

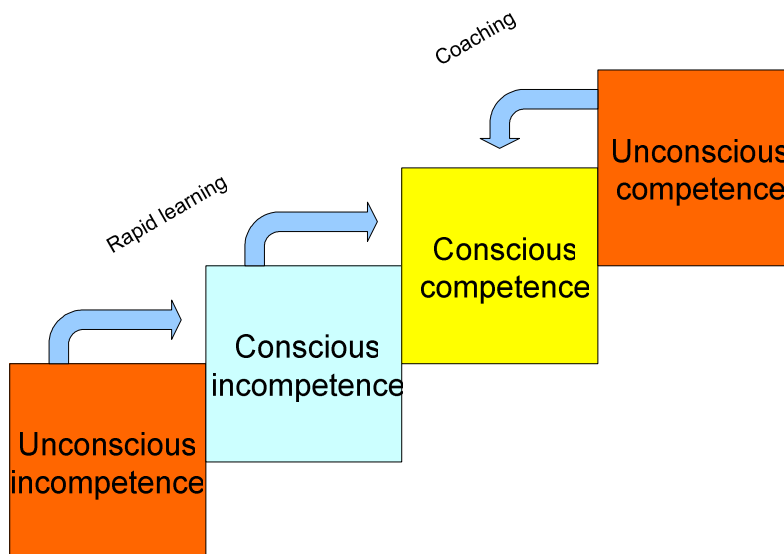
How Life-coaching is Successful

By Dr Angus McLeod

All coaching depends upon the desire of an individual to change something in their life. This requires that they have adequate emotional energy to see their goals through. If they do not, then a level of emotional support, possibly counselling or psychotherapy is often needed first.

Whatever the goals are, the outcome of coaching must be that the person is always successful - this ensures that they become more self-assured, self-confident and active. For that reason, it is vital that each goal is achievable and broken down into steps that are realistic and time-framed. Even when steps go wrong, it is essential that they learn positive things from those experiences and feel motivated to continue with fresh steps to their goals.

All our learning can be described by the figure below. Before we attempt something new, we do not know whether we are able or not – indeed, we do not know that we do not know! Once we get started we may quickly realize that we are not competent (conscious incompetence). If we keep at it, we then become competent. Eventually we have learned so well that we are automatically being competent without being aware of it. This is where we may stop acknowledging our ability and run ourselves down. It is also where our skills may deteriorate through lack of attention – think of the standard people's driving for an example. There is a short-cut then, between unconscious competence and unconscious incompetence! Beware! For that reason, pilots at British Airways are regularly re-stressed with new operating procedures and then put through their paces in the flight simulator. If they fail within a time-frame, they are grounded until they meet the new standards. This whole process is designed to keep BA pilots in the zone of conscious competence. And this is what skilled coaches do. Skilled coaches help to focus your attention on your skills, to keep your abilities high and encourage you to acknowledge your ability to be skilful and successful in what you do without taking your effort for granted. They also encourage successes and help you to learn how to re-use your abilities in new areas of your life.



Whatever their coach-training, the coach will invariably be using three principle methods, these are: questioning skills, challenge and silence.

Questions are broadly designed to increase choice, gain wider understanding and to help focus. Challenges help people to re-think the beliefs and assumptions that hold them back. Effective use of silence is essential to allow such re-thinking to become fruitful. Sometimes the individual will remain silent but in a busy state of mind for many minutes. Invariably though, if asked how long the time was, they will rarely believe that it was over twenty seconds. When I coach in masterclasses and in training sessions, the audience tells them how long they were silent and they are always surprised! This is because the silence is where they went so deeply into their learning process that all external events became unnoticed. The coach has to be expert in order to recognise such periods of great mental (and or emotional) process. These breakthroughs are called cathartic events and good coaches observe these (and the huge motivational impact of them) on a regular basis.

Life coaching is enormously helpful in life-change, dealing with today's issues and tomorrow's goals. The added benefits include learning life-skills that they will continue to use effectively afterwards and the self-confidence that comes from repeated successes.

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