COACHING NEWS
A Compilation of Columns from the 2003-2010 Issues of ACSM’s Certified News
Dear Reader,

Over the past eight years, Wellcoaches faculty and coaches have enjoyed sharing insights, discoveries, and enthusiasm in the “Coaching News” column in ACSM’s Certified News. We’ve prepared more than 25 short articles on coaching topics and skills for you, the well-informed, thoughtful, and enterprising professional who has sought and maintained ACSM certifications. Thank you for your interest.

The coming years mark a turning point as Wellcoaches and ACSM contribute to the building of a national certification for health and wellness coaches. We are setting a gold standard to further the development of this much-needed profession dedicated to combining coaching of sustainable change and lifestyle medicine. We aren’t likely to run out of new things to share with you for a long, long time! Thank you for being on this journey with us.

Margaret Moore/Coach Meg
Founder & CEO
Wellcoaches Corporation
Coaching News

Having a difficult time understanding the difference between coaching and health and fitness instruction or personal training? If you are, you aren’t alone. “Coaching” — driven by its recent emergence and success in the fields of business and life coaching — is a word that is being used by just about everyone selling services for personal growth and development today. At the same time, there is a lack of understanding of the origin or meaning of coaching.

“Coaching” is actually an old word that has its roots in sports and athletic competition. The word has been traditionally used to refer to the person who instructed and motivated individuals or teams to compete. Then about 15 years ago, a gentleman named Thomas Leonard was searching for a word to describe the people who were using new, emerging skill sets to improve performance outside sport — and in people’s personal lives and business environments. He searched the dictionary and hit upon the word “coach.” And so it began...

Today, coaching can be briefly summarized: Through thoughtful assessment and inquiry, collaborative problem-solving and goal-setting, and safe, open, and honest dialogue, coaches help their clients become clearer on where they are, where they want to go, and how to get there. The coach’s agenda is only the client’s agenda. Clients feel accountable to themselves and their coaches. They make and honor their commitments to reaching their goals, accomplishing more than they believed possible when they began. Coaches provide instruction and mentoring to their clients, and help them set goals, define an action plan, and navigate the path until they reach their goals. Coaches facilitate learning and help clients put the learning into action.

Since Thomas Leonard’s founding of the new coaching movement, including his launch of CoachU, the best-known coach training organization, the practice of business and life coaching has become more refined and standardized. Under the umbrella of the International Coach Federation, guidelines have been established to clarify the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed by people who call themselves a “coach.”

As coaching has become more standardized, it has also become more specialized. Why? Because coaching skills aren’t as powerful or expedient if they aren’t also backed up by expertise in the specific area in which a client wants to make change. In short, coaching works! But what’s better is to have a coach who also has knowledge and experience in the specific area you want to make progress in.

Building on this trend, coaching has moved into many areas, including health, fitness, and wellness. People want specialist expertise and the skills of a coach.

Coaching skills + Expertise = Today’s Coach

Today’s business coaches working with corporate executives would have a tough time establishing the credibility needed to suggest or guide the executive’s direction, if they did not have specific expertise and knowledge in the business area they were coaching. In order to coach effectively, they need a background in coaching skills and expertise in the area of business they coach.

Similarly, in the wellness arena, today’s wellness coach needs to have coaching skills in addition to knowledge, skills, and abilities in exercise, fitness, nutrition, stress and weight management, or the management of health risks.

Coaching skills + Health & Fitness Expertise = Today’s Wellness Coach

Below are ways that improving your coaching skills can compliment your expertise as a Health and Fitness Professional:

What
Help clients develop awareness and insight about what they do and where they want to go.

How
Help clients find their own answers

Ongoing Implications
Provide clients with a greater capacity to produce results — and not generate the perception that clients need to rely on the coach to set goals and get results in the future...

Who’s the Expert
Relating to a client as both the partner and the expert...

Scope
1) Dealing with client behaviors, along with driving motivators and obstacles and,
2) dealing with the broader context of a client’s life and achieving more adequate, satisfying, and productive lifestyle changes in several wellness areas...

In summary, although wellness coaching is at an early stage, the combination of new coaching skills and tools and the expertise of health and fitness professionals to mobilize effective wellness coaches, is one of the major new trends to emerge in the health and fitness arena.

Are you Fit to be a Wellness Coach?

Many health and fitness professionals are pondering whether they should pursue wellness coaching as a natural and exciting progression of their careers — a direction which may better exploit their skills and passions for helping people.

Here’s a working definition of coaching:

Through thoughtful assessment and inquiry, collaborative problem-solving and goal-setting, and safe, open, and honest dialogue conducted in telephone coaching sessions, coaches lead clients to a higher level of self-understanding, and help their clients become clearer on where they are, where they want to go, and how to get there. The coach’s agenda is only the client’s agenda.

Coaches focus on helping clients find their own answers, rather than providing most or all of the answers. Clients feel accountable to themselves and their coaches. Coaches provide instruction and mentoring to their clients, and help them set goals, define an action plan, and navigate the path until they reach their goals. Clients make and honor their commitments to reaching their visions and goals, accomplishing more than they believed possible when they began.

How do you know if you have what it takes to be a great coach? Here are some questions to ask yourself and help you discover your potential to become a wellness coach. The more yes answers the better! The no answers will help you identify where you need to improve in order to become a coach.
BACKGROUND

1. Do I have strong credentials, academic background, and a track record in helping clients or patients in at least two of the following areas: fitness, nutrition, weight loss, management, stress management, or health risk management?
2. Do I have training in or interest in learning about behavioral psychology?
3. Am I interested and knowledgeable in all areas of wellness, not just my primary expertise, such as exercise or nutrition?
4. Am I a good role model – someone who is constantly striving to improve myself and my level of wellness, and who is also setting and reaching new goals for myself?
5. Do I have a high level of self-awareness?
6. Am I well-organized?
7. Have I employed a coach (life or business coach) to help my own personal development?
8. Am I achieving balance and managing stress effectively in my own life?

CLIENT RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

1. Have I worked with clients successfully on a one-on-one basis for at least two years?
2. Would my clients say that I have above average interpersonal and communication skills?
3. Would my clients say that I’ve made a difference in their lives?
4. Am I intuitive?
5. Am I interested in all aspects of my clients’ lives?
6. Do I like to help and support others over a period of months or longer?
7. Do people believe that they can trust me?
8. Am I a creative problem solver?
9. Can I guide a conversation and assist others to reach their own conclusions?
10. Am I a good listener?
11. Am I good at making my clients feel as though I accept them and that I’m not judging them?
12. Am I comfortable with working with people who are very different than me?
13. Am I good at putting people at ease and engaging them to share personal information?
14. Do I know how to help my clients set realistic, simple, and measurable goals?
15. Am I good at recognizing when I’m wrong, admitting it and seeking help readily?
16. Do I like to talk on the phone?

AMBITION

1. Do I want to take my career to another level?
2. Am I a self-starter?
3. Do I like working independently?
4. Have I had my own business before?
5. Am I resourceful when I am faced with something I have never done before?
6. Do I have perseverance when starting something new?
7. Do I like the idea of being one of the early founders of a major new health and fitness service?

GETTING STARTED

1. Do I know how to market and sell my services, or want to learn how?
2. Do I know the type of people or target audience that I work best with?
3. Do I work in an environment where I could add coaching as a new service to the club or center?
4. Do I have current clients that would like coaching services or know where I can get clients?
5. Do I know how to create a basic business or marketing plan, or do I want to learn?
6. Am I a quick study?
7. Do I have a home computer, an internet connection, and use e-mail frequently, and am I reasonably competent on a computer and the web?

In order to become a wellness coach, you certainly don’t need to answer yes to every question. It’s a good sign if the process of reviewing the questions made you feel comfortable, energized, and motivated to find out more!

ACSM’s Certified News, Volume 14, Number 1 (January-March 2004)

What’s In It For Me (WIIFM)? The Client’s Perspective

Personal coaching (one-on-one) is a new service in all areas served by coaches – life coaches, corporate coaches, and most recently, wellness coaches. You may remember the situation ten years ago when personal trainers had to work hard to explain to client prospects what personal training was all about. Now wellness coaches meet the same challenge — how to describe coaching to client prospects.

Here are five common questions asked by client prospects of wellness coaches, followed by answers to guide you:

1. Why does the world need personal wellness coaches?
   - The majority of people struggling with fitness, nutrition, weight, stress, and health (100 million estimated in North America) do not have time to go to a gym, do not like the gym environment (e.g. want more privacy), or want support for going to the gym regularly. Meeting a coach by telephone (with the support of web tools) at a convenient time for a time-efficient coaching session is more appealing.
   - Many people have wellness issues which are intertwined and need a holistic approach that a wellness coach provides – e.g. they overeat because they are stressed out, or they don’t exercise because their energy is low due to poor eating habits, etc.
   - Health and fitness experts, including personal trainers and dietitians, are well-trained to provide advice and solutions to clients’ issues. Unfortunately for many people, even though they know what they should do, they don’t do it. Often the problem is great intention, followed by poor execution. This results from the fact that people lack the mindset needed (including readiness to change) to tackle the long tough path of behavior change. Wellness coaches are trained to use a systematic coaching process, based on behavioral psychology principles (readiness to change, choice theory) and counseling skills (listening deeply, asking powerful questions, giving effective feedback), that help clients create the mindset needed to make lasting changes.
2. How would a wellness coach help me?
A wellness coach empowers you (a client) to establish a higher level of wellness by partnering with you to:
• define your personal vision for wellness
• get clear on what you want to change
• get connected to why it matters a lot to you to make the changes
• develop strategies to overcome your particular obstacles
• take small weekly steps toward your goals and vision, maintain the new mindset, and creatively solve problems along the way

3. What do I commit to in a wellness coaching program?
As a coaching client, you would be on board with the following:
• I am ready to establish the mindset to make changes and improve my wellness
• I am ready to invest at least three months to make lasting changes
• I am ready to take responsibility and make changes in at least one area of wellness — fitness, nutrition, weight, stress, and health
• I am ready to think deeply about the issues around my wellness and become more self-aware
• I recognize that the path to successful change and a higher level of wellness is slow and steady, and not a quick fix, and that there will be setbacks along the way to success

4. How long do I need to work with a wellness coach?
Most clients need weekly or biweekly coaching sessions for three-six months to make lasting changes, and then often are ready to move to a “maintenance” mode of monthly coaching sessions to stay on track. Clients who are obese may need to work with their wellness coaches for a year or two, or longer, to reach their weight loss goals.

5. Will I get a return on my investment in wellness coaching (time and money)?
There is probably no more important investment than improving your health, fitness, and wellness, both short term and long term. For $35-40 per week (fee for a 30 minute telephone coaching session) or every two weeks, you will be able to make lasting changes that may have struggled to make alone. You will look and feel better in the short term, and you may make huge savings down the road if you delay or prevent a medical condition. How can you beat that?

Of course, the best approach to helping people understand coaching is to allow them to experience it. A future Coaching News column will discuss how to demonstrate coaching to client prospects! Stay tuned.

Reproduced from ACSM’s Certified News, Volume 1, Number 2 (April-June 2004)

Why Do I Need Coaching Skills to Be A Better Personal Trainer?

We chose this profession because we want to help our clients develop and sustain fit lifestyles. One-on-one personal training helps many but often falls short with people who have difficulty sticking with a program. Just like people who go on diets and soon regain the weight they lost, many training clients start out enthusiastically but later regress to sedentary lifestyles.

Behavioral psychologist James Prochaska, Ph.D., has provided a way to help us evaluate how ready our clients are to change so we can adapt our training strategies to each individual’s personal readiness.

Other behavioral science principles that trainers apply include helping our clients develop and commit to concrete plans and SMART goals, and then providing the training support and supervision to help get them on the right path.

But our power as trainers is still limited when it comes to those “reluctant” clients who have difficulty staying with a program. Now, however, there’s a new approach for health and fitness professionals — supported by the emerging worlds of life and corporate coaching combined with more traditional counseling skills. While you may consider yourself a great coach, you may be lacking the background and training to provide a systematic coaching process and invaluable coaching skills.

The problem is trainers, just like all other health and fitness experts, including doctors, nurses, dietitians, and physical therapists, are very good at solving client problems and providing the answers for them. We are confident that we can solve any problem and we can’t wait to tell our clients what to do.

However, life coaches, counselors, and therapists have the opposite perspective. They believe that clients have the ability to find their own answers, and that the job of the professional is to help the client explore and discover his or her own answers, rather than offer a prescription. In order to achieve this, the coach must develop a strong personal relationship with the client. When that is achieved, the coach can then help the client to think deeply, reflect, clarify and focus, and make decisions — and ultimately develop the mindset needed to change. We could call this the fit mindset.

Life coaches also believe that an early step in their process is to help people align their most important values with their goals, and thereby connect with a deeply-desired vision of the person they want to be.

So as trainers, we have a powerful opportunity to learn new coaching skills and add coaching sessions (telephone or face-to-face) using a systematic process to training programs. This transforms the way we work with our clients, and helps them to make changes that they can sustain.

Two important coaching skills for personal trainers…
…First, coaching people to find their own answers.

The most important distinction between coaching and training is that coaches focus totally on the client’s agenda. They silence their own agendas — and ignore the voices in their heads that are dying to tell their clients what to do.

Coaches focus on asking powerful, open-ended questions (i.e., what would it take…) that send the message to their clients “I believe that you know the answer and can solve this problem.” They “listen until they don’t exist,” and give feedback on what they heard their client say (both the facts and the emotions) rather than saying what’s on their own minds.

Coaches skillfully navigate the inquiry and discussion to a place where clients have one or more “ah-hah” moments — finding the truth (or as Reality Therapists call it — getting real), evaluating possible solutions, deciding to take action, and committing to the next step. Their clients then feel empowered, in charge, and energized by their discovery and commitment to move forward. And while the coach didn’t give the client the answers, the coaching approach was critical in helping him/her get there.

Developing the skills to help clients find their own answers requires training, and takes weeks and months of practice, and years to polish. Of course, personal trainers are still the experts, but as coaches, we should wear our expert hats and give advice no more than 50 percent of the time, and devote the other 50 percent to helping clients discover and develop their own answers.
When people connect to a vision of the person they really want to be.

An early step in a systematic coaching process is to help people connect with a personal vision that they feel inspired to reach. Life coaches and Reality Therapists believe that profound change happens when people connect to a vision of the person they really want to be. A vision sounds something like “I want to be a great role model for my children” or “I want to have the energy and vitality to enjoy life to the fullest.” Visions like these lift people’s focus beyond the more banal “I want to lose 20 pounds” or “I want to exercise three days a week.”

