Coaching Behavior Change

INTRODUCTION

Health coaching works. Studies have shown that effectively implemented health coaching interventions contribute to long-term behavioral changes (reviewed in Miller & Rollnick, 2013; Olsen & Nesbitt, 2010; Stober & Grant, 2006), especially when combined with broad-based efforts to support healthier communities. These changes are critical in the treatment and prevention of numerous diseases, including those typically categorized as "lifestyle diseases," which result from a chronic imbalance of nutrition and physical activity, smoking, stress, and other factors. Individuals who have developed expertise in effective coaching skills are well positioned to play an important role in helping individuals and groups adopt permanent behavioral changes that lead to lasting improved health outcomes.

While earning a nationally accredited certification is critical to enter the profession of health coaching, developing practical skills in behavioral change is equally important, both for professional health coaches and for individuals from other professions who include coaching as part of their practices such as physicians, nurses, dietitians, and personal trainers, for example. It is for this reason that the American Council on Exercise has developed the Behavior Change Specialist credential, which is intended to accompany the ACE Health Coach Certification for the full health coach training experience. These educational offerings may also stand separately to help professionals from all disciplines and walks of life develop the skills they need to help support meaningful lifestyle changes.

COACHING CORE COMPETENCIES

This program is based on the Core Competencies established by the International Coach Federation (ICF). The 11 ICF Core Competencies are grouped into four clusters:

- Setting the foundation, including (1) meeting ethical guidelines and professional standards and (2) establishing the coaching agreement

- Co-creating the relationship, including (3) establishing trust and intimacy with the client and (4) coaching presence

- Communicating effectively, including (5) active listening, (6) powerful questioning, and (7) direct communication

- Facilitating learning and results, including (8) creating awareness, (9) designing actions, (10) planning and goal setting, and (11) managing progress and accountability

These 11 core competencies are developed and supported throughout the training program. For a more complete description of each of the core competencies and skills that a coach is expected to master in each area, refer to Chapter 1 and Appendix A.

COACHING FUNDAMENTALS

Communication is at the heart of coaching, and effective communication is critical for a coach and his or her clients to be successful in making behavioral changes. This first section of this manual begins with a chapter to help coaches develop the applied and specific communication skills required for an effective client–coach relationship and development of a coaching plan. The next two chapters support the coach in improving communication skills in general through discussion and application of emotional intelligence. It also strongly advocates that coaches take a positive strength-based approach to helping their clients that is rooted in positive psychology.

EXPAND TO THE FULL BEHAVIOR CHANGE SPECIALIST EXPERIENCE

Coaching Behavior Change outlines the best practices in behavior-change science and provides opportunities for readers to apply and practice what they have learned. Readers interested in taking their skills and knowledge to the next level should consider pursuing the full Behavior Change Specialist experience.

Throughout this book, readers will notice a variety of icons highlighting additional educational opportunities, such as engaging in instructional interviews with renowned experts like psychologist Bill Miller, the founder of Motivational Interviewing, and Dan Goleman, author of the *The New York Times* bestsellers *Emotional Intelligence* and *Focus,* or listening to an interview with psychologist James Prochaska, the founder of the transtheoretical (stages of change) model of behavioral change. Each of these educational opportunities serves to enhance the learning experience and help coaches most effectively translate enhanced knowledge into improved skill in empowering people to change their behaviors.

Each of these supplemental materials is a component of the online, self-directed comprehensive Behavior Change Specialist training curriculum, of which this text serves as the foundation. In this training, learners will have the opportunity to engage with the content through completion of practical exercises and by listening to interviews with leading experts in coaching and behavior change, engaging with an online learning community, and taking advantage of the opportunity for real-time feedback on their coaching skills.

Those who pursue the expanded experience will engage in 25 hours of educational instruction and practice in coaching. Upon completion of the curriculum, eligible participants will earn a Behavior Change Specialty Certification. The course is approved to provide professional continuing education hours for professionals from a variety of disciplines. For more information and details about eligibility, contact ACE Educational Services at (800) 825-3636, ext. 782, or support@ACEfitness.org.

