

Choosing a Great Wellness Coach

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While we long to live well and be our best selves, many of us are struggling mightily. The demands of everyday life have never been greater. The bewildering array of wellness guidelines, products and services makes it difficult to create a personal formula. We face the challenge of navigating universal obstacles to making change, including innate resistance and ambivalence. Plus, many of us have histories of repeated failure.

Bottom line? Many of us are not confident that we can master physical and mental wellness. A new profession, wellness coaching, is designed to help us master the wellness game, and make changes that last.

How do you know when you have found a great coach?

First and foremost, wellness coaches are passionate and energizing in their commitment to help us be our best...to live our lives with high energy, clear focus, and a positive and confident outlook. Wellness coaches view their mission as helping clients be their own boss of health and wellness. Masterful wellness coaches walk the walk—they model the life skill of mastering the wellness game.

Coaches don't make it easy for us by giving us the answers. Rather, they are skilled partners; they join with us in creating an inspiring vision together with a pragmatic plan to get us closer to that vision. In the process, we dig out our strengths and insights from life's clutter.

Wellness coaches, along with coach certifications, also should have physical or mental health credentials. Just-in-time learning requires the training and experience of a seasoned expert, such as an exercise physiologist, nurse or physician, dietitian, physical therapist, or psychotherapist. Coaches offer expert advice and knowledge at pivotal moments; they slice through knots with a blade of expert advice.

Training in coaching psychology

Wellness coaches are practitioners and life-long students of a vibrant new field: coaching psychology, which integrates more than 15 other fields. Coaching psychology, in part, is the relational vehicle for implementing the tenets of positive psychology, a field focused on the scientific study of happiness and well-being.

Over the past 20 years, dozens of life and corporate coach training schools and university programs have trained more than 20,000 coaches worldwide, and in the past five years health and wellness coach training programs have emerged, some founded upon coaching psychology.

Reputable coach training programs require six months to two years of training and coaching practice, followed by a certification process that measures core coaching competencies. Becoming a masterful coach, even for those with natural coaching talent, requires months of training and years of practice.

Understand, engage and challenge

Great coaches have several skills you will notice right away. They are great listeners and enjoy our stories. They foster self-acceptance and self-respect. They arouse, engage, energize and challenge us to reach higher at the right moment. They have a bird dog's ability to sniff out our strengths, values and desires. They are playful when appropriate. They take risks and ask courageous questions. They don't rescue us from emotional muck—sometimes we need to sit in it for a bit to energize our desire to change. They know that our lives are at stake if we don't take care of ourselves. And they know how to celebrate our successes.

Proven coaching processes to get to point B

Coaches draw on a variety of coaching processes—some to facilitate a powerful coaching conversation, and others to enable planning and implementation. Some of these processes help us see the big picture, and identify the stepping stones that lead us to our destination. Other processes enlist our strengths, or reframe challenges as opportunities for learning and growth. Coaching sessions are, in fact, workouts for our brains. They enable new thinking, feeling connections and pathways that propel us forward with clarity and focus towards energetic action.

Seek the best

While we need optimal wellness to be at our best at home and work, managing physical and mental health are among our greatest life challenges. As we age, the challenges become more difficult. It is wise to seek out a wellness coach with the best training and skills available. **CDHC**

Following 17 years in the biotech industry, Moore founded Wellcoaches in 2000. She is the co-founder of the Coaching Psychology Institute at McLean/Harvard Medical School www.coachingpsychologyinstitute.com, and lead author of the upcoming Lippincott Williams & Wilkins' Coaching Psychology Manual for Physical & Mental Health Professionals. To reach Moore, go to www.coachmeggblog.com or send email to margaretm@wellcoaches.com.

