



What The Hell Is Life Coaching?

by

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An Insider's Guide To Life Coaching

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Introduction

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If you were to stop 10 people in the street and ask them what life is, you would probably get some strange looks, but my guess is everybody would be able to give you an answer of some sort. If you had too much time on your hands and you were to follow that up by asking them if they knew what a coach was, again most would be able to give you a satisfactory answer.

So why do you think it is, that if you stopped 10 people and asked them to explain what Life Coaching is you would get more blank stares than if you asked the way to the gym at a Star Trek convention?

You cannot get too many more obvious words than 'Life' and 'Coach' but when you put the two together it often throws most people into a state of complete confusion.

I think there are a number of reasons for this, not least of which is that there is no specific standardized role for coaching. Every Life Coach is free to make up the rules as they go along if he or she so wishes. And trust me, some do.

Not only that, but Life Coaching is completely unregulated and if you want you can start calling yourself a Life Coach right now and you have as much legal right as I or any other practicing coach does.

Similarly, if you didn't want to actually bother with pesky clients, but fancy yourself as a trainer, you can set up your own Life Coach training company and start handing out certificates as soon as your large color printer arrives.

That's the downside. The upside is there are a great many credible and highly competent Life Coaches. Equally, there are some very effective training companies and larger organizations dedicated to maintaining a high quality and to safeguard the people that invest in Life Coaching.

Another reason for the confusion is because Life Coaching hasn't truly hit the mainstream yet. Sure, the number of people calling themselves coaches has exploded over the last 2 or 3 years, but demand is not keeping up with supply and the market is currently struggling to catch up.

Life Coaching is still seen by many as a bit woo-woo and something that is best left for the arty types living in places like San Francisco, New York, Los Angeles and other large cosmopolitan areas.

I've had clients that haven't even wanted to tell family members they were working with a coach for fear of ridicule. When I point out that many great business leaders, politicians, people working in the arts, and of course sports people use coaches, that is dismissed as though it were in some way different. It isn't.

I'm writing this ebook in response to the most common questions I get asked both by people calling me for a consultation or contacting me via my blog.

Questions like:

What is Life Coaching?

What makes a great Life Coach?

How do I become a Life Coach?

What do I look for in hiring a Life Coach?

Can I be a great coach?

What are the best books to read on coaching?

So if you have ever pondered any of those questions this book is going to be of interest to you, and if you haven't, read it anyway because you never know!

Disclaimer Type Stuff

A lot (although by no means all) of what I am about to say is my opinion. Please use your own due diligence and common sense if you want to either hire or become a coach.

There is some overlap, as I feel sure some people will only read part of the book that pertains to their circumstances. If you are lovely enough to read it all I apologize for any small amounts of duplicated information, it is intentional and not lazy editing.

There are a number of affiliate links in this ebook, especially to Amazon and I do earn about 4% commission on each sale. If you prefer I don't earn anything (and that is cool with me by the way), jot down the book title, training company etc and manually do a Google search.

Please be assured I've only linked to products and services that I personally have used or know well enough to be 100% confident that they offer massive value.

Companies like [Phoenix Services for Personal Development](#) here in Orlando and [Achievement Specialists](#) in the UK do not offer affiliate schemes, but that does not stop me recommending them, because I have worked with both and know they offer excellent value and the highest possible standards. Having said that, please do your own due diligence.

There are also a number of links back to blog posts I have written that may help you understand a certain topic in more detail. Feel free to click through if you have no idea what I'm talking about.

If this ebook has been of use to you, please forward on.

Cheers
Tim

What Is Life Coaching?

There have probably been as many different answers as there have been people that have asked the question. Unlike a lot of professional disciplines, life coaching cannot be pinned down or pigeonholed because the term is so generic and there are so many different approaches to it.

Some coaches prefer to separate themselves from the growing mass of Life Coaches by adopting titles such as Success Coach, Achievement Coach, Personal Coach, and Life Design Coach to name but a few.

Then there are coaches that only concentrate within certain niches. These may be as broad as only working with either men or women or concentrating on coaching gay and/or lesbians. Or as defined as working with smaller groups such as authors, people in the legal profession, sales professionals, those preparing to leave the armed forces, and of course, Life Coaches that only work with other Life Coaches.

