Chapter 12: Self-Care and Professional Development
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Self-Care and Professional Development

“Coaching is not a service profession; it is a modeling profession.”
– Jay Perry, MCC

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After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- Describe the role of modeling in coaching
- Describe why it is important for coaches to practice self-care
- Discuss various ways to practice self-care
- Distinguish between standards and boundaries
- Define and discuss the five steps for setting and enforcing boundaries
- Identify strategies to prevent burnout
- Explain the importance of self-development as a coach
- Discuss how to create an individual development plan
- Demonstrate how to develop a coaching career vision
Throughout this manual we have focused on how to structure the coach-client relationship so that it generates life-changing movement, learning, and growth on the part of the client. That is, indeed, the point of coaching: to assist clients to clarify and reach their goals and to enjoy developing and strengthening their true selves in the process. As we learned in the last chapter, however, this takes more than just the masterful use of coaching techniques. It takes a presence – a way of being in the world and with clients – that brings out the best in people through the quality of the connection itself. It’s not just what we do, but who we are, that determines our effectiveness in coaching and in life.

In order for health, fitness, and wellness coaches to manifest this presence and to generate this quality of connection, we need to “be the change we seek.” In other words, we need to model in our own lives the very attributes of health, fitness, and wellness that we assist our clients to create. That doesn’t mean we have to be perfect, but we clearly have to be on the way. The more we experiment with and put into practice the wisdom that we develop with our clients, the more transformational our presence will be. Clients respect coaches who “walk the talk”.

In order to put on the mantle of role model, without being boastful, coaches need to take care of themselves on all levels: physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially, and spiritually (to mention only five biggies). Whenever we do this, wonderful things happen. Everyone benefits on all levels. Clients feed off the energy of a well-cared-for coach, experiencing greater movement and change than they otherwise might. The better coaches attend to their own needs, the better they can attend to the needs of their clients.
SELF-CARE

Taking care of ourselves on all levels, or self-care, is an important part of optimal wellness. In fact, mastery of wellness can be considered mastery of self-care. Self-care can be defined as a way of living that incorporates behaviors that enable one to maintain personal health and balance, replenish energy and motivation, and grow as a person.

We all know the importance of eating a healthy diet and engaging in regular physical activity. But self-care goes beyond these basics and can include the following activities: improving your physical surroundings; developing a practice that exercises your mind and soul; balancing your family, social, and work demands with time to unwind by spending time in nature; soaking in a hot bubble bath; watching a beautiful sunrise; listening to your favorite music.

Practicing self-care does not come easily to many people who work in the “helping professions” because they are so accustomed to taking care of everyone else. It may feel selfish to “put yourself first” and take care of your own needs when so many other things demand your time, energy, and attention.

However, nurturing your body, your environment, your relationships, and your spirit is a vital part of maintaining good health and a vibrant life, and is a key factor in having the strength and motivation to continue to give to others.

It is valuable to build up a repertoire of habits that positively affect your well-being and quality of life. Start by making a list of ways you can practice self-care. Include both small things that don’t take a lot of time or money (e.g., a soothing bubble bath) and others that might need more time and planning (e.g., a week at
a spa). Pick one or two activities you want to start with and put these activities into your schedule, just like another appointment. And treat it as though breaking this appointment is not an option!

PERSONAL WELLNESS FOUNDATION TOOL – SIX FACETS

To strengthen your personal wellness foundation, it’s helpful to assess a set of life domains and there are many assessments to choose from, as noted in Chapter 7 on Client Assessments. Here’s a simple, basic set of life domains to consider which include self-care.

- **Self-Care** = practicing regular self-care routines that support your best energy

- **Environment** = designing environments that support your best self, with no tolerations

- **Relationships** = connecting with self and others in relationships that support your best intentions

- **Thoughts** = adopting attitudes, values, integrity, and self-talk that support your best presence

- **Time** = managing your energy over time to support your highest priorities

- **Finances** = handling the money and building reserves to support your ability to give and receive freely
Using the Wheel of Life Domains in figure 12.1, rate your level of satisfaction in each area using a scale of 0-10, with 10 being total satisfaction. The center of the wheel represents 0 and the outer edge as 10. Draw a curved line to create a new perimeter to represent your rating. The more bumpy the shape the more work you may have to do to balance things out and to be who you want to be as a coach.

FIGURE 12.1. Wheel of Life Domains

(Developed by Gloria Silverio to strengthen the healthy living skills needed to advance personal development and growth.)
SETTING STRONG PERSONAL STANDARDS AND BOUNDARIES

Another way to practice self-care is to learn to set strong personal standards and boundaries. Standards are those things you hold yourself to while boundaries are those things that you hold others to. Example: if you refuse to use illegal substances on principle, that’s a standard. If you refuse to allow others to use illegal substances in your home or in your presence, that’s a boundary. High standards and clear boundaries are essential parts of self-care.

