Chapter 1

What Is Coaching?

I have ideas and aspirations buried deep inside,
like dying embers. What I need is a matchstick!
—Client

We chose the coaching profession because, at the core, there's nothing quite like witnessing and being a part of a person's journey of growth and change. You, too, may share our passion for making a meaningful difference in people's lives. A personal journey of transformation may have led you here, or maybe you noticed that others lean on and confide in you when they struggle in life or work. Regardless of your unique reason, the resonant heartbeat for all of us is that we believe we have something of profound value to offer people on their path of change and growth.

Many of us have come from other professions. The 2020 International Coaching Federation (ICF) Global Coaching Study reported that 94% of coaches offer services in addition to coaching, such as consulting (60%), training (60%), and/or facilitation services (54%). Coaches are nutritionists, counselors, physical therapists, nurses, yoga instructors, project managers, interior designers, teachers, retired from corporate positions, or a host of other occupations. As fulfilling as those occupations are, we made a shift because we sought something more. Perhaps you wanted to go deeper, become more effective, and see people make lasting change. We decided coaching is the missing piece.

This chapter's central focus is on coaching, and future chapters will build a tight bridge connecting coaching with a conversational approach called motivational interviewing (MI). We make the case that coaching, specifically the practitioner stance referred to as the "coach approach," can be synonymous with MI. MI's principles, method, and spirit can shape the *how* and *what* of our practice and, more importantly, the *why* of our approach. We view MI as foundational for much of the theory, processes,

and methods of coaching. The ideas about coaching in this chapter find parallels in MI, which we will fully explore in future chapters.

Whether or not you arrived at coaching from one of the professions named above, you may be aware that a common concept of coaching is that we remove our "expert" hats and instead approach clients as experts in their own lives. You may have experienced receiving a directive, a prescription, or a business plan from an expert in your life, but you did not change. Or maybe you were the expert, and despite your expertise, the person or organization you tried to help made only minimal and short-term adjustments. You can hear the disappointment in this story: A chiropractor shared that he gave a client exercises to strengthen his back, but the client came back and reported that the exercises didn't work. The chiropractor asked, "Did you do them?" The patient replied, "I tried to, but just couldn't get around to it." With a sigh, the chiropractor shook his head regretfully and said, "No, these exercises won't work unless you do them."

Do people need more information and more expertise? Typically, when we need more information, we can just google it. Sometimes more information helps, of course, like knowing what to do to lower our risk of developing cardiovascular disease. But for behavior change, more information alone does not always inspire action. Real change often happens in a relationship between people who engage and connect with each other. This awareness is pervasive in our culture and especially noticeable in work environments. "Organizations have come to understand that effective performance depends on effective relationships" (Kimsey-House et al., 2018, p. xi). You came to coaching not only to find out what to say and do but, more importantly, *how* to say it in a way that ignites the smoldering motivation for change and growth in your clients. The relationship is key. Our experience testifies that speaking louder or adding more information is not the formula for facilitating behavior change. Passion, experience, and various levels of expertise in diverse fields are not enough to make us more effective. We need something else.

Can people simply change on their own? Yes, we all make changes, driven by our desires and hopes for a better existence. We choose a better job, clean out our desk drawer, start drinking more water, or turn in work projects on time. And yet, at times, we may have something in our life that is not budging. Maybe we do not manage our stress, and we eat or drink our emotions or work to exhaustion and neglect our families. Humans are not usually all or nothing when it comes to behavior change but are more beautifully nuanced than that. Herein lies the dilemma of human growth and development. We find that people often want and need to change but find themselves stuck in the current dilemma. As coaches, we can do something to loosen the grip of the status quo and invite clients to declare, "I'm ready!" We can help the self-changers get started and then walk with them on the forward-moving path toward change and growth.

THE COACHING RELATIONSHIP

Coaching is first a relationship. But it is not one of imbalance of roles or status, where one person descends while the other rises high, like children on a seesaw. In coaching, two experts, the coach and the client, form a partnership to benefit the client's self-directed ongoing change and growth. As a coach, you bring your expertise to the relationship. Having the finesse to know when and how to dispense expertise is the skill of a masterful coach. Although we stay in our scope and do not claim to diagnose or cure, we simultaneously stand as developing experts in behavior change.

This balanced partnership calls forth a creative and thoughtful process that inspires clients to reach their highest personal or professional goals, their ideal and authentic selves. In this relationship, clients are engaged, active, learning, discovering, and using self-monitoring to work toward their goals. The coaching relationship focuses energy on empowering clients' self-regulation and self-directed change, which is the end purpose of coaching. Skilled coaches use behavior change theory, which includes strategies in motivation and communication, all of which inspire intrinsic motivation toward lasting change (Wolever et al., 2013).

The priority of the coaching relationship is where we begin to build our definition of coaching. It can be tempting to skip ahead and grab the tools and strategies of coaching, but we choose to percolate here for a bit. Without this foundational relationship, the how-tos and methods will lack context and may become flat. The danger is that you could default back into the role of expert, one who tells, directs, teaches, consults, or counsels your clients. Coaching is unique, and the coaching relationship is one element that makes it so. Relationships are inherently dependent on the individuals within the team, so it makes sense to focus on the personal characteristics that can enhance this relationship. See Chapter 2 for research on the positive effects of this relationship in psychotherapy, and we assert, in coaching as well.