Then there are coaches that focus on dating (gay or straight) relationships, religion, immigration and health.

And none of that takes into account Career, Executive, and Business Coaching that are different disciplines that utilize different skills sets, but we'll not muddy the waters by talking about them in this book.

There are also many different approaches to training because anybody has the power to set up a coach training organization and teach whatever it is they want to teach, presuming people are prepared to sign up for it.

Whereas solution or co-active coaching appears to be the most popular method (of which, more later), there is also NLP Life Coaching, Grow Model Coaching (behaviorism), Transformational Coaching, coaching based upon Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and a whole host of lesser known models.

When you take all this into account it's easy to see why many people are confused as to what a Life Coach actually does. I kid you not when I say that the most common question I get asked by prospect clients is "What exactly do you do?"

Before I get into that, let me begin by explaining what Life Coaching isn't.

What Life Coaching Isn't

Life Coaching is not Counseling, it's not Psychotherapy and it's not mentoring even though there are similarities and crossovers with all of those.

Note: The rise in the popularity of life coaching has meant there are a great many Counselors and Psychotherapists that now offer Life Coaching services which only serves to further confuse matters for the general public. When I use the term 'therapy' or therapist' I'm primarily referring to people who are qualified in Psychotherapy and/or Counseling

The fundamental difference between Life Coaching and therapy is that Life Coaching does not dwell on, or in, the past. In fact, if I spend 10% of my time talking about past issues with a client that's about 5% too long.

Unlike Psychotherapy and Counseling, Life Coaching always looks to the future whilst keeping the client firmly in the present.

This is important to understand because I've had clients come to me with the express intention of talking about stuff that has already happened. Unfortunately, neither I, nor anybody else I know this side of Marty McFly can influence that.

I appreciate under certain circumstances it may be useful to delve around in people's history to help overcome current issues. However, in my opinion, it is really not as necessary as people are led to believe.

And when I say nothing like as necessary, I mean, not even close.

Therapy had a substantial head start on Life Coaching that is still relatively speaking the new kid on the block. As such, therapy is often people's default thought when their life isn't going quite according to plan.

If they are stressed they think 'Therapy' if they're confused about their life and its direction they think 'Therapy' and if they hate their fifth consecutive job they think 'Therapy'

The reason they think this way is because they believe there's something wrong with them, that they are broken and therefore need repairing. They believe they should be able to deal with everything life throws at them in their stride, and if they can't, then there must be something wrong.

This belief is exacerbated by the fact we seldom have a clue to what is going on inside other people's heads. Thus we presume (quite wrongly) everybody else has all their ducks in a row and therefore there must be something wrong because we don't.

I cannot tell you how many sighs of relief I have heard from clients when after they have told me their issues, I've responded by assuring them they are perfectly normal and nothing I haven't heard dozens, maybe hundreds, of times before.

However, for every person that calls a Life Coach a huge number are considering some form of therapy. A recent comparison on Google of the various search terms yielded the following results:

Search Term	Searches
Therapy	7,480,000
Counseling	2,740,000
Psychotherapy	301,000
Life Coaching	165,000

That equates to 120 million searches per annum for counseling and therapy and 2 million for Life Coaching. Does that seem out of whack to you? It sure does me.

I've no doubt a major reason is that therapy is often covered under medical insurance and Life Coaching is not. But the balance is so out of kilter it must also come down to education and people not understanding the benefits and value of coaching.

I have had clients come to me after having been in therapy of one sort or another for literally decades, and no, I'm not joking. I don't doubt that there are times when long-term therapy may be necessary, but I equally have no doubt that many more times when it is not.

On more than one occasion I have been tempted to ask a client when they have told me they've been in therapy for over a decade, "So when did you decide it wasn't working, when your therapist invited you to see the new wing of his house you'd paid for?"

I am in no way equipped to deal with people who are suffering from severe depression, schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder, PTSD, anger management issues, severe drug dependency or even marital breakdowns. And neither is any coach that isn't also a qualified therapist.

