

An Introduction to Coaching



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Introduction

Welcome to *An Introduction to Coaching*. In this book, we aim to offer an introduction to coaching for those of you who are learning the profession, those who are transferring from other professions, or those who want to enhance the skills and understanding you have to make your practice even better. The schema of this book follows the coaching course that we developed for initial use at the University of Hull, for the Diploma in Personal and Corporate Coaching. We have subsequently adapted, modified and used this schema to teach in-house courses and Certificate courses in various cultural environments. As coaching training and education develops, we learn more and more about what we need to know as credible professional coaches, and how best we can learn and teach. The book, then, is aimed at students of coaching through to postgraduate level, whether or not they are in a traditional academic setting.

The substance of the book is rooted in the psychological underpinnings of coaching. As such, the desired outcome is that it equips those joining the coaching community with deep-seated principles of coaching. When people learn languages, for example, knowing the *principle* of how a verb is conjugated, how endings are formed, how an adjective might match the gender of a noun, gives them the freedom to learn, correct and create effective communication. An understanding of a principle of how a form of communication works gives us the tools with which to become more and more effective.

So it is with coaching. There are lots of coaching tools and courses around that enable people to learn a great deal in terms of techniques and interventions. However, we believe that it is critical to understand the foundations and principles of coaching, necessarily grounded in the psychology of human behaviour and motivation, and then to be free to develop whatever techniques we like. This is only possible when we understand the intention behind techniques, and are then able to respond to the outcome of an applied technique flexibly, ethically, creatively and effectively. Our aim in teaching coaching, then, is to develop 'psychological linguists' who can decipher new words and apply appropriate principles to the language

of applied communication. In this way, students of coaching become not just practitioners, but ‘informed practitioners’ who understand both the theoretical and empirical foundations of coaching. Richard Bandler famously said that Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) is an ‘attitude and a methodology which leaves behind it a trail of techniques’. Equally, we might say that coaching is an ‘approach seated on motivational principles which leaves behind it a trail of intentional interventions’.

It is also our experience that learning coaching, applying the principles to ourselves and to our clients, is an enjoyable and revelatory experience, just as we believe that the activity of coaching, grounded in sound psychological principles is energising and satisfying.

We map out this book as a journey through the psychology of human behaviour and motivation, exploring well-established psychological theory and blending it with newer and zippy approaches, making for an eclectic and effective approach to coaching. We do this quite systematically, although you are free to dip in and out of this book at any point, as you think fit.

In Chapter 1, we explore the foundations of coaching, and suggest what constitutes the activity and what differentiates it from other developmental approaches. In Chapter 2, we look at models of coaching, and discuss why and how they are significant and useful. In Chapter 3, we explore the skills and processes of coaching, the basic nuts and bolts that make the wheels of the coach go round. In Chapter 4 we explore learning theory, which is fundamental to good coaching practice, and Chapter 5 provides a solid grounding in motivational theory and the practice of motivating people.

In Chapter 6, we look in some detail at the theory and practice of goal setting, while Chapter 7 introduces ways of helping people overcome obstacles and challenges on their journey of change. Chapter 8 explores the issues of professionalism that coaches need to be aware of, and Chapter 9 takes a light yet helpful look at marketing coaching ethically and in a principled manner. And in Chapter 10, we summarise the key points of the book for the reader.

Throughout, we will draw on academic sources and integrate these with practical exercises and examples. In this way, we intend to provide a lively and rounded textbook that equips the reader with a fundamental grounding in the art and science of coaching, whether they work in a corporate, independent or academic setting. We wish you an enjoyable and helpful read, and may your mind focus on all of those aspects of the book which will be most useful to you.

1

Coaching: The Foundations

Introduction

In this chapter, we will introduce discussions that inform a clearer understanding of coaching, and the theoretical and practical foundations on which it stands. To do this, we highlight the *qualities* of the activity that make it distinctive, namely that it relies on the learning of the client, is goal focused, is didactic and performance-oriented. We identify differing arenas in which coaches work, i.e. life coaching, corporate coaching, executive coaching, career coaching, sports coaching. We acknowledge the ontological roots of coaching and that it is to some extent a discursive practice, drawing on sets of practices and ideas from different backgrounds. We also differentiate coaching from activities which depend on cross-over principles and skills, namely counselling, mentoring, supervision, managing and consulting.

In the second part of the chapter, we look at the question of ‘who can be a coach’, in order to highlight some of the qualities and skills that are identified as necessary to the endeavour. Finally, we summarise when coaching may be appropriate, and when it may not, introducing the concept of assessment as an integral part of the ethical coaching process.

What is coaching?

What is a coach? Traditionally, the word ‘coach’ indicates a tangible object, a vehicle. Vehicles travel, they propel people in directions that they want to go; they are the vessels in which people make their chosen journeys. At one point in European history, young men and women of the gentry in England were taken on a coach journey, the ‘grand tour’, with an elder in charge, to chaperone, to educate and to inspire. The idea was that the coachee

returned more skilled, a little more knowledgeable, and with more wisdom in terms of how they applied their skills to the path they wished or were required to follow in life.

