study plan, what would it be?

Client: I would look at the practice problems on the review sheet and I'd study the review by looking it over.

Coach: What's your usual way studying?

Client: Like I said, doing the practice problems and looking over the review sheet to make sure that I understand everything.

Coach: What's the difference between studying and reviewing?

[The coach is making a distinction here in the form of a question]

Client: Well, studying is going over the review sheet.

Coach: It seems to me there's a difference between looking over something as a review versus studying and actively making sure that you can identify the concepts as well as how they'll fit together. If you make a distinction between studying and reviewing what would that distinction be?

Client: You know, I often think of studying and reviewing as the same thing, but if I were to look at them differently I think what I've been doing is reviewing. I know that when I go through the chapter and make my own review sheet I do better. But that takes more time, and I'm already pressed for time.

Coach: How much time does it take?

Client: Yeah ok, now I'm realizing that it takes way more effort to go through my notes and make my own review sheet - but I'm thinking back to the third chapter when I did that and I got a 91% on the test. It felt soooooo good.

Coach: Worth it?

Client: For sure.

Coach: What's the next step?

Next, the coach and client created accountabilities on studying.
Metaphor

metaphor |ˈmetəˌfôr; -fər|
noun
a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable.
- a thing regarded as representative or symbolic of something else, esp. something abstract.

ORIGIN late 15th cent.: from French métaphore, via Latin from Greek metaphora, from metapherein 'to transfer.'

What

As a life coaching skill, the use of Metaphor creates an image in the client’s mind that captures a thought and makes it more memorable and useful for them. An outstanding metaphor can help the client wrap their mind around something that may have been difficult. It is also a useful tool when a coach tries to explain something difficult and helps the client take that first step towards gaining understanding. The three elements of using a metaphor are:

1) The object or action. An understanding of the original object or action that a client is describing.

2) Imagination. Employing imagination to use something as a symbol for that original object.

3) Invitation to the client to make it their own.

Why

A) Can capture a thought difficult to express. Metaphors can express a thought that is otherwise a challenge to express.

B) Easy to remember. Metaphors are often easy to remember and have the potential to stay with a client for years if it has a deep meaning to the client.

C) Uses the imagination. Metaphors also help the client use their imagination and helps them think about their situation differently. When a coach asks the client to make the metaphor fit them specifically, they are also opening up the possibility for the client to further enhance the metaphor and tap into their creativity.
How

1) Trust yourself as coach. Confidence in using metaphors gives them a strong foundation.

2) Create a metaphor using your creativity and Intuition [see page 71] and take a mini-leap of faith in sharing the metaphor with your client. Sharing a metaphor may involve small Risk Taking [see page 197] and those steps in risk taking also apply.

3) Invite your client to make it their own by asking if the metaphor fits, and if not, what they would change to make it fit.

4) Follow up with Powerful Questions [see page 66] to ensure that you are back in Mode Two Listening [see page 55] and paying attention to the pace of the coaching session.

Paraphrase

paraphrase |ˈˌparəˌfræz| verb
express the meaning using different words, esp. to achieve greater clarity.

noun
a rewording of something written or spoken by someone else.

ORIGIN mid 16th cent. (as a noun): via Latin from Greek paraphrasis, from paraphræzein, from para- (expressing modification) + phræzein ‘tell.’
What

Paraphrase is the a coach’s ability to state back to a client the meaning of what he or she just said from a slightly different point of view and using similar words. It is not directly repeating the client, but rather expressing something similar with different words to ensure that the coach understands what the client said from a slightly different perspective. Paraphrase is usually used in two circumstances:

1) For the coach to make sure that they understand what the client means.

2) So the client can understand what they just said from a slightly different point of view that provides more clarity and a deeper understanding.

Why

A) Perspective shift. One of the most effective uses of paraphrase is saying the words using a slightly different point of view. By using different words, a coach shifts the perspective so that the client can see things a little differently. That difference may lead to a shift in the client’s thinking and eventually some great insights. Paraphrase is one method to Reframe [see page 194] a situation.