Having said that, I am certified to deal with people suffering from severe and chronic stress, who have anxiety and panic issues and even people that have phobias. And the reason I know I am qualified to do those things is because I have a track record of doing so and the only thing I am really worried about in the final analysis is, "Can I help this person?"

My Approach To Life Coaching

On a number of occasions since I received my Life Coaching accreditation I've stopped to analyze what it is I do and compared it to what I think I *should* be doing as a certified Life Coach. No matter how I looked at it, I could never get the two to match exactly; there were always gray areas.

Solution or co-active coaching relies almost exclusively on asking the client questions until they come to their own conclusions. When I was trained we were told never even to offer an opinion unless we prefaced it with something like

"Would it be ok if I offered some information that may be useful at this stage?"

Whenever I spotted a short cut and wanted to dive in with practical advice it led to some doubt and confusion as to whether I was doing my job properly, especially in the early days.

However, I'd usually push it to the back of my mind by asking the following question:

What is the most important thing when I am working with a client?

The answer always came back the same. It is to help clients get from where they are to where they want to be.

It's not to stick to some unwritten, or even written, code that will *hopefully* get them from where they are to where they want to be?

The rationale behind the co-active/solution coaching approach of asking questions of clients and letting them come to their own conclusions, is sound. If

we can do this effectively, then change is not only more likely to happen, it's more likely to stick.

It's human nature to want to think our own ideas and thoughts are the best and new fMRI brain research has finally shown why this is the case. For more on this check out the brilliant ['Your Brain At Work' by David Rock](#).

The conventional wisdom in Life Coaching is that if a coach does a very good job with a client he or she gets complimented, but if they do an excellent job, they don't. In other words, the client walks away thinking it was all his or her own work.

Let me be honest, it can be somewhat disconcerting to the ego when a client thinks it was purely a coincidence that the change they wanted happened whilst employing you as a coach. The urge to stick up a hand and say, "Oo-oo what about me, look what a great job I did" in a whiny voice can be almost overwhelming.

As I say, the upsides of subscribing and practicing the co-active or solution coaching model are obvious. When a client makes a breakthrough it can be **huge** and it is very likely to stick. It also removes the risk of the coach inflicting upon the client their map of the world and simply telling them 'how it is'. Something I still firmly believe is the antithesis of good coaching.

However, the more I work with clients, the more I grow to believe that the downsides to this type of coaching, whereas not as glaringly obvious or prevalent, are nonetheless present.

Yes I believe we all have the resources within ourselves to make the necessary changes. In fact that's the only place they are. I don't have a magic box full of determination, courage, enthusiasm, tenacity and belief ready to hand out to clients. If I did, I'd be charging a lot more than I do now.

In my experience some people do not respond to the co-active version of Life Coaching. Or probably more accurately, if they do, it takes so long and costs them so much money they usually get fed up and quit before seeing the change they want to see.

It took me a few years to really get my head round this. Some people actually like to be shown options, they like to be pushed rather than be lead and they respond much more favorably to that approach.

And that is often where NLP can be useful as it is more of an intervention/hands on approach than solution coaching.

Note: *I have deliberately avoided talking about NLP in too much depth, as it is such a huge topic. If you want to know more you can either check out a post I write called [What Is NLP?](#) Or go and buy a copy of a book that is probably the best introduction to the topic I know, [NLP The New Technology of Achievement – by Charles Faulkner & Steve Andries.](#)*

Being an effective coach requires I be flexible in my approach and not be confined to a certain way of doing things. This is not surgery, it's not an exact science, and there is no **'the way'** of doing things.

When I think of the great change work coaches/therapists like Richard Bandler, Steve & Connieraë Andreas, Andrew Austin, Robert Dilts, John Grinder, Virginia Satir and Milton Erickson, I think of people that push the boundaries and don't (or didn't in some cases) conform to the norm.

A great many Life Coaches I've come into contact with, work with clients at the level of actions. What I mean by that is they take a look at where a client is and where a client wants to be. Then they put an action plan in place to bridge the gap.