CHAPTER 2
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

NATALIE DIGATE MUTH

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, the coach will be able to:

- Define the concept of "emotional intelligence" and its four domains
- Approach the client–coach relationship with competency in each of the areas of emotional intelligence
- Implement coaching strategies while practicing a high degree of emotional intelligence, with an emphasis on the expression of empathy

Emotional intelligence (EI), also known as emotional quotient (EQ) and emotional competence, is described as the ability to recognize, interpret, and manage emotions in oneself and in others. As a coach—a trusted companion to a person or a group making very personal and challenging behavioral changes—a high degree of emotional competence is important for career success and client outcomes. Unlike intelligence quotient (IQ), which tends to be somewhat predetermined, hardy, and resilient, EI can be boosted with training and practice. A coach is encouraged to spend the time and energy required to continuously improve his or her emotional competence. This chapter helps to engage the coach in that process.
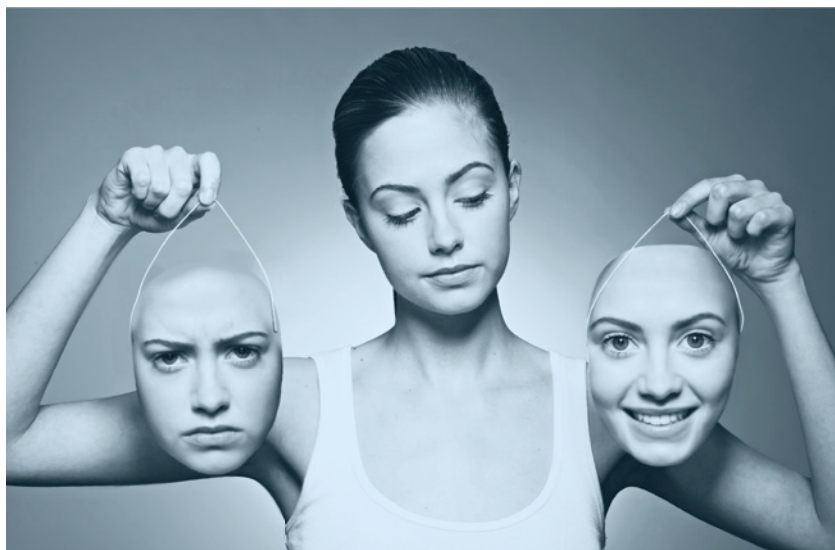
THE SCIENCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer first introduced the notion of emotional intelligence in 1990, though the concept of "social intelligence" roots back to the early 1900s (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined EI as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions." Daniel Goleman's book *Emotional Intelligence* helped the concept gain widespread recognition in 1995 (Goleman, 1995). This book's popularity and the cottage industry that grew from it may have come too soon for EI as a scientific construct, as a clear definition and understanding of EI continues to be debated despite a growing body of literature on the topic spanning over 25 years. While the evidence to date is not adequate to prove a relationship between EI of a coach and health-behavior change, the concept is included in this text to help coaches increase awareness of, and skill in, effective communication. In the broadest sense, EI is a marker of how well a person is able to navigate the "softer" side of the human experience, including emotions, communication, and relationships.

ACCOMPANYING VIDEO:
The course interview with Dan Goleman further elaborates on the important role of focus in emotional intelligence.

THE FOUR DOMAINS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Emotional Intelligence is divided into four domains, discussed in hierarchical order from the most fundamental to the most complex: **self-awareness, self-management, social awareness,** and **relationship management**. Within each domain, skills range from easy to complex (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

Self-awareness

Self-awareness, or the "ability to perceive emotions in oneself and others accurately," is the most foundational of the EI skills (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Individuals with a high degree of self-awareness are able to identify their own emotions and feelings as well as the emotions and feelings of others. The simplest task of self-awareness is to correctly identify one's own emotions, while a more complicated task may include correct identification of emotion in a client based on subtle body language.