B) Clarity. Paraphrase is also effective because it gives the client a chance to clarify what they are thinking exactly. The client's words are the most important and by paraphrasing, a coach offers the opportunity for the client to either take the coach’s words and run with them or change them to words that they can fully own.

How

1) Listen carefully to what your client is saying, picking up on individual words but also comprehending the larger meaning.

2) With a mixture of Intuition [see page 71] and Curiosity [see page 61], rephrase what your client said, adding a slight Reframe or subtle shift in the point of view.

3) Be open to your client taking your paraphrase and making it their own with their own words.

Sample dialogue between a coach and client

Client: I had a terrible day.

Coach: I’m sorry to hear that. What happened?

Client: I have so much to do. And I wrote so much down in my planner today, which was pretty big for me because I usually just shut down, but I followed through on what we talked about last week. But I got so discouraged this morning when I got a C on my physics test and I don't feel like doing any of the homework.

Coach: So you had a setback in the morning, but you still followed through on the action you created last week. But now you're not feeling that motivated. [Here is the paraphrase. Notice how the coach picks up on followed through yet added the word still.]

Client: Yeah that's it. And when I was writing things down in my planner I thought to myself, “There is no way I'm going to do this.” It almost became a joke.
Coach: I think you had a fantastic day. You had a setback but still followed through on the important action and you have the rest of this evening after the session to recover and get back on the horse. [See the reframing and notice that the coach again emphasizes still followed through.]

Reframe

re|frame |rēˈfrām|

verb [ trans. ]
1 place (a picture or photograph) in a new frame.
2 frame or express (words or a concept or plan) differently.
What

Reframing is the art of expressing an event or concept from a different perspective [see page 100]. The coach takes what a client may consider to be a setback or something inconsequential and provides a different, and sometimes radical, perspective shift.

Why

Reframing is an important skill in life coaching because it helps clients get to a different perspective quickly, which influences their attitude as well as the possible action. Because it provides a different point of view, it can almost immediately short-circuit a useless cycle of feeling bad about something that is unnecessary to feel bad about.

How

1) Begin by understanding the initial frame for your client’s point of view.
2) Apply a different point of view.
3) Describe the same situation from that different point of view.

Sample dialogue between a coach and client

Client: I had a really tough conversation with my brother today. He brought up something about mom and I got so annoyed. I usually wouldn't say anything to him about what I thought. But I know that I'm working on being more... confrontational... that's not the word... what was the word that we talked about last week?

Coach: Um... Oh yeah, it was “assertive.”

Client: Oh I remember, it was “assertive.”

Coach: Yes, that's it!

Client: I was trying to be assertive before I got really mad, but then... boom... I'm in a tough conversation I do not want to be in.

Coach: What was the outcome of the conversation?

Client: Actually my brother thought it was kind of cool that I said something, but that was after 20 minutes of him being mad and saying how immature I was.

Coach: Seems like a successful and assertive conversation to me - and yes, I can imagine that it was tough - but it seems that it's more accurate to call it a necessary and assertive talk.

Client: Afterwards I was in a weird way... I don't know how to say it...

Coach: Proud?

Risk Taking

risk | risk |
noun
a situation involving exposure to danger.
• the possibility that something unpleasant or unwelcome will happen.
• act or fail to act in such a way as to bring about the possibility of an unpleasant or unwelcome event.
• incur the chance of unfortunate consequences by engaging in an action.
ORIGIN mid 17th cent.: from French risque (noun), risquer (verb), from Italian risco ‘danger’ and rischiare ‘run into danger.’

take | tāk |
verb (past took [tōk]; past part. taken [ˈtʌkən]) [trans.]
1 accept or receive (someone or something).
• understand or accept as valid.
• acquire or assume.
• achieve or attain a victory or result.
• act on an opportunity.
2 make, undertake, or perform an action or task.
Risk Taking is when a coach says or asks a question that could bring up an unpleasant experience, emotion, or thought for the client, yet could also lead to something useful and positive. When a coach constantly plays it safe, they do not provide the most value to the client. Taking acceptable risks is an essential part of being a coach and building a strong coach-client relationship. A coach is not a consultant. A coach is not expected to know all the answers. In fact, a coach provides value to the client especially because a coach does not know all the answers. An effective coach uses Intuition [see page 71], Powerful Questions [see page 66], and the other core coaching competencies with skill.

