



An introduction to
COACHING



NEUROCOACHING
A U S T R A L I A

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discover the difference...



Hi, my name is Robert Holmes. Like you, I'm interested in people's personal development, and have found the coaching modality particularly helpful for change, resilience and growth.

So far as I can recall, fifteen years ago the word coaching was really only used in sport. Then along came the 'coaching profession' and now we are seeing this modality being used by all sorts of other professions including human resources, teaching, management, neuroscience, youth work, social work, psychology and employment.

I've been at the front edge of that transition and have seen both the good and the bad in experiments and application of theory, as well as a lot of general confusion among practitioners. There are a lot of people claiming to be doing coaching but it's nothing of the sort.

In this booklet I hope to answer some of your questions about coaching. With understanding and agreement about what it is, and perhaps how to do it well, we will then be able to help others too.

It's time to explore a 'secret' world where people find solutions to their unique, complex and difficult problems, overcome their barriers to success, get ahead, get what they are after, smash previous records and find themselves flourishing in life. In that world everybody has a coach. Maybe you've had glimpses of it already? Every elite athlete has a coach, as does every successful politician

and every prosperous business person. It gives you the feeling that coaches are only for the rich, famous and successful, but that is just no longer true.

Coaching now takes place literally everywhere:

- *actors are coached in how to personify characters,*
- *managers are coached in doing conflict management better,*
- *CEO's are coached in negotiation skills and tactics,*
- *speakers are coached in having better stage presence,*
- *students are coached into their adult lives, and*
- *parents are coached in raising kids.*

I just love coaching – it is so incredibly effective when used properly.

So, with that, let's get started.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adam", with a horizontal line underneath it.

what is coaching?

helping you achieve



In its simplest form, coaching takes place any time one person looks curiously and objectively at someone else's behaviour or performance and asks them useful questions. Coaching happens every time someone offers helpful, impartial and objective feedback that lets the other person discover a way to get better outcomes – ones that are more in line with what they are trying to achieve.

Coaching brings together the best tools and learnings from philosophy, psychology, neuroscience, education and religion to help people thrive.

Like much of behavioural science, coaching makes use of a wide range of tools and methodologies. However, coaching is unique in that the relationship between coach and client is very different. How so?

1. The coach needs nothing from the client.
2. The conversation is entirely centered on what the client wants.
3. The conversation takes place in a judgment free space.
4. The coach is positioned as a peer rather than an expert.

Having peer-to-peer conversations in a judgement free space allows for curiosity and exploration around thinking and behaviour, which opens the recipient to new possibilities and gives them access to greater choice and responsibility for the outcomes they are getting in life. The coaching conversation is based entirely on what the client wants (the pursuit of goals) and the coach assists them to remain future focused and motivated to keep moving forward.

The aim of coaching is to facilitate change and enable action. Coaching achieves this by assisting the individual to explore their limiting beliefs and change the fixed mindsets that are producing their current outcomes, so they can create the future they really want.

Coaching is all about helping people develop skills and strategies for doing life better – finding appropriate goals to aim for in the long and short term, then helping them bring their best selves to the game of life.



coaching philosophy

the box factory



Imagine that your life was a factory that produced boxes. You noticed that the boxes it produced were missing sides – they were no good as boxes. In this case you might take the view that you are broken, that your factory needs fixing. You might adapt to having broken boxes and use them for something else.

A coach just wouldn't look at you that way. They would simply say your factory is very consistently producing boxes without sides. It is producing exactly what you have designed it to produce.

If you want boxes with sides you will have to go inside the factory and change a setting. Coaching is not about taping sides back on boxes and pretending everything is all right – that is simply behaviour management. Coaching is about lasting transformation. Every behaviour rests on an underlying belief. There's no point complaining about the outcomes we are getting, as though they are somehow separate from ourselves. We are creating our reality and if we don't like it, we have the power to change it. I hope you can see how that's a bit different.



Here's what else coaching believes...

People are not their behaviour. Every negative behaviour has a positive intent. In everything we do, we are trying to bring peace and comfort to ourselves or avoid pain. Often our strategies and behaviours can be very unresourceful, incongruent with our values and even destructive. But ultimately we can change them into resourceful, congruent and constructive ones.

People always have choice. We have 100% choice and total responsibility. However, nothing is certain in this game of life. We can make great choices as well as poor ones. One great choice does not guarantee the next one will be of the same quality. We all have ultimate responsibility for our lives, but we can give it away and live as disempowered victims if we choose to. Conversely, we can live as victors too.