Even if the vision feels out of reach, clients can typically identify some behaviors that they are confident they can perform – things that the person they want to be would do. This takes their focus away from the tough job of resolving any issues that might sabotage a healthy lifestyle, and shifts their focus to the easier task of taking the first behavioral steps. After that it doesn’t take long for a client to feel and think more like the person in their vision, and develop the confidence needed to support change.

Now, you ask, what about the rest of a systematic coaching process? Stay tuned to future columns!

What Does Coaching Sound Like?

Because coaching is new, particularly to the health and fitness industry, one of the best ways to learn about it is to hear what its sounds like!

So this month, we invite you to listen to web recordings of two coaching sessions from coach training classes. Please copy the segment web addresses into your browser and listen at your leisure.

The first client is Dave who is 40, married with four children, owns a small business, and lives in North Carolina:

Segment 1 - http://www.wellcoach.com/flash/30408_1.html
Segment 2 - http://www.wellcoach.com/flash/30408_2.html

The second client is Donna who is 44, married with two children, and a homemaker. Donna is struggling with a severe case of Lyme disease, and lives in New Jersey:

Segment 1 - http://www.wellcoach.com/flash/80602_1.html
Segment 2 - http://www.wellcoach.com/flash/80602_2.html
Segment 4 - http://www.wellcoach.com/flash/80602_4.html

The next way to hear what coaching sounds like is to practice using the two coaching tools below for yourself and others.

The first coaching tool focuses on developing a vision and higher purpose for health, fitness, and wellness:

Wellness Vision Self Coaching Tool

Priorities: What are your highest wellness priorities?
Visualization: Paint a picture in your mind of the person you want to be (be, do, think, feel, look like) with respect to wellness.
Key Element: Which element in this vision matters to you most?
Gap: How large is the gap between where you are today and your wellness vision?
Downside: What is the downside for you if you don’t move forward to reach your wellness vision?
Powerful Motivator(s): Why is this vision really important to you? (Give examples of powerful motivators) If you hold this motivator in your mind, will it help you stay on track when you meet obstacles?

Obstacles: What might get in the way of you reaching your vision? What else? What else? What else? Which obstacle are you most concerned about?
Strategies: What strategies may be effective to overcome your main obstacle?
Ready/Committed: Are you ready and committed to take the first steps toward your wellness vision?
Three Month Goal(s): What new behaviors (that would move you toward your vision) do you want to be doing consistently three months from now?
Next Week’s Goal(s): What do you want to do next week to take the first step forward? The second coaching tool is a great way to help yourself or a client overcome a challenge:

Obstacle Self Coaching Tool

Problem: What is a major challenge with improving your health, fitness, and wellness?
More: Tell me more about that.
Long: How long has this been going on?
Fix: What have you done to try to fix it?
Given Up: Have you given up?
What’s This Costing You: What is this costing you in morale, energy drain, relationships, self-esteem etc?
Feel: How does it make you feel?
Impact: What impact does this have on you if nothing changes?
Action: What do you want to do about this?
Next Steps: What could you do next week?
Obstacles: What obstacle might prevent you from doing this?
Strategies: What strategy would help you avoid this obstacle?
Committed: Are you committed to taking the next step?
Finally, we want to tell you about a new ACSM Interest Group focused on coaching that was launched in March 2004. The new ACSM Health, Fitness, and Wellness Coaching Interest Group met twice this spring – at the ACSM Summit in Orlando, and at the ACSM Annual Meeting in Indianapolis. Joining the interest group is a great way to connect and learn about coaching from other ACSM members.

The group’s mission is to network and share coaching experiences, practice new coaching skills, and overcome challenges when moving from the training mode of providing expert advice and solutions to client problems to the coaching approach of helping clients take responsibility and discover their own answers and solutions.

To join, please contact acsmcoachinginterestgroup@wellcoaches.com. Please send your contact information and ACSM member number, then we will send directions for signing up to our YAHOO! discussion group for networking and information.

In the two group meetings, we did coaching demonstrations and coaching practice exercises. We also created a web audio version of the meeting that we can share with you.

We’re also offering a monthly opportunity for one group member to be coached around a life or wellness challenge. The coaching session will be recorded for everyone to enjoy.

After you read this article, go forth and listen, practice, and network with fellow aspiring coaches!
Coaching and Mindfulness

Adapted from an essay by Bob Tschannen-Moran
Founder & President, LifeTrek Coaching

People come to health, fitness, and wellness coaching because they are tired of struggling and/or want to learn and grow, and make lasting changes. Ideally, coaching assists people to find the inspiration, the knowledge, and the path to master a new, healthier lifestyle. Even after many years of thinking the same thoughts, feeling the same feelings, and performing the same behaviors, coaching enables people to master changes and move forward.

Through a new level of mindfulness gained through coaching, learning and mastering change becomes a way of life.

Coaching will not be successful until and unless the client learns to self-coach through mindfulness. We can masterfully listen, inquire, and respond to clients during a coaching session, but until they learn to listen, inquire, and respond to themselves in real-time through mindfulness, they will not master what they want to learn and change.

As coaches, we can facilitate the development of mindfulness by getting clients to pay attention to their thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and environments on a daily basis. This requires assisting our clients to slow down long enough to observe, reflect on, emote about, and design what’s going on.

To do this, Tim Gallwey (The Inner Game of Work: Random House, New York, 2000) writes that we need to get our clients to STOP, and he’s turned the word into an acronym: Step back, Think, and Organize our thoughts before Proceeding. He recommends short stops throughout the day as well as longer stops at the beginning and end of the day as well as much longer stops on a weekly, monthly, and annual basis.

David Dibble (The New Agreements in the Workplace: Releasing the Human Spirit; The Emeritus Group & The New Dream Team, LLC, New York, 2002) writes about achieving the mastery of awareness and transformation through three simple steps: (1) Catching ourselves in the moment, (2) Observing what’s going on inside and out, and (3) Making a choice. “The key to changing,” he notes, “is not to try to change, but first to become aware of what’s happening in the moment.” Without mindfulness of our behaviors, thoughts, feelings, and environments, we have no chance of creating and sustaining proactive change.

Jon Kabat-Zinn (Wherever You Go There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life; Hyperion, New York, 1994) writes that we need a spiritual practice, each and everyday, in order to keep ourselves on track. Meditation, prayer, and yoga are three such practices. “The point is to pause in our experience long enough to let the present moment sink in; long enough to actually feel the present moment, to see it in its fullness, to hold it in awareness, and thereby come to know and understand it better.” With practice, we become participant-observers in our own lives, making the learning process more fascinating, forgiving, and effortless.

Few people take the time to live with this much mindfulness. It is much more common for people to rush through the day, from one thing to the next, with hardly any thought at all. Technology enables us to get more done in less time than ever before; but it also threatens to eliminate thoughtfulness, whole heartedness, and symbiosis. These come only through the practice of mindfulness.

Asking clients the following questions can help put them on the path to mindfulness. The goal is to move clients beyond a deep weekly conversation with their coach to a deep minute-by-minute conversation with themselves. Self-coaching is the only way to catch ourselves in the moment. Masterful coaching enables people to slowdown and live mindfully through the day, using a variety of techniques, tools, habits, patterns, and behaviors.

Reflective writing in a journal or diary, breath work, meditation, prayer, and yoga are classic ways to increase mindfulness. But these approaches will not work for everyone. They may not even work for most people in the Western world. Soother strategies, creatively tailor-made for each and every client, need to emerge through the coaching process. An example:

One client hung small wind chimes on his office door, from the rear-view mirror in his car, and on his garage door. Now, whenever he goes in and out of his office, car, or home, he rings the chime and pauses long enough to think, feel, and design the moment. It has transformed his behavior as well as his relationship to self, others, and life in noticeable ways.

Here are some questions that can make us more aware of what we are doing, thinking, feeling, and contending with in our environments.

Behavior Questions

• What am I doing right now?
• What am I doing before I start working on my goals?
• What am I doing as I work on my goals?
• What am I doing after I work on my goals?
• Does my behavior advance or hinder the accomplishment of my goals?

Thinking Questions

• What am I thinking right now?
• What am I thinking before I start working on my goals?
• What am I thinking as I work on my goals?
• What am I thinking after I work on my goals?
• What do I understand about mastering my goals? What don’t I understand?
• What are the benefits of mastering my goals? What are the costs?
• How can I be fully present to my commitment today?
• What ideas, beliefs, and memories impact my learning goals?

Feeling Questions

• What am I feeling right now? Include physical sensations and feelings that are bubbling under the surface.
• What am I feeling before I start working on my goals?
• What am I feeling as I work on my goals?
• What am I feeling after I work on my goals?
• What feelings interfered with the accomplishment of my goals?
• What feelings helped me to accomplish my goals?
• Do I feel in control or out of control?
• Do I feel any intuitive inklings about my goals?
• What’s my theme song to celebrate the accomplishment of my goals? What is the music that describes this moment?
• What music plays when my goals are incomplete?

Environmental Questions

• What am I noticing right now? What’s happening? What stands out?
• What am I noticing before I start working on my goals?
• What am I noticing as I work on my goals?
• What am I noticing after I work on my goals?
Personal Journey from Expert to Coach

My personal journey in the wellness profession has taken me from health and fitness expert to registered dietitian and, most recently, to wellness coach. Along the way, I became aware that the most important knowledge was that I didn’t know everything, and that often the best “prescriptions” come from our clients.

There is a huge gap between our wealth of nutrition, health, and fitness guidelines and education, and the impoverished self-confidence of most clients who are struggling with mastering change. For me, wellness coaching, which puts our clients in control, is what is needed to fill the gap, and my journey as a coach has now begun.

My journey from expert to coach began almost 25 years ago when I received a degree in Health Education and a certificate in Health Promotion from the University of Florida. After several years of working in the field, I earned a MS in Sports Nutrition from Georgia State University, and became a registered dietitian.

With all this knowledge, I was now a wellness “expert” and ready to take on the world! Sound familiar? I provided education and training in the nutrition and fitness fields. All of my clients worked on behavior changing skills, and received the nutrition and fitness information for which they were paying me. I gave my clients solutions to their obstacles, told them what they should do (most already knew), and cleared up myths with research-based knowledge.

But something was missing. With all my knowledge, all of this information and motivation, why was I not 100 percent successful? I continued to learn and mature. It soon occurred to me that although a physician may prescribe exercise five days per week or a 1,200 calorie diet or a 2,500 mg sodium diet, her patient was set up to fail because he or she was too far from the prescription. I adapted to this real-world enlightenment and provided clients with small goals. My clients’ success rate improved — but still not to 100 percent.

In 2001, I was introduced to the Wellcoaches wellness coach training program by an ACSM colleague. I learned coaching skills and tools to enlist and support cognitive shifts and behavior change. However, coaching, especially wellness coaching, was so new and the market was small. I was still waiting for wellness and coaching to become the direction of healthcare! So I applied my coaching skills with my existing clients, and my clients’ success rate increased. I came to believe that the missing link in healthcare was not educating, but the ability to successfully facilitate change.

In the fall of 2003, I made the leap — to go from applying coaching skills to my services as a registered dietitian, personal trainer, and presenter, to defining myself as a wellness coach. I decided that wellness coaching is the present and the future of wellness. With the new focus my clients’ success rates began to soar!

But there was still a lot more to learn so I signed up to repeat the latest wellness coach training and hired a mentor coach.

With my mentor coach, I was able to practice coaching in a non-threatening environment and receive immediate feedback. Too often, I found myself providing solutions and making incorrect assumptions. With practice, my listening skills improved, and I was better able to define coaching moments (opportunities to help clients dig deep to find the truth and their best solution) and cover what was important to my client. I learned how to more smoothly transition between goals and topics. I woke up to the full power of coaching to deeply engage our clients’ mindsets and help them face and resolve ambivalence.

In coach training I learned something new every week, usually a clarification of a theory or principle, or a new phrase or skill. And this was my second time through the training!

The abundance of information and the time it takes to practice reminds me daily that becoming a great coach is a lifelong journey.

Defining my direction as a coach has empowered me to be more productive and more effective in ALL aspects of my life. And now I’m able to grow a coaching practice! I’m much better at describing coaching and its benefits and principles and why they are unique and effective.

I have learned a lot over the past 25 years. Knowledge by itself isn’t enough. It is still of prime importance for my clients to be successful; but my approach has changed. I realize I don’t know it all, and my clients know a lot about what they want!

Often it is not what we say, but what we don’t say that empowers our clients. Instead of offering solutions, goals, knowledge, we often need to be silent and empower our clients to come up with their own solutions and goals. They will only succeed when they figure out what works for them, and they are in control of their well-being.

We need to help them by leading powerful conversations that create breakthroughs through deep listening, open-ended provocative questions, and inspirational feedback. We must focus on the positive and victories and learning more from strengths than the negatives or failures. Our role is to empower clients with the skills and confidence that they can make lifelong changes.

Last week when wrapping up a coaching session, I asked my client if she wanted to work on anything else in the coming week. She replied, “What do you think I should work on?” Nine months ago, I would have given her a “should” suggestion.

Last week I said, “What else would you like to work on?” We’d had a great session and I knew that she knew the “right” answer.

About the Author

Julie F. Schwartz, M.S., R.D., L.D., ACSM Health/Fitness Instructor®

ACSM’s Certified News, Volume 15, Number 1 (January-March 2005)
Principles of Behavioral Psychology in Wellness Coaching

We have reprinted here the first part of a paper published by the International Coach Federation’s Coaching Research Symposium in November 2004, and links to a web audio version of the accompanying lecture.

To download the complete paper, go to:
To listen to the accompanying lecture:
  • http://www.wellcoach.com/flash/612154_1.mp3
  • http://www.wellcoach.com/flash/612154_2.mp3

Introduction

Over the past ten years, the personal coaching industry has grown rapidly to become a major new proponent of personal growth and behavior change for improved corporate leadership and management, and more effective personal life-management. More recently, personal coaching has evolved to address health promotion and disease prevention by supporting the development and maintenance of health-promoting behavior changes (Wellcoaches training manual). In our view, coach training programs have been deficient in acknowledging and integrating evidence-based principles of psychology, and harnessing technology, necessary for a replicable and measurable enterprise. For the health/wellness field, the result is an inadequate foundation upon which to build a broadly based and replicable coaching approach that reliably generates measurable outcomes and behavior change.