Making the distinction between an appropriate and an inappropriate risk is crucial. An appropriate risk is one that has a clear and probable benefit. It is also a risk taken when the coach is listening empathetically in Mode Two or Three [see page 55] and is confident in helping the client work through what arises for them. An inappropriate risk is one that does not have a clear benefit, makes the client extremely uncomfortable, or is taken when not listening empathetically.

A coach may also use Asking Permission [see page 131] to mitigate the risk and put the risk you are about to take in a useful context. Appropriate risk taking for a coach involves four distinct parts:

1) **Confidence in the strength of the coaching relationship.**
   A successful coach takes some risks by asking difficult questions or stating something from their intuition. Their confidence in taking that step is essential for the client to feel emotionally safe to take steps to move them forward.

2) **Empathetic or mode two or three listening.** When asking a powerful question that may seem pointed or open up something big for the client, being in mode two or three Listening gives the coach the highest chances that their risk is going to pay off and lead to something positive and useful.

3) **The client leads too.** Once the coach has taken a risk with a question that points in a certain direction or a statement that comes from their intuition, they then need to let the client lead. When a coach releases attachment to being right, it lets the client take the question in whichever direction they wish or take the statement and make it fit them perfectly.

4) **Guts.** It takes a certain amount of guts for a coach to take a risk. Part of having a strong coaching presence is knowing when to take those risks and when not to.

**Why**

Taking risks is an essential part of being an outstanding coach. A series of coaching sessions that always stay within certain safe parameters does not fully serve a client’s growth. Risk taking works well because:

A) **It shakes up the client’s thinking and action.** Clients are coming to coaching because they want to take positive steps to change and grow. There is a gap that clients want to cross and taking a risk is a great way for the coach to shake up a client’s thinking and action.

B) **It helps the coach use intuition in service of the client.**
   Taking risks helps the coach use intuition in the service of the client and build the coaching relationship because the coach voices what they are thinking and release expectations of being right. Taking risks is a form of intellectual freedom. When a coach is in mode two, they can trust that their intuition has something to offer the client. Placing their intuition in the context of taking a risk helps the coach voice...
their thoughts and be able to handle how the client responds. Such freedom and responsibility is the root to why taking appropriate risks works so well.

C) It provides permission for the client to take appropriate risks too. When a coach shows the courage to address a challenging issue and has the confidence to handle what comes next, they also give the client permission to be courageous. The client will know that they too can take risks and the coach will be there to support them.

How

Taking a risk requires you as a coach to be both self-aware and highly attentive to the risk being taken. Especially if you think, “Ok, I’m about to take a risk here...” there is a good chance that the risk will be a great benefit to both your client and the coaching relationship.

1) Begin by being in mode two or three listening. Making sure that you are listening empathetically is key.

2) Have a thought, idea, or question that you think will move your client forward, but recognize that voicing it requires a bit of a risk.

3) Be clear in your mind about the benefit to your client.

4) You may also want to ask permission to address a certain subject or ask a question that involves a bit of a risk.

5) Ask the question or state what you are thinking.

6) Release the expectation of being right.

7) Be attuned into how your client responds and handle anything that comes up for your client.

8) End by Acknowledging [see page 126] your client’s courage in responding to your question or statement as well as acknowledge the strength of your coach-client relationship.

Sample dialogue between a coach and client

Coach: What do you want to talk about next? [The client just talked about addressing some action steps around reaching out to experts in a career field that the client was interested in.]

Client: I’d like to look at my friendships. If I were to look at my Wheel of Life, this would definitely be an area that would be the lowest.

Coach: What number would you give it?

Client: I’d give it a two.

Coach: What is it you want?

Client: I want to feel secure in the friendships that I have. I want friends who call me up and asked me to do things. I don’t like having to call my friends all the time to make something happen.