Self-management

Self-management, or self-control, is the "ability to use emotions to facilitate thinking" (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Goleman describes it as "the term for putting one's attention where one

> ## The ability to use emotions to facilitate thinking

wants it and keeping it there in the face of temptation to wander" (Goleman, 2013). A person who scores high in this area may have a high degree of willpower and self-discipline. A high degree of self-management also helps one to hone **focus** and attention. Goleman (2013) describes focus, or the ability to concentrate on the task at hand and ignore distractions, as a powerful driver of performance and goal attainment. While improving focus may initially be a self-management strategy—after all, managing distractions is a huge feat of willpower for many—a sharp focus can also boost higher-level EI.

Social Awareness

Social awareness is described as the ability to "understand emotions, emotional language, and the signals conveyed by emotions" (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). A key attribute that is strongly tied to social awareness is **empathy,** which is broadly defined as being attuned to the needs and feelings of others and acting in a way that is sensitive to those needs. There are at least three types of empathy: cognitive empathy (understanding what the client knows and understands), emotional empathy (being attuned to understanding what the client is feeling), and empathic concern (the ability to sense what another person needs from you) (Goleman, 2013). As a coach develops and strengthens skills in emotional intelligence over time and with practice, he or she gains increasing effectiveness in communicating with empathic concern, which can be a potent facilitator of behavioral change.

> ## Being attuned to the needs and feelings of others

ASSESSING COACH EMPATHY

The most important quality a coach can express to a client is that of empathy, or an attempt to truly understand the client's experience. In any particular coaching session, coaches can range from "low" to "high" in their expression of empathy. Coaches who are low in empathy have nearly complete disregard for the client's feelings or experience, and lead from an expert mindset. These coaches may blame the client for the problem. On the other hand, coaches with a high degree of empathy are naturally curious about their clients and want to learn more about their experiences, thoughts, and ideas. This type of coach listens intently to the client. Tools to enhance empathy are provided in Chapter 5.

Table 2-1 presents a scoring system to help classify coach empathy into a 5-point scale ranging from "low" to "high."

Table 2-1
EMPATHY SCORING SYSTEM

Coach's Degree of Empathy	Description	Examples
(1) Low	No apparent interest in the client's point of view	Ask information-seeking questions only Probes only for factual information
(2) Low-moderate	Occasional effort in understanding the client's situation	Offers reflection, but frequent misinterpretations Only superficially interested in understanding the client
(3) Moderate	Actively attempting to understand the client's perspective, with errors	Offers few accurate reflections (a "best guess" at the meaning of what the client said) Attempts to understand the meaning of statements, but with limited success
(4) Moderate-high	Actively attempting to understand the client's perspective, mostly accurate	Shows interest in the client's situation Offers many accurate reflections Communicates an understanding of the client's situation
(5) High	Evidence of deep understanding of what the client has said and the underlying meaning of what the client has said	Communicates understanding of the client beyond what he or she has explicitly expressed Frequently encourages the client to elaborate Uses many accurate reflections that help to reveal underlying meanings for the client

Data from: Miller, W. & Rollnick, S. (2013). *Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change* (3rd ed.). New York: Guilford Press; Hendrickson, S.M.L. et al. (2004). Assessing reliability of the Motivational Interviewing Treatment Integrity behavioral coding system under limited range. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research,* 28, 5, 74A.

1. The following activities aim to help build skills in the four areas of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.

Identify an important life experience of your own or of a close friend or family member, such as a marriage, birth of a child, a new job, a graduation, or a relocation. The experience can occur in real time, or you can think back to a previous experience.

› Write down all of the emotions that come to mind from your perspective.

› Write down how you believe a close friend or family member felt about that experience from his or her perspective.

› Optional: Ask the close friend or family member to share with you how he or she feels (or felt) about that experience. How aligned were your feelings?

Identify an area in your life where you are impulsive—where perhaps you tend to make rash decisions without fully considering the consequences. This could be in dietary choices, relationships with a partner or colleague, or shopping habits, for example. The next time you are in the situation, consciously choose not to act in the way that you normally would. Describe your experience.