While property boundaries are marked on maps and staked out by surveyors, personal boundaries are not immediately evident to others. Personal boundaries are more like imaginary lines created to protect a person’s body, mind, and spirit from the unhealthy or damaging behavior of others. Such lines are not intended to shut people out; they are designed to keep unwanted behaviors from intruding on and negatively affecting your well-being. Setting strong personal boundaries is essential for personal health and allows you to protect and take care of yourself.

The first step in setting boundaries is to identify those behaviors of others that are not acceptable to you. For example, most people have a boundary that others may not hit them. Other examples of boundaries are:

- Others may not yell at me.
- Others may not speak to me rudely.
- Others may not enter my office without knocking.
- Others may not call me at home to discuss office matters.
- Others may not gossip in my presence.
Once you have identified the behaviors that you will not tolerate, it’s important to communicate your boundaries to others. People will not know what you expect from them unless you teach them how to act in your presence. Be direct when you assert your boundaries and expect that it will take several requests before others “get” that you are serious about enforcing your boundaries.

**STEPS TO ENFORCING BOUNDARIES**

1. **Inform** by pointing out the behavior that is unacceptable: “Do you realize that you speaking to me in an extremely loud voice?”

2. **Make a request** to let the other person know what you expect: “Please do not speak to me in such a loud voice.”

3. **Give a warning** to let the person know what you will do if they continue with the unacceptable behavior: “If you continue to speak to me in such a loud voice, I will leave the room.”

4. **Follow through with the stated consequence.** It is crucial that you follow through with the consequence if the person ignores the warning: “What you are doing is unacceptable to me, so I am leaving the room. You may come and find me when you are ready to discuss this without speaking in such a loud voice.”

5. **Let go of the outcome.** Another person’s offensive behavior is not about you, even though it may feel personal.
Asking and expecting others to treat you appropriately is a necessary step in learning to take care of yourself and allows you to develop healthy relationships, exhibit self-respect, and become a role model for others.

PREVENTING BURNOUT

Burnout is a stress syndrome that is prevalent among those working in health and helping professions. It happens when people try to reach unrealistic goals and end up depleting their energy and losing touch with themselves and others in the process.

According to psychologist Herbert J. Freudenberger, PhD, who coined the term in 1974, burnout is “the extinction of motivation or incentive, especially where one’s devotion to a cause or relationship fails to produce the desired results” (1980). Since burnout is a condition caused by good intentions, it is easy to see how preventing it is very important for coaches.

IMPORTANT: It is important to watch for the signs and symptoms of burnout in yourself, as well as to recognize them in your clients. However, keep in mind that each person is different in how s/he exhibits and responds to burnout.

Signs of burnout can include:

- Emotions such as anger, frustration, depression
- Impatience
- Feeling tired, fatigue

Burnout mainly strikes highly committed, hard working people – and can be experienced by those who care passionately about the work they do.
• Melancholy
• Ambivalence
• Lack of interest
• Short term memory loss
• Dreading an event
• Anxiety or panic
• Self-medication
• Nightmares
• Health issues
• Difficulty making decisions
• Working at 120%, then dropping to nothing
• Not caring

Burnout prevention strategies may include:

• Know yourself – watch for your particular signs of burnout (whispers, yells, two-by-fours) and develop strategies for relief
• Have a support system – engage friends, family, and others to help you avoid or manage burnout
• Maintain a calendar that works for your lifestyle – make sure that you book time and activities that recharge your batteries
• Set and maintain boundaries following the above guidelines
• Follow your wellness program – it’s not about perfection but building in activities and choices that minimize burnout or enable quick recovery
• Stay stimulated with learning – recall the wonderful zone of flow – challenge yourself to stretch yourself but not so far as to generate stress
• Take time off (vacations, moments, hours) to recover
• Get 15 minutes of sunshine each day
- Home office tricks – taking breaks, scheduling time out of the office, socialize, meet with colleagues, network
- Practice ten daily habits that give you pleasure

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Create a Professional Development Plan

Becoming a great coach is a lifelong journey; the learning and professional growth never stops. So, it is extremely important that you make a deliberate and organized effort to continue to develop your skills as a coach. In the same way that an employee has an annual performance review and creates a plan for career development and skills improvement, you can implement a professional development plan for yourself. This plan can follow a simple process – one that is similar to how we coach our clients – to improve their health, fitness, and wellness.

Process to develop a Professional Development Plan:

1. Assess your coaching skills on a scale of 0-10 (review earlier chapters to identify the most important coaching skills for self-rating)

2. Set up your intended outcomes – where you want to be in six months and one year. Choose a couple of skills to work on at a time in three month increments. This helps you to focus.