Coach: What do you value most about friendship?

Client: The camaraderie. I feel lonely right now. I like the friends I have. But I just don’t have the kind of deep friendships that I really want.

Coach: I’d like your permission to ask a question that reaches back to what we just talked about before. It also touches upon our coach–
client relationship. Do I have your permission or do you want to keep talking along this thread?

**Client:** Yes, I like to explore this topic from a different point of view.

**Coach:** I notice that in our relationship you come to the session seeming like you have everything already figured out. And in our coaching we seem to be making minor tweaks or keeping you accountable. If I were your friend, I’d wonder what benefit I have to offer you. It seems like I’d want to help, but I can’t. Since you seem so put together, you may come across as intimidating when I don’t think you mean to.

**Client:** Wow. I think I know what you mean. I have a hard time accepting help from others, and I really want to. But I don’t know how without seeming really needy or like I need to reciprocate in some way.

**Coach:** When you let others know that you need help, what gift are you giving them?

**Client:** I never thought of it that way. I guess I’m giving them the opportunity to help and be needed, just like I love to help and I appreciate being needed.

The coach took a risk by asking about friendship within the parameters of the coach–client relationship and used the intuitive thought that the client has everything put together and it affects the client creating and maintaining strong friendships. The coach was confident and easily handled the client’s response, which was positive, which provided a lot of value to the client.
4 Bonus Tools

The tools in this Chapter are more structured and sequential life coaching tools than the other tools that covered so far in this book. However, the following four tools often show up in life coaching sessions and are valuable especially when combined with a life coaching approach. These tools are:

1) **Future-Self.** The future self is a tool that invites the client to imagine who they are going to be in a certain number of years (usually 10). It is a powerful exercise and one that usually has a big impact on clients.

2) **Inner Critic.** The inner critic is another way of pointing to that negative inner voice in the client’s head. The exercise captures the negative self-talk and creates distance between the negative self-talk and the client’s self. This is a great exercise on its own and is often paired with the future-self.

3) **Powerful Relationships.** This exercise takes the Perspectives [see page 100] and Assumptions [see page 108] and applies it to relationships to help clients think about their relationships in a different way.

4) **Wheel of Life.** This is a standard life coaching tool that coaches often use at the beginning of the program to give the client a quick snapshot of the different areas of life and the level of fulfillment in those areas.

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**Future-Self**

future |ˈfyoʊ ər| noun
1 (usu. the future) the time or a period of time following the moment of speaking or writing; time regarded as still to come.
• events that will or are likely to happen in the time to come.
• a prospect of success or happiness.

ORIGIN late Middle English : via Old French from Latin futurus, future participle of esse 'be' (from the stem fut-, ultimately from a base meaning ‘grow, become’).
What

The Future-Self is essentially a Perspective [see page 100] from the client’s point of view, ten or fifteen years in the future. It is part of a series of exercises that rely heavily on using the client’s imagination to create an image of a version of him or herself in the future. The future-self exercise has five different components:

1) **Image of who they are going to be.** When most clients think of the future, they only think of what they are going to do. The future-self is an exercise that focuses on who they are in the future. It looks more at their characteristics than actions.

2) **Description.** The future-self has a description of their clothing, geographic location, description of their house, and lots of little details that are associated with creating an image and using their imagination effectively. The description can also include favorite things to do, top values, or the typical day.

3) **Nickname for your client to use.** Creating a nickname, a name that only the coach and client will use to refer to the client’s future-self, is often the key to helping distinguish the current perspective of the client from that of their future-self. Of course, the client is still going to be called their name when they are older, but the nickname is a name for them to use now to refer to the future-self. It essentially is a structure to refer to their future-self easily and effectively.

4) **Positive perspective.** A future-self includes a positive perspective that offers wisdom to your client.

5) **Relationship between present and future-self.** The future-self represents a relationship between the client’s current, default perspective and their perspective years in the future looking back. The gap between those perspectives is personified in the relationship between present-day client and future-self client.