The assessments, methodologies, and skills taught by coach training programs vary widely, and frequently don’t reference psychology literature. Each coach is often encouraged to develop a unique process and style. After training, coaches practice and pursue continuing education independently, without supervision or standardized approaches — particularly to outcomes definition and measurement. Coaching outcomes research is at a very early stage. Applying principles of established psychology models is a powerful way to strengthen the foundation supporting standardization of coaching skills, processes, outcomes measurement, and research studies. Thankfully, a dialogue and collaboration among psychology researchers and coaching practitioners is now emerging to address these gaps.

Within corporations, in the past thirty years the use of behavior-based applications such as performance feedback and goal setting has increased, setting the stage for a behavioral approach to coaching (Andrasik, 1989; Kim& Hammer, 1976; and Dickinson, 2000). This article briefly describes the principles of four psychology models which support personal growth and behavior change and can be applied in personal coaching, including a health behavior change model, a counseling model, and two therapy models. We then examine the behavioral principles employed by two corporate behavioral coaching models. Finally, we explore a personal wellness coaching model that integrates principles from the four psychology models, and the behavioral principles used by the corporate models.

Principles of Psychology Models Applicable to Coaching

Personal growth and development requires both cognitive and behavioral change, and the field of psychology is rich in evidence-based approaches to support both. Two of the most important behavior change models, the Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983), and Motivational Interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 2002), were developed initially for health behaviors and addictions, respectively. Traditionally, therapy has been oriented mainly to the past, searching for the roots of the present challenges. Some branches of therapy, including Choice Theory (Glasser, 1999) and Reality Therapy (Glasser, 2000), and Solution-oriented Psychotherapy (O’Hanlon & Weiner-Davis, 2003), pursue a future orientation, similar to coaching models, which is unconcerned with how problems arose or even how they are maintained, but instead is concerned with how they will be resolved.

The Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change

The Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change (TTM) developed by James Prochaska is based on twenty-five years of research in measuring behavior change for a wide variety of health behaviors including smoking cessation, exercise adoption, eating a low fat diet, and mammography use (Prochaska, Velicer, DiClemente & Fava, 1988; Marcus, Ross, Selby, Niaura & Abrams, 1992; and Greene, Rossi, Reed, Willey & Prochaska, 1994). This model is a blueprint for effecting self-change in health behaviors and can be applied in personal coaching.

TTM first categorizes stage of readiness to engage in a behavior and then measures the use of key variables that have been found to promote behavior change. The four key variables are (1) stage of change, (2) decisional balance, (3) self-efficacy, i.e. examining challenging situations to create a personal relapse prevention plan, and (4) processes of change. The processes of change can be divided into five experiential or cognitive processes (consciousness raising, dramatic relief, environmental reevaluation, self-reevaluation, and social liberation), useful in early stages of change before the behavior has begun, and five behavioral processes (self-liberation, stimulus control, counter-conditioning, reinforcement management, and helping relationship) useful after the behavior change has begun.

Motivational Interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 2002)

Motivational Interviewing is a counseling methodology developed over the past 15 years in the addiction treatment field, and is defined as a “client-centered, directive method for enhancing intrinsic motivation to change by exploring and resolving ambivalence.” This methodology considers what is necessary to initiate and support change — summarized briefly as being ready, willing, and able — and uses a decisional balance sheet to consider the pros and cons of the status quo and the change under consideration. Through a careful balance of inquiry and reflective listening, interviewers elicit and selectively reinforce pro-change talk, and respond to resistance in a way that is intended to diminish it.

Motivational interviewing is readily integrated with application of TTM, and is often combined with values-oriented counseling techniques, which are intended to provide clients with a higher and more inspiring purpose to support change. Motivational interviewing addresses the behavior change variables of readiness, self-reevaluation, decisional balance, and self-efficacy.
**Choice Theory / Reality Therapy**  
*Glasser, 1999; and Glasser, 2000*

William Glasser’s Choice Theory provides an excellent theoretical framework for coaching models. It is an internal control cognitive theory, which stresses that human beings have four basic psychological needs for fun, freedom, love/belonging, and power built into their genetic structure. When the individual’s needs are not being met in the real world, a want is created. Then the individual generates a behavior to bring the want and the real world into balance.

This approach is based on the belief that only the person himself can change his behavior. The client has control of all choices, and no one can control another person’s behavior. Coaches can only provide information and help the client to determine the person he wants to be, define his wants, describe his current behavior, and determine a plan of action.

In practice, a Reality Therapist first works to build a close, trusting relationship with a client. The therapist then helps the client describe what is happening and decide whether or not this “reality” is helping to meet his or her needs and wants, and to confront the “reality” in relation to the challenging situation. The client identifies the persons he wants to be in the situation. Then the therapist helps the client identify the behaviors that the person wants to exhibit in the challenging situation, and helps the client decide to commit to the behaviors, one step at a time. The important behavior change principles used in Glasser’s Choice Theory and Reality Therapy models include doing a needs assessment, self-reevaluation, self-image, goal setting, and specific plan making.

**Solution-oriented Psychotherapy**  
*O’Hanlon & Weiner-Davis, 2003*

Solution-oriented therapists help clients elicit their strengths and abilities, rather than focus on the roots of their deficits.

The three main strategies of solution-oriented therapy (O’Hanlon & Weiner-Davis, 2003) are:

1. Helping clients change their behaviors in the challenging situations that they wish to address. New behaviors can change a client’s frame of reference, or elicit new or forgotten strengths and abilities.
2. Helping clients change the way that they view a challenging situation by reframing their perspective, and stimulating the use of clients’ resourcefulness.
3. Stimulating clients to identify their own resources, strengths, and solutions, helping them change their behaviors and viewpoints.

The important behavior change principles used in solution-oriented therapy include self reevaluation, self-image, and self-efficacy.


**Words of Wisdom from an Ex-obese Wellness Coach**

Obesity feels like you’ve fallen into a hole that is very deep and dark. You can see the light coming from above and hear people walking around and having fun. You’re not apart of the “fun” because you’re in this dark hole. You’ve been trying to climb out for a really long time, but the walls are too steep and you’re exhausted. Every so often, you get enough energy to try again… sometimes you get closer to the top only to tumble back to the bottom. You’ve tried to climb out so many times that you learn to accept that you can’t get out. So, you’re exhausted and hopelessly stuck in this hole that’s dark — it’s excluding you from things you’d enjoy. You’re helpless. Obesity is physically exhausting. The next time you’re at the gym and you pick up a 45 lb. plate, think about how this makes your feet, knees, and back feel. Now, imagine carrying around 3 of these all day and sleeping with them on you too! If you can imagine this, you’ll understand how it physically feels for the obese person. You’re exhausted and in pain (amazing what the body will adapt to). I remember coming home from work and dragging myself into the house. Any invitation for a “life” was met with anxiety of how I’d handle my appearance — class reunions, picnics and seeing old friends was very painful. Food became “pain relief” which only made the problem worse — but I was hopeless so what’s a little more? As my weight problem mounted, the hole was just getting deeper. I think a wellness coach is the perfect answer to helping people who have obesity. They’ve tried to get out of the hole so many times that they’ve lost faith that it’s even possible. Another attempt in their minds is “doomed.” I think it is human nature to look for the “quick-fix” or the “miracle cure” and the obese person is no different. They’re looking for a ladder or an elevator to whisk them from the hole and end the nightmare. That’s where the liquid diets (I lost 100 lbs. on Optifast once) come in. In the end, the liquid diets get you out of the hole, but the hole is still there and it’s very easy to fall back in! The lasting solution to obesity is to gradually fill in the hole. With each handful of dirt, you’re a little closer to the top. Over time, the hole is filled in. Not only are you out of the hole, the hole is gone! The handfulls of dirt in my analogy are exercise and a healthy diet. This is the sustainable solution. In my mind, each day that I went to walk (could barely do a mile when I started), I was putting a handful of dirt into the hole. Each time I went to the store and bought “whole foods”, there was another handful of dirt. Each time I said “no” to the cookies, I got a handful of dirt. It took about 14 months to fill my 140 lb hole, and I rejoice everyday that it’s gone. When I think of not exercising and “vacation eat” for more than a few days, I think about taking a handful of dirt from under my feet and how that can add-up to another “hole”. The wellness coach can help the obese person believe that it’s possible to fill the hole. The obese person has truly lost hope and feels helpless (forgive my generalization but for the most part I believe it’s true). For me, I worked with a body builder/personal trainer. He really believed that I could do this when I couldn’t even imagine it! Because he believed it was possible, I took the first steps on faith. As I saw some progress, I started to believe in myself more and more. It was a gradual process of learning to believe that it was even possible! Today I am about 19 percent body fat. Maintaining this weight (2 years) is easy for me since I didn’t “diet” to get here. People cannot believe that I used to be obese, and for me it’s like a
bad dream. There were a lot of shifts and challenges along the way... seeing my reflection in a store window and not recognizing myself, figuring out how to dress, and defining my personal style. How other people related to me was similar to going through adolescence again (we all know how much fun that was). Today, people who have not seen me in a few years do not recognize me unless I talk — I've learned to really like this since I can walk right by somebody I don’t like! I think my point here is that there is a sense of personal loss and a feeling of being "exposed & vulnerable" that makes the "hole" seem secure. Getting out of the hole is a real danger without support. For me, physical fitness & strength training for me has been important in balancing the "exposed and physically vulnerable" feelings. I’m now in training to become a certified wellness coach and I hope to help many obese clients fill in their holes and become whole! This article was written for Wellcoaches by Jenny Beaird (jbeaird@mac.com) who lives in Atlanta and lost 140 pounds several years ago. Go to www.wellcoach.com for more information on Wellcoaches and its coach training and certification programs for health and fitness professionals.

ACSM's Certified News, Volume 15, Number 4 (October-December 2005)

Take Time for Preparation

This article was written by Gabrielle R. Highstein, Ph.D., RN, who is an ACSM Health/Fitness Instructor®, certified wellness coach, and behavioral psychology researcher at Washington University School of Medicine. Applying principles of established psychology models is a powerful way to improve coaching skills. This column focuses on the Pros of change, one of the variables of the Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change (TTM) (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983), which equates to the Values foundation block of the Wellcoaches Pyramid of Change — see http://www.wellcoach.com/images/wellcoaches.pyramid.pdf. The pyramid’s foundation of building blocks is made up of:

- Self-Awareness & responsibility
- Knowledge - benefits & information
- Values (motivators or Pros)
- Understanding major obstacles
- Strategies to overcome major obstacles

One of the clear messages of the TTM and the Pyramid is that people do better at accomplishing behavior change if they are well prepared before they start. These foundations of change need to be valued by you as a coach for your client to invest time and energy in preparing for change. Most importantly, the science has shown that until the Pros outweigh the Cons people don’t change. So it behooves us to help our clients find a strong, personal Pro or Value — something near and dear to their hearts. How can you help your clients identify and connect to a powerful PRO, to help them make lasting change?

Helping your Client Find Powerful Personal Motivators

When a client comes to me full of enthusiasm to make some healthy change my first response is “Great. Let’s explore whether you are ready.” Science has taught us a lot about how to go about making a successful change. It is my job to help you make sure you are ready.” I want to hear the story of what changes my client wants to make and why my client wants to make them now. I am looking for a strong, personal motivator. I want to hear something concrete that my client wants. If my client can’t tell me anything specific or talks in generalities about wanting to be healthier, then/he may not be ready. A great technique to help a person get focused is to ask your client to visualize — close your eyes and think about who you want to be in one, two, or five years. What does this person look like? What do you value? What can she do? How does she feel? What is her mindset? For example, one of my clients said that she wanted to look like she does now only with a little flatter stomach and she wants to be just as active as she is now. Then she said “You know what I really want. I want to eat so well that I don’t have to worry about my weight.” I said “Excellent. What kind of behavioral goals do we have to set to get you there? What are you going to have to work on to reach this vision?” She said “I do regular exercise already but I will have to keep that up and maybe up the level. And I am going to have to do something about learning how to eat right so weight will not be a worry.” I responded by asking her if she could come up with two concrete three-month behavioral goals around exercise and eating. We wanted goals that stretched her but did not overwhelm her. After some discussion she decided that by three months she would be exercising vigorously enough that she would be sweating at 15 minutes into the session and work for at least 30 minutes seven days a week, and she would be writing down everything she eats. So are we ready to plunge in and get her started doing these behaviors? Not yet. There is a lot of practical prep work to be done first. Do we have our big motivator now? Yes — she wants to look 35 when she is 40 and she wants to no longer worry about her weight because she eats well. How do we operationalize these motivators? How do we measure them? We have to help her drill down to something concrete and specific. She has exercised before and expresses confidence that she can exercise regularly. So I query what she likes about exercising! What does it do for her? She says when she exercises she gets a good night’s sleep. She likes the way her body shape changes when she does strength training. She laughs and says that she looks a lot better in her bathing suit when she has been strength training a lot. I ask her if she has any plans in the next three months of getting into a bathing suit. She says yes, that her husband has a conference in Florida and she is going along. I ask if that would be a good motivator: to get ready for the Florida trip. Her eyes light up and she says she would love that. I am happy that we have found another concrete motivator to keep her on track as she meets the many obstacles to establishing a new health habit. Is she ready to go now? No. We have not yet explored the other foundation blocks of the pyramid, her Obstacles, Strategies, Self-Awareness & responsibility. Nor have we talked at all about the knowledge she needs to eat healthily. But for the exercise behavior we have accomplished a critical step: Find Strong, Personal Motivators (Pros or Values). Remember to take time to help your clients lay the foundation to support change that will last over time. Go to www.wellcoach.com for more information on Wellcoaches and its coach training and certification programs for health and fitness professionals.

References

A few weeks ago I was cleaning out some old office files and found an interesting study published in the American Journal of Cardiology titled “Myocardial Infarction: A New Model for Patient Care.” Ever looking for the next new thing to help me professionally, I glanced at the publication date in bold print… February 1, 1985… 21 years ago!

The conclusion of the authors was that medically directed at-home rehabilitation has the potential to increase the availability and decrease the cost of rehabilitation for low risk survivors of AMI. Over the last 21 years subsequent studies have demonstrated the efficacy and safety of at-home and community exercise. In recent years, research publications have reported the efficacy of health promotion counseling delivered in a 1:1 coaching format. The coach training has delivered the skills we need to truly individualize a client’s program based on his/her readiness to change and self-motivation. This is much better than trying to push the patient through changing behaviors” says Burnell.

Burnell now requires all staff to complete the training within a year as a condition of employment. “It’s our new standard. The timing was right, and supported by ACSM’s reputation and endorsement of Wellcoaches, we are now able to apply coaching skills for every patient encounter” confirms Burnell. Although the application of coaching skills is fairly new in the CV Wellness Center, her initial observations are positive. “We are now better mentors and better coaches, and the coaching skills have increased program effectiveness and client success.”