How did a coach become a description of a person? There seems a general consensus that this originated in its modern sense with the concept of the sports coach. It has been seen as good practice for a considerable while that professional athletes receive coaching, for tennis, football, and so on, and awareness of these practices has been propagated through various media. It was sports coaches who first began to equate the process of fine-tuning the mind to ensure maximum mental and physical performance from the person, with Tim Gallway's classic book *The Inner Game of Tennis* (1974) heralding the principles of the coaching movement to come.

Today, 'coaching' has developed into a professional role, and a coach is someone who is equipped to aid individuals, groups and organisations to maximise their performance in pursuit of their desired goals. So while modern coaches are not the first to assist people on their journey through life, what is specific about us is that we break our profession down into a skilled activity, with its concomitant principles, techniques, attitudes, models and professional codes. Essentially, though, coaches are *still* a means to enable individuals and groups to travel more successfully on their chosen paths. As Julie Starr (2008) comments, the commonality in all forms of coaching is that people use it in a future-focused way to enhance life and create change.

Our *description* of coaching is that it is a dynamic and self-generating process in which the coachee works to harness and develop their skills, approaches and capabilities in order to achieve their personal and/or professional goals and to reach and maintain their optimum performance. Our *understanding* of coaching is that it is a discursive practice founded on a number of underpinnings from the disciplines of psychology, education, learning, motivation, mentoring and management. So, it may involve the learning of new aptitudes to create a shift in activity, or it may involve the application of prior or existing knowledge to achieve maintenance of current optimum activity. In other words, coaching is not only developmental, it is also about maximising existing capability towards desired ends.

Professional definitions vary around these concepts. The Association for Coaching, for example, uses the following definition:

A collaborative solution-focused, results-orientated and systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of work performance, life experience, self-directed learning and personal growth of the coachee. (Grant, 2000)

This is clear and succinct, and lends itself to slight amendment for the different contexts of coaching. Does it, however, differentiate it clearly enough from other activities? Cox et al. (2009: 8) acknowledge the perceived difficulties of defining coaching specifically and suggest that:

... it is perhaps better for us to explain coaching as one of a close family of helping strategies and not to try to provide a succinct, all distinguishing definition. Instead we will outline some of the attempts made to try and set a boundary around coaching by explaining how it differs from its near relatives.

This is an honest and realistic approach, yet problematic. If we can only define coaching in terms of what it is not, then how can we ethically promote it to clients?

To some extent, this perceived difficulty with defining coaching has ominous echoes of the debate once so prevalent in the profession of counselling, where a major professional body, the former British Association for Counselling, failed spectacularly to differentiate between counselling and psychotherapy after years of debate. In that circumstance, some professionals were left to lament, 'what about the client?' Should they not have some clear inkling of what they will be getting into before signing their contract (Russell and Dexter, 2008)? In other words, it is surely key to know precisely what we offer to someone and to be able to explain it before they consent to buy it.

One of the words in Cox et al.'s explication may hold a key as to how we need cleanly to conceive what we are doing in coaching, language being a powerful discursive tool. The word 'helping' is curiously philanthropic. Recently, one of us was at a business network lunch where a member of the network was approached by an officer of the networking association to see how they could 'help'. The association member was affronted. 'I don't need your help', she replied: 'Help is not a word I associate with a business transition. I may need information, advice and professional skills, assistance even, but I really don't need your help.' She experienced the use of the word 'help' as having some kind of *superior* connotation, a *therapeutic* connotation, the helper as someone who assumed knowledge of answers to questions that she had yet to ask. While this may seem a small point, it might hold a clue to how we might look to define coaching as a business contract between two or more people that is distinct in its activity and ethos. Coaching may undoubtedly be a helpful activity; so is teaching, so is nursing. But the helpfulness is an *attribute* of the process, not its core defining feature. This understanding may inform us as to how we might boldly position coaching as an activity unto itself in terms of its purpose and achievement.

McLeod (2003) takes a refreshing approach to the question of definition. Acknowledging diverse definitions, he suggests that the three key *instruments* of coaching are the use of silence, the use of questions and the use of challenges. These three represent the cornerstones of McLeod's practice and are based on principled fundamental approaches to the work in hand. Based on this understanding, McLeod's definition of coaching is that it is:

The use of silence, questions and challenge to assist a coachee toward a defined work-based target. These are often present issues or ones that relate to the future. (2003: 9)

While we might hold different cornerstones in our own practice, we acknowledge that McLeod has produced a tight definition of his practice, which is succinct and informative. Within it, the client knows already common aspects of the focus (current and future), and the kind of interventions to which they will be subject.