Why

A) **Doing and being.** Most clients have dreamt of what they will be doing in the future, but the future-self exercise takes that to another level by looking at who they will be in the future. Looking at who the client will be, with all the characteristics and wisdom, offers them a better chance of filling out the details and making the future rich with details.

B) **Optimistic future.** Human beings naturally have an optimistic view of the far future. Clients know that there is potential for their experience to be remarkable, and the future-self is so effective because it personifies that natural instinct and makes it come to life.

C) **Outstanding perspective.** Asking the future-self questions is essentially looking at a client’s life from the point of view of fifteen years in the future looking back. It is similar to a Bird’s-Eye View [see page 136] but instead of looking at their life from far above, it looks at their life from a time far distant.

How

1) Explain the concept of the future-self to your client and provide examples of your own future-self and perhaps those of other clients (once you have your previous clients’ permission).

2) Take a moment to center yourself. Take a deep breath. Shake off the any remaining thoughts of a previous exercise.
3) Invite your client to center themselves. Take a deep breath. Perhaps even close their eyes for a few seconds.

4) Ask your client to imagine themselves fifteen years in the future.

5) Become curious. Help your client fill out the details. It does not have to be an intense visualization. Your client does not even need to close their eyes if they don’t want to. The idea is simply to become curious about who they are in the future.

Ask questions about:

- Fashion style
- Geographic location
- Description of home
- Occupation
- Typical day
- Favorite things to do
- Top values
- Message to you
- Other notes

6) Ask your client to create a nickname for them to use to refer to their future-self.

7) Sometimes it is even helpful to invite the client’s future-self to walk into the cafe and have a seat with you. Or, ask them to use their imagination to go visit their future-self. Use your coaching skill and Intuition [see page 71] to guide you.

8) When you get to the “Message to you” prompt in the workbook, you are looking to help your client gain some value and take action based on the image of their future-self. The question can bring up a lot of emotion for your clients. Often, future-selves are very kind and often say things like, “Keep working hard.” Sometimes they say, “Get your butt moving!” Whatever the message, it is a great time to use your coaching skills to bring your client to a deeper awareness of how he or she can take the message of their future-self and turn it into present action.

Complete the session with some coaching homework and checking in with the future-self throughout the next few weeks.
Inner-Critic

inner |ˈɪnər|
adjective [attrib.]
1 situated inside or further in; internal.
• close to the center.
2 mental or spiritual.
• (of thoughts or feelings) private and not expressed or discernible.
ORIGIN Old English *innerra*, *innra*, comparative of *ina*.

critic |ˈkrɪtɪk|
noun
1 a person who expresses an unfavorable opinion of something.
2 a person who judges the merits of literary, artistic, or musical works, esp. one who does so professionally.
ORIGIN late 16th cent.: from Latin *criticus*, from Greek *kritikos*, from *kritēs* 'a judge,' from *krinēin* 'judge, decide.'

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What

Everyone gets down on themselves and engages in negative self-talk. The Inner-Critic exercise is a tool that clients can use to personify negative habits, negative self-talk, and negative perspectives in order to take on a new set of more useful habits, self-talk, and perspectives to be more fulfilled and effective. The exercise is similar to debugging a software program. It takes old, outdated patterns of thought and habit, exposes them, and playfully puts them aside so that the new software can run smoothly.

It is most helpful to do the inner-critic exercise before the Future-Self [see page 206] exercise, but the two work well in the same session. The inner-critic clears the negative self-talk out of the path, and the future-self fills the gap with a stellar, positive mental structure. The inner-critic has three pieces:

1) **Negative-self talk described.** Being able to describe the situation as well as the content of the negative self-talk is the foundation for this exercise.

2) **Image of the inner-critic.** It takes imagination on the part of the client to personify the negative self-talk into some sort of character, usually a cartoon character or something that corresponds to the self-talk.