Like Pam Burnell, I envision the certified health or wellness coach being integrated into areas of medicine where health behaviors are important, including pulmonary rehabilitation, CHF clinics, lipid clinics, diabetes clinics, and cancer centers. Coaching change is a key intervention that is poised to become the new model for patient care.

About the Author
This article was written by Blaine Wilson, MS, CHC, and ACSM Exercise Specialist® certified.

Personal Training Plus Wellness Coaching: A Powerful Combination

After twelve years of working in the clinical arena, while spending a portion of my time as a personal trainer and strength coach, I decided two years ago that it was time to work full-time as an entrepreneur. With my certification as a wellness coach, I’m able to combine personal training with coaching in a way that is not only very unique in the fitness business, but also highly effective.

I have never felt more fulfilled in my work, and my clients have never accomplished more. Yes, I have matured over the years, and have learned a great deal from experience, but wellness coaching has added a whole new dimension to my fitness business.

I often describe the wellness coaching I do as business and/or life coaching disguised as wellness coaching. As fitness professionals we are well aware that in order for someone to be successful in their pursuit of sound health and Wellness, success is often determined by their ability to balance all aspects of their lives carefully and consciously. So very often, we are strategizing with our patients and clients through all aspects of their lives so that they can not only find the time and energy to exercise and eat right, but so that they discover why they might be struggling.

I always felt that there were many coaching themes in the work that I was doing, but until I went through the process of becoming a wellness coach, I never realized how much more I could help people by simply becoming more of a coach and less of a teacher throughout the process.

Coaching, as it turns out, is very different from what we do as trainers, because we are taking ourselves out of the role of teacher

ACSM’s Certified News, Volume 16, Number 1 (January-March 2006)
and instructor and into the role of guide and coach. And there is no limit to the techniques and strategies that can be used as a coach to help guide someone to long-lasting solutions. The true beauty is that your approach will always be slightly different than mine, because as coaches we are all unique in our approach to combining the art and science of coaching.

Combining coaching with personal training has allowed me to do the teaching necessary to design effective exercise programs, while also providing the space and time necessary to listen, guide, problem-solve, and strategize with clients about how to make all of it work. People love this opportunity, and they all feel that this is what they truly need to be successful. Their results are proof that it works.

Here is one example of what I’m talking about... (more examples posted at www.thefitnessnomad.com)

His name is Mike and he’s 34 years old with two small children less than 10 years old. He’s still married to the love of his life, but has become somewhat disconnected with her. After all, she is a full time lawyer too, and having children will challenge even the best of marriages. I know that story well with two of my own.

Mike’s workload is at least double that of the average person, but he’s in debt, has just started his own law firm, and can’t afford to hire the help he needs in his office. So he just grinds it out, because he’s not the kind of guy who is used to putting himself first. Though he knows he needs to take better care of himself, he is so deep into his situation, that he doesn’t even know where to begin.

He wants to quit smoking, but has become reliant on the nicotine for alertness during his late night work. The cigarettes also feel to him like a necessary vice since there is almost nothing left in his life for him personally at this point.

He wakes up tired every day, doesn’t eat or drink much until dinner time, and works in an environment at the office and in the courtroom that demands his optimal performance at all times. Somehow, he’s getting it all done, but he is aware that he’s struggling, which is why he made the decision to hire me.

Mike and I decided that two sessions per week for three months was a good start (one coaching session and one training session). And though it was a challenge, he made time in his schedule for both and didn’t miss any of them.

Four months later Mike doesn’t need coaching more than once a month, and even though his workload has not really changed, he has found time for exercise, is eating during the day, drinking more water, and working all night only when absolutely necessary, instead of relying on this as a solution.

It’s worth noting that Mike had suffered a serious back injury about a year before coming to see me, and had tried to begin an exercise program on his own, but his back pain and spasms wouldn’t allow him to be consistent. Working with me as his trainer, we were able to address this problem and prevent his back from limiting his performance.

Mike reports that he is feeling much better, has more energy, and has begun formulating a better plan for his workload. This has given him new hope. Mike’s life is more balanced, and he now sees me only twice per month, mostly for exercise, and we perform isolated coaching sessions on an as needed basis, either in person or over the telephone.

Having a coach provides a level of support that is often missing in people’s lives. Combining the coaching support with personal training has allowed me to help my clients create lasting change and transform their lives. Combining personal training + coaching is the next big thing in fitness — not only for our clients, but also for our personal transformation as fitness professionals.
describes how we as health and fitness professionals, dietitians, physicians, and others, have often worked with our clients to help them make changes. We fill our client’s bags to the brim with knowledge, passion, programs and information, spin them around, then point them to the door. They are often dizzy with the amount of information, that instead of taking action, they give up and do nothing. Remember the last time you went to a trade show, home show, or other similar event with informational resources? How often have you taken the bag out again and read the materials? The truth is we rarely take action on that bag because life gets in the way. We do the same with our clients, filling the bag with pride and passion filled information. We’ve spent years learning and we want to pass it on!

The coach approach is not about throwing away those years of expertise. It’s instead, providing “just in time learning” when the client is needing or wanting it! In fact the strength of health and fitness professionals being trained as coaches is their foundation of professional expertise. However, one of the greatest challenges for new coaches is finding the balance between expert and coach which enables clients to build confidence and master well being and change.

In my 25 years of working in the health and fitness industry, coaching is far and away the most effective tool I’ve ever used. When people take ownership of their health and make lifestyle changes, there’s no greater reward. I have taught them to fish and engaged them within the framework of their lives to make lifestyle changes once and for all.

As a recent breast cancer survivor, I came face to face with a new world. I experienced what it felt to be overwhelmed with information. I longed for someone to help me sort out the many decisions I was making, and coach me through it. There was no part of my life that was untouched, so the information stream was endless. Because of my experience in trying to get my life back after cancer, I am now coaching survivors to live their healthiest lives, one small step at a time. Coaching has been a gift for me that I can use to help others in a powerful way.

If you’ve been putting off training/certification, I’d encourage you not to wait, and experience what coaching can do for you and what you can do for others. Before using the title of coach, just as in any profession, make sure you have the skills and training to support the title!

### About the Author

Pam Schmid owns Priorities Simplified which provides wellness services as a coach, speaker, educator, and consultant. She is a licensed executive wellcoach and is ACSM HFI certified. She is on the teaching faculty of Wellcoaches, is a practical examiner, and mentor coach as well as co-chair for ACSM’s Health, Fitness, and Wellness Coaching interest group. Pam has built several Web sites to support her business and passions. www.PrioritiesSimplified.com.

---

### Coaching Happiness

When Martin Seligman became president of the American Psychological Association (APA) in 1998, he had a vision of a new psychology. Rather than focus on what ails the human mind (neurosis, anxiety, depression), Seligman proposed that psychology turn its attention to the conditions that enable people to flourish, to what makes people feel engaged, fulfilled and meaningfully happy. This movement has become known as positive psychology and has important applications for both wellness coaches and health and fitness professionals.

Positive psychology is increasingly suggesting a link between happiness and health. According to Dr. Derek Cox, Director of Public Health at Dumfries and Galloway NHS there is mounting evidence that happiness might be at least as powerful a predictor, if not a more powerful predictor than some of the other lifestyle factors that we talk about such as cigarette smoking, diet, physical activity, and those kinds of things for improving the health of the nation (The Health Benefits of Happiness by Mark Easton, BBC News Home Editor).

Several studies have also shown that happier people have greater protection against things like heart disease and stroke. And recent research has even shown a connection between happiness and longevity. A study of nuns in Milwaukee analyzed their handwritten autobiographies written at age 20, and found decades later that sisters who expressed positive emotional content in their writing by using words like “joy” and “thankful” lived up to ten years longer than those who expressed negative emotions.

Given such evidence, we are convinced of the connection between happiness and health. Happiness can be broken down into three components: pleasure, engagement, and meaning. Pleasure is feeling good and enjoying life, engagement is the depth of involvement with one’s family, work, romance and hobbies, and meaning is anything that makes one’s life more meaningful; it often involves serving something larger than oneself.

Getting more pleasure out of life and increasing positive emotions does more than signal well-being; it produces well-being. People with positive emotions are more resilient and creative and perform better. By pointing out positive emotions noticed during the coaching conversation, coaches can help clients build awareness of these emotions.

The other two components of happiness (engagement and meaning) are related to an individual’s character strengths. Strengths can be determined by having the client complete the VIA Signature Strengths Survey (www.authentichappiness.com) or just by the coach noticing what their clients do well naturally or what gives them energy or gets them excited. It is likely that engagement and meaning are more important than pleasure in leading a happy, satisfied life.

Once strengths are identified, coaches can help clients begin to shape their lives to utilize their highest strengths. Using strengths to serve something larger than oneself can also create a meaningful life. Helping others through volunteering, mentoring, or practicing acts of kindness gives one a greater sense of connection with others and a sense of purpose and meaning to life.

Some examples of activities that have been shown to increase life satisfaction and positive emotion are:

### Gratitude Journal

Keep a daily or weekly journal of three to five things you are grateful for or things that just make you feel good. These can be simple things (beautiful sunset, new outfit) or more significant events (job offer, new relationship). A variety of entries works well.
Savoring Exercises

Be mindful of momentary pleasures and what you are feeling. Tune into your senses when you are having these moments. Share your feelings about the experience with others. Savor the wonderful things in life, from people to food, from nature to a smile.

Acts of Kindness

Intentionally perform acts of kindness, such as visiting a nursing home, taking a meal to a sick friend, mowing a neighbor’s lawn, or smiling at a store clerk. Try to include at least five acts of kindness each week.

Signature Strengths

Identify your top five signature strengths by completing the VIA Survey (see above). Pick one strength and find a new way to use it. If one of your strengths is love of learning, for example, you might want to learn another language or sign up for a course that you have never considered before. Finding a new way to use your strength of humor might include bringing more humor and playfulness to your coaching sessions.

Research within the positive psychology movement has shown that one can raise one’s own level of happiness. Before working with clients to raise their happiness levels, it is recommended that coaches focus on raising their own happiness levels. It is not yet clear how far reaching the implications of positive psychology work will be. We know that happiness increases wellness, and we are confident that working on one’s own – or a client’s – level of happiness will produce many positive results.

About the Author

Jessica Wolfson and Gloria Silverio are executive wellness coaches and work for Wellcoaches Corporation as faculty members, examiners, and mentor coaches. They have both completed a certification course in Authentic Happiness Coaching from Martin Seligman, former president of the APA and author of Authentic Happiness. This topic will be presented at the 2007 ACSM’s Health & Fitness Summit & Exposition.

ACSM’s Certified News, Volume 17, Number 1 (January-March 2007)

A Wellness Coach’s Guide to Working with Physicians

Opening the door to the medical world is like trying to pry open a door that has been nailed shut, both by the American Medical Association as well as pharmaceutical companies. Is it even possible to begin to open that door? Yes, the time has never been better for wellness coaches to collaborate with physicians to better serve the health needs of their patients. One important trend is that women will dominate family practice in the future because they are well-suited to be nurturers who are interested in prevention as well as treatment of illness, and who look out for the health interest of the entire family. Today, family physicians are overwhelmed and understand that while pharmaceutical companies have an important role to play, they are not the only solution. The opportunity to combine medication with lifestyle change supported by wellness coaches will provide physicians welcome support. Wellness coaches are trained to deliver mastery of wellness and behavioral change, and will make major strides in supporting patients to pursue healthy behaviors, including medication compliance, to treat and prevent disease. We now know that our lifestyle choices determine 70 percent of our health status, and the coaching model has measurable outcomes, including behavior self-efficacy and biometrics. The door is open for the collaboration of physician and wellness coach. Here are eight guidelines based on my experience as a licensed therapist and wellness coach who has worked closely with a family physician for the past three years.

1. Have your credentials available in print form

Physicians are required to post their medical credentials, and they want to readily see and understand the scope of training you bring to this new partnership. It is important for physicians to understand your specialties as a wellness coach, and how you can best intervene. Describe client scenarios when presenting your services to a physician and her team. Provide references to demonstrate that you can work with all kinds of personality types. They want to know how you will work under conflict if a patient is volatile. Let them know what you have been able to do with your clients and show them the results.

2. Help make the physician’s day easier

I work in a family practice with a woman doctor, her husband who is a physician assistant, and one nurse. On a Monday in the cold weather, this office sees between 60-70 patients, not including the patients who I work with. I step in to calm someone down and try to make an appointment with him/her for the next day. If there is a patient who would like information on the new drug for nicotine addiction, I give that to him/her because I sat in on the drug reps’ educational lecture, and the physician knows that is in my scope of practice. If a patient needs advice on losing weight to respond to a recent diabetes diagnosis, I give the relevant educational information to him and then send him to a certified diabetes educator or a personal trainer. Doctors want help: not more work. They rejoice if they get some assistance in their daily office life.

3. Present coaching outcomes simply and clearly

Behavioral goal charts and readiness/confidence ratings are excellent tools because they capture the coach’s skill and the patient’s efforts. Presenting material succinctly is critical because physicians have so little time.

4. Reduce unnecessary physician visits

We now have reports that health coaches, who help patients manage medical conditions, are effective in assisting people to better manage their illnesses and cut down on their emergency room visits. With a wellness coach working in a doctor’s office and being available at all times with specific information and resources related to patients needs, unnecessary doctor visits can be reduced. The coach can also use his/her time in the office to meet their other clients’ needs by using cell phones and laptops.

5. Be available, mobile, and efficient

Being available and being mobile are two very important steps to take to set up in the medical arena. The medical world is overloaded with patients and paperwork, so be as efficient as possible. Be present but with as little baggage as possible.

6. Handle referrals professionally

I always follow up with a thank you letter to the professional who refers a patient to me. I put a “First Time Contact” on the doctor’s desk to let her know that a patient that she referred to me came to the coaching session, and then describe the goals we will be working on. When appropriate, I refer to an ACSM-certified personal trainer, and to certified diabetes educator (CDE) and a certified alcohol counselor (CDAC).
7. Stay up to date with the latest high quality research

Read the latest research on the impact of health behaviors, and share a succinct synopsis with the doctor to support his/her discussions with patients. Be sure that everything you recommend is backed up by the latest high quality research. Prepare educational handouts to give to patients, and display handouts in your office or the waiting area with your company name and contact details. I subscribe to Dr. Weil’s newsletter and some other current journals to help stay up to date. Putting the most recent health and wellness information on the doctor’s desk every week with an FYI is an invaluable service and one that will earn you great respect.