One of the realities of coaching, which is by no means exclusive to the profession, is that within the activity of coaching exist many different approaches, and indeed paradigms. Ives (2008: 109) makes an informative summary of 'conflicting' paradigms, and concludes that, currently, there is an increasing tendency to emphasise the 'therapeutic' nature of coaching. Perhaps this is unsurprising as the increase in numbers of professional coaches draws heavily from those who have practised therapeutic activities in former careers.

For us, the conflict in paradigms could become a red herring to the question of defining coaching. To use previous examples, there are different paradigms in teaching, and in nursing approaches and protocol, but the professions remain distinct. We return, therefore, for the purposes of this book, to the need to have a discernible definition for the activity of coaching before presuming to offer it as a commercial activity. We don't suggest that every person has to use the same words, just as in the examples above, but, ethically and practically, we need to be clear about what we do. Perhaps the knack to this is to define coaching in terms of process and outcome so that a client might know what to expect.

EXERCISE

Take some time out to think. A potential client asks you what is coaching. How would you describe to them in one sentence the kernel of the activity that interests them?

However you answered the above, the key objective is to know what you are offering to clients and that your understanding is concomitant with the parameters of the coaching profession.

Coaching contexts

It remains the case that ‘coaching’ is an over-arching *term* for an activity that has a number of sub-categories: life coaching, business coaching, executive coaching, sports coaching and career coaching – and more are coming into use as the profession develops. One way of exploring the difference in contexts is to look at what kind of events or issues might provoke a person to sign up for coaching, to undertake to improve their understanding, knowledge and skills so that they can ‘do’ things better in life and work – increase performance and maximise dividends. It can be helpful to elucidate the reasons that people might choose to engage in coaching within the various sub-categories.

Life coaching

Life coaching is presented as an activity to aid individuals to fulfil their potential, to feel more directional, and to reach a higher ‘performance’ level in their everyday life. This may mean something as simple as developing a more effective routine in terms of time management, health and fitting in the activities that have value for you. It may mean getting over the procrastination list. Or it may mean making life-altering decisions at transitional points and finding the resources to fuel them.

There are a number of possible events or reasons that influence people to engage in life coaching:

- When an individual is motivated to make changes in their life but is not quite sure of what direction would help most.
- When someone knows what direction they want to take, but is not sure how to do it or where to learn skills or find appropriate resources.
- When unforeseen circumstances, such as redundancy, financial loss, force a re-evaluation of life.
- When transitional events of any kind, including redundancy, relocation, divorce, bereavement, have created a crossroads for the individual.
- When stress levels indicate that an individual is not achieving a healthy life–work balance.

In these circumstances, life coaching becomes a great asset to assist the individual to identify what they would like for their life to be more balanced,

purposeful and fulfilled. Part of the process of coaching is to aid the coachee to identify resources and gaps, and to learn how to make appropriate changes in thinking and behaviour which will sustain change in their preferred direction. For example, see Vignettes 1.1 and 1.2.

VIGNETTE 1.1

Maria is a 32 year-old woman who runs her own clothes shop. She is competent in and passionate about her business. She has known what she wanted to do for many years, and, business wise, she has now achieved it. However, since the death of her father four years ago, she has noticed herself become more apprehensive about taking risks in her business. She feels responsible for her mother, and is fearful of going away for too long and leaving her mother alone. She stays closer and closer to her home and her shop, and is now wary about driving. She is beginning to suffer with anxiety. She would like to explore these issues and free herself up to be able to develop her business more widely.

VIGNETTE 1.2

Tom is a 26 year-old male who left home at an early age, after major disputes with his father. He qualified in hotel management, and has always worked, although he has moved frequently from post to post. At one time he developed a drinking dependency problem, and received a great deal of counselling to help him to resolve his personal issues. Tom is now at a stage in his life where he feels he wants to begin to develop a more stable career and lifestyle but is not sure where he wants to go.

Both Maria and Tom could benefit at this point from life coaching. A life coaching programme is driven by the individual coachee's agenda and needs. The coaching is focused on what the individual wants to achieve, and how they can clarify their objectives. The coach is there as a thinking partner, to help their client to gain insights, identify what they want (their goals, visions, desired state), their current reality, their options, their obstacles and the actions they can take.

The coach facilitates the individual's learning, particularly around increasing knowledge, widening cognitive options and acquiring new skills and

behaviours, enabling the coachee to develop long-term improvements in *performance*. Performance simply means what they 'do', how they present themselves and behave in their life context. No one would expect to leave a life coaching experience without being able to do something differently from before, thus the activity must produce a change in action. The process of coaching should be self-generating and self-correcting. In other words, what the individual learns will ultimately show them how to coach themselves, when they understand principles as well as skills.

Life coaching has acquired an increasing number of sub-categories, such as health coaching (Palmer, 2004). In sub-categories, one aspect of 'life' or 'lifestyle' is focused upon. There are also, inevitably, more niche markets developing, like dating coaching, where a 'coach' will help to improve performance in meeting and dating people. There is also the facility for help with online dating, assisting people to understand their wants and needs better and to present themselves more effectively: in other words, to increase 'performance', as all good coaching purports to do (www.1online datingcoach.com).