3) **Managing focus.** Once the inner-critic is personified, the client then has the next step of managing their focus and choosing whether to continue to focus on negative self-talk and the inner-critic versus setting aside the inner-critic and focusing on something else.
Why

A) Creates distance between the negative self-talk and the client’s inner dialogue. The main reason the inner-critic exercise works so well is that it uses Making Distinctions [see page 181] to discover that the negative self-talk is not them. It is a vestige of a message that is no longer needed or useful. Once that message is isolated, the exercise creates distance between the client and their self-talk. It is an opportunity to increase the probability that the client will be able to dismiss that negative self-talk and focus on something else.

B) Realization of how easy it is to dismiss the negative self-talk. Building on the first reason for the effectiveness of this exercise, once clients have created that gap they learn how easy it is to dismiss that negative self-talk. Often, clients discover that they have to recover and dismiss the inner-critic numerous times. The habit of recovery is an important part of the process and helps the client understand that they are not their inner-critic and that they do have power over it.

C) Silly. The exercise is completely silly and outside of what most clients have experienced. This silliness is one of the strengths of the exercise and why it works so well. Forming negative self-talk into a personified character brings an element of playfulness to the process. Such playfulness is useful in helping a client address issues that may be heavy or difficult.

How

1) Take a little time setting up the atmosphere of the coaching session. Scope out the room, especially if you are in a coffee shop, to make sure that you are in a good spot and that the coaching session can go relatively uninterrupted.

2) Take an extra minute to establish a great connection with your client.

3) Explain the concept of the inner-critic. It can be helpful to use the analogy of a software update and explain how it is the personification of negative patterns so that your client can get over it easily and quickly.

4) Give a few examples of your own inner-critics or the inner-critics of students you have worked with. [Make sure you get their permission to share first, and do not reveal their name or other identifying characteristics.]

5) Ask your client about an area where things are not going so well, or a time in their day when they usually have a hard time. Ask them specifically, “What kinds of things do you say to yourself?” or “What kinds of things do you picture?”

6) Explore the negative self-talk and perspectives. In your notes, write down the specific words that your client is using.

7) Repeat those specific words your client used, and ask “What do you think about a person who [fill in the negative pattern your client used]?” Keep following the thread down into the negative stuff until you feel you have reached the kernel of the negative pattern. You have found the bug, and now it is time to debug the system.

8) Ask your client, “If a little being were to tell you that message, what would it look like?” I often use the word little here on purpose to keep the inner-critic tame. Sometimes, however, it is not little. Use your Intuition [see page 71] and coaching skill to shift the internal message that may be very close to your client’s concept of self to a personified mental
structure that can be easily overcome. Take your time. This step is the crux of the inner-critic work!

9) Once you have got the beginnings of the inner-critic sketched out, turn to the workbook and prompt your client to fill out each of the questions.

10) Keep it playful!

11) After you have filled out the description, ask your client to put the inner-critic on the other side of the table or perhaps further away at the other side of the room. [You may need to encourage your client to use their imagination and have fun with the process.]

12) Facilitate a discussion between your client and the inner-critic laying out the new ground rules described below.

**New Ground Rules Guidelines**

Creating new ground rules is the software update. You are creating a new relationship between your client and their negative self-talk. It is a great process, and one that has guidelines.

A) Build into the new rules that your client has the power to dismiss the inner-critic at will.

B) The inner-critic may balk, argue, or throw a fit. It does not matter. Your client is not to engage but rather simply give the inner-critic milk and cookies and get on with his or her life!

C) The new ground rules can be silly and fun.

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**Powerful Relationships**

**powerful** |ˈpou(-ə)rfl|  
adjective  
having great power or strength.  
• (of a person, organization, or country) having control and influence over people and events.  
• having a strong effect on people’s feelings or thoughts.  
**ORIGIN** Middle English : from Anglo-Norman French _poeir_, from an alteration of Latin _possē ‘be able.’_

**relationship** |ˈrelə ʃən, ʃər ɪp|  
noun  
the way in which two or more concepts, objects, or people are connected, or the state of being connected.  
• the way in which two or more people or organizations regard and behave toward each other.  
**ORIGIN** mid 16th cent.: from Latin _relat- ‘brought back,’_ from the verb _referre_ (see _refer_).
What

Powerful Relationships is an exercise that uses life coaching principles to help clients understand the assumptions that they are making in their relationships and create Well-Designed Actions [see page 80] for them to improve their relationships. It is a chance for a coach to help the client directly address an area of their life in a proactive way using life coaching tools. The three elements to create a powerful relationship are:

1) **The client’s choice.** In life coaching, the client drives the agenda. If a client wants to focus on relationship this is an outstanding tool for the coach to use in order to address that relationship. Often, clients want to have a better relationship with someone, but at the same time they also want to protect themselves from being hurt further. The client has the choice to change their assumptions while at the same time still keep their bubble of protection.