The stakes are high. This game of life is played with incredibly high stakes. We can win and lose, love and hate, give and take, live and die. A coach will separate us from our choices though – we are not our choices. Our choices may hurt us and others, but they do not define us. We are not bad people because we do bad things. We do bad things because we are needy people.

Seeking to be free from the ability to do wrong is a fool's quest. In order to be able to make good choices we must also have the ability to make poor choices. In order to be able to love, hate must also be available to us; otherwise both good and love cease to be meaningful. Therefore, there is no point judging our 'shadow'. We must become more aware of the choices we make and continue making better choices more aligned with our core values.

Life comes with consequences. When we make poor choices we experience the consequences and end up lost and disconnected from ourselves, other people, the community and the planet. Often our poor choices carry their own punishment. They cut us off from others. But life also has a way of letting people go for a long time without those consequences catching up. When a person is coaching you they are not your judge. They will help you find ways to make great choices in the future irrespective of your past.



what coaching isn't

a point of distinction



While coaching falls neatly into the realm of human behavioural science, people sometimes get it confused with the other behavioural sciences. In order to get maximum benefit from the coaching skill set, it is important to understand how this modality differs from the myriad of roles a professional may play when relating to people in their care.

Examples of the types of roles a practitioner may slip into when relating to a client include:

- **Advisor** – giving guidance, direction and advice like a consultant.
- **Teacher** – having more knowledge, instructing, tutoring and debriefing.
- **Critic** – providing constructive feedback both when it's asked for and when it's not.
- **Mentor** – providing emotional support and at times acting as a role model.
- **Director** – having more power, and telling others what to do, or stop doing.
- **Manager** – making decisions about or for another and requiring accountability.
- **Referrer** – arranging further, outside help (from a counsellor, psychologist or doctor).

I hope you can see by now that none of these are the same as coach. Remember, the coach provides peer-to-peer conversations in a judgment free space where the client is the expert and their desired outcome is the focus of attention. The coach might highlight observations, but they will 'permission it in' by asking "do you mind if I share a... story, anecdote, personal testimony, observation".

This space allows the client to own their decisions, gives them greater choice and responsibility and builds their capacity to make more resourceful decisions throughout the rest of their life without neediness or dependency on an expert.



It is absolutely fine for the practitioner to slip into or out of modalities, in fact relationships and circumstances often demand we do. However we should:

- a) be aware that we're doing it; and
- b) decide whether the person we're with needs to know that change is taking place or not – i.e. will we do it out loud and on purpose, or intentionally but quietly.

The last role of referrer may need a little further explanation, because knowing when to refer to another professional is really central to remaining helpful and best serving the needs of the client.

The types of issues coaching regularly assists with include:

- *Diet and eating*
 - *Eating disorders*
 - *Stress*
 - *Mindfulness*
 - *Values*
 - *Co-dependency*
 - *Divorce*
 - *Finances/budgeting*
 - *Intimacy/sex*
 - *Anxiety*
 - *Depression*
 - *Lack of motivation*
 - *Phobias*
 - *Trauma*
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Referring to a Counsellor, Psychologist or Doctor (Psychiatrist)

You may not that in counsellor, psychologist and doctor were not included in the list of roles I listed previously (advisor, teacher, critic, mentor, manager, director, referrer). I did this for a very good reason. The seven roles above are ones that we might slip into and out of quite naturally. But, even if we are trained to do so, we do not think it wise to give counselling, psychology or medical advice when we are operating in the coaching modality. This is for two reasons.

Firstly, and perhaps most obviously, these three roles require tertiary education, certification, registration and allow the client access to medicare payments. The advice they give carries much higher legal repercussions and insurance requirements.

Secondly, these modalities are fundamentally different from coaching.

- **Counsellor** – focuses on the past, works to fix it, listens to story with the goal to rescue from a past negative experience or emotion (hurt).
- **Psychologist** – addresses past and present behaviour and thinking routines, working on strategies for survival.
- **Doctor** – hears the symptoms, gives a diagnosis then suggests a prognosis or course of treatment.

A Puddle Metaphor

Perhaps it would be helpful to think about these roles in a metaphor. Imagine a child walks through a mud puddle after the rain. Their boots get muddy and they walk this mud into the house.