WHAT COACHES BELIEVE

This chapter describes what the coach approach is, which includes how a coach thinks about the people they serve. What we believe often shapes how we show up as a coach and, thus, how we function as a partner in the coaching relationship. Eckhart Tolle says it well: "Doing is never enough if you neglect being." *Being* is something that includes a mindset, which then translates to words and actions. Here we shine a spotlight on the "being" part, your mindset, your beliefs about other people, specifically your assumptions about the client.

When we use the term "coach" in this book, we are referring to professional coaches. Since the emergence of coaching more than 25 years ago, professional coaching definitions have included globally recognized ideas and beliefs about people and how they change. If these ideas are new to you, we invite you to explore how they can positively impact and influence your coaching.

In the coaching relationship, we believe clients are partners, not patients. They want meaningful change and want to achieve their highest potential and become more of what they know they can be. Furthermore, clients are experts in their own lives; they know what is best for themselves. They are resourceful and capable of creating their own goals and solving their own problems. They can be driven by higher values, and they are able to choose what is most important to them (International Coaching Federation, 2022). Additionally, coaching clients on a professional journey have what it takes to create and achieve their personal best and, in turn, contribute a higher value to their organization or project. We hold to the belief that people possess their own inner genius, and coaching can remind them of that.

Effective coaching begins with this fundamental and non-negotiable belief system. This belief system should undergird every process, method, tool, and technique in coaching. Without this approach, coaching could easily default to the typical model described earlier, one of giving directions, protocols, and prescriptions. You might mistake your role as a "fixer" for fragile people who need to be told what to do or as a dispenser of a prescription for flourishing. Your belief that clients are creative, resourceful, and whole establishes the kind of relationship that is the best container for growth (Kimsey-House et al., 2018). We believe every individual deserves to be treated with respect, and they are worthy of high regard despite their current journey or the reasons for being where they are. Our positive regard for them is unconditional (Rogers, C. R., 1980).

You may be saying, "But wait a minute. Some of my clients look like they have plenty of room for improvement; they don't seem whole. Some of them are scattered and in need of help. And if they are so creative, why can't they seem to figure out a way to move forward? If they're resourceful, why do they need a coach? If they are experts on themselves, why are they still stuck in unhealthy behaviors or struggling to find ways to improve, change, and grow? Why is the organization not growing or the leader not leading? Why don't they fix themselves?"

Yes, this paradox demands an even more tenacious grip on your belief system. But you, as a coach, can consciously choose to see beyond the apparent contradictions. You can build robust relationships with your clients within a framework of acceptance, mutual respect, and trust. Your clients need to feel safe and free to discover, experiment, learn, and grow. Anything short of this could sound the alarm for a client to resist, defend,

and make a case for the status quo. It seems ironic, of course, but research suggests that when people who want to change are pushed by someone or something else, they most often hold to the safety of the current situation, and at worst, they push back (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). When people feel accused or judged, a typical response is to remain stuck. This applies to parenting; for example, if parents show continual disapproval of their child, rebellion is a common defense response (Seltzer, 2019).

A coach takes a humble, supportive posture in working with clients. You deeply listen with compassion, and partner with the client to guide, support, invite, and elicit their own journey forward. Only with this humility and compassion will you be able to advocate for your clients' wholeness, wherever they are on their journeys. Even when clients are frozen at a crossroads, these beliefs can breathe hope into their lives, enabling them to move forward. Furthermore, when you have and express confidence in your clients, they are more likely to find the courage and self-efficacy to take the next steps toward their goals (Moore et al., 2016).

You may feel a sense of disequilibrium as you step out of an expert role. After all, many of us are trained to bring knowledge and expertise to people. Adopting this heart and mindset is your first goal as a coach, and with intentional focus, this can be further developed. You will likely find more ease in coaching as you learn to stretch those mindset muscles. Below is a list of the beliefs that shape what we do and how we show up to coaching.

What Coaches Believe

- Clients deserve unconditional positive regard.
- Clients are worthy of respect as they are.
- Clients benefit from an ally who elicits and uncovers their ideas and plans for growth.
- Clients deserve your acceptance and esteem, regardless of their current challenges.
- Clients have the potential to live up to the vision of their ideal selves and futures.
- Clients are capable of making their own decisions (and should be encouraged to do so).
- The coach–client relationship exists to benefit your client.
- Clients are the experts in their own lives.
- All change is self-change; you guide self-changers to choose and act on their goals.
- Clients possess their own unique strengths, motivations, and resources.
- A collaborative partnership with your client enhances growth.
- Motivation already exists within your client; it cannot be installed by you, the coach.

- You can empower your clients by evoking and eliciting their own motivation.
- The coaching relationship is a safe container for clients to imagine and plan for growth.