3. Develop an action plan to get there – what you are going to do. Use books, others, skill practice, role-plays, classes, conferences, etc., in your plan.
4. Set up a review time and make revisions.

5. Celebrate all of the good things in your life, as well as your milestones as a developing coach!

NOTE: You can apply the same process to knowledge that you wish to acquire in the health, fitness, and wellness arena.

You can also assess your coaching while working with a client. For example, after you end a call (or after you terminate your work with a client) ask yourself the following questions:

1. What am I learning about myself and others in coaching?
2. Am I modeling wellness? If not, how do I see my role as a coach?
3. What ideas of mine are being challenged in the coaching process?
4. What am I discovering about myself?
5. What are my strengths and weaknesses in working with this client?
6. What mood works best for me to facilitate my coaching?
7. What stops me from saying what wants to be said?
8. What don’t I understand about my client and what does this show me about myself?
9. In what ways am I flexible, rigid?
10. In what ways am I being supportive or critical?
11. What judgments am I making about my client’s life?
12. What surprises me in coaching?
13. What did I learn about the coaching process?
14. What in coaching makes me the most uncomfortable?
EXPERIENCE COACHING AS A CLIENT

IMPORTANT: To be an effective coach, it is important to experience being a client. It helps you to understand the perspective, position, and feelings a client goes through. It also allows you to personally experience the results that can occur from working with a coach. This enthusiasm for the power of coaching will be present when you market yourself. You can find a coach through ICF (International Coach Federation) or Wellcoaches, depending upon the area of life you want to work on with a coach. Working with a mentor, who may provide more advice and training than a coach, and developing a buddy / peer coach relationship are other avenues to help grow your ability as a coach.

PARTICIPATE IN ADDITIONAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Attending conventions or professional meetings, taking classes, reading books, and using self-study techniques are additional ways to improve coaching proficiency and stay informed of advances in the industry. Be sure to budget both time and money for these ongoing opportunities.

COACHING CAREER VISION

There is no better way to start your coaching career than with a vision! Table 12.1 is an adaptation of the Vision & Planning Coaching Tool modified specifically to support your emerging coaching career. Work with a buddy or mentor coach to develop a powerful vision and revisit it frequently.
Table 12.1: Coaching Career Vision & Planning Tool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Picture</td>
<td>What is my vision for my coaching career? Paint a picture. What kind of person do I want to be? What do I want to do, have, think, feel, and look like? Clarify until it’s reasonably succinct.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Elements</td>
<td>What are the most important elements in this vision?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Experiences</td>
<td>What have been my best experiences to date with the key elements of my vision, times when I felt alive and fully engaged? Recall one or two stories, in detail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Values</td>
<td>Without being modest, what do I value most about myself? What values does my coaching career vision represent and support?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivators</td>
<td>What makes this vision really important to me? Why do I really want to reach this vision? What good will come from my doing so?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gap</td>
<td>How large is the gap between where I am today (Point A) and my coaching career vision (Point B)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>On a scale of 0-10, with 10 being totally confident and 0 being no confidence, how confident am I that I can close this gap and realize my vision?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths</td>
<td>What strengths can I draw on to help me close this gap and realize my vision? How can the lessons from my successes in life carry over to this situation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>What challenges do I anticipate having to deal with on the way to reaching my vision? What else? Review multiple possibilities. Which challenge concerns me most?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports</td>
<td>What people, resources, systems, and environments can I draw on to help me realize my vision and meet my challenges?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td>What strategies may be effective to help me move forward? Brainstorm and clarify multiple possibilities, including outside-the-box possibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-Month Goals</td>
<td>Of the possibilities generated, which one or ones are most intriguing? Where would I like to be, and what behaviors would I like to be doing, 3 months from now?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next Steps</td>
<td>What step or steps will I take in the next week that will help me realize my vision and my three-month goals?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Confidence
On a scale of 0-10, with 10 being totally confident and 0 being no confidence, how confident am I that I will take these steps on the way to realizing me vision? What would elevate my confidence to a 7 or higher?

### Summarize & Confirm
Summarize my values, outcomes, motivators, strengths, supports, and strategies in a succinct statement.

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**REVIEW & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What does Jay Perry mean when he writes that “Coaching is not a service profession; it is a modeling profession.”?

2. How is self-care defined?

3. Why is it important for coaches to practice self-care?

4. Name the six facets of personal wellness as outlined in the Personal Wellness Foundation Tool.

5. What are some things you can do to practice self-care?

6. Why is setting strong standards and boundaries an important part of learning to practice self-care?

7. Describe the five steps to enforce boundaries.

8. What are some things you might notice if you are suffering from burnout? What can you do to prevent it?
9. Why is it important to create a Personal Development Plan? Describe the process.

10. Why is it recommended that coaches work with their own coach?

REFERENCES & SUGGESTED READING