Undoubtedly, the list will increase, with coaching of more or less honourable or dubious ethic and quality being found within it, just as there were trends in consulting and counselling during the last two decades. 'Financial adviser', for example, became 'financial consultant', moved towards 'financial counsellor', and will no doubt now be a 'financial coach'. That is not to say that coaching cannot help with financial decisions. Rather, there may be some confusion as to where the expertise lies as some people train specifically in coaching, while other practitioners with expert knowledge have vested interest in the outcome and will, largely speaking, appropriate the term for commercial purpose.

Business coaching

Business coaching is a somewhat catch-all term for coaching that takes place in the workplace, and is centred on the development of the business. Business coaching is likely to be sought when:

- One or more partners are developing their business, either at the beginning of the process or at a stage of evaluation, expansion or change of focus or branding.
- Business needs and outcomes are not being met, and managers want to increase the performance of the workforce.
- Managers are doing their work well but not always remembering to bring on other members of their team.
- Culture change is imminent or in process.

- Companies want to capture high performance, to help individuals remain at the optimum level of motivation.
- Managers want to combat the geek syndrome, where individuals with technical expertise may need to improve their human interactive skills.
- There is need for conflict resolution.

In these circumstances, coaching becomes a powerful aide to the business project, and can be as small or large an initiative as necessary, ranging from a two-day coaching intervention to enhance team motivation, to the implementation of coaching as a managerial tool to be employed in the long term right across the board.

Business coaching is also referred to as corporate coaching. It might be argued that they are the same thing, but whereas business coaching allows the little business person in, corporate coaching implies a company of some magnitude, possibly an international corporation. Coaching can assist in either context. For example, see Vignettes 1.3 and 1.4.

VIGNETTE 1.3

Lisa is the Managing Director of a kitchen crockery and utensil business specialising in villa rental and management companies. She has five staff, two of whom are multilingual, one of whom is her sister, and she has a good relationship with all of them. Lisa's background is hardcore business – sales, marketing and management, in multinational companies. Her employees bring a variety of excellent skills and experience, though none has worked at anything other than a local level. Lisa is planning to expand her business by becoming trade rather than retail, and projects a tenfold expansion over the next five years. She wants coaching assistance for herself, team working, and for the individual development of her staff.

VIGNETTE 1.4

Carmens is a large manufacturing plant based in the North East of England. Over the years, it has kept pace with changing trends and prides itself on its development of staff as well as products. During a recession period, managers reluctantly agree that they must lose 700 of their 4,000 strong workforce. The company already use coaching as a managerial tool and decide to call in independent coaches to aid the process of redundancy and recovery for all concerned.

In both of these cases coaching can be seen as a valuable tool for transition, and offers flexibility and support to all concerned.

The World Wide Association of Business Coaches (WWABC) recognises business coaching as a specialist industry. Typically, a business coach will assess, with their client first of all, what the core issues are, and whether or not coaching is the correct intervention. Generally speaking, business coaching has been shown to be of great benefit not only in tackling specific issues and culture change, but also as a part of training programmes. When coaching is introduced as a follow-up part of a training programme, then the training is seen to be more effective (Stober and Grant, 2006).

Executive coaching

Executive coaching is a well-used strategy within business or corporate coaching. It is used as an aide to assist senior executives to maximise their potential in the interest of the business in which they operate. Defining 'senior executive' can be problematic as in practice executive coaching is sometimes offered to individuals with potential from middle management through to chief executive level. The key point is that this is a one-to-one coaching contract which enables the individual to discuss issues, formulate personal, professional, team and company goals; to align them in order to develop skills and competences; and then to develop strategies appropriate to the level of their role in the company. Generally, the contract allows for a degree of self-development and awareness, and often incorporates the use of feedback to maximise efficiency. The leadership aspect of the senior executives' role is of paramount importance in the focus of the coaching, and this aspect implies a responsibility to manage and balance both the human resource and competitive nature of business. Therefore it entails a keen emphasis on learning as part of the executive role (Stokes and Jolly, 2009) and is almost always contracted with an external coach who can operate from an unbiased position.

Executive coaching is likely to be sought when:

- A major change is occurring and senior executives need support and development to drive the change through.
- Companies want to develop leadership in their executives.
- Teams are underperforming.
- New roles are being developed.
- New business ideas are being created.

For example, see Vignettes 1.5 and 1.6

VIGNETTE 1.5

Marc is a Chief Executive of a UK Health Trust. His Trust has made many major changes over the last ten years, has received a degree of adverse publicity regarding suicides in mental health care, and has also worked hard towards improving morale of staff and standard of care. Marc is signed up to receive Executive Coaching as his leadership skills and ability to see a wide picture and implement clear strategies to well thought-out goals is paramount.