8. Describe your compensation and payment process clearly

Present your means of being paid clearly and firmly. Physicians have enough trouble getting paid both by insurance companies as well as patients, without having more hassles to deal with. Let there be no misunderstanding between the coach and the doctor’s staff as to how you will be reimbursed. Also, make sure that there is a specific boundary between you and the doctor’s services.

As a therapist as well as a wellness coach, I am credentialed by major insurance companies, so I bill insurers myself using as much online and direct reimbursement as possible. I do not send out bills to patients, and I ask for payment immediately from those with no insurance.

In conclusion, I believe that wellness coaches will become firmly established as health practitioners, and ultimately we will be integrated into the family practice office, and perhaps sooner for integrative medicine practices. Good Luck!

About the Author

Lisa Todd Graddy, LCSW MS, is a Certified wellness coach and is ACSM Certified Personal Trainer Certified.

Applying Coaching Skills to Workplace Wellness

Worksite health promotion is as much about coaching the whole workforce in ways of wellness as it is about coaching individuals and regardless of the formality or informality of the health promotion initiative there are some coaching best practices for staff running the programs. Here are ten – all related to the coaching skills integral to managing workforce wellness.

1. Appoint an active, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable coordinator (internal or external). This person can rapidly create rapport and credibility across the organization. In the same way that a single client needs to have confidence in a coach a whole workforce has to feel that their program is professionally led by someone who is able to help the organization set wellness goals for the organization, guide it towards the outcomes, and hold it accountable for making progress.

2. Encourage senior leaders to participate and be VISIBLE.

Workplace wellness programs are much more successful if leaders act as role models, in exactly the same way that a coach in a 1:1 client relationship has to act as a role model. The CEO who bicycles to work and encourages employees to take the vacation owing to them provides profound support to the wellness initiative.

3. Cover nutrition, health, fitness, stress management, and weight management not just one of these. Wellness coaching is about meeting the client’s needs not what the coach thinks the client needs. In a diverse workforce there will be a whole host of different needs related to different aspects of wellness: in any workforce there are people who want to lose weight, balance home/work life, get fitter, learn to eat healthy foods and so on. In most 1:1 wellness programs the client is working on a range of these, aiming for a balanced lifestyle. This too is the aim of a good worksite program.

4. Make the program inclusive and simple. A successful workplace wellness program is inclusive, embracing people by providing a range of options that do not eat into their time or money and are easy to access: massage at the desk, healthy snacks in vending machines, biometrics monitoring, lunch time brownbags on health issues, and information sheets in restroom stalls, are just a few of the types of things that works to meet the needs of all the clients. This approach mirrors a good 1:1 coach’s approach working with small steps to help clients understand themselves better, open doors, and become more self-directed.

5. Keep wellness on the corporate agenda. A 1:1 coach has to be an excellent motivator and extremely supportive, knowing what motivates people, how to empathize, and ways of giving encouragement. Clients rely on their coaches for that sort of energy. In the same way a worksite wellness program requires this coaching skill. With all the varied demands of organizational life keeping leadership and employee support for a wellness initiative demands skill in motivating and knowledge of methods of motivation.

6. Focus on priorities and issues. Corporate health promotion initiatives must be focused on workforce priorities and issues. For example, an organization that is a 24/7 manufacturing operation will have an entirely different program than a 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. government department, or workforces which have significant numbers of older members will be different from programs where the workforce is predominantly people under 30. Again, the skill to focus on the client’s priorities and issues is as relevant for those coaching individuals as it is for workplace wellness leaders.

7. Measure progress. Regular reviewing and evaluating the success of the wellness program in meeting its goals and objectives is critical to getting timely feedback on what is and is not working in the wellness program. It guides adjustment of direction and, if necessary, demonstration of ‘tough love’ – e.g. pointing out to leaders their drop in commitment to the program or participants their tendency to say that they want to participate more than they actually participate. Being able to measure progress and guide action is as necessary of a skill in a program coordinator as it is in a 1:1 coaching relationship.

8. Switch hats. Like 1:1 coaches, wellness coordinators have to be skilled in switching hats. A workplace wellness promoter may one moment be advocating the program in a Board meeting, the next encouraging an individual, then being a publicist and media communicator, and within minutes, a designer of the next phase of the program, or an educator facilitating a particular brown bag topic.

9. Communicate, communicate, and communicate. The ability to communicate is the biggest key to being a good 1:1 coach, and this is the same for a wellness program coordinator. Knowledge and expertise in types of communication (verbal, non-verbal, communication media, etc), communication blocks, listening actively and well are essential. Perhaps surprisingly, organizations, like individuals, have defense mechanisms expressed verbally; ‘that’s not the way we do things around here’, or ‘we tried that before and it didn’t work’ are two common organizational ones. Good coordinators like good 1:1 coaches can recognize and handle these communication defenses, challenging them appropriately to help progress towards the wellness goals.
10. Make the program fun and challenging. Coaches in a 1:1 relationship look at their client’s overall dreams and embroider into the program other aspects of the client’s life that play into the goals. For example, a coach may encourage a client to take up tap dancing with a friend—combining the exercise goal, with a social aspect, and the new challenge of learning tap! It is the same for wellness worksite initiatives—the programs are better supported with an element of fun and challenge—team sports tournaments like softball or volleyball can work well with everyone being encouraged to have a go.

In summary, a successful worksite wellness initiative leader requires a very similar range and use of coaching skills to that of an individual coach working with one client. The context is different but it is easy to see how the skills are transferable and scalable.

About the Author

Naomi Stanford is a management consultant with SRA Touchstone Consulting, Washington DC. Additional to this role Stanford coordinates a flourishing wellness program: Healthy Minds, Healthy Bodies, Healthy Planet for the company’s 180 people. Stanford ran a similar program in her previous company and is a member of the Greater Washington Board of Trade Health Care Committee. She bikes to work, practices yoga, and runs with the DC RoadRunners Club.

Get out of Sales and Go Fishing!

Our thanks to Robert Rhode, Ph.D., for this title used in his presentation, “Coaching Behavior Change Using Motivational Interviewing,” at IHRSA 2007.

What would happen to your personal training business if you stopped selling training and focused instead on helping your clients clarify their goals, motivations, and the value of becoming fit? Would your business wither or grow?

My money is on growth.

I’m not suggesting that you stop charging for your services or that there is something shameful about selling. I am suggesting that a change in perspective—from selling to fishing—will help your clients clarify why they want to be fit and why they train with you. As a result, your clients are more likely to be intrinsically motivated and, therefore, more successful. They will also happily train with you for longer periods of time.

So what is fishing and how do you do it?

Let me answer this question through the lens of Motivational Interviewing (MI), an evidence-based methodology for helping people change behavior. MI is “a client-centered, directive method for enhancing intrinsic motivation to change by exploring and resolving ambivalence.” Let’s explore this further.

First, MI’s focus is wholly on the client—his/her agenda, motivations, perspective. To preserve this focus, it’s essential to fish for information beyond that needed to create an exercise prescription. Be curious and cultivate a beginner’s mind—no assumptions. Ask questions like, “What do you want to accomplish?” “If your training is successful, what would be different for you a year from now?” “What motivates you and what gets in your way?” These open-ended questions generate thoughtful responses and reveal things about your clients that are important for you to know and use.

Curiosity has another benefit as well. It assumes that your clients have the answers and that these answers are correct. Your clients are, after all, the experts of their own lives and it’s important that you give them the freedom to completely speak their mind without judgment.

What should you do when your client misunderstands the literature or chooses an action based on a popular exercise or nutrition myth? There is, after all, no shortage of “diet du jour” and “fitness by celebrity” programs. By all means, speak up if your clients choose goals that are unrealistic or prescriptions not supported by exercise science. Be aware, however, that how you speak up will make all the difference.

When your client asks you to endorse something unscientific, harmful, or ineffective, go fishing. This is the perfect time to ask, “What do you like about the diet?” or, “What attracted you to this particular exercise program?” Questions like these respect your client’s intelligence, are non-threatening, and will provide you with valuable information about your client’s agenda and motivations.

Once you have clarified what’s important to your client, summarize the relevant information and ask permission to share your expertise: “Now that I know you don’t enjoy cardio exercise, how do you feel about creating a program that integrates shorter bouts of aerobic training with strength training?” or “I understand your reluctance to strength train because you don’t want to develop bulky muscles. May I share with you some of the science that speaks to that concern?” Your clients always say, “yes” when I ask permission and I believe yours will as well.

Secondly, MI proposes that change occurs naturally and fishing gives you an effective way to encourage this natural human propensity. To do this, listen for “change talk.” Statements that begin with “I want to…” or “I can…” or “I started…” or “I will…” or “I need to…” give voice to your clients’ motivations and intention to act. And when you hear change talk, don’t just sit there! Reflect it back to your client, reinforce it by asking for more information (“Tell me more…”). Go fishing and keep the lure dangling where your client can see it!

Reinforcing your clients’ change talk is important because “people are more persuaded by what they hear themselves say than by what someone tells them.” In other words, your clients will always be more motivated by what they say themselves than by what you tell them about your service or the promise of exercise.

Third, MI assumes that ambivalence is a natural part of the change process. Therefore, don’t ignore or diminish your clients’ ambivalence when you hear it. Instead, embrace it—after all, change doesn’t happen without it. Help your clients resolve their ambivalence by amplifying the discrepancy between their present behavior and their goals. In other words, go fishing!

When your client misses a workout, rather than reminding them that they can’t achieve their goals without putting in the time, say instead: “I’m curious. How did it feel to not come to the club when you said you would?” or “What was great about giving yourself an unplanned day off from your workout?” These questions are neutral in tone, respectful, non-judgmental, and appreciate that the client has choice about doing or not doing the healthy behavior. You can then ask, “What would you do differently next time?” or “What did you learn?” Questions like these help your clients clarify their motivations and reinforce their commitment to their goals. Both outcomes also strengthen the value of the work they do with you.

In summary, if you fish effectively you can sell less. You create for your clients a richer training environment by encouraging them to hear their own change talk, explore their goals and motivations, and articulate for themselves all they receive from your service. In short, fishing gives your clients a powerful framework for success. And the greater your clients’ success, the greater is your reward—personally and professionally. Go fishing!
nothing I could to educate women about early detection, writing with lower survival rates. (www.KnowYourDensity.com). But of equal importance, if cancer gift of information that I realized many others did not have.

As I learned quickly from the researchers I bombarded with questions, that first week of diagnosis, “We can reduce our risk, but we can not prevent disease!” Quite a surprise at the time, that if you do everything “right” you can still get cancer. I was attending the ACSM Summit that week, you see, and was able to STOP a few scientists and press them on the matter.

At the end of the week, I apprehensively attended a presentation about working with breast cancer survivors, given by Harvard surgeon and breast cancer survivor, Dr. Carolyn Kaelin. Though I had walked beside a very close friend through many years of treatment, as well as her final days with the disease, I soon learned I had no idea of her experience. The presentation prepared me for the harsh reality of what I was about to go through and the profound impact it would have not only on my body, but my entire being.

For example, as a pre-menopausal breast cancer survivor, I could expect to age 10 years in one year (who’s ready for that?). I needed to do strength training to counteract bone loss (which still resulted in a 10% loss of bone density for me). I would most likely experience sarcopenic obesity (increase in adipose tissue/reduction in lean body weight). And that I should work to prevent more than 12 lbs. of weight gain during treatment, as anymore than that was associated with lower survival rates.

It set the stage for me to ask more questions and be proactive in my “patient” experience, which I continue to this day. Not only did I go into this experience with good health and fitness but I was given a gift of information that I realized many others did not have.

From the beginning of my journey with cancer, I vowed to do everything I could to educate women about early detection, writing and speaking on issues not often talked about (www.KnowYourDensity.com). But of equal importance, if cancer should strike, I wanted to do all I could to help survivors get their health, fitness, and well-being back after treatment; a challenge, even for an experienced health and fitness professional, like myself. I was in a position to make a difference and do this. So began the journey.

I had become certified a few years before my diagnosis as a wellness coach, had joined the Wellcoach® faculty, and was building a private practice. The day I was diagnosed, I was coaching a breast cancer survivor, ironically. I continued to coach survivors, formally and informally, but soon realized I needed to work with organizations to create a greater focus and engage more survivors in this area.

In November of 2006, a guide for informed choices around nutrition and physical activity for survivors, during and after treatment, was released by the American Cancer Society saying that “An appropriate weight, a healthful diet, and a physically active lifestyle aimed at preventing recurrence, second primary cancers, and other chronic diseases should be a priority for survivors...” But as we all know, guidelines aren’t usually enough to get people moving. People know what they need to do, they just have trouble doing it; survivors are no different.

What is different is that they may have more challenges to overcome as a result of the treatment or medications that they take long term. Some of those challenges include ongoing fatigue, sleep problems, emotional or mental challenges, anxiety, physical changes (too numerous to mention), or side effects from medications, all of which have an impact on health, fitness, and well-being.

Currently, very few cancer centers offer comprehensive programs to aid in improving health, fitness, and well-being after treatment. Many provide services such as counseling or support groups, dietitian consult, or physical therapy to deal with surgery issues, but nothing as comprehensive as wellness coaching. If a survivor is lucky enough to find a rehab or fitness program that is low cost or that insurance will pay for, the funds and visits end quickly, as do the recommended regimens. I have watched survivors get excited about a program they were a part of, only to watch them completely stop the healthy change when it ended. This transition from structured programs or professional consults to doing it “on their own”, is the perfect place for wellness coaching to insure continuity and a plan to facilitate the lifestyle changes into their life.

As an ideal stand alone program, wellness coaching addresses the many areas that impact a survivor’s health, fitness, and well-being. There is not one part of life left untouched by this disease: spiritually, emotionally, physically, socially, financially, or mentally; all interconnected in the path to healing after treatment. Having a partner to think through what matters most and developing a plan of action with small steps, really moves them towards better health faster than they might alone (and are the benefits most express gratitude about). Regaining control of weight, eating better, getting fit, improving sleep or energy, along with reducing risk of recurrence and improving overall happiness, are the general areas where I often support survivors.

My program is called Healthy and Fit After Cancer, which is primarily wellness coaching for cancer survivors. Initially, two organizations I had relationships with, were willing to give coaching a try for their survivors, CancerCare Connection in Delaware, and Rutland Regional Hospital in Vermont. This “pilot program” soon became a “pilot study” when a researcher from Richard Stockton College of New Jersey and the Delaware Cancer Consortium heard about the projects. Another cohort was added months later at Northwest Community Hospital in Chicago. We are in the midst of the pilot at this writing. We have 30 survivors ranging in age from 32-76, breast, prostate, and colorectal in an individualized three month coaching program.