2) **The assumptions that the client makes about other people.** The exercise shows how simple yet challenging it can be to change those assumptions. The exercise helps the client focus on their specific role in creating this powerful relationship.

3) **Empathy and the other person.** This exercise also accounts for the inherent nature of relationships and that the client is only one part of the equation. The exercise helps the client understand what it is like from the other person’s point of view and focuses on building their empathy and discovering resources to manage the relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You</th>
<th>Them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your Assumption (Leads to your Action)</td>
<td>Their Action (Leads to your Assumption)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Action (Leads to their Assumption)</td>
<td>Their Assumption (Leads to their Action)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why

A) **Allows the client a powerful choice whether they want to improve their relationship.** Helping the client focus on improving a relationship is a key to helping clients look at specific areas in their life.

B) **Focuses on the role.** Just like a well-designed action, powerful relationships only focus on what the client can specifically control. This exercise realizes that the client can only control their assumptions and their actions. Focusing on
those two things is the best way for the client to improve their relationship.

C) **Asks clients to take a leap and think empathetically.**

Essentially, the coach is asking the client to think from the point of view of the other person in the relationship. It is similar to Mode Two Listening [see page 55] and helps clients understand how they are being viewed by the person. That leap of empathy helps so much to improve the situation, it can often be the key for this exercise to be successful.

D) **Assumptions.** Just like with Assumptions [see page 108] clients naturally want their assumptions to be proven true because they like to think that they are able to predict the future and have some semblance of what the future can be. This exercise helps the client align their assumptions with the other person’s actions and what it is that they really want.

**How**

The charts in the *Academic Life Coaching Workbook* are surprisingly simple: just two charts and a prompt for your client to explore an assumption that is not working and to change it to one that would. But the exercise has a big impact. Explain the transition in the program from looking at who they are as a person to their leadership, who they are in relationships, and what their impact is on their community.

1) Invite your client to explore a relationship that is not working.
2) Have them write down some assumptions they have of the other person.
3) Once they have some assumptions written, ask “If you were to act from those assumptions, what action would you take?”
4) Have them write down their answers in the space below.

5) Repeat the same series, “What assumptions?” then “What actions?” for the other person, based on the actions that they take.
6) Observe the cycle and put your coaching skills to use. You have created a rich coaching environment with a lot of different places to explore to bring growth and value to your client. Run with it.
7) Look for patterns in this one assumption and relationship that occur in other areas of their life.
8) After you have had a chance to explore this area, invite your client to choose a positive assumption and apply the same process of looking at the interdependence of each person’s assumption and action. In a large part, each assumption relies on the other person also holding the same assumption and action. If your client breaks the cycle, and can successfully stay in a new cycle while the momentum of their relationship goes in a different direction, your client has mastered the art of building a powerful relationship.

From here, you have created such a great environment for coaching. Have fun with the process! The homework I usually give comes from this process and chart and involves looking at other assumptions they have made and how they can turn those assumptions around as well.
Wheel of Life

wheel | (h)wēl |
noun
1 a circular object that revolves on an axe and is fixed below a vehicle or other object to enable it to move easily over the ground.
• a circular object that revolves on an axe and forms part of a machine.
• (the wheel) used in reference to the cycle of a specified condition or set of events.
2 a machine or structure having a wheel as its essential part.
• (the wheel) a steering wheel (used in reference to driving or steering a vehicle or vessel).
• a vessel’s propeller or paddle-wheel.
• a device with a revolving disk or drum used in various games of chance.
• a system, or a part of a system, regarded as a relentlessly moving machine.