VIGNETTE 1.6

Paula is a co-owner and business manager of a small healthcare business. She wants to expand her market and the size of her staff. She wants to define her personal, professional and business goals and develop recruitment and management strategies to maximise motivation within a reward culture. She would also like to be clearer on roles and responsibilities between her and her partner.

Both of these are suitable for executive coaching. Executive coaching needs to be particularly clearly contracted as there must be a degree of confidentiality for the coachee, even though it will be the company that is footing the bill for the service. It can also carry risks that the personal development angle of the coaching may lead the coachee to want to move in unexpected directions in order to achieve what they want to, and this may not always be in the interest of the company, especially if this means the coachee may be seeking alternative employment elsewhere!

Sports coaching

Sports coaching remains a central and common type of or context for coaching. Sports coaching has existed in some form for a number of years. In a way, it has a reflexive relationship to 'psychological' coaching. Sir John Whitmore (2002, 2007), often regarded as a founding father of coaching in a business sense, and champion of the very popular 'GROW' model, began his career as a racing driver. It was his extraordinary coaching work and discussions with colleagues Max Landsberg and Graham Alexander that led to the development of the GROW model (Jenkins, 2008). Whitmore has been instrumental in using the GROW model as a tool to

support coaching to excellence within the business arena. Nowadays, sports coaches not only teach skills but study human psychology, particularly on motivation and learning, in order to coach their clients to maximum effect. Interestingly, psychologists increasingly take into account the importance of physiology in maximising personal psychological states.

Sports coaching is sought when:

- Individuals or teams wish to reach specified levels of achievement.
- Individuals want to learn a new sport as a recreational pursuit.

Some sports coaches will have expertise in their field, so a ski instructor, for example, will probably be a competent skier and have some coaching elements in his/her approach. But this may not always be the case. So, we might also see coaches brought into 'big' arenas, such as working with national teams in a variety of sports, specifically to work with the motivational aspects of performance. Similarly, someone may receive a limited number of coaching sessions, perhaps to help them master the ability to learn dancing at the local dance school. Expert coaches are just that – they are expert at coaching. So some coaches who coach world-class professional sportspeople may well be unable to catch or pot a ball themselves, or do the salsa, but they are helping people to build confidence in their ability to do these things. This only serves to emphasise that coaches need to learn the principles of human behaviour and motivation and become 'expert' at this rather than expert in their coachee's particular field. This helps us distinguish the practice of coaching from mentoring, where more often it is essential for the mentor to be an expert in the field, a senior, and always more experienced practitioner than their mentee. This is discussed in more detail later in this section.

Career coaching

The career coach will have some particular expertise, experience and knowledge of the pathways and processes that are required for individuals to pursue particular career choices. They will endeavour to discover the interests, talents, skills and aptitudes of their coachee, but will not advise, lead, persuade or judge what is best for them. Typically, the career coach will use a host of inventories and questionnaires to 'profile' the coachee and to seek to define both problems and strengths. They will then share their expertise and knowledge with their coachee, so that the coachee can see more clearly their opportunities, and develop more informed and powerful strategies to strengthen and pursue their chosen career goals. In

some ways, the career coach is more likely to focus on solution provision through eliciting and then giving information than other kinds of coaches. The profession is still emerging, and it would seem that there remains some legacy of careers advice and guidance within this profession.

People might use a career coach when:

- They are dissatisfied at work.
- They are threatened with or faced with redundancy.
- They want to change career.
- They are seeking promotion.

For example, see Vignettes 1.7 and 1.8.

VIGNETTE 1.7

Antonia is a middle-level manager in a large organisation. The company has undergone several changes over the last five years and her workload has increased dramatically. There is a high degree of staff turnover at the levels above her. She has not received any promotion in three years. She is feeling tired and stressed, and wonders whether she wants to remain with the company.

VIGNETTE 1.8

Dermot, an energy consultant, has been made redundant. He is 54 years old and is feeling very uncertain about how he will cope with this development, or what he wants to do. He is worried that his age will go against him in finding more work. He is wondering whether it is viable for him to set up a self-employed consultancy.

Career coaching would be appropriate for both of these situations.

Differentiation of coaching

So, coaching is an enabling process which can be used in a variety of contexts. The activity hinges on what we might call coaching psychology, and the definition we concur with:

Coaching [psychology] can be understood as being the systematic application of behavioural science to the enhancement of life experience, work performance and well-being for individuals, groups and organisations who do not have clinically significant mental health issues or abnormal levels of distress. (Grant, 2006)

At first glance, it may seem that this definition may be applicable to a number of professional activities. Perhaps it is useful, then, to review the similarities and differences between the activity of coaching and the activities of the disciplines which overlap or resemble it, namely, mentoring, counselling, consulting, managing, supervising and training.