Every survivor experiences cancer in a different way. Cancers and their treatments are different, as is the impact. A personalized approach is key. Amidst a renewed sense of purpose and appreciation for life, challenges often remain.
My mission is for all survivors to have access to a wellness coach to help them regain control of their health, fitness, and well-being again. I am building a team of coaches who are survivors or have a special interest in working with survivors. Please contact me if you have this interest!

About the Author

Pam Schmid is ACSM HealthFitness Instructor®, Executive Licensed Wellcoach®, patient advocate, and speaker through her business Priorities Simplified in Clayton, NC. Please contact her at Pam@pamschmid.com or go to her web site www.HealthyandFitAfterCancer.com.

Laying the Foundation of Behavior Change

As we all know a pyramid is an enormous structure that could not rise if it did not have a very wide and strong foundation. Reaching the pinnacle of behavior change also requires a broad and strong foundation. This foundation work is made up of thinking and feeling homework that needs to be done before actual behavioral change is attempted. Many personal trainers, dieticians, and all types of health educators were trained to think in terms of getting their clients to engage in new behaviors. Their training did not accentuate the foundation work that needs to be done. They often treated all clients as if they were ready to be on a trip to Hawaii.

DiClemente, 1983) has recognized that people range across a continuum of readiness and they have described this continuum as extending from Precontemplation (PC) where a person is not even thinking about changing to Contemplation (C) where they are thinking about changing to Preparation (P) where they are planning to make a change to Action (A) where they are doing the behavior with concentration to Maintenance (M) where the behavior has become more automatic. In this column we are interested in the early stages of PC, C, and P where the thinking and feeling foundation work is what needs to be accomplished by the client with the partnership of a coach in order to move to the later stages of A and M.

To ensure that you encourage your clients to set goals that they have confidence in their ability to accomplish, it’s important to focus on three foundation tasks BEFORE they start actual behavior change.

1. helping clients come up with strong, personal, positive motivator (benefits),
2. helping clients recognize their major barriers (obstacles) and
3. helping clients come up with some possible solutions (strategies) for each of the barriers

Finding out if these three tasks have been done is a very good way to discover how ready your client is to make change.

For example, PC – I WO N’T people won’t be interested in coming up with a motivator or discussing their barriers or possible solution because they are not interested in change right now. Treat them with respect and validate their situation so that they will not connect you with the emotionally negative experience of being judged. This approach leaves the door of possible change with your help open.

PC – I CAN’T people are fixated on their barriers. They have a litany of emotionally charged reasons why they can’t change their behavior. Since the three important things that all early stage people need to do are 1. to have a strong motivator, 2. to recognize barriers and 3. to come up with possible solutions, we can praise these people for knowing their barriers, one of the three foundation tasks.

They may also be willing to rationally sort their barriers into three columns: real barriers for which time will have to pass, excuses, and barriers that can be overcome by a strong enough motivator. Real barriers can be taken off the table thus lowering the emotional level of the discussion and the barriers left can be examined so see if there is one that be overcome by a strong enough motivator. For example my friend could never lose those 20 lbs. that she constantly bemoaned until she was invited on a trip to Hawaii.

C – I MAY people have not accomplished one or more of the three foundation tasks. They either can’t articulate a strong, positive enough motivator or they don’t recognize their major barriers, or they haven’t come up with any possible solutions for the barriers.

Let’s talk a little about negative health motivators versus positive motivators. Many, many people come for help when they have been scared by a real or potential negative health outcome. We have found that the impact of these negative experiences as a motivator can dissipate. We don’t sustain the strong feelings and they dissipate and no longer motivate us as they had in the beginning. So an important role for the coach is to help the client translate the possible negative experience into something positive that they want.

For example, I knew a woman who had been told that she was diabetic and then scared by a lecture about all the really devastating outcomes she could have if she didn’t change her ways. She came to work on changing her habits but was getting no where until she realized that to go on an Outward Bound-like experience she could not be on insulin. She had been planning and saving to go on this adventure for many years. When she realized that she could only go if she changed, it gave her the motivation to really commit to make changes. So any time you have a client with a negative health motivator, explain to them that concrete, positive motivators are better at sustaining change. Help them to figure out if there is something positive that they want connected to the negative health consequence.

P – I WILL people have accomplished all three of the foundation tasks. They have a strong, positive motivator, know their major barriers, and have come up with some possible solutions. Once they have accomplished these three foundation tasks you can encourage them to set small behavioral goals and know that they will have a good chance of accomplishing them. Their foundation work is done and they can move onto the behavioral end of the change continuum.

So if your training has not stressed the importance of giving your clients enough time to come up with a powerful intrinsic motivator, their barriers, and some possible solutions, you may have to make a leap of faith and allow your clients whatever time they need to accomplish these tasks. Once you have seen the difference it makes in the long run I believe that you will reinforce and value this foundation building. Remember that your clients will never value this thinking and feeling foundation work unless you first value it.

About the Author

Gabrielle R. Highstein, Ph.D., R.N., is an Instructor in Medicine at Washington University School of Medicine, Division of Health Behavior Research, and a Wellcoaches faculty member who is an expert in the transtheoretical model. Gabe can be reached at gabe.Highstein@gmail.com.

References

Wellness and Wisdom Within Illness

Fitness professionals know how challenging it can be to help unfit, but otherwise healthy clients, adopt an exercise routine to which they stay faithfully committed. At the beginning of the program, fed by a New Year’s resolution, a new relationship, a health scare or some other existential crisis, it is easy. You say “jog” and they sprint. You say “jump” and they say “Aren’t you going to hold me back with one of those harness things!”

But then, February rolls around and the gym parking lot is less full. Suddenly, appointments need to be rescheduled due to work or family commitments, and homeostasis resumes in the elliptical trainer cue (read: there isn’t one).

This is the way of life... the normal sine wave describing the waxing and waning of human motivation.

Now throw in a serious medical condition that is never going away. A cancer diagnosis brings new meaning to the word “obstacle.” Now it isn’t fatigue that results from too many glasses of Chardonnay the previous night that eats into motivation, but fatigue stemming from the assault of chemotherapy on bone marrow as well as malignant cells. Or it may be the raw fear of another heart attack happening despite a doctor’s encouragement to exercise moderately. It could be that your client really wants to be running on your treadmill, but he is in the hospital with pneumonia for the third time in three months.

Chronic illness is a major health issue in our society. It is estimated that nearly 125 million Americans suffer from at least one chronic condition and this is projected to grow to 157 million by 2020. The top five conditions, heart disease, cancer, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and diabetes, together account for more than two thirds of all deaths in this country.

On one hand, it is fortunate that diseases such as certain cancers and HIV/AIDS are becoming “chronic diseases.” With better treatments available, what used to be considered a death sentence can now be managed effectively long-term. As treatments for these and other conditions improve and the population ages, a greater and greater percentage of people seeking help with exercise programs, nutritional counseling, smoking or drinking cessation, or stress reduction are going to have one or more chronic diseases to manage concurrently.

Wellness coaches are in the perfect position to help such people. I am a retired physician who spent 15 years studying disease. I have also spent 47 years living with disease, cystic fibrosis. When I became a “wellness coach,” it was obvious what my niche would be, and I haven’t looked back. While I entered this field thinking that wellness coaching would be helpful for people with health issues, my experience has been overwhelmingly positive.

Many of my clients did nothing to cause their disease. Fate handed them a faulty gene or combination of genes and environmental cues that put them at high risk. Interestingly, I think I learn more from coaching these people than they learn from me. It is challenging work, of course, because it is frustrating for both of us to deal with the uncertainties of their health.

It is easy for those with serious illness to use as a major motivator the Big "F" word... fear. Unfortunately, while this may be effective in the short term, it is neither a pleasant motivator, nor one that works well in the long term. I have found that over time, fear often gives way to a more positive approach. People who were either born with their disease, or who have lived for a long time with their disease, are experts in finding their “inner” coach. This is the voice that tells them to exercise (or eat healthy, or sleep enough hours, or perform active relaxation, etc) in order to feel the best they can now... in the moment. They easily come to understand that exercise actually gives them energy instead of robbing them of it. They grasp that although their future health status may be largely out of their control, they are in control of many things, and great progress can be made when they focus on those.

The best thing about working with these clients is the wisdom that comes with being in touch with their own mortality leaves them very open to trying new things. They don’t tend to cling in fear to old habits. They truly want to make the best of the time they have left. To them, taking positive action is clearly a better strategy than simply waiting for the next shoe to drop.

Of course, not all clients with chronic disease are like this. Many are saddled with problems that were, in large part, preventable. Decidedly unhealthy lifestyle choices combined with genetic and environmental influences left them with heart disease, type II diabetes, obstructive lung disease, hypertension, liver problems, etc... etc. It is estimated that 70% of health care dollars is spent on preventable disease, due to poor lifestyle habits (and inadequate access to healthcare).

The difference in helping these clients as a health professional and helping them as a coach comes with taking off the "expert" hat. This is not always easy to do, especially when solutions seem quite obvious to you, but not so clear to your client. One thing all coaches know is that if an idea comes from you, it is much less likely to be embraced than if it comes from the client. Generally speaking, health care professionals are not trained to work that way.

One coaching tool that is effective with the client who is faced with (what seems to be) insurmountable health obstacles is appreciative inquiry. This is a process filled with positive energy. It involves questioning to bring out the positive core of the client. This includes the qualities, capabilities, beliefs and strengths that have led to previous successes. It keeps the client’s successes in the foreground as they are encouraged to dream big and to explore what they could achieve if they were at their best.

Finally, the most important aspect of working wisely with any client, especially one with severe health limitations, is to ensure frequent and early success. Nothing starts the healthy lifestyle ball rolling than a large dose of self-efficacy. This comes from the client witnessing, first hand, that they are indeed capable of successful encounters with... themselves. They begin to see that they can effect change in their lives, that they can take charge and do what they promised themselves.

By encouraging small, achievable goals and providing support and an automatic accountability system, the wellness coach is well positioned to optimize self-efficacy in her or his client. Then they roll.

About the Author

Julie Desch, MD, is president and founder of New Day Wellness (www.newdaywell.org), a non-profit organization with the mission to provide wellness coaching and personal training to people with chronic illnesses.
From, “I’m A Health Risk,” to, “I’m a Well-Being”: A Wise Direction for Corporate Health Promotion

The story line is old news but still shocking. We are a nation of people of all ages traveling toward a wall over the coming years. Preventable chronic disease on an unprecedented scale, starting with teenagers and those just ahead of them in Generation Y, and ending with our seniors who have not acquired the skills and knowledge to be the bosses of their health, is positioned to help bankrupt our economy by 2030 (when government healthcare expenditures are projected to rise from 19% today to 50% of government revenues). Only five percent of us engage in the top three to five health behaviors that prevent disease and more than half of our healthcare costs are caused by preventable disease.

The workplace is an interesting stage for the story to play out. On one hand, employers are tackling the enormous challenge of reigning in preventable employee healthcare costs. This is making some industries unprofitable and may lead to the demise of some (for example, the cost of healthcare for Starbucks now exceeds the cost of coffee).

On the other hand, workplace conditions (long hours, high stress, travel, struggling morale, and inadequate cultural permission for self-care — e.g., exercising during the workday or taking time to eat healthy foods) are making it difficult for most employees to adopt healthy lifestyles.

So even while companies invest to reduce preventable disease, the features of today’s workplace are in parallel increasing the risks of preventable disease and bringing us closer to the wall.

We have to work harder to help our companies survive and deal with the burden of our rising healthcare costs. And the harder we work, the higher the toll. The risk that we will get sick and increase healthcare costs grows. The wall is getting closer.

What a vicious circle we are in. There is no easy way out. We would like to propose two new directions.

First let’s look to our leaders. The Center of Creative Leadership compared the leadership attributes of executives who exercise regularly with unfit executives and the fit executives were rated significantly higher, at least in part because they were more energetic. Perhaps their position as healthy role models is even more important, although not evaluated in their study.

Wellcoaches coaches report that while they are delighted to coach employees, clients often face inadequate cultural permission for self-care. Examples include: bad food choices at meetings, and frowns when an employee leaves his desk to go to the gym or goes home for a home-cooked family meal. So coaches help employees build energizing wellness plans only to be sabotaged by barriers at work.

This has led our Wellcoaches corporate team to decide that when we deliver coaching services to corporations, it’s important that executives go first. Executives must answer the call to lead by example, openly share their wellness journeys, disclose their ups and downs, and acquire basic coaching skills so that they inspire and not trigger resistance among colleagues. Leaders need to not just set policy but walk the walk and show the value of exercising during the workday or going the extra distance to find healthy foods or going home to cultivate a strong family.

But this isn’t just about reducing health risks and healthcare costs. How many of our best ideas or solutions pop up when we’re exercising or doing something fun? When leaders and employees learn that their energy, productivity, and creativity soar when they take care of their bodies and lives outside work, then we have the recipe for more energy, innovation, and productivity for all, leading to more successful companies.

Second, let’s talk more about what delivers well-being, including energy, vitality, and feeling satisfied with one’s work and life, and talk less about what causes disease and impairs productivity — overweight, high blood pressure, and stress.

Ask yourself and those around you — would you prefer to have more productivity, or more energy and zest? Would you rather focus on having lower blood pressure, or having a more satisfying work life? The second focus is more engaging and happily delivers, indirectly, the first focus.

The best path to higher well-being is not the direct one that focuses solely on pushing education about preventing illness — risks, numbers, and avoiding unhealthy behaviors. It’s the indirect one where we coach people to choose to build what we call the DNA of Well-Beings. The DNA model integrates the science-based concepts of positive psychology (science of what optimizes mental health or flourishing) with physical heath — connecting mind, body, heart, and spirit.

DNA of Well-Beings

All of the five components of DNA (relationships, energy, emotions, strengths, and meaning) are vital and depend upon each other and, unlike our physical DNA, our DNA of Well-Being can get better as we grow older and wiser.

Without supportive relationships it’s hard to engage and develop our strengths. We need physical energy to nurture our relationships and our relationships energize us. We need meaning to reach the highest level of positive emotions. Engaging our strengths generates positive emotions. Positive emotions give us energy and help our relationships flourish. You get the picture.

The double-stranded backbone of a Well-Being is based upon strong, healthy, growth-promoting relationships at work and home. You probably would agree that nothing builds or drains energy and enhances or relieves stress more quickly than the quality of our relationships and recent relational interactions.

Our energy, not time, is our life currency. If we exercise, eat and sleep well, and schedule downtime or fun, we are amazingly creative and productive when we need to be. Often our best ideas and solutions come when we are working out or having fun.