Spend some time people-watching. This can occur on a city street, at a shopping mall, beach, playground, party, or any other social scene. As you people watch, try to put yourself in the shoes of the people you are watching. Continue watching until you notice that someone needs help with something. Then perform a "random act of kindness" to help that person.

› Describe your experience. What did you observe? How did it feel to you to perform the "random act of kindness"? How do you think that the person you helped felt?

Identify a person with whom you would like to have a stronger relationship. Make a concerted effort to engage with that person. This could be someone you have never met but whose work has intrigued you, or an old friend, a colleague, or a family member.

› Who did you reach out to? What happened? What did you learn from this experience?

Relationship Management

Relationship management is defined as the "ability to manage emotions so as to attain specific goals" (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). The most accomplished leaders often excel within all areas of EI, including the highest order, which is relationship management. This domain includes a variety of skills and attributes, such as influence, clear communication, conflict management, collaboration, and effective team building.

A leader becomes effective in each of these areas due to highly developed self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness. As Goleman describes in a now-classic *Harvard Business Review* article: "People tend to be very effective at managing relationships when they can understand and control their own emotions and empathize with the feelings of others" (Goleman, 1998).

The ability to manage emotions so as to attain specific goals

A CONSTRUCT FOR IMPROVING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

In an effort to integrate the various teachings of EI, psychologists have begun to discuss how one might improve and build this emotional competence. The construct of knowledge, abilities, and traits is used as a framework to help improve EI (Mikolajczak, 2009):

KNOWLEDGE:
What one knows about emotions. This includes both what a person has learned from others as well as from personal experience.

»

ABILITIES:
How one applies this knowledge in real-life situation

»

TRAITS:
How one instinctively responds to emotional situations

Anyone whose job relies on communication with other people benefits from skill development in emotional intelligence. This is especially critical for a coach. Coaches can take steps to improve their own skill as well as that of their clients through attention and skill practice in each of these domains.

The process of improvement may simply begin with reading and learning more about the concept of EI. This helps improve knowledge. The next area of focused attention is on improving skills and abilities in identifying and managing emotions. The various skill-building activities contained within this chapter and the recommended resources can help to start that process of increased ability. Ultimately, the true learning ground is in real life with every client encounter. Here the coach can practice EI skills, most importantly that of empathy. Traits are the most difficult construct to permanently change. This is where a coach-the-coach model is helpful to provide feedback and direction to help change ingrained communication challenges.

THE CLIENT–COACH RELATIONSHIP

A coach will rely most heavily on his or her communication skills and emotional intelligence during key stages of the client–coach relationship, such as when building **rapport** and managing conflict and discord.

BUILDING RAPPORT

A thriving client–coach relationship sets the groundwork for a client to successfully implement a behavioral change. It begins with developing a strong rapport. In the *ACE Health Coach Manual*, building rapport is described as "a process that promotes open communication, develops trust, and fosters the client's desire to participate" in the coaching program (Galati, Merrill, & Comana, 2013).
Rapport should be developed early through open communication and initial positive experiences, and enhanced through coaching strategies that respect a client's **autonomy** while helping him or her strengthen **internal motivation** and **self-efficacy** for change. Development of key coaching skills to build rapport and nurture the client–coach relationship is the focus of the ensuing chapters. In addition to skill development, coaches also are advised to take notice of other factors that can affect rapport, including the physical environment and location of the coaching sessions, the way the coach presents him- or herself, and the total client experience.

A process that promotes open communication

MANAGING DISCORD

Despite the best of intentions, on occasion a coach and client will experience discord and conflict. Miller and Rollnick (2013) emphasize the importance of quickly identifying and addressing signs of discord in a collaborative relationship. The following are four signs of discord:

— *Defending:* This is when the client begins to deflect blame ("it's not my fault"), minimizes the situation ("it's no big deal"), or justifies decisions ("this just makes the most sense"). People defend when they feel threatened. If a client begins to defend actions, it is likely the person feels attacked or threatened by the coach.