The **counsellor** is concerned with going outside and fixing or removing the mud puddle. The **psychologist** wants to discuss the choice to walk to the house and what happened to make the child play in the mud. The **doctor** sees the child has a runny nose, coughing and wet feet and decides she has a common cold. The **coach** wants to clean off the boots, help the child discover how to avoid the mud in the future and get on with life!

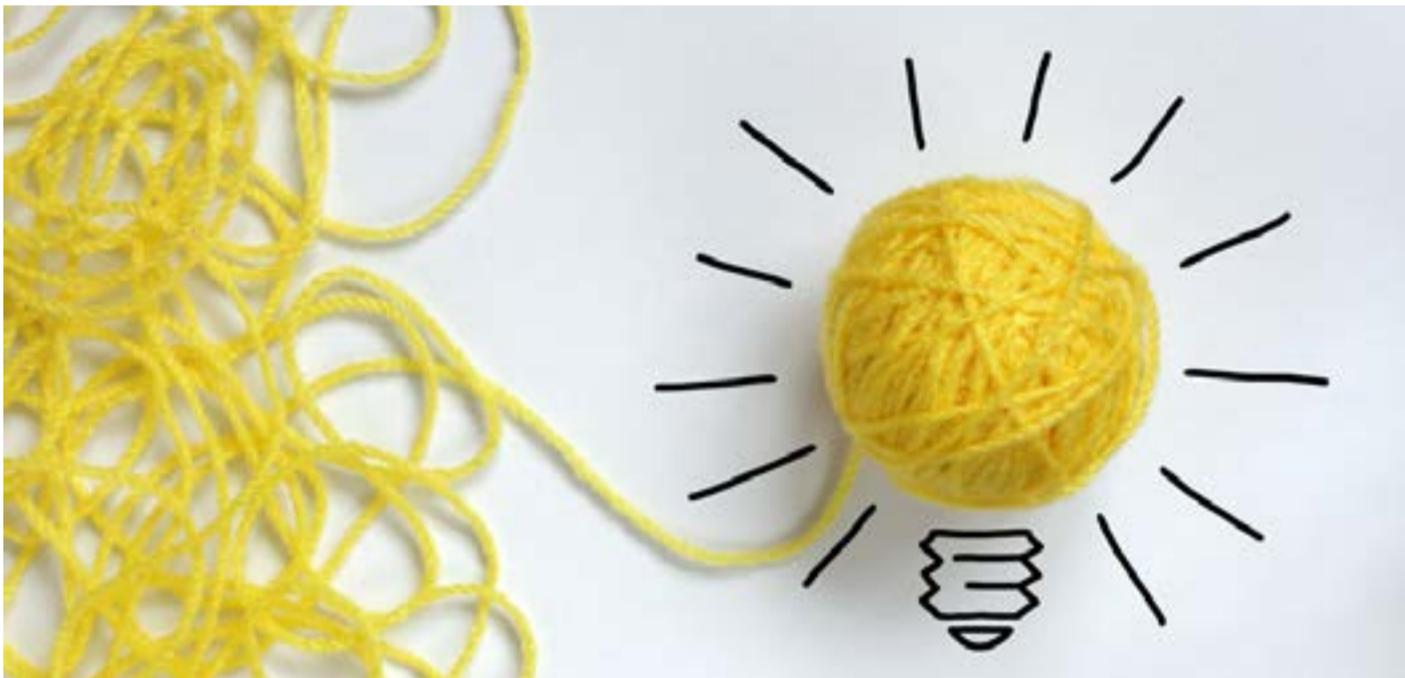


In your life, mud puddles are simply part of the story – something you walked through. To some extent your past and emotional issues have bearing on the situation, but in the ordinary course of coaching we are only going to talk ‘story’ to the extent that it helps us clean up the boots. After that, a coach is concerned to help you pursue your goals, hopes and future.



Coaching does not say your past is irrelevant, or that the mud puddle does not exist, or even that it shouldn't be cleaned up – after all other kids will walk through it too and get dirty. It just isn't the focus of the coach's work.

Even if you are working with another specialist for health, legal, financial, business, spiritual or emotional issues, it is highly likely that a coach can help you discover simple solutions to many of the complex contributing factors that a specialist is unlikely to pay attention to.



Coaching as a modality can deliver simple solutions to almost all complex human problems. So long as it is done with integrity, and follows the basic principles it will rarely cause harm or involve risk. That's what makes building a coaching culture so very critical to good growth and change.