Our emotional state is like our prevailing weather pattern — rainy, cloudy, or sunny. Our positive and sunny emotions are generated by the way we relate to the past (gratitude and forgiveness), present (mindfulness, savoring, and engaging in meaningful activities) and future.
(hope and optimism). We can recognize clouds forming (lack of gratitude or forgiveness, lack of savoring, lack of meaning, etc.) and reframe our thinking to bring out the emotional sun.

Developing emotional resiliency in the face of adversity is what helps us stay on track with healthy lifestyle choices and positive relationships. Growing our emotional intelligence, in particular handling strong emotions in ourselves and others, allows us to navigate storms calmly and avoid terrible stress on our bodies. How often have you noticed that you accomplish more when you feel good? It’s not a luxury but a necessity for performing at our peak.

Then comes our strengths and talents and stretching our use of them to grow and change. Most of life’s most nourishing “flow” experiences happen at work and we don’t even enjoy them because we’re fretting about what’s gone wrong and what’s not getting done. We’re missing the best moments of our days and even lives. Let’s capture and savor them and celebrate them, at minimum in our work performance reviews.

Last and most importantly is meaning. What is life without purpose? Best to think hard and get clear about the meaning of life for ourselves at three levels — first ourselves, and our personal growth and life satisfaction, second our connections with close colleagues, family, and friends, and third our contribution to building a better world through our work and other activities.

**Let’s Dream**

Coaches like to talk about visions and then how to make them real. Imagine a highly successful workplace, whose leaders model and enable a culture which helps employees become Well-Beings. The path leads to ever-improving innovation, growth, and profitability.

Imagine a world where a firm’s financial prosperity does not lead to today’s terrible toll — threatening the health and longevity of those who sacrificed at least some of their well-being in favor of their employer’s success.

Let’s take on the challenge of showing that we can be number one in corporate performance while enhancing, not damaging, the health and well-being of the people who get us there. This is an important way for us to help turn around the American healthcare train heading for a wall. We all win. We help save ourselves, and the financial strength of our companies and our country. If anyone can do it, we can. If you’re a leader, it’s time to step up to the plate.

**About the Author**

Margaret Moore, BS, MBA is the founder & CEO of Wellcoaches Corporation (www.wellcoaches.com) and conceived the DNA of Well-Beings as a model of optimum mental and physical health. Donna Allen Cover, PhD, CHES, FAWHP is the founder and CEO of Positive Purpose Inc. that hosts the Positive Psychology Forum in Sedona, AZ. (www.positivepurposeinc.com).

Of Gremlins, Prisms, and Choice

“Believe in yourself and you will be unstoppable.” – Emily Guay

What an inspirational statement! It evokes a sense of success and aspirations fulfilled. It is a simple concept to understand and yet difficult to achieve.

We can all list the reasons why we’re not reaching our full potential. Reasons like, “I can’t. I’m too ....” These statements become a self-fulfilling prophecy and they are how we stop ourselves. This practice has many names: gremlin, saboteur, inner critic, disempowering thought, and negative self-talk to name a few. But they all describe the same thing: an internal voice that tells us we can’t be successful, we shouldn’t dream, we can’t change, we’re not qualified for the promotion, we have nothing to contribute, and on and on.

To be human is to have this internal voice, this gremlin. It does have a legitimate purpose; it protects us from risk. But in doing so, its voice often distorts opportunity. It creates insurmountable challenges where there is potential for growth. It prevents change even when the status quo is undesirable and unfulfilling. It makes us victims and robs us of choice. It links a fact (“I didn’t stamp an envelope.”) with a judgment about our capabilities (“I’m stupid and forgetful”) and it is activated by change.

As a coach, I am an agent of change. As a health and fitness professional, you are as well. You routinely help your clients implement lifestyle changes. And since gremlins are activated by change, you can expect your clients’ gremlin to show up periodically simply because they’ve hired you.

In addition, you have your own gremlin to contend with! Think about what happens when you face change — a promotion, a new facility, selling your services to a prospective client, an advanced certification. Does your gremlin remind you why you’re not the perfect trainer for the job, that you don’t have the ability to grow your business to the max, or that you’re not as smart as some of your colleagues?

Happily, you can learn to hear your gremlin’s voice and move beyond it. Although the method described here will work for anyone, I recommend you begin by getting acquainted with your own gremlin before introducing the concept to your clients. Once you become more practiced, you can choose to share this information and your observations with them if you wish.

**Hear your true voice**

First, identify what your gremlin is telling you about you. Listen to your internal voice and clarify the disempowering thought. Your emotion and accompanying body sensations are good indicators that your gremlin is active. Emotions like happiness, gratitude, or joy resonate in our bodies in a unique way. We may feel light, uplifted, open, or energized. In contrast, gremlin-speak feels distressful emotionally. In addition, you may experience headaches, muscle aches, stomach upset, sweaty palms, a tight throat or clenched teeth.

When you hear your gremlin, pause for a moment. Examine what’s happening around you and inside of you. What emotion do you feel? What sensation? What is your gremlin saying about you?

Now that you can hear the gremlin’s voice clearly, you can distinguish it from your own — your true voice. Your true voice is capable of making a neutral observation about circumstances without linking them to a judgment about you. Notice that both voices exist in
your head and, just like it's impossible to listen to two conversations at one time, it's equally impossible to hear your true voice speaking if all you can hear is your gremlin.

**IDENTIFY YOUR GREMLIN’S PERSPECTIVE**

Your gremlin doesn't stop with a simple judgment about you. It validates that judgment by giving you a perspective about some aspect of your life. When you unconsciously accept that perspective as “the way things are,” you become stuck. The perspective becomes “The Truth.”

Here's an example: Let's say your gremlin says you are an ineffective salesperson, a trainer destined to always struggle. This belief is powerful, and chances are good that every time you approach a prospective client you are already convinced they are not going to hire you. When they don't, they simply reconfirm what you already know. Now your experience confirms your belief. It also generates your perspective about selling personal training: it's hard, or scary, or impossible, or a struggle, or something you will never master. Regardless of your description, this is your gremlin's perspective! And until you make this perspective conscious, your gremlin will continue to run the show.

**THE POWER OF CHOICE**

You can choose to approach selling (or anything, for that matter) from many different perspectives. Think of perspectives as the facets of a prism. Depending on which facet you look through, the world looks different. Now, here's the great part: You get to choose your perspective and it doesn’t have to be the one that your gremlin wants!

Playing with perspectives begins with brainstorming. It can be fun and is always enlightening. When you brainstorm, hold nothing back. Write down every idea that comes to you no matter how far-fetched and implausible. You're not obligated to choose any of them and they will prime your creative juices.

Let’s say your current perspective on selling personal training is, “it’s hard.” Alternative perspectives could be: it’s easy, it’s a game, it’s fun, or it’s a great way to meet people. Or, you can really think out of the box and ask yourself, “What would my pet’s perspective be? Or what would a red perspective (or your favorite color) look like? Or what perspective does a successful trainer use?” (Ask one to find out!)

Any of these perspectives will shift the prism, permitting you to see what you could not see before because your gremlin was blocking the view. Make a list of every perspective you identify and then examine them in more detail. Notice which resonate with your true voice? Which feels like a good fit? Ask yourself, “If this was my perspective, what would I be saying ‘yes’ to and what would I be saying ‘no’ to?” This will help you clarify all the perspective has to offer.

Choose a perspective that feels right and commit to using it for a week or two. As you experience it, notice how it feels in your body and what emotions it evokes. Notice how it changes things, either the process of doing something or the outcome. You may continue to hear your gremlin’s voice, but now that you recognize it for what it is you can begin to move beyond it. Be sure to remember that no perspective is “The Truth.” Although any perspective may be true for you, they are simply one facet of a multi-faceted prism, a specific way to examine, explore, and experience an aspect of our life.

Learning to hear and move beyond your gremlin is well worth the practice, and consciously choosing perspectives that resonate and nurture will offer you freedom to grow. Ultimately, the opportunity waiting for you is a life that fulfills and makes you alive. It’s your choice.

---

**About the Author**

Heidi Duskey, M.A., is an ACSM Certified Health Fitness Specialist and has worked in the fitness industry for over 15 years, holding club management positions in fitness, membership, and program development. Sparked by a keen interest in human behavior and learning, she transitioned into coaching in 2005 earning credentials from Wellcoaches and The Coaches Training Institute. Underpinning Heidi’s work today is her curiosity about how people successfully adopt sustainable, healthy behaviors and her passion to effectively support this process. She currently maintains a private coaching practice, coaches at Manchester Athletic Club (Manchester, MA), and walks the walk as a seasoned racewalker. Heidi can be reached at heidi@coach4zest.com.

ACSM’s Certified News, Volume 19, Number 1 (January-March 2009)

**Coaching Comes of Age: Why Wellness Coaching Works**

While the coaching industry is dedicated to helping people take charge and reach their full potential in all walks of life, in medicine there is a huge need for coaches to help people take charge to not only prevent disease but also to thrive.

We face another financial crisis, one brought about by epidemics of preventable diseases. Treasury Office projections show that 20 years from now, we may need to spend nearly half of total government revenues on healthcare, 70 percent of which can be prevented. It is vital to build standards for professional coaches in healthcare and help establish a scientific foundation for coaching psychology as a path to making a dent in preventing disease.

Progress is being made in articulating a scientific foundation for coaching. A growing and diverse set of domains in psychology are adding to coaches’ toolboxes. Coaching psychology — the science of coaching relationships designed to optimize health, well-being, and performance — is making significant strides.

We offer the following meta-frame to help coaches get a better grip on where their clients are at so they can help them “get it done.” It is built on the premise that coaching is a humanistic relationship designed for constructive development.

**What is Constructive Development?**

Constructivists believe that we make our own reality. We construct what we perceive, what we believe, what things mean, and what we value. Developmental psychologists study how we grow over our life span. Melding the two together, constructive development is the process of qualitative changeover time in our constructions: perspectives, beliefs, and making-meaning. This meta-frame is ready-made for coaches. At the heart of coaching is the belief that helping clients shift assumptions and frameworks enables them to grow beyond problems and generate new perspectives and possibilities.

**Coaching is a Humanistic Relationship**

Coaches frequently describe their work as assisting clients to move from Point A to Point B. The question is: what is point B? The humanist would answer — our best self. Humanists have taught us that we are wired to be self-actualizers — that we yearn to fulfill our...
potential and achieve life satisfaction and happiness. Empathetic and accepting relationships foster self-actualization. Thus coaching relationships are humanistic — they enable growth and change. Character virtues, strengths, and talents are valued and encouraged to grow and flourish. Clients’ efforts toward self-determination, autonomy, and choice are supported while the building of environmental supports is encouraged. Emotional intelligence increases. Physical health and vitality are strengthened.

Constructive Development Within A Humanistic Relationship

We assert that constructive development comes in two “sizes”: Big Ds and Coaching Ds. Big Ds are the large ways we develop new perspectives throughout our life-span, usually over years. Navigating an entire developmental change (a Big D) is not the work of coaches, however. While we might wish to have the wisdom of age 50 at age 40, this is not a reasonable coaching assignment. Coaching Ds are the primary focus of coaches — specific change cycles within Big Ds or at major transitions into new Big Ds.

An example of a Big D is the Transtheoretical model, developed by James Prochaska, which describes how people advance through stages of readiness to change. The model of Mount Lasting Change, developed by Margaret Moore et al (2005), is an out-growth of this model, a pyramid of change that encourages clients to construct and aim for an optimal vision to achieve their “best self.” Another example is Appreciative Inquiry, a 5-D cycle of change first proven in the corporate setting. The 5-Ds are: Define, Discover, Dream, Design, and Destiny. A third model is Hope therapy, which provides a change.

The coach toolbox also has various “constructive” tools that contribute to change cycles, such as developing more self-efficacy, autonomy, emotional intelligence, or flow.

Making It Simple — An Innovative Cartoon

To portray this process of constructive-development, we developed a 3.5 minute cartoon: “How Coaching Works” posted at YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uy7SMQte4RJ.

It demystifies the process of coaching as it brings alive its psychological foundations. This simple, clever video helps coaches better describe how coaching works and helps clients appreciate the potential that coaches offer. The cartoon depicts a client facing a challenging road ahead who engages a well-equipped coach to successfully navigate the journey—a cycle of change and growth — to reach his best.

When clients come to coaches for help in reaching their goals, they also get a bonus: they grow, develop, and change, self-actualizing through a process of constructive development. This process is facilitated by a supportive relationship where clients feel safe, understood, and appreciated, and are challenged to be their best. As clients grow closer to their “best self,” they become healthier, happier, and energized to live life fully. We invite coaches to adapt this new meta-frame to their own specialty area, developing their own toolbox to inspire clients to “get it done.”

About the Authors

Margaret Moore/Coach Meg, MBA, CEO & Founder, Wellcoaches Corporation www.coachmeg.com; coachmeg@wellcoaches.com.

B.J. Richstone, Psy.D., Wellnesscoach and developmental psychologist Bjrichstone@aol.com.

Exercise is Medicine™: Doctors, Coaches, & Clubs

At long last, the ACSM/IAMA Exercise is Medicine™ initiative acknowledges that exercise is a breakthrough medicine which is safe and effective to prevent or ameliorate most common medical conditions. This initiative offers health clubs a new opportunity to reach out to the medical community, and open up markets for new members and programs. What will it take for success?

Deploy the cutting edge toolbox of the fitness or wellness coach. The combination of the professional coach’s toolbox with clinical exercise physiology has unleashed a new generation of certified fitness and wellness coaches. Not only are they skilled at helping people build and sustain healthy lifestyles, they impress physicians with their command of exercise science along with their ability to help people make lasting change. While personal training is valuable to many, training sessions alone often do not provide the skill and support to move people to take charge and sustain regular exercise. Coaches promise to be an important bridge between the club and physician to implement Exercise is Medicine™.

Help physicians spark patient motivation to adopt fit lifestyles. Medical schools spend little time teaching students about exercise prescription or how to help patients pursue healthy lifestyles Clubs and coaches have a unique opportunity to assist doctors with the exercise prescription of their patients and provide them with a resource to use short physician visits to spark patient motivation to get fit. Further, offering trial club memberships and coaching programs to physicians and their staff will help them learn what coaches do and why it is important to walk the walk.

Build trust and collaborative relationships with physicians. To build trusting relationships, physicians appreciate open communication and detailed background information from clubs on the credentials of their employed fitness professionals and coaches, on equipment and programs available for people who are sedentary and have health risks, and a communication method to receive concise feedback on the progress of their patients. Being honest about what your facility offers and communicating about patient progress is essential to a lasting collaboration with physicians. A short summary of a patient’s fitness or wellness plan and goals, including motivators, strengths, and challenges is valuable. Detailed feedback (data) to physicians should be tailored to address the reason the physician advised the referral, such as BMI, waist circumference, blood pressure, and heart rate measurements for someone who is overweight and hypertensive.