THE COACH'S ROLE

Assuming you have adopted the heart and mindset necessary for effective practice, then what is your role? How does this look in practice? You may wonder, "What good is our expertise if we can't use it? Is it not a disservice if we withhold information? If clients have the answers, then why do they need coaches?" Some clients want to be told what to do, and others may know what to do but have few resources for how to get it done. We will answer these questions with specific strategies in upcoming chapters, but for now we focus our discussion more on *how* we do what we do. This is part of what we mean when we say, "coach approach."

You, as a coach, may possess vast experience and varying degrees of expertise, yet you set aside your own agenda to give space for your clients to explore their own. You may be an expert in many things, but you remove your expert hat in favor of honoring and eliciting your clients' expertise. You may be able to see further down the road than your clients, but you patiently shine a flashlight on their sometimes-dim path, illuminating one step and then another so they can navigate their way forward. In other words, you wait, guide, and partner with clients to develop their own creative solutions. Your role in this partnering relationship is to build trust and respect so clients are inspired to create their own solutions or partner with you to find new ones. Why do coaches do this? The simple answer is that when people generate their own ideas, they are much more likely to find the internal motivation that sparks the trajectory of growth forward (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory richly confirms this phenomenon. They identified three basic psychological needs that must be met before self-regulation occurs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Coaching is a means to an end, and this end is the client's independence and self-regulation in behaviors that support health and well-being in personal and professional growth. Since the support of autonomy in the coaching relationship is vital to fuel motivation, coaches encourage clients to choose behaviors based on their own values and desires, not those chosen for them (Moore et al., 2016). Clients driven by self-regulation and intrinsic motivation develop greater positive outcomes that are long lasting.

The belief system we describe in this chapter spreads a layer of rich and fertile soil. This primed garden plot is the perfect place to plant the seeds of understanding about what coaching is and how to do it in a masterful and effective way. In later chapters, we offer more specific guidelines for the

processes, tools, and coaching techniques. For now, the belief system, the way you approach clients and coaching, is primary and foundational; it's the form within which you eventually bloom with your own voice.

THE COACH APPROACH

How does this approach help you coach clients who know full well what should be done, yet waffle and hesitate? Or how does it help you with clients who do not know what to do or where to get started? How does this approach empower clients to find that internal motivation necessary to propel their lives forward?

Coaching is quite different from what doctors do, the so-called medical model. That approach includes diagnosing, prescribing, and treating symptoms. In the medical model patients may hear the reasons for change, how their lives will improve if they change, and how much harm is done by not changing. They might walk away from a medical consult better informed, though often frustrated or bewildered because they cannot or will not change their harmful lifestyle behaviors. It is no surprise this approach has a poor track record of leading to behavior change. Consider a study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* that reported that only 4.3% of participants who had a cardiac event and were instructed to make lifestyle changes to prevent recurrence actually made any changes (Brinks et al., 2017). The traditional medical model has focused on one factor: providing information. However, it is clear that knowledge alone is not sufficient to help patients improve their health (Shearn, 2001).

What makes coaching so powerful and effective is not what information you offer or topics you address but *how* you approach things. "Health coaches believe clients are already experts in their own lives and their own needs," said Leigh-Ann Webster, executive director of the National Board for Health and Wellness Coaching (Webster, 2020).

If you hold to this belief that clients are experts in their own lives, then you will approach the coaching relationship in a particular way. Although your preferred style or method may be unique and shaped by your own comfort level and skill, an effective coach will be grounded in the conviction that clients know what is best for them.

Experts are indeed necessary in the face of an immediate crisis. Still, preaching or teaching is not the ideal or most effective way when people seek a behavior change—when they want to lose weight, handle stress better, or adopt a positive mindset when dealing with negative employees. Giving someone a diet plan, a strength-training program, or a webinar on positive emotions and stress reduction does not automatically transfer to action and growth.

The *way* you, as a coach, believe, speak, and act is the very thing that sets coaching apart from many typical helper models. As a coach, you take

on the privilege and responsibility to stir a person's own expertise and their own inner motivation, and then you walk alongside them to start and sustain change. Again, we know the question may linger for some: "How do you help someone change if you don't tell them what to do?" Propelled by this paradox, excellence in coaching departs from the typical model and adopts the coach approach as a way to be most effective.

Often, clients know what they want but have not found the motivation within themselves to get where they want to go. Coaching can make a difference, says Leigh-Ann Webster. According to Webster, this client-directed approach is key, and as we will explore later, it is based on MI.

> In this technique, health coaches ask non-judgmental, open-ended questions that provide opportunities for clients to explore their motivation for change and, in collaboration with their coach, develop strategies to change their behavior that are personally meaningful and self-directed. (Webster, 2021)

When you, as a coach, hold a particular heart and mindset about your clients, you discover that these beliefs naturally circulate and breathe life into how you treat people. Your beliefs determine your thoughts, and those thoughts determine your behavior and actions. The trade secret is that this, in turn, has a direct impact on your clients' progress. Your beliefs about your clients indirectly influence their growth trajectory toward health and fulfillment in life and work (Moore et al., 2016).