Coaching and counselling

While both counselling and coaching are seen as developmental activities, counselling is seen as therapeutic, which implies that there is movement from a not so good state to a better state, which may to some extent be considered as a 'normal' range of responses and behaviours. In coaching, there is a specific thrust towards higher levels of performance, which tends to bring with it a shift from a 'normal' to optimal state of being. As we saw in the list above, an individual does not have to be suffering in some way to benefit from coaching, although they may be at a transition point, while people seeking counselling will likely begin from a position of some unhappiness, dissatisfaction or suffering. The principle behind coaching is 'positive psychology'. This is the use of psychology advocated by such experts as Martin Seligman (2004). Seligman has researched how psychological understanding can be used to move people from a perfectly adequate state of being to a state which optimises levels of engagement and satisfaction. This is not therapeutic in a traditional sense; rather, it is empowering and developmental in terms of capability and approach. What is more, it signifies a shift in our knowledge of psychology, which for many years was focused on therapeutics and treatment, and this shift is an important part of the emerging discourse of coaching.

Initially, the received wisdom regarding coaching suggested that coaching is not suitable for individuals with mental health problems, and that they may be better served by counselling or some other therapeutic activity (Bluckert, 2008). However, in our own practice we might argue that coaching for people living with mental health issues can be a very helpful process, as long as the coach is acting ethically and purposefully. Equally, from our own practice, and from available research, there is some evidence that counselling is *not* appropriate for people prone, say, to psychosis, as this may generate an

overload of emotion and cognition (Russell and Dexter, 2008). The point here is that whether or not a person has mental health issues may not be the right question to ask. A more useful question might be 'is coaching an activity that can be used to assist the individual?' The key understanding here is that coaches must understand that they are *not* working therapeutically, and need to know their limits and the purpose of the contract.

This last point is important for all clients of coaching, and all coaches. Martin (2001) suggests that when therapy and coaching are confused in the eyes of the practitioner, then the chances are that clients are likely to receive a poor dose of each – in other words, a confusing and unhelpful mish mash that does not have useful long-term effects. On the other hand, there are some radical propositions that one person can be both coach and counsellor to the same individual, providing that careful contracts are made, and that in this instance the practitioner is seen as a 'personal consultant' (Popovic, 2007).

Coaching and mentoring

Mentoring, as referred to earlier, is typically an educational process which is entered into with a more experienced colleague from the same industry/profession (Clutterbuck, 2005). Often the mentor is of a superior status and may well be the individual's manager (Landsberg, 1997). We would contend that rather than looking to help someone achieve their potential for its own sake, which may be the case with coaching, mentoring generally has an agenda of ensuring that the client reaches a certain, prescribed standard within an identified range of activities.

Mentoring may involve an element of coaching and, in attitude and skills, the mentor will be encouraging, constructively criticising, explaining, listening and guiding. Additionally, the mentor will generally be seen as wiser and more experienced than the mentee. Elements of advice, guidance and training often enter into the mentoring contract, whereas these would not have a place in the coaching contract. The developmental aspect of coaching may be subsumed in order to 'get the job done', to equip the learner with insights and show them 'how things are done', in the best interests of good practice within the relevant profession.

The benefits of a formal mentoring process are accepted by many organisations as an effective and efficient way to help staff to learn the responsibilities and skills of their job, and concurrently to achieve their potential. Mentoring is a useful tool in fast-tracking, particularly with new recruits and those who seem to be potential high-flyers. In such instances,

mentoring helps the mentee to learn about the culture of the organisation as well as the skills of the job, and to align these with the goals of the organisation. In nurse training, for example, both raw recruits and returning previously qualified staff are afforded a mentor. The mentor is then responsible for ensuring that their mentee has appropriate experience opportunities, and that they learn and observe the best practice. They are then also responsible for 'signing off' the student as competent and fit to work as an autonomous professional. In reality, this means the mentor is both educator and assessor, and is clearly a central lynchpin in the delivery of practice-based training and the maintenance and development of professional standards.

In some ways, we might say that apprenticeships are early examples of mentoring, where an individual would be overtly identified as a learner, and their mentor as wiser, more experienced, and a teacher. Mentoring demands a higher level of dependence than coaching.

Finally, mentoring can, because of the notion of having the more experienced person support a less experienced person, spread to the area of social mentoring, where individuals are offered a mentor who undertakes actively and sometimes advisorally to support them through all kinds of situations in life. This activity is quite unlike coaching, and may at times lean towards the activity of befriending (Russell et al., 1992; University of Brighton Research Group, 1993).

Coaching and supervision

Supervision is one of those terms that can have many shades and nuances. A supervisor on the shopfloor is more or less a boss, an overseer, the gaffer. The supervisor in this context might be advisory, with an eye to the job being done to the required standard and within the required time.

In the behavioural sciences and professions, supervision has taken on a different meaning over the last thirty years, and is seen as an enabling process of helping the supervisee develop their abilities and skills within the work context. So, social workers and nurses might have 'clinical' supervision, and counsellors and psychotherapists require 'clinical' supervision in order to conform to codes of ethics and practice. Supervision is work-centred first and foremost. It may be seen as a process which helps the supervisee to develop supervision, either in the sense of an enhanced perspective or in an overseeing sense. The supervisee is encouraged to look at their work in its fullest context, to gain an overview of how one activity relates to another, and to the values and goals of self, profession and organisation.

