**VCS-Inc. Wellness Coaching**

**Introduction to Coaching**

**What is a coach?**

A Coach helps a client build a vision for their future – and then helps them evolve into the kind of person who lives that vision. Coaches accomplish this by helping clients create systematic plans containing a series of steps / actions to take that will result in the achievement of their goals. Along the way on the change process, coaches provide guidance, support, feedback, encouragement and education to ensure that the client is able to carry out their change plans efficiently and effectively. Coaches keep their clients accountable and help them to continue working on their goals when they experience difficulties maintaining motivation.

Most importantly, coaches believe that their clients are capable of achieving their goals. They function as the keepers of their client’s vision – holding on to the client’s vision and reminding them of it whenever they lose sight.

**What is coaching?**

Coaching is a professional relationship from which great success transpires. Coaches work with clients to enhance the quality of their lives.

Coaching focuses on the present and future of the client’s lives. All the answers are inside the client, and the coach exists to help tap into them.

Learning to coach is a multi-step and ongoing process. You will learn through your training, additional reading, practice between classes, practice with clients, and supervision.

The International Coaching Federation defines coaching as collaborating with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential, which is particularly crucial in today’s uncertain and complex environment. Coaches honor the client as the expert in his or her own life and work and believe every client is creative, resourceful, and whole. Standing on this foundation, the coach’s responsibility is to:

* Discover, clarify, and align with what the client wants to achieve
* Encourage client self-discovery
* Elicit client-generated solutions and strategies
* Hold the client responsible and accountable

This process helps clients dramatically improve their views on and expectations for work and life while strengthening their leadership skills and unlocking their potential.

Coaching can be provided over the phone, via video call, or in person. Clients can be any distance away from their coaches and still benefit from the service.

Through the coaching sessions, the client experiences clarity and motivation that enables them to reach their goals.

This is done with the help of tools, questions, insights and instruction provided by the coach.

**What do coaches do for their clients?**

At times, people feel incapable of completing tasks on their own. They may have tried in the past and either failed or experienced limited success at a particular growth, change, or problem-solving effort.

**Good Coaches:**

Identify where the client actually is and how far they have to go to reach their goals. Many people are closer than they think (and of course, some are much farther). However, they cannot see this for themselves. It often takes an outside, objective perspective to allow them to see things clearly.

Create a safe environment for them to reach their goals. Often, people do not reach their goals because they do not feel as if they should be striving for them. Someone in their life may be keeping them from achieving success, and working with a coach provides a safe place to be themselves and do what they want.

Give them permission to achieve their goals. Some people are their own worst enemies. They feel as if they are not supposed to achieve what they want and feel guilty about pursuing it. As a coach, you can provide the encouragement that allows your clients to accept permission to follow their dreams.

Set higher standards for clients than they would have set for themselves. People that are afraid of failure will set lower expectations of themselves and then wonder why they do not achieve the success they desire. Having a coach to hold them accountable to a higher standard can often be just what they need.

Help clients build a structure for success. It can be challenging to achieve a big goal if you are not sure how to get there. Many people simply do not know how to structure a plan that will result in their success. For example – many people seek to make large changes at once and feel like failures when they struggle, lose momentum and eventually quit. They do not realize that large changes can absolutely be accomplished – slowly, over time and through taking small, successive steps, the results of which compound over time.

Give them the support that they might be lacking. Many people do not get the support and encouragement they need to believe in themselves from their friends or family members. Many people do not know how to ask for the support they need from those close to them. Coaches can both provide this support up front AND teach clients how to build a strong support network for themselves outside the coaching relationship.

**Key Principles of Coaching**

* **You must be at your best when coaching others. (Live by example. Do what is best for you, not what others or society thinks is best for you. You are your own best evaluator. Evaluate yourself non-judgmentally. Use your coaching skills and tools on yourself.)**
* **Although there is a structure to the coaching process, the client must lead the way during coaching sessions. (Everything that applies to you in the first principle applies to your clients. Do not coach from an ego-driven mindset. It is not about you. If you attempt to tell your client how to live, your client will likely – as they should – resist your efforts. Control is an illusion. You can only control yourself.)**
* **Unlike with therapy – the focus of coaching is the present and the future of your client, not the past. The past does affect us. There is no denying that fact. As a coach, you will need to discuss the client’s past BRIEFLY, to understand how a habit, problem or symptom evolved. However, you must not stay focused on the past with the client. It is not necessary or appropriate to focus on reliving, analyzing or attempting to process the past. This is the realm of Clinical therapy. It is important to understand and respect the boundaries of your scope of practice.**
* **You CANNOT coach the unwilling.** 
  + **Coaching is a structured, guided, self-help process**
  + **All the actual work of the change process must be (can only be) done by your client.**
  + **Your client must want to help himself or herself and must be committed to working with you to achieve their goals, based on the tools and processes you will learn in this course.**