The coach approach calls on clients to become the decision-makers, to grow into discovering (or rediscovering) their own expertise on a path forward. You help by calling forth what is deep inside each client. If you do not believe in the capacity of your clients, it can impede their growth toward health and well-being. Furthermore, holding your clients in high regard is a prerequisite for establishing trust and rapport and building relationships that inspire self-efficacy and confidence in your clients.

These unique views are the life pulse of everyone who calls themselves a coach and embraces the coach approach. You acknowledge that people are capable of finding answers, choosing, taking action, and bouncing back when hitting roadblocks, and, of course, they are capable of learning. In the book *Co-Active Coaching*, the authors asserted this recognition is more than a belief, "It is a stand we take" (Kimsey-House et al., 2018). See Table 1.1 for a comparison of what the coach approach is and is not.

THE HISTORY OF COACHING AND THE COACH APPROACH

To the best of our knowledge, the definition of the term "coach approach" finds its origins in the 1980's field of business consultants. According

TABLE 1.1. The Coach Approach Is, Is Not

The coach approach is . . .

1. Showing support and empathy for your clients.
2. Honoring clients as experts in their own lives.
3. Enabling clients to exercise autonomy.
4. Accepting that clients are creative, resourceful, and whole.
5. Demonstrating positive regard for clients.
6. Forming working alliances to create shared goals that are important to your clients.
7. Personalizing the coaching process for each client's learning and growth.
8. A client-centered, client-driven agenda.
9. Using MI skills (open-ended questions, affirmations, reflections, and summaries) to evoke and empower clients to self-discover motivation to change and grow.
10. Acknowledging and inquiring about your clients' expressed or unexpressed emotions and shifts in energy.
11. Listening deeply to understand your clients, which includes waiting for them to speak.
12. Adopting an attitude and posture of curiosity and humility in service to your clients.
13. A professional growth mindset that is open to ongoing reflection, feedback, and learning from peers, mentors, or clients.
14. Inviting self-awareness and intrinsic motivation by helping clients align their current reality and goals with their larger vision.

The coach approach is not . . .

1. Showing pity or sympathy for your clients.
2. Assuming clients need your expertise.
3. Inserting your expertise in clients' decisions.
4. Believing that clients are broken and may not be able to create ideas and solutions.
5. Demonstrating judgment toward your clients.
6. Forming a coach-driven relationship where you set or suggest goals for your clients.
7. Using a one-size-fits-all protocol without personalization for your clients' needs.
8. A coach-driven agenda.
9. Asking yes/no questions, evaluating, advising, or persuading your clients to become more motivated to change and grow.
10. Overlooking or minimizing your clients' expressed or unexpressed emotions and shifts in energy.
11. Talking more than your clients and filling the empty space with your comments.
12. Assuming that that you already know what your clients want and need to do.
13. A professional fixed mindset that resists feedback, and does not seek input from peers, mentors, or your clients.
14. Overly focusing on your clients' short-term goals and failing to cultivate motivation by connecting to their longer-range visions and goals for their ideal self and future.

to Michael Arloski, author of *Wellness Coaching for Lasting Lifestyle Change* and CEO of Real Balance Global Wellness Services, Inc. (*www.realbalance.com*), the term "coach approach" is synonymous with the origins of professional coaching itself. In the 1980s, some business consultants began to expand their services beyond providing in-depth analysis and strategic planning. They included teaching supportive relationship skills such as listening, establishing accountability, and helping clients set up goals and plans to finally achieve "whatever had been eluding them" (M. Arloski, personal communication, August 5, 2021).

One of the earliest pioneers in the field was Thomas Leonard, along with the authors of *Co-Active Coaching*, Henry and Karen Kimsey-House, Phil Sandahl, and Laura Whitworth (2018). From this group, the definition and practice of coaching took shape. Their work led to the formation of the International Coaching Federation (ICF) in 1995 and then the ICF core coaching competencies. (The ICF core coaching competencies are available online. We have created a link to them at *www.guilford.com/lanier-materials*.). These competencies drew a framework around coaching characteristics as distinct from consulting (Dueease, 2009).

According to Dueease, Leonard and Kimsey-House applied their business backgrounds and created what we now call coaching. Leonard invented "personal coaching" and was responsible for the coach training curriculum for Coach U and then, afterward, the Coach Training Institute. He designed the personal coaching process.

Life coaching was popularized in the early 2000s with the explosion of "reality" shows where many self-proclaimed life coaches involved themselves in the personal lives of others. But it was Thomas Leonard who dubbed this uniquely developed process "personal coaching" because it assists people by focusing on the inner person. Leonard's newly created process filled a blank spot among the other existing human improvement processes. A recent study by the *Harvard Business Review* confirmed Leonard's perspective that all coaching focuses on personal issues. The study of 140 executive coaches reported that while only 3% of coaches were *hired* to assist in the personal lives of executives, over 75% of coaches found that they actually were helping their clients with personal issues (Dueease, 2009).

For this reason, when we speak of coaching in this book, we refer broadly to the field of life coaching, which includes certain subspecialties, such as health and wellness coaching.

A Working Definition of the Coach Approach

While in coach training, we heard the term "coach approach" many times, but as we began to write this book, we could not find a succinct definition that described the uniqueness of this approach we wanted to convey. This

quest for a clear definition of the coach approach was the inspiration for this chapter.