In supervision, the supervisee is encouraged to review the psychological processes between themselves and their clients. For this reason, it is widely used in clinical settings such as in counselling, psychotherapy and nursing. Managerial supervision is quite different and has more of an element of accountability and standard setting.

Like coaching, supervision has a facilitative aspect to it. Supervisees are encouraged to explore their strengths and weaknesses, they are encouraged to set goals, for themselves and their clients, and to align those goals to organisational goals. They will be pointed in the direction of further training where appropriate, to extend their skills and aptitudes. And they will be encouraged to develop action plans in pursuit of set goals.

However, a major difference, between such supervision and coaching is that supervision is *always* client-centred. It is about best practice for the client group that is being serviced by the professional, the supervisee. In this respect its *raison d'être* is quite different from that of coaching. The personal development of the supervisee is likely, and to some extent expected, but it is not required as an integral function of supervision, but rather as a secondary outcome to ensure best service to the client group.

Coaching and managing

Managing can refer to the management of processes or the management of people. Management's main function is to ensure that all processes and resources, both human and material, are utilised to maximise efficiency, whether through nurturing staff or through Machiavellian approaches. The carrot or stick approach has loomed large, with most management proponents suggesting that carrot, i.e. the art and science of reward, is more motivating than punishment. Books on management have abounded since the wonderful work by Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1982/1936), and management consultancy has become huge business.

Managing people has become broken down more and more into component parts and is recognised as a skilled process, within which motivating workforces and individuals is of great importance. Management of people is always galvanised in the interest of getting business goals met. Management is also different from coaching, because a good manager also has an element of leadership, where they control the agenda. Managing implies a degree of *responsibility* for the behaviour of the employee, which is somewhat different from coaching. There is also a line of accountability, wherein the manager will be assessing performance against desired goals. This accountability and assessment function distinguishes very clearly between the function of

manager and coach, even though the manager might be using an element of coaching in their management style and activity.

Coaching and training

Training is another human resource activity which necessitates learning on the part of the trainee. Training methods tend to be didactic (i.e. telling information), experiential (i.e. trying it out for yourself), and interactive (with the trainer encouraging participants to discover their own knowledge). Training usually has set objectives to a certain standard, and may or may not carry an element of self-development with it. Training someone how to wire a plug, for example, is purely mechanical, while training someone to train someone *else* in wiring a plug may draw more on an ability to develop confidence and interpersonal skills. Training will almost always be followed by some form of assessment and often a pass/fail outcome.

It is true, of course, that good trainers will employ many of the skills of the good coach, and to some extent this is reciprocal, but the aims and ethos are of a different nature. The central differences are that it is the trainer who defines the learning outcome, the standard to be achieved and the assessment of progress. Clearly, this is not the case in coaching. The process in coaching will be negotiated between coach and coachee, and the direction taken will be the coachee's. Even when coaches are employed in business and corporate situations, the ethical coach will insist on the individual's right to self-determination, and indeed must ensure that in these situations the organisation does not impose learning outcomes that are not compatible with the coachees' values and capabilities.

Consultancy

The old, albeit somewhat cynical, definition of a management consultant is that of the highly paid person brought in to find out 'what time it is?' who then borrows your watch to tell you. To some extent this is true, in that the best consultants are expert in facilitation, and will identify solutions to problems and develop opportunities for their clients from within the resources already resident within the organisation. Often management consultants will be engaged in organisational development at every level of an organisation, and to do this they may use many of the strategies and skills found in good coaches. Sometimes a consultant may employ or embark on training 'coaches' as their main device for pursuing and driving change identified as beneficial to the organisation.

But perhaps there we have the distinguishing feature: the consultant will be pursuing change for the benefit of the organisation, usually prescribed or identified by the organisation, and using multiple strategies devised by the consultant in collaboration with the organisation. Coaches, on the other hand, are more likely to be negotiating with individuals or teams to identify goals that will enhance performance, and sharing identified insights for their use. Alignment of organisational goals would be implicit in this operation.

Similarities and differences between coaching and other relevant activities

All of the above utilise psychological processes with human beings in personal and business contexts. What they have in common is that they are fuelled by what we would call high-level communication skills. In other words, the person doing the management, the counselling, the coaching, the supervision, the mentoring, and the training, needs to be able to listen carefully, to question appropriately, to demonstrate accurate understanding, and to drive a process in the direction of the stated goals. The differences, however, are in the purpose of the activity, the process model of delivery, the areas of discovery – past, present, future – the degree of self-development necessarily inherent in the activity, and, most importantly, since this is crucial to an understanding of coaching, what the ‘client’ will *learn*.

