

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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