While some attempts to define the coach approach include a list of strategies and skills, we humbly assert that many definitions omit the more important fundamental element of the coach's belief system. Here's our definition of the coach approach, as explained in this chapter:

The coach approach is a unique set of foundational beliefs and behaviors that shape the coaching conversations to inspire client-initiated consideration and plans for growth and change. The beliefs and behaviors, based on evidence-based change theories, form a container for a relationship that empowers clients as autonomous experts in their lives. Clients have resources, capabilities, and ideas for discovering why, how, and what to do to achieve their desires and goals. The relationship is built on compassion for people, acceptance of who they are and their situation, partnering with them to support their goals, and empowering them to find their motivations for change and growth.

(See Handout 1.1 at *www.guilford.com/lanier-materials* for an extended definition.)

Some may mistake coaching as a means of giving advice or information, figuratively blowing an air horn on a person's bad behavior or giving out awards and incentives for a job well done. But as we have discussed already, people do not make changes because an expert tells them to do something or praises them for their behavior. Effective coaching is much more than a way to mentor, train, teach, consult, advise, or counsel people. While those methods have merit in the proper context, they are not suited for the partnering-style relationship found in coaching.

As a coach, you do not diagnose, prescribe, or claim to cure. You do not threaten, cajole, warn, or even reward behavior to get people to change. Yet neither do you passively listen and nod in agreement or sympathy. Instead, you skillfully and dynamically navigate a collaborative relationship that invites and inspires your client's growth.

A STANDARD OF PRACTICE: OUR COMPASS

As a coach, you hardly need convincing that coaching works. You are here because you know coaching is a powerful intervention for people who want to change. But as we pivot our focus to standards, core competencies, and credentialing, it may be worth reminding ourselves why these are so important in this field.

Clients expect and deserve a consistent quality and predictable service across a broad range of coaching contexts. According to the 2020 ICF

Global Coaching Study, most managers/leaders who use coaching skills agree that clients expect their coaches to be certified or credentialed. The number of respondents who agreed rose from 37% in 2015 to 55% in 2019 (ICF, 2020b). Clients expect a level of proficiency and skill when employing a coach. In this case, becoming credentialed and meeting proficiency standards is simply a matter of rising to the level of expectations of those you hope to serve.

National standards and international core competencies assure clients and the public that certified or credentialed coaches throughout the field possess a core base of knowledge and skills and a certain level of proficiency. Clients who join with a coach who received national or international recognition as a competent coach can be reassured that they receive the best available service, regardless of their location.

THE CASE FOR STANDARDS, CORE COMPETENCIES, AND CREDENTIALS

These days, coaches are expected to be competent and credentialed, especially when a client makes a significant investment in coaching. An article in *Forbes Coaches Council* (Young, 2021) spells out what consumers (specifically, business executives) should look for when hiring a coach.

In that article the author outlines some critical characteristics of good coaches and evidence of their expertise in the field, both of which apply to this discussion. First, good coaches use evidence-based methodologies. Second, good coaches are able to customize a plan to fit their clients and get beneath the surface to their clients' deeper needs. Good coaches will be adept at using various techniques and models to suit their clients' unique needs. This customization helps emphasize clients' autonomy, self-confidence, and an accountability plan. Good coaches are able to support clients to connect their goals to a larger vision and greater purpose for their lives.

Finally, credentialed and qualified coaches are happy to verify and authenticate their training, including the program they attended and how many coaching hours were required to complete it. These coaches ideally provide certification from an organization such as the International Coaching Federation (ICF) or board certification from an organization such as the National Board for Health and Wellness Coaching (NBHWC).

Standards are not just for the benefit of the client. They are also for sponsors who depend upon coach services to produce specific outcomes, such as employers, human resources (HR) managers, organization leaders, superintendents, parents, or practitioners in medical practice. These sponsors, or third-party members, focus on the investment and the expected specific outcomes. Whether a coach's client is an individual or an organization,

the client increasingly demands a level of service commensurate with the investment of resources. In addition to the benefit to clients and those who employ coaches in their organizations, standards offer many advantages for coaches.

Standards and Competencies: A Path to Professional Integrity

While relaxing around a fire pit, a marketing expert sat across from a new coach, chatting about what messages would be essential to convey on an upcoming website. This marketing expert brazenly demanded, "Don't use the word 'coach' in your branding materials. The modern consumer is tired of the term, and it's been overused and watered-down." Her rationale was based on market research citing how that term was used too broadly. The term could include a range of people: on one end of the continuum those who received no training or attended a weekend seminar and on the other end those who graduated with certification from an accredited program. The public was too savvy, she said, to take this term seriously, and they had become suspicious of what they perceived to be a self-designated title. The coach was stunned at this news.

What do we, as coaches, do with this information? Instead of diminishing and bowing our heads in apology and acquiescence, we can choose to reclaim the term and instead bring it to the rightful and respectable place it deserves in the world of professional services. We can honor the calling and the altruistic model of coaching. Although silence in the coaching conversation is often used to benefit the client, we are certainly not mute in professional integrity. We can speak up and insist that this profession is among the most honorable, fulfilling, and impactful vocations within the personal and professional development professions.

