

What is Coaching Anyway?

Ask five people what coaching is and you'll probably get six different definitions. Just as there are many different ways to define coaching, there are different ways to provide and experience coaching. All may be equally valid. As it relates to the process of continuous improvement in human growth and achievement, coaching can be viewed as the process of receiving and using new information about oneself and/or one's behaviors, for the purpose of changing unproductive behaviors in order to become either more effective, more satisfied, or both.

Since many of our behaviors have become 'habit', the role of a coach is often to identify the unconscious habits that we have that may not be serving us well. These habits are typically somewhat rigid patterns of thought and behavior that once served to ensure our survival and well-being, but which are no longer needed, nor helpful to us.

Examples of unproductive habits might be engaging in a fight with someone when angry, "forgetting" our own needs or desires in the face of another's, or eating, working, or turning on the TV when feeling empty, lonely or uncomfortable. These habitual ways of interacting with ourselves and the world are quite common and, thus, quite normal.

Due to these unconscious habits and internalized patterns, however, there are places where we can't look, can't see, and can't think clearly. These are places where we, quite literally, "go unconscious." In these unconscious places, our perceptions of ourselves, others and reality, can be quite distorted without our even knowing it.

With effective coaching, and a commitment to continuous personal improvement, we can become more aware of when and where we tend to go unconscious, start to realize how some of our habitualized patterns can actually stand in the way of "the next level" of our personal development. We can transform these habitual patterns, or "blind spots," and strengthen our ability to think and act clearly, increasing our effectiveness and satisfaction in our work, our relationships, our families, and our communities.