ORIGIN Old English hwēol (noun), of Germanic origin, from an Indo-European root shared by Sanskrit cakra ‘wheel, circle’ and Greek kuklos ‘circle.’

What

The Wheel of Life is a standard life coaching exercise that helps a client get a snapshot of different areas of their life. It also invites clients to explore how their satisfaction in one area of their life may be connected with another. Here are the elements of the Wheel of Life exercise:

1) Diagram of a wheel with wedges. The diagram below is a Wheel split into 8 different wedges. Around each wedge is a label that describes an area of a client’s life.

2) Different areas of life. The different areas are for students: school, grades, family, friends, health and exercise, fun, cleanliness of their room, and personal growth. The areas for adults are similar except school is career, grades are finances, room becomes personal space, and you can split a wedge to add significant other as well.

3) Rating current level of satisfaction. The coach asks the client to rate their current level of satisfaction with each area of life on a scale of one to ten.

4) Follow-up. Usually a coach will follow-up with Powerful Questions [see page 66] and Well-Designed Actions [see page 80].
Why

A) **Quick assessment.** The Wheel of Life offers a quick subjective assessment of the client’s level of satisfaction in different areas. The speed of the tool to uncover different areas is striking.

B) **Surprises.** Often a client is surprised that they have not considered a certain area of their life in some time, and how that neglect is having a negative influence on their life.

C) **Everything connected.** The exercise implies that different areas of our life are connected. If the client improves one area, another area will probably increase as well.

D) **Away from “all or nothing” thinking.** The scale of ten helps clients think in terms of elevating their current level of satisfaction by increments, not “all or nothing.” Such increments make it easier to create Well-Designed Actions [see page 80].

E) **Easy introduction.** The Wheel of Life is an easy introduction to the many other areas of life coaching and what is important to your client. It often leads to solidifying the Client’s Agenda [see page 23].

How

1) Draw a circle or use the one on the following page.

2) As if the circle were apple pie, draw four lines to cut the pie into eight pieces.

3) Determine the eight areas of your client’s life you want to use. (The wheel shown earlier has been designed for students)

4) Write each label around the outer edge of the wheel.

   - **School:** Your overall experience of being in class and being with your friends
   - **Grades:** How happy (or not) you are with your grades
   - **Family:** Usually your immediate family, and if you need to break this wedge into two (parents and siblings) that works
   - **Friends:** Pretty straightforward
   - **Health:** How healthy you feel, how much you exercise, and your diet
   - **Fun:** How much fun you are having
   - **Room:** How clean or messy your room is and how happy you are with it
   - **Growth:** How you feel you are growing personally and spiritually

5) Ask your client to rate their current level of satisfaction for each area on a scale of one to ten, with ten being the highest.

6) Ask your client Powerful Questions [see page 66] such as:

   - **Looking at your wheel, what jumps out at you?**
   - **If you were to choose just one wedge and do one action to increase that number from a 7 to an 8 (for instance), what would that action be?**
   - **Do you want to follow through with the action? If so, how will your coach know that you did so?**

7) In the prompts following the wheel, make sure to emphasize that your client is just trying to get their level of satisfaction one little notch higher. One of the great uses of the Wheel of Life is that it gets clients out of thinking digitally (either things are a perfect 10 and they are awesome, or they are a
dismal number and things are doomed to fail) to thinking in terms of analog (there is a continuum of success and it is possible to focus on things being ok and making them a little better).

8) Create one or two possible actions to take from this exercise and move on to the Well-Designed Actions [see page 80] to create your client’s coaching homework for the session.

9) Save and date the wheels. I do this exercise with myself about once a quarter (every three months) and I date them. It is a great exercise to look back and see that the action you take from doing this exercise really does make a difference in your life over the long-run. So often successes can get buried in the details of living that they forget how reality looked and felt even three months ago. Consider this an exercise to make sure your client’s life is balanced, a kick in the pants to get them moving, and a tool to remind them how far they have come.