As suggested in the *Forbes Coaches Council* article (Young, 2021), one way to use our voices is to consider becoming nationally board certified by the NBHWC or credentialed through an organization such as the ICF. Many of the concepts in this book are predicated on this assumption: The standards and core competencies are the framework within which we build our professional, ethical, and effective practice. Within these guardrails, we can offer a high-quality service for our clients.

The standards and core competencies are the links that unite coaches in strength and identity. Why are they so central to our identities? They keep us in our lane, within our scope of practice. Standards and core competencies are our compass to keep us traveling in the right direction.

How the Standards Help Us in Coaching

Coaching conversations are a lot like diving off a high dive. The diving skill is only tested once divers take the lonely walk up the ladder and gingerly

place their toes right to the edge of the slowly pulsing board. The final movements are fluid and natural. The diver positions themselves, bouncing with precision, until finally, with one last thrust of commitment, they spring high up into the air and take the inevitable descent to the water. It's too late to check the manual of instructions. The momentum takes over, and there is no turning back. The dive is assessed for quality not during the dive but *after* the diver is in the water. You, too, as a coach, enter the coaching session with a commitment, and once it begins, you will focus entirely on the client and the process at hand. You cannot check the list of "most powerful questions," and your notes are out of reach. It's only afterward that you look back and reflect on the quality. How can you learn and grow without stopping and checking your notes during a session? The answer is to, like a diver, build muscle memory. Notice how high divers take themselves through a dive simulation beforehand. You may see them, on the ground, micro move as if they are going through each step, each contortion. Their knowledge and skills are so deeply embedded that they can practice and improve them just by using their imaginations.

Our suggestion is to build a strong base of knowledge and skills to draw from. Choose core competencies and standards from the NBHWC or the ICF and study, revisit, and review them so that they are engrained in your memory. Becoming certified and credentialed will help you increase the possibility that you will be able to rely on muscle memory and provide what is best for each client in the moment.

A summary of the standards and core competencies developed by these two organizations gives us context. This is our mooring. Each set of standards and competencies resonates with the same basic foundational principles and beliefs we embrace and have detailed in this chapter. These may help the developing coach become better grounded in the *why* of the methods and strategies used in coaching sessions, which we will explore in later chapters. For both aspiring and experienced coaches, reviewing these standards will help set the stage for our focus on coaching throughout the remainder of the book. (The NBHWC competencies and the ICF core competencies are available online. We have created a link to them at *www.guilford.com/lanier-materials*.)

You may be tempted to skip ahead and collect the strategies, tips, and tricks of coaching in Parts II and III of this book. But experience tells us that when helping clients with complicated challenges or clients who do not move forward, or even if you are hoping to avoid a potential numbing monotony of overly familiar routines, you would be wise to step back and ask yourself *why* you are doing what you are doing. Ultimately, coaching is about your client's growth, so the question should be "How can I be more effective as a coach?" As we have said rather boldly, your client's growth is partially (if not totally) dependent on your effectiveness as a coach. We

believe the coach approach is what makes us effective. The absence of that approach will, at best, minimize your impact, and at worst, it may allow your client to linger in the status quo.

Atul Gawande, in his address to Harvard students at the School of Education on the importance of coaching (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2012), spoke about the proven correlation between students' growth and the skill of the helping professional appointed to them. The George W. Bush Institute study showed that the most critical determinant in student achievement is not student socioeconomic status, district resources, the leadership of the school, or the use of consistent, systemwide protocols. The one factor that makes the difference is the teacher's level of skill (Goldhaber et al., 2015). Gawande draws a close parallel for coaches. The most important player is not the protocol (strategy or method) but the coach. Therefore, the coach's responsibility is to continue striving for professional growth and mastery of the fundamental concepts of coaching.

Concepts in this first chapter help to steady the footing of the novice, developing, or experienced coach in the *why* of the methods and strategies in coaching. We hope you continue your ongoing journey toward becoming a more effective coach by taking an in-depth review of the coach approach while also continuing your mastery of the core competencies and standards in the field. Next, we venture into the coaching competencies to highlight how the coach approach is integrated throughout our professional standards.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND COMPETENCIES FOR COACHING

International Coaching Federation

The ICF core competencies were first created in 1998. These provided a vital and early foundation for the coaching profession and set the standard for ethics and practice in the coaching field. The founders sought to define and enlarge the understanding of the skills and knowledge needed for effective coaching.

The updated core competency model has new elements and themes that broaden the existing foundation, including a focus on ethical behavior and confidentiality, the coach's mindset, ongoing reflective practice, coaching agreements, the partnership of the coach and client, and the influence of context and culture on self and others. All eight core competencies can be accessed at the ICF's website (we have provided a link to those competencies at *www.guilford.com/lanier-materials*). In this summary, notice the themes of the coach approach that we have described in this chapter.