That can be highly effective with clients that know where it is they want to be and don't know how to set goals etc. It can also be fairly useless in many cases because it doesn't get to the root cause of what was stopping the person from moving forward in the first place. It's equally problematical for clients that aren't even sure where it is they want to be, and that is a surprisingly large group of people.

Actions can only ever be the results of thoughts (even if those thoughts are unconscious), so it means working with the symptoms rather than cause in the same way that an aspirin is dealing with the symptom of pain rather than what caused the pain in the first place.

Changing somebody's thoughts purely by asking questions and [using reframing techniques](#). Can be very complex and time-consuming. Sometimes rapid intervention (like certain NLP processes) requires more of a 'tell and show' approach.

I'm a much better Life Coach when I'm prepared, under the right circumstances, to offer opinions and give advice. As long that is, as I work within the clients [value framework](#) and realize the only agenda is to help them.

Having said that, there is equally nothing wrong with a coach sticking strictly to one coaching model if they are getting great results because in the final analysis it comes down to results. If a coach isn't helping their clients then it doesn't matter what approach they are taking, it needs changing.

How Do I Hire A Life Coach?

I'm going to keep this section as honest as I can. It would be easy for me to say, pick the phone up and call me, but that would kind of defeat the point because I cannot work with everybody. And anyway, it may be that you would prefer to work with a woman, somebody from your own ethnic background, or maybe just somebody with more hair and a normal accent.

With that in mind, I'm going to presume you are a friend or family member as I would never coach either, and you have asked for advice on how to hire a coach.

Training & On-Going Education

I know I said that training isn't absolutely necessary to become a great coach, but it makes it far more likely. I have no doubt there are great coaches that have never had a day's training in their life, but I also have no doubt that there are way more great coaches that have had lots of training.

If I think of the best coaches I know, every single one of them has spent thousands of Dollars, Pounds or Euros on training. Possibly the best trainer/coach I have worked with, Jamie Smart, has spent well over \$100,000 on training. Now that's what I call commitment and I know for a fact he's constantly topping that up.

Knowing your potential coach has undergone various training sessions above and beyond what is absolutely necessary tells you they take what they do very seriously. I calculate that I've spent in excess of \$25,000 on training and training materials and that doesn't include travel, accommodation or lost work time. If I added those to the cost as well as money spent on books and audio programs I am north of \$35k and I haven't stopped by any means.

You don't do that unless you are very serious about what you do. A long weekend NLP Diploma does not indicate (to me anyway) that somebody wants to be the very best coach they can be.

Experience

About the only thing that may trump training is relevant experience.

But what is relevant experience?

My co-author on *How To Be Rich and Happy*, John P Strelecky travels all over the world talking to thousands of people about leadership, goal setting and living a more fulfilling life. He has also written 4 books (3 of which were best sellers) on those topics.

John is not a qualified life coach. In fact he doesn't even get involved in one-to-one coaching.

Would I hire him if I wanted a new coach and he was available?

Damn straight I would. On several occasions he has blown me away with snippets of insight (about myself) that I'd missed. I've also read his books and seen him inspire a room full of people. That is all relevant experience, at least to me.

I first dipped my toe in the coaching waters in 2004 and started coaching full time in 2005. When I look back now on what I didn't know then, I'm almost embarrassed at my naivety. I'm an exponentially better coach than I was when I began because I have had the experience of dealing with 100's of clients and 100's of different sets of problems.

It almost seems unfair to novice coaches to suggest experience is so important, but nonetheless, it's probably true. Of course we all have to start somewhere and everybody has their first day on the job, so is it reasonable to penalize new coaches that are learning the ropes?

I'll let you be the judge of that, but let me ask you this?

If you were having brain surgery would you want the surgeon that just got the green light to operate solo? Ok, so that may be an extreme example, but would you want the newly qualified dentist, or the mechanic that just opened his garage? What about the hairdresser that just left school, or the painter that just set up on his own?

Your answer to those questions is what will decide if you want a coach that has experience. In the brilliant [‘Outliers’](#) Malcolm Gladwell spoke of needing approximately 10,000 hours to truly master a skill. Life Coaching is a skill no different to any other.

