

**A Space
to talk
about ...**

SELF-COACHING

INTRODUCTION

Coaches work in many different fields. Most of us have heard of sports coaches. Other examples include voice coaches who work with actors or singing coaches who help pop stars. Any successful celebrity can confirm that being coached makes all the difference. A coach is supportive and validating but also encourages self-discipline, motivation and trying one's best. Poor performance isn't criticised by the coach, nor is it glossed over. Instead, it is talked through and learned from. To benefit from any kind of coaching, we must be prepared to accept our mistakes, face up to our failures and acknowledge misjudgments or times when our feelings got the better of us.

.... Give an example of how our emotional response to a situation might prevent us from achieving what we're aiming for.

COACHING FOR LIFE

Professionals such as psychologists, psychotherapists and counsellors also fulfill a function similar to a coach. They are trained to support children, young people and adults in reaching their potential as individuals and in getting the most from their relationships. As well, they can help with understanding what holds us back, especially negative self-talk. Developing a less harsh inner voice so that self-talk is more positive and reinforcing is always a first step in any type of coaching.

.... Give some examples of critical self-talk. Now change these to more balanced statements.

COACHING OURSELVES

We can learn to be our own life coach by challenging our 'inner critic' and developing an encouraging and affirming 'inner coach'. This means we practice observing our self-talk, changing it when it's negative and taking the time to fully acknowledge all our achievements, big and small.

Replacing our negative self-talk isn't quite as easy as it sounds. First of all, it involves noticing when we are giving ourselves unhelpful messages such as: *'I tried before, and it didn't work. I still did badly. There's no point putting the effort in.'* Simply replacing this with *'Trying hard is going to make a huge difference!'* rarely

works because it's hard to believe. It's usually more helpful to take a different approach. For instance, we can say to ourselves: *'I'm human and it's okay if putting in the effort hasn't worked in the past. This doesn't mean it won't work now. I can re-commit to trying and ask for some support to help me identify what I need to focus on.'* As this example shows, balanced self-talk is neutral, neither negative nor overly positive.

... Give an example of something critical that you often tell yourself. Now re-shape it so that it becomes neutral and more supportive such as the example above.

SETTING GOALS

As a self-coach, we can also set ourselves goals and outline the steps we'll take to achieve them. It can be helpful to identify what areas you want to make progress in and set up three goals for each. Here are some examples of different kinds of goals:

Personal Goals e.g. being more outgoing or the opposite - cultivating our reflective side; reflecting on our identity and learning to accept who we are; understanding our differences and not judging them; acknowledging our difficult life experiences and talking them through with someone we trust; monitoring our self-talk and changing negative commentary to more balanced thinking and so on.

Emotional Learning Goals e.g. building our knowledge of emotions including what triggers them and how to manage them; accepting that we will have painful, distressing, confusing and uncomfortable feelings but knowing we can learn from them; developing the capacity to be more solution-focused; knowing how to better deal with conflicts; learning how to repair relationships when they break down or trust is betrayed; learning to read the signs which tell us if relationship is unhealthy and knowing what to do about it; knowing how to say 'no'; developing the capacity to talk openly about our personal life with people we trust etc.

Social Goals e.g. making an effort to find new friends; joining clubs/groups; taking extra classes to meet people with common interests; spending less time online and more time socialising face to face etc.

Academic Goals e.g. taking personal responsibility for our learning by engaging in lessons more; setting up and following a home learning timetable; preparing for exams in advance; learning how to manage academic pressures and exam anxiety etc.

Society-based Goals e.g. being more mindful of our lifestyle and how it impacts on each other as well as on the planet; learning more about politics and why they are important; understanding differences and challenging any form of discrimination or prejudice; finding a cause to support; being purposeful and intentional; knowing what our values are and living them etc.


Goals towards building our Future e.g. taking action now instead of waiting for the future 'to happen'; being realistic about what's possible without giving up on being ambitious; setting current goals which will provide the stepping stones for the kind of future we want to create for ourselves.

YOUR GOALS

It's very helpful to take time to work out goals for yourself in each of the above categories. You can choose which are most important to you and start with them.

SELF-UNDERSTANDING & SELF-ACCEPTANCE

Getting to know and understand ourselves better and achieving self-acceptance is what self-coaching is all about! This involves looking closely at who we are and who we want to become. Honesty and compassion are central - as well as discovering our strengths, we need to accept our limitations and recognise that we may not be as good at something as we'd like to be. We'll also want to identify what is important in life. Some might believe that making a great deal of money will bring happiness but research shows this is not so. Strong, supportive relationships and having a meaningful purpose are key to fulfillment. We all have the potential to build a good life for ourselves, one step at a time!

 *Unconditional self-acceptance means you always – yes, always – accept and respect yourself, your personhood, your being, whether or not you perform well and whether or not other you're pleasing other people.*

Albert Ellis, psychologist and psychotherapist

Because true belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance.

Brené Brown, professor, author & podcast host 