1. Ethics and standards of coaching set the foundation for all coaching practice.
2. Coaches develop their own mindset, which is open, curious, flexible, and client centered. Coaches know that clients are responsible for their own choices, just as coaches are responsible for their own emotions, reflective practice, and ongoing learning.
3. Coaches partner with the client and stakeholders to create agreements about the relationship, the overall coaching arrangement, and each individual coaching session.
4. Coaches partner with the client and create a supportive environment that allows clients to feel safe and free to share. The relationship is built on mutual respect and trust.
5. Coaches are fully present with the client, being fully conscious with an open, grounded, flexible, and confident style.
6. Coaches focus on the full meaning of clients' spoken or unspoken communication and further support client self-expression.
7. The coach uses tools and techniques such as questioning, silence, metaphor, or analogy to facilitate client insight and learning.
8. The coach promotes client autonomy by partnering with the client to transform learning and insight into action.

The National Board for Health and Wellness Coaching

The NBHWC was formed in 2012 to advance the profession of health and wellness coaching. In 2016, it collaborated with the National Board of Medical Examiners (*nbme.org*) to create a robust board certification exam, leading to more than 9,400 national board certified health and wellness coaches (NBC-HWC) who hold the credential.

A content outline was created and is now the national board certification examination framework for coaching. Training programs that wish to become approved NBHWC programs adhere to the content outline for the training and education standards. (See the content outline at NBHWC's website; we have provided a link to that website at *www.guilford.com/lanier-materials*). Instead of summarizing the 126 competencies and related skills, we present the beautifully succinct yet comprehensive definition of coaching stated in the NBHWC code of ethics:

> Health and Wellness coaches partner with clients seeking self-directed, lasting changes aligned with their values, which promote health and wellness and, thereby, enhance well-being. In the course of their work, health and wellness coaches display unconditional positive regard for their clients and a belief in their capacity for change and honoring that each client is an expert on his or her life while ensuring that all interactions are respectful and non-judgmental. (NBHWC, 2017)

The ICF and NBHWC competencies echo the coach approach described in this chapter. One can see why these standards are considered essential and foundational to the practice of all coaches in all fields.

In the chapters to come, we will make the case that this coach approach, along with the competencies and standards, receives direction and inspiration from the theory and practice of MI. As you continue in this book, you will hear MI as the unmistakable melody that harmonizes with all discussions of coaching theories, models, methods, and techniques.

COACH-APPROACH SAMPLE

This short coaching scenario is an example of how a coach can use the coach approach. Here, we spotlight a few applications of the ICF core competencies and the coach approach.

John arrives for his second coaching session. In the beginning and after reviewing how things have gone for him since the last session, the coach elicits John's focus for this session. She frames her responses around the belief that John has the answers he needs within himself, and she resists stepping into a fix-it, expert mode. She is self-aware and consciously decides to hold a nonjudgmental belief in the client's value, worth, and potential. (CA, coach approach; ICF, International Coaching Federation core competencies.)

COACH: You wanted to work on getting fit. What specifically do you want to accomplish in our time together?	CA: *Client-led agenda, honoring autonomy.* ICF 3.6: Partners to identify what clients want to accomplish in the session.
CLIENT: I can't get myself motivated or in that mindset where, "Okay, I'm going to do this." My wife and I already eat healthy food, but I need to get strong and fit for my health and be an example for my boys. I'm not where I want to be right now.	
COACH: It's important to you, because you want to feel strong and be an example. That's the bottom line: You recognize that something's missing in your mindset. (*Pause*)	CA: *Expresses empathy, without judgment. Reflects possible meaning, seeking to understand. Coach honors client's autonomy.*

COACH: So, what would make this session of value to you?	ICF 3.8: Partners to define measures of success for the individual session.
CLIENT: I want a plan on paper to look at each day, a plan for food, hydration, and workout so I can be focused. Mental notes aren't working.	
COACH: A paper plan would help you focus. What else needs to be addressed?	CA: *Honors client choice and autonomy.*
CLIENT: I don't really know where to start. What do you think might work for me?	
COACH: Sure, we can dive into that today. What are some ways you've created success in the past around getting fit, building muscle, and losing weight?	CA: *Restrains from the expert role to call on the client's own resources for success.*
CLIENT: The healthiest I've felt and looked was when I was on the paleo food plan, but I was also weightlifting. I'm too busy to go to the gym, and I don't like running. I need something fun, something right for me, maybe weightlifting.	
COACH: You have self-awareness about what works for you, and you want something fun, that gives you results. What would it look like to "spice it up"?	CA: *Sees client as resourceful, and capable of finding solutions. Coach reflects to demonstrate empathy.*

Part of the appeal of this coach approach is born from experience as a teacher. I (C. H. L.) found a new way that aligns with MI to approach students and their learning process.

THE COACH APPROACH: A PERSONAL JOURNEY

As a former teacher, I developed a method for creating a room full of independent learners, in part because I followed the advice, "You can get anything done, as long as you don't mind who gets the credit." My secret

was getting students to develop their own ideas, rules, rewards, and most importantly, their *why* for learning. For several years prior to that, I followed the typical model of creating rules and boundaries in hopes of getting students to comply.