Testimonials

There is a tendency when people start up in coaching to grab as many testimonials as possible to demonstrate to potential clients their value.

Unfortunately in their haste to demonstrate social proof some coaches forget that the testimonials should really be from people they have had a professional working relationship with, and not just some online friends that think they are cool dudes or dudettes and want to offer their support.

I have been asked on at least 3 occasions to offer a testimonial for a persons coaching ability based on the fact that I knew them rather than because I’ve worked with them. On each occasion I politely declined because whereas I have no issue endorsing other coaches, and have done many times, I do have an issue endorsing them when I have no real idea if they are even competent.

Unfortunately, fake testimonials do exist, so if in doubt, ask to speak with the people that have offered the testimonial. I welcome clients that ask me if they can speak to people I have worked with, as will most coaches worth their salt.

Rapport

Arguably the most important thing with choosing a coach to work with is the level of rapport you have with them. I end almost all my preliminary consults by saying something like this:

“Listen to your gut instinct. If you think working with me would be a cool thing to do, then let’s do it. If you’re getting warning signs or a feeling that either I, or coaching, isn’t right for you, then don’t do it PERIOD!”

That may seem like a rather poor technique for closing a sale and you would be right. In my early days I would use all the sales techniques I had learned in over 20 years to get clients on board.

However, it wasn't long before I realized that the harder I had to work to get a client to hire me the less likely they were to do the work I wanted from them in return. It seemed it was a law of diminishing returns that benefited nobody.

If you start talking with a coach and you get a sense that they aren't right for you, then they aren't, and yes, it is that simple.

Thank them for their time, put the phone down and call the next one on your list. Do not override your gut instinct even if you get offered the "Deal of the Century" that expires in exactly 18 seconds.

Coaching is a partnership and hard selling should not be needed.

Cost

Do not make the assumption that cost tells you anything whatsoever about a coach's ability to coach!

I know one coach that launched their business charging \$500 per hour without any training or experience whatsoever. The person in question was a brilliant marketer though and understood the 'Velvet Rope' theory that dictates the more you charge, the better people will think you are.

On first pass I would advise avoiding looking at costs completely. Find the coach you like the most and then work out if you can afford to hire them.

I know a lot of marketers love to advise you that you are making an investment in their product, but most of the time we all know that's bullshit.

Coaching is a rare exception though because you really are investing in you.

Having said that, I'd love to be able to hire Michael Neill as my coach, but at \$50k per annum I cannot afford it no matter how much of an investment it is, so I appreciate there will have to be times when practicality takes over.

A final note on this.

I have worked with over 50 pro bono clients since moving to the US. I do not advertise the fact because I get way more requests than I can deal with as it is and my waiting list is usually 3 to 6 months.

Don't be afraid to ask for free coaching if you genuinely have zero cash. I can, and regularly do, say no to people and every coach has that option. You can even ask me, but bear in mind I'll want a damn good reason why I should chose you over all the other dozens of worthy requests I get.

Being a bit short of cash this month because you have your vacation to pay for probably won't have me welling up and rushing to help.

Note: My pro bono places always go to people that are subscribed to my newsletter. [So click here and sign up.](#)

Guarantees

There are no guarantees with Life Coaching. If a potential coach tells you he or she can definitely help, then they are either lying or have no comprehension of what coaching is all about, and neither looks very good.

You may well get a 100,000-mile warranty with your new car and a lifetime guarantee with your patio furniture, but coaching isn't like that.

Here's a secret that I'll share with you and hopefully you want blow my cover by telling anybody else.

The client does the really hard work in life coaching.

Shocking stuff eh? So let me explain.

Imagine you decide to take up playing golf. You have never hit a ball in your life but you sign up for a series of lessons at your local club with the professional. Would he or she promise to have to you down to a single figure handicap by the end of the year?

Of course not, that would be ludicrous because it's you who has to do the work in-between lessons if you want to improve. Coaching is no different so if and when you decide to hire a coach avoid the ones that tell you they can guarantee anything other than doing their very best and working to your agenda.

The Cookie Cutter Coach

I often get asked by prospective clients what we will do together in each session. I usually respond that other than the first session where I will be gathering background information, and possibly the second when I usually delve into values, I have no idea.