— *Squaring off:* This is a signal that the client feels like he or she is in an adversarial relationship with the coach. Typically, squaring off statements come in the form of "you" statements— "you don't understand"; "you don't know what it's like to be me"; "you are wrong."

— *Interrupting:* When a client frequently interrupts a coach, it may be a sign that the client feels that the coach is talking too much, does not understand, or is not listening.

— *Disengagement:* Disengagement is marked by poor eye contact, distracted behaviors such as looking at a phone or text messaging, or not participating in the conversation.

Regardless of the specific type of discord, the most important step a coach can take is to recognize discord and respond to it immediately. Coaches can address discord with strategies such as reflective questioning (described in detail in Chapter 5), apologizing when appropriate ("I didn't mean to lecture you"; "I understand that I may have insulted you"; "I'm sorry, I misunderstood."), affirming the client's autonomy or positioning ("You are best positioned to make this assessment"; "I see how important this is to you"), and shifting focus away from a sensitive topic, when appropriate.

Discord commonly presents when making a difficult change. It is not an automatic sign of a failed client–coach partnership. However, in some cases discord may not be easily remedied, or may be ongoing across multiple sessions. In these cases, it may be worth exploring with the client if there is another professional who may be better able to support the client in the change. If this occurs, it is incumbent upon the coach to offer recommendations and attempt to facilitate the transition, if desired by the client.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

2. Complete the UC Berkeley Greater Good Science Center facial expressions quiz at
   greatergood.berkeley.edu/ei_quiz/13.
   How many questions did you get right?
   Which questions did you miss?

   What did you learn?

3. Over the course of one day, focus on being present in every activity that you do. Every time you find your mind wandering, or you have the temptation to multitask, remind yourself to refocus. Describe your experience.

4. This activity addresses building rapport and managing discord.
   Describe a time during which you were able to build excellent rapport with a client. What do you think were the ingredients that helped to facilitate building such a strong rapport?

   Describe a time when you experienced discord with a client. What do you think triggered the discord? How did you manage the situation? If you could repeat the situation, what would you do the same? What would you do differently?

SUMMARY

In *Motivational Interviewing*, Miller and Rollnick (2013) describe the ideal relationship between client and coach as if the duo is doing a dance: "[the coaching session is] dancing rather than wrestling…. conversation looks as smooth as a ballroom waltz. Someone is still leading in the dance… without tripping or stepping on toes. Without partnership there is no dance."

A coach's competency in understanding and managing emotions in both oneself and others is crucial to success. While people have natural communication styles, within that style one's emotional intelligence can be honed and improved upon to support a client in making a successful behavioral change, in essence setting the stage for a successful waltz. This discussion of EI opens this guide to serve as a foundation for improving coaching skills.

EXPANSION QUIZ
Multiple-choice quiz available if you expand to the full experience
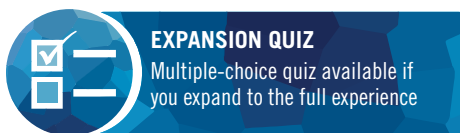
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Mikolajczak, M. (2009). Going beyond the ability-trait debate: The three-level model of emotional intelligence. *Electronic Journal of Applied Psychology*, 5, 2, 25–31.

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Additional Resources

The Emotional Intelligence Consortium: www.eiconsortium.org

▬ Includes research citations supporting the efficacy of EI. Also contains a list of assessments that measure EI, their uses, and pros and cons.

UC Berkeley: The Greater Good Science Center. www.greatergood.berkeley.edu

▬ Link to an EI quiz as well as myriad resources on leading a more meaningful life

www.morethansound.net: Podcasts and DVD resources for translating knowledge of emotional intelligence and focus into action

www.danielgoleman.info

Bennett-Goleman, T. (2013). *Mind Whispering: A New Map to Freedom from Self-Defeating Emotional Habits.* New York: HarperOne.

Bennett-Goleman, T. (2002). *Emotional Alchemy: How the Mind Can Heal the Heart.* New York: Harmony.

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