If you fail to manage student behavior, the likelihood that you can teach them is low. I used colorful, motivational checklists and incentives to reinforce good behavior and squelch the bad. When students took their behavior reports home, I expected their parents to sort things out and send kids back on Monday morning more well-behaved and ready to comply. But this didn't work! The more resistant kids were no less resistant on Monday morning.

The "meaningful" consequences I set up worked, but only temporarily. The moment I turned away, they went right back to their rascally ways. I noticed a pattern developing, so I took a bird's eye view and asked, "What do I really want for these students?" I wanted them to *want* to learn, be excited, and become independent and self-directed in learning. I knew that was a big ask, but as I went after it with vigor, that success became a pivotal moment in my profession. For the remainder of my teaching career, I enjoyed mostly independent, self-motivated, energized learners in my class. These were not the "easy kids." My reputation for being effective with the more challenging students placed an imaginary sign over my door that said, "Bring me all the hardest cases! I'll spark their love of learning!" And that is exactly what happened.

How did I do this? First, I shifted my mindset. Instead of demanding respect from students, I began with the notion that they deserved respect and unconditional positive regard. I was trained in a behavioral management technique whose approach was built around the work of Carl Rogers, who developed the idea that a person should be accepted and respected as they are, without judgment (Rogers, 1951). With a new mindset, everything changed. I no longer viewed some students as apathetic, incompetent, or misbehaved, and more profoundly, I stopped treating them that way. How did this belief transform students into energized and self-motivated learners?

My new beliefs changed my approach. Tossing out the charts and checklists, I met the students as partners, asking them what and how they wanted to learn (while staying within the mandated curriculum standards). I honored their ideas and encouraged their involvement and creativity, and was thrilled and even surprised at how many ideas they had and how excited they were to learn and exert their autonomy. The positive results confirmed the power of this approach. Once I stopped overtelling and overdirecting them and invited them alongside the learning journey, they took off! Soon, my classroom became an observation point for university-level intern teachers looking for models of effective instruction. Interns, with clipboards ready, wanted to know tips and tricks and best-practice

strategies: the secrets. Strategies are helpful, but I insisted they have minimal impact if you neglect the foundation, the thinking and believing part.

Years later, I transitioned to the role of instructional coach for teachers and witnessed—again—the power of my beliefs to influence my words and actions and, ultimately, the teacher's ownership and investment in their own growth. I watched teachers whose once sparkling enthusiasm had been dulled by the increasingly high demands of the job. Some were frustrated and felt trapped in the status quo. How would I engage these dedicated professionals to choose goals for improvement? How could I spark their first love to create ideas and help them set new goals for becoming more effective instructors? How would I elicit the excitement and energy necessary to make changes, even while they were already spinning many plates on the job?

As I did with the students, I began with respect and unconditional positive regard. I believed in the teachers' capability even though they might sit in a meeting with folded arms, shrugging their shoulders when asked for a plan. I met them as equal partners in this relationship of mutual trust and communicated my message loud and clear. I respected them as experts in their own practice. Since our district's directive was to make my program entirely voluntary, I had to wait for them to choose coaching. They would never have invited me in if they had any hint that our coaching meetings would result in more demands, criticism, or judgment.

Soon, they believed I was there to support them, and eventually, they also asked for my advice and suggestions. But I waited to be asked. Instead of scrutinizing their practice, I demonstrated compassion and empathy and supported their self-created goals with reflective discussion. As cited in a districtwide review of the coaching initiative, the success of this approach proved the validity and benefits of coaching. Growth ignited! The coach approach unlocked their inner genius or, rather, helped them rediscover it.

One surprising bonus was that they began working within professional learning teams. And in this case, teamwork proved to be equally if not more impactful than one-on-one sessions. This changed the culture of professional learning and instruction in the school and, as a result, had a positive data-proven impact on student achievement. The district was more than pleased with the investment in coaching.

This narrative illustrates how heart and mindset (fundamentals of the coach approach) are a starting point for effective helping. Professional coaching is framed within the same paradigm. A coach is a partner who respects the client's abilities, values, and reasons as valid and sufficient for meaningful change and growth. The coach approach is the vital foundation that allows this to happen.

Take It Further

Directions: Work with a partner or in your professional learning community to read and follow the instructions and respond to each of the questions below.

1. Find the NBHWC competencies that focus on building the coaching partnership, including the client's self-discovery and the coach's role in the relationship. (We have put a link to these competencies at *www.guilford.com/lanier-materials*.)
   a. Identify the statements that are descriptive of the coach approach.
   b. In your own words, write out the coach's primary function.
2. Find the NBHWC competencies that focus on establishing trust and rapport in the coaching relationship.
   a. Describe the benefits gained by establishing trust and rapport.
3. Find the NBHWC competencies that focus on the client's freedom of choice, autonomy, and intrinsic motivation.
   a. What does this say about eliciting and evoking a client's motivation?
4. Find an ICF and an NBHWC core competency supporting the idea that the coach is not the expert. Explain why this is important in coaching.
5. Locate the Handout 1.1 online at *www.guilford.com/lanier-materials*. Read the four sections that define the coach approach. Work in your learning community to discuss ways in which this approach is similar to or different from your own experiences and ideas.

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