Cultivate your market. Cast a wide net. In addition to working directly with physicians, including alternative medicine, may also be an option. Examples may include chiropractors, acupuncturists, and rehabilitation facilities. To facilitate the relationship, set up fact finding meetings with these providers to uncover unmet needs of their patients, then offer your memberships and programs that meet the needs of their patients. Examples could include a club membership plus a wellness coaching program, short-term membership for first time exercisers, prevention programs or lecture series for patients with risk factors and rehabilitation programs.

Learn from success stories. The Thoreau Club partnered with a local hospital to deliver the Prelude program first to its employees, and later to patients via physician referrals. The Prelude program was an 8-week introductory membership that included weekly sessions with a

ACSM’s Certified News, Volume 19, Number 2 (April-June 2009)
Coaching in a Clinical Environment: Observations and an Invitation

I am breaking new ground as a health coach for Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates, a non-profit multi-specialty medical group in eastern Massachusetts. As the company’s first coach, I am accountable for creating a coaching program that improves clinical outcomes for patients with chronic medical conditions like diabetes, hypertension, dyslipidemia, and obesity, and can be replicated across our offices. My clients are referred by my practice’s primary care clinicians, and I often work with our nutritionists. Embedded into the program are quantitative and qualitative tracking measures that facilitate ongoing assessment of the program’s efficacy. These “feedback loops” allow us to quickly modify the program and have proven invaluable to its development.

I have been given an extraordinary opportunity, one that stretches my skills as a coach and provides daily gratification. As I witness my clients’ changing behavior, their improving health, and their self-discovery, my belief in the power of coaching is continually reaffirmed. My experience thus far is that coaching fits easily into the clinical environment and strengthens the care that my team provides.

My training as an ACSM-certified fitness professional is equally important in the work that I do. Most of my clients tap into this expertise during the coaching process, and without it I would be hard-pressed to guide them through many of the behavior changes they are ready to make.

Being a coach and fitness professional are more than essential to my work. Together, these skills set create a potent service that has much to offer a clinical team; they will serve you well if you want to coach within a medical environment. Consider the following:

• Your training prepares you to create safe and effective ways of improving health through physical activity. This expertise aligns with and augments that of physicians and, generally, does not exist elsewhere in a medical practice.
• You share a common language with clinicians: HbA1c, BMI, lipid profiles, blood pressure, spinal stenosis, osteoporosis, etc. This fosters communication throughout the team and helps to provide a seamless service to patients. Many of my clients are pleased that my notes are read by their physician. They report feeling supported, as if the “safety net” beneath them is strengthened.
• You are a coach, trained to help people make sustainable behavior change. You do this through powerful conversations that ask clients to distinguish their own path to health, engaging them in the process of becoming healthy. Your training facilitates a different kind of conversation about lifestyle choices with your clients, one that is powerful and self-directed. I know coaching changes lives and I hope that it becomes a reimbursed intervention someday soon. This is my vision. If it is yours, I invite you to join me.

Recently on a beautiful summer day, I had lunch with Barbara Fredrickson, author of the new book *Positivity* which summarizes her 20 year research career focused on the study of positive emotions. On the book cover, Martin Seligman, founder of the new field of positive psychology, describes Barbara as the “genius of the positive psychology movement.” The timing was perfect. I was preparing my presentation on positive psychology and coaching for the September 2009 Harvard Medical School Conference: Coaching in Medicine and Leadership.

I jumped at the chance to ask the world-famous expert, “Have you truly cracked the code for happiness? That it’s about focusing on a target for one’s state of being — moment to moment, day to day, week to week, month to month? That the target is a ratio of three positive emotions to each negative emotion, above which we flourish and below which we languish? Or do you think a new theory and evidence will arrive down the road?”

Dr. Fredrickson smiled her humble smile, and replied, “No... This is it.” I then asked: given that your data show that 80% of people are below the tipping point of three positive emotions to one negative emotion, could that be why we have an epidemic of obesity? In fact people do not have the capacity, resources, and resilience needed to change lifestyles successfully?

Fredrickson agreed that while most of us think of ourselves as positive, in fact most of us are below the tipping point of positive emotions to one negative emotion, that could be why we have an epidemic of obesity? In fact people do not have the capacity, resources, and resilience needed to change lifestyles successfully.

Fredrickson agreed that while most of us think of ourselves as positive, in fact most of us are below the tipping point of positive emotions to one negative emotion, that could be why we have an epidemic of obesity? In fact people do not have the capacity, resources, and resilience needed to change lifestyles successfully.

Fredrickson agreed that while most of us think of ourselves as positive, in fact most of us are below the tipping point of positive emotions to one negative emotion, that could be why we have an epidemic of obesity? In fact people do not have the capacity, resources, and resilience needed to change lifestyles successfully.

Fredrickson agreed that while most of us think of ourselves as positive, in fact most of us are below the tipping point of positive emotions to one negative emotion, that could be why we have an epidemic of obesity? In fact people do not have the capacity, resources, and resilience needed to change lifestyles successfully.

Fredrickson agreed that while most of us think of ourselves as positive, in fact most of us are below the tipping point of positive emotions to one negative emotion, that could be why we have an epidemic of obesity? In fact people do not have the capacity, resources, and resilience needed to change lifestyles successfully.

Fredrickson agreed that while most of us think of ourselves as positive, in fact most of us are below the tipping point of positive emotions to one negative emotion, that could be why we have an epidemic of obesity? In fact people do not have the capacity, resources, and resilience needed to change lifestyles successfully.

Fredrickson agreed that while most of us think of ourselves as positive, in fact most of us are below the tipping point of positive emotions to one negative emotion, that could be why we have an epidemic of obesity? In fact people do not have the capacity, resources, and resilience needed to change lifestyles successfully.
the tipping point, people are healthier and have the resources to change and grow, and bounce back from adversity. They flourish and are on an upward spiral. Below the tipping point, people languish and fall into a downward spiral.

**What is So Important About Positivity?**

Some have criticized the positive psychology movement for focusing so much on happiness. They contend that, while happiness is nice to have, it is not essential. Positive psychologists have been accused of being superficial and new-age, not grounded in the brutal reality of the human condition. However, Fredrickson’s latest discovery is showstopping: Positivity is the mechanism of action for resilience and life satisfaction. Most would agree, particularly in these challenging times, resilience in the face of significant adversity is essential, not just nice to have.

Fredrickson goes beyond happiness to focus on flourishing. She contends that people who flourish not only feel good but also do good. They have a sense of purpose or calling and they are highly engaged. They give to others with their best possible self to achieve their best possible future. Fredrickson contends that the way to happiness is to flourish through cultivating positivity in order to be optimally resilient in the face of negativity. Hence positivity is a necessity, not a luxury — an essential component to good health and well-being.

**How Does Positivity Work?**

According to Fredrickson, positivity not only feels good. Positivity cumulatively broadens thinking, builds resources, and widens possibilities. People who cultivate positivity are more open-minded, flexible, mindful, optimistic, and resilient. They have better social connections. They sleep better and experience better health. Growing literature reports that high levels of positivity improve health and extend life. Chronic stress (negativity) has been shown to negatively impact health, while long term positive emotions may prevent people from becoming ill and favorably impact morbidity and mortality. High positivity people have more effective immune systems; positive emotions reduce cold and flu infections as well as real and perceived physical symptoms. Happy people also are more likely to engage in healthy behaviors. Positivity and health is a two-way street: positive health generates positivity and positivity generates positive health, an upward spiral.

**How Does Coaching Generate Positivity?**

Coaching generates positivity by fostering the capacity, resources, and processes that are needed for successful change. Coaching helps clients identify what makes them flourish. It builds the top ten positive emotions: ‘inspiration: connecting health and well-being to higher purpose and life meaning; hope: creating a vision of the future, identifying small steps forward that feel doable, and developing the experimental mindset of a scientist; pride: uncovering strengths and talents and realizing goals and success; interest: setting goals that are engaging and “a stretch,” but not anxiety producing; love: fostering trust, rapport, and connection with the coach, and harnessing social support; awe: identifying inspiring role models and heroes; amusement: laughing at self and situations, joy: improving awareness and enjoyment of thriving; gratitude: appreciating life’s gifts including challenges; and serenity: stopping to savor moments of contentment.

Coaching also helps generate strategies to reduce negativity, such as: improving mindfulness and moving away from “automatic pilot”; building confidence with small successes; and reversing the focus — digging for the gold in the negative, and building more positivity — to displace negativity.

My lunch with Barbara Fredrickson turned out to be nourishing to both body and mind. Her pioneering work inspires all of us to ask the life-changing question: are you languishing or flourishing? Check at www.positivratio.com.

**About the Author**

Margaret Moore/Coach Meg, MBA, is the founder & CEO of Wellcoaches Corporation, a strategic partner of ACSM, widely recognized as setting a gold standard for professional coaches in healthcare. She is co-director, Institute of Coaching, at McLean Hospital/Harvard Medical School. She co-authored the ACSM-endorsed Lippincott, Williams& Wilkins Coaching Psychology Manual, the first coaching textbook in healthcare.

**References:**


**Curiosity—At the Frontier of Coaching Health and Well-Being**

In a recent study, more than 2,000 older adults aged 60 to 86 were evaluated to determine who was more likely to be alive at the conclusion of the study. In the group that achieved greater longevity, one factor was significantly more important than any other. Are you curious as to what that factor was? Knowing about this factor also may help you enjoy a long life.

In his new book, *Curious?* Todd Kashdan, professor of psychology at George Mason University, reveals that the all-important ingredient to longevity in this study was curiosity. He points out: “Those who were more curious at the beginning of the study were more likely to be alive at the end of the study, even after taking into account age, whether they smoked, the presence of cancer or cardiovascular disease, and all the rest of the usual markers.” While he acknowledges that declining curiosity may be a sign of declining health and neurological illness, Kashdan believes that “there are promising signs that enhancing
curiosity reduces the risk for these diseases and even the potential to reverse some of the natural degeneration that occurs."

According to Kashdan, curiosity has a powerful effect on well-being and thriving. It is incumbent upon coaches to understand precisely what it is, its benefits for psychological and physical health, and how to best facilitate curiosity in our clients.

**What is Curiosity?**

Curiosity has received more than a century of psychological study and many definitions have been offered over the years. What all definitions have in common, however, is that curiosity is (1) a motivational state; (2) approach-oriented and; (3) associated with exploration. A good working definition of curiosity, offered by Kasdan, is: “The recognition, pursuit, and intense desire to explore novel, challenging, and uncertain events.”

**We are Wired to Be Curious**

Psychologists who subscribe to the intrinsic motivation tradition believe that interest or curiosity arises from the operation of evidence-based primal needs, such as competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Scientists also have focused on physiological explanations by studying curiosity patterns in the brain. They have discovered that the chemical dopamine is released from the striatum in the brain at a greater rate when a person pushes beyond the boundaries of the known, facing challenges, novelty, and uncertainty. There is also a greater release of dopamine when there is personal importance or meaning in the novel situation. This surge of dopamine prepares us to capitalize on these experiences by focusing our attention on the present, mobilizing our energy resources, and initiating approach movements.

**What Purpose Does Curiosity Serve?**

Curiosity motivates us to be receptive to the happenings of the present moment, to be immersed in, explore, and investigate our surroundings. In the process, curiosity stretches our knowledge and skills, enabling us to meet new people and learn new things. In the longterm, curiosity builds competence.

**Curiosity Leads to Well-Being**

In cross-sectional studies, researchers who measured levels of curiosity consistently report a greater level of psychological well-being. Regarding physical health, as was previously mentioned, older adults with greater curiosity have been found to live longer over a 5-year period. Kashdan admits that the mechanisms linking curiosity to physical health, illness and mortality are not yet fully understood. He offers several intriguing explanations for why highly curious people may live longer, such as “the process of neurogenesis stemming from continued novel and intellectual pursuits, a non-defensive willingness to try unfamiliar yet science-based health strategies, or the psychological benefits of evaluating stressors as challenges being guided by exploration as opposed to avoidance.” He suggests that “an examination of cognitive, behavioral, social, and biological levels of analysis will lead to promising avenues of when and how curiosity leads to desirable outcomes.”

**In Coaching**

Perhaps most important for coaching, curiosity promotes new ways of thinking and acting. Perspective change is the bread and butter of coaching. Kashdan writes, “People who feel curious challenge their views of self, others, and the world with an inevitable stretching of information, knowledge and skills.” Coaches know that this is an important route to meaningful change.

Curiosity also helps in goal fulfillment. Kashdan and Steger (2007) studied people over the course of 21 days and found that people who were highly curious were more likely to persist in attaining their goals, even in the face of obstacles, and were also more likely to express gratitude to their benefactors. This led to higher levels of perceived meaning and purpose.

Curiosity also can help our clients build neurological connections as they explore new experiences and seek out new information.

Finally, according to Kashdan, curiosity leads to more efficient decision-making and helps us grow in our ability to see the relationships among disparate ideas, leading to more creativity.

**Conclusion**

It is not surprising that curiosity and achieving our best life have been found to be linked.

Imagine life without curiosity. It would be a grim, boring existence. Our mission as coaches should be three-fold. First, we should be curious about curiosity, encouraging research in our field. Second, we should model curiosity for our clients in our powerful questions, active listening, and perceptive reflections. Third, we should facilitate curiosity, helping clients develop and use their curiosity to enhance their lives and their health, so that they can live longer, more fulfilling lives.

**About the Authors**

BJ Richstone, Psy.D., CPC is a Harvard-trained clinical psychologist and Certified Professional Coach. She has a Doctorate in Ministry and is a published spiritual author. She has appeared nationally on radio and television. Margaret Moore (Coach Meg), MBA, is the founder & CEO of Wellcoaches Corporation, a strategic partner of ACSM, widely recognized as setting a gold standard for professional coaches in healthcare. She is co-director, Institute of Coaching, at McLean Hospital/Harvard Medical School. She co-authored the ACSM-endorsed Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins Coaching Psychology Manual, the first coaching textbook in healthcare. (www.wellcoaches.com* • www.instituteofcoaching.org* • www.coachmeg.com* • coachmeg@wellcoaches.com)

**References**

For more than 50 years... ACSM has been Leading The Way in the scientific and public health aspects of physical activity and the breadth of exercise science and sports medicine. Today ACSM provides services to over 30,000 members and certified professionals in more than 70 countries.