The coach will be immersed in the process of identifying and helping the wise and judicious choosing of goals with an emphasis on learning. Taking a didactic approach from an identified learner-centred position, the coach will enable the subject or subjects to learn about themselves, about the change processes, and how these insights can be incorporated, developed and maintained by the individual themselves.

Who can coach, then?

In order to coach, then, we might reasonably expect that coaches have certain abilities, namely in skills, knowledge of models of psychological health and development, and in particular behaviours and attitudes. The Association for Coaching identifies three of these four aspects, and suggests a number of core coaching capabilities (see Table 1.1).

The qualities and aptitudes of the coach are key to the ethical practice and credibility of the profession. At one of our coaching masterclasses

TABLE 1.1 *Core coaching capabilities***Knowledge – as a coach you need to know:**

What coaching means and what distinguishes coaching from other learning and helping roles
 What the coaching process involves and what coaching models underpin your role as a coach
 Where coaching fits within wider developmental processes
 What personal and professional capabilities the client needs to develop
 How people respond to, manage and resist change
 How people learn and adapt coaching to suit different learning styles
 The limits and boundaries of your own practice

Skills – as a coach you need to be able to:

Actively listen and communicate at different levels
 Employ your intuition
 Creatively ask questions
 Influence with integrity
 Give feedback artfully
 Be empathic in the face of setbacks
 Demonstrate confidence in yourself and your client
 Be compassionate
 Work openly and collaboratively
 Challenge your client
 Help your client to engage in problem solving
 Facilitate goal setting and the generation of strategies
 Focus on action
 Inspire persistence
 Act in the best interests of your client
 Network and access resources
 Manage yourself
 Demonstrate passion
 Act ethically and with the highest integrity

Behaviours – as a coach you should:

Demonstrate empathy and build rapport
 Promote and facilitate excellence
 Inspire curiosity to open up new horizons
 Encourage self-discovery
 Act as a role model
 Be non-judgemental
 Possess a sense of humour and use it appropriately
 Value diversity and difference
 Show tact and diplomacy
 Maintain trust and confidentiality
 Signpost client to other sources of support
 Seek opportunities to build your client's confidence and self-esteem
 Critically evaluate your own practice
 Engage in continuous professional development
 Share learning with clients, peers and the wider coaching community

recently, there was lively discussion regarding the reluctance of some senior executives to engage in coaching culture because the last thirty years have brought so many different initiatives, particularly consultancy and 'change agents'. These have had varying degrees of success and failure, professionalism,

weak practice, and the infiltration of occasional charlatans. It is for this reason that we are committed to working with psychological principles and not just techniques.

In addition to the knowledge base of coaches, for us, some of the key attributes of the coach are elicited in the following list. So from our own experience, we offer you some ‘quick and dirty’ tips that might help the potential coach.

- You need to be motivated! Coaching is energetic and results are not always instant.
- You need to be self-disciplined. Coaching needs to be worked at, reviewed and evaluated. If you are working on your own as an independent, you need to be able to manage your work/home balance.
- You need to be creative.
- You need to be ethical. Knowing what you can and cannot do are key attributes; it’s important to know when you are not the right coach for the client, or vice versa.
- Be cooperative – learn from others and share your learnings with others.
- Work with integrity – be forthright, honest and open, and be assertive enough to say what you think and feel is right.

When is coaching not so appropriate?

Finally, a brief reminder that coaching is not a universal solution or panacea. Sometimes it is just not suitable. When we look at assessment later in the book, we will go into more detail and our view is that it is more useful to be adept at assessment than to know what ‘types’ of people or situations may be unsuitable for coaching. Intentional and knowledgeable assessment will throw up its own answers. For now, however, we suggest that the following are situations to think about and to alert you to when coaching may not be appropriate:

- When a person has severe psychological difficulties or where physiological factors influence mood and behaviour.
- When a person lacks insight into their behaviour and is not interested in developing it.
- When the issues affecting an individual’s performance are cultural, and where the investment would be best placed in a different intervention, e.g. team building.
- When a person is ‘sent’ for coaching against their will, whether by manager or family.
- When an individual expects coaching to be the ‘quick and easy’ way out, with the coach having responsibility for the outcome.
- When an individual within an organisation is behaving in a socially inappropriate

fashion, for example being aggressive or abusive, harassing others, and so on. In this case, a mixture of support, investigation and possible counselling will be indicated, and coaching may compromise tricky boundaries.

It is not appropriate for coaches to be involved in these contexts because coaches do not pass judgement, do not set goals for the client, and do not pretend to know what is best for the client, or to offer solutions or advice.

Summary

In this chapter, we have given an overview of what coaching is, its origins and suggested how it might differ from other activities. We have looked at how and where coaching is appropriate, and begun to note the kind of qualities and skills that a coach might be expected to have. These latter themes will be extensively explored throughout the book, and issues of ethics and professionalism will be revisited in Chapter 8. In the next chapter, we look at models of coaching and why they have value for practice.