

Lesson 35 - Ethics and Business

Like any business, project, or endeavor in life, your coaching practice will succeed to the extent that you conduct it in harmony with universal success principles. In this lesson we will underscore some of the primary ethics that govern life coaching. (We have already touched on some of these items in the lesson on setting healthy boundaries. Here you will find a reiteration with some embellishment.)

Confidentiality:

Respect your clients by keeping all discussions and interactions with them confidential. Never divulge the contents of a coaching session or the name of your clients. Your relationship with the client is sacred, built on trust. Do not violate that trust by offering personal information to others.

The only exception to this practice is for the purpose of professional growth and training. If you are discussing a particular case with a teacher, mentor, or fellow coach for the purpose of improving your skills or helping the client, do so without divulging the name or any other identifying information about the client. If your client gives you permission to share any information, you may do so. Otherwise all interactions remain confidential except for teaching and learning purposes, and in that context the information should go no further.

Focus on Client Service:

During your coaching session keep the focus of attention on your client and her needs and process. Do not allow the focus to drift to you or your process. You might, of course, share an example from your own life or experience, but only if it is relevant and in the service of helping the client. Do not make the session or a portion of it more about you than the client. Your purpose during your session is to help the client. Use other appropriate venues to express your needs or work on your path.

Romantic and Sexual Relationships:

A coach with integrity does not date or sleep with his or her clients. This muddies the coach-client relationship and creates an emotional and interpersonal dynamic that

prevents the coach and client from seeing each other objectively. It's not healthy or ethical.

While attractions may sometimes occur and they may be tempting, do not allow sexual or romantic feelings to interfere with your coaching relationship. If your client tells you that he or she has such feelings for you, you can discuss them in the context of illuminating the issues you might help them understand or progress with.

If you find yourself romantically or sexually drawn to a client and you would prefer to be involved in that way, you must terminate the coaching relationship. Even this is ill-advised, since you overstep a line that impugns your integrity as a coach.

Friendship and Social Interactions:

Can you do friendly or social things with a client outside the coaching relationship? Sometimes yes, sometimes no. In general it helps to set a boundary between coaching and social life. This keeps your coaching interactions clean and devoid of confusion with other issues.

You may develop a friendship with a client that goes beyond the coaching scenario. If this is healthy and supportive to both of you, you may want to interact at that level.

Sometimes you may become friends with a client after the coaching relationship is complete. If this happens in an organic, natural way, let it.

Business Deals:

It's generally not a good idea to get involved in business deals with your clients. Anything that might blur the roles in a coaching relationship and distract you from seeing each other clearly should be avoided.

This is especially so if the client ends up purchasing something from you or someone you recommend. In such a case you may have a conflict of interest.

If, however, you have a product or service that is directly related to your coaching service, such as a book, DVD, or CD, and you sell it to the client with the intent to augment their coaching experience, this may be helpful to the client.

Use discernment and be very honest with yourself and your client about your intentions. If you sincerely seek to help, that's one thing. If you just want to make a buck or help someone else make a buck, that's another.

Integrity:

Support your client to live a life of integrity by modeling integrity. Do what you say you are going to do. Do not use your client for any selfish purpose. Be fair and honest in your financial dealings. Acknowledge your client for acts of integrity, good will, and noble purpose. If your client is doing something in his personal life or in your coaching relationship that you believe is out of integrity, tell him. Create a space of truth and fairness, which will bless both you and your client.

Licensing:

The field of life coaching is a relatively new one. At the current time it is generally not subject to the kinds of regulation and licensing to which other more traditional professions are subject. If you have any questions or doubts about the legality of offering coaching as a profession, consult your state laws or a qualified authority.

If you are already licensed as a physician, psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker, or in any other social service profession, consult the rules and regulations in your profession to determine if offering services specifically as a life coach may constitute a conflict of interest.

Terms of Agreement:

Some life coaches ask clients to sign an agreement that lays out the terms and responsibilities in the coach-client relationship. This may include duration, finances, roles, and/or a hold harmless waiver. If you feel such a document will help you and the client, use it. If you are fine without it, you may want to go that route. If you would like to see a sample agreement form that one of our graduate coaches uses, see "Coaching Terms Sample" at the bottom of the lesson. This is simply one method that one coach uses. If you choose to use an agreement form, you are encouraged to use terms and language meaningful and appropriate to you. If you have any considerations or questions about using such an agreement or waver, consult an attorney or legal authority you trust.

Affirm:

**I conduct my coaching practice in harmony with
ethics of kindness, honesty, and service.
I abide by the law in regard to my coaching practice.
I set and use healthy boundaries with my clients.
I make choices about my coaching practice in alignment with my values.**

Coaching Terms Sample

Services Provided: The services to be provided by the Coach to the client are personal, business, marketing and/or life coaching, as designed jointly with the Client. Coaching, which is not advice, therapy or counseling, may address specific personal and business projects, or general conditions in the client's life or profession. Other coaching services include values clarification, brainstorming, identifying plans of action, developing systems, asking clarifying questions, and making empowering requests.

Confidentiality: The Coach considers the future plans, business affairs, customer lists, personal information, goals and financial information of the Client to be proprietary information. And therefore the Coach promises that all information provided will be kept strictly confidential, i.e. No one will know that you have a Coach unless you tell them.

Nature of the Relationship: Throughout the working relationship, the Coach will engage the Client in direct and personal conversations. The Client can count on the Coach to be honest and straightforward in asking questions and making requests. The Client understands that coaching is by permission and hereby grants the Coach permission to coach. If the Client believes the coaching is not working as desired, the Client will communicate and work with the Coach to obtain the desired results.

The Coach's background: Personal and business turnaround; energy modalities; personal transformation work; career development, mindset belief systems, life and enterprise systems; business, marketing, productivity and performance improvement; and advanced mentoring techniques. The Client is aware that the coaching relationship is in no way to be construed as psychological counseling or any type of therapy. In the event that the Client feels the need for personal counseling or therapy, it is the responsibility of the Client to seek a licensed professional.

Terms & Conditions: This agreement will begin on _____ and will continue for a minimum of 3 months. The fee for the three months is \$1200, payable in advance (or \$450 per month, payable in advance each month).

Termination Policy: Upon completion of the three months, coaching will convert to a month-to-month basis. In order to have closure, the Client and Coach agree to provide each other with a fourteen-day notice in the event either wishes to cancel further services. We require a minimum of one additional session after you have declared your termination. Again, this serves for closure and completion. Cancellation must be in writing, by email.

The Client enters into coaching with the understanding that he/she is responsible for creating their own results and hereby releases the Coach from any liability for adverse actions or results experienced by the Client as a result of the coaching relationship.

Client Signature

Date