Until I have gotten a clearer understanding of what makes a client tick how the hell can I tell them what we'll be doing? Every client is different and as such every client requires I adapt my coaching to meet his or her needs.

If you speak to a Life Coach that tells you he knows exactly what you'll be doing in sessions 1 through 6, ask him how he knows that?

How Do I Become A Life Coach?

Before we start, ask yourself whether you need to make a six-figure income?

If the answer is yes, then pick another career.

Seriously, if you are going into coaching to make sacks of cash you are embarking on the wrong career path for the wrong reasons and you're probably going to be very disappointed, as well as broke.

Are there Life Coaches that make a lot of money? Of course there are and maybe you could be one of them, but they are the exception to the rule. Life Coaching is a vocation, or even a calling, and money should be way down the list of reasons for doing it.

Not only that, but the coaches that do get rich seldom do so by exclusively doing client work. It is usually through other activities such as holding workshops and seminars and doing public speaking.

I seldom see more than 3 clients per day because of the concentration levels required and because I like to do other things like writing free ebooks to give to fine people like yourself. At an approximate rate of [\\$130 per hour you can do the math](#) on the theoretical maximum I can ever earn in one year.

When you throw in vacation time, clients cancelling and sickness you'll understand that I'll not be placing a down payment on an ocean going yacht any time soon. Not that I care.

Since early 2006 when I moved from the UK to Orlando there has been an explosion of people taking up Life Coaching as a career. I conservatively estimate that there are at least three times as many coaches in the Orlando area (I wouldn't be surprised if the true figure were five or six times as many) than when I first moved here.

Even taking into consideration more people now know about Life Coaching than would have done even a few years ago, that's still a huge growth in supply, and not one that is reflected in demand.....yet.

I say that not to crush your dreams if you want to become a Life Coach, but to make you aware of what you need to do to be successful. Few training

companies will stress the difficulty involved in running a successful coaching practice because if they did they'd have far fewer people enrolling.

Is Life Coach Training Necessary?

It's important to understand that unfortunately, Life Coaching isn't regulated in either the US or UK, although I do believe the Australian Government is currently investigating the possibility.

The reason I say it's unfortunate, is that the low cost of entry means there are lots of ill equipped people running around declaring they are Life Coaches with little or no idea of what that really means or what their responsibilities as a coach are.

Asking whether Life Coach training is necessary is a tough question and there is no definitive answer. However, in an ideal, world I tend to believe formal training (presuming it's good training!) is very important, if not necessarily crucial.

Firstly, it teaches the core elements and thus helps protect clients from coaches that really have no clue to what their role and responsibilities are.

Secondly, training will allow you to separate yourself from the competition. It will demonstrate to prospective clients you take your job more seriously than those claiming to be coaches with nothing more than a shiny new business card and free blog to support that claim.

Having said that, I'm sure there are brilliant uncertified coaches and terrible certified ones, so a piece of paper doesn't necessarily demonstrate somebody is a great coach, but it does increase the likelihood.

Other than the cost of the investment and the time needed to complete formal training the only real downside I see is that you will only be exposed to one type of coaching model. Not that there is anything necessarily wrong with that, but as I said before, I like to flick backwards and forwards depending on the clients' needs.

If you get trained in co-active or solution coaching for example, you may well hold on to the idea that if you can't elicit the answers from the client with cunning questions, then there's nothing else you can do to help them.

I'm sure really skilled practitioners can achieve great results like this, but I'm equally sure that a minority of clients will prove difficult for them because they require a more direct approach.

In any event, training is purely a starting point because you really learn to do this job by doing this job. I liken it to learning to drive. Ok so you get your driving license when you pass your test, but you really start to learn how to drive when you get out on busy highways on your own.

Who Should I Train With?

The most recognizable and respected credentials within the United States are issued by the ICF ([International Coach Federation](#)).

The basic qualification they begin with is ACC (Associate Certified Coach) which requires a mere 100 hours experience and 8 clients. The next level up is the PPC (Professional Certified Coach) level that requires 750 coaching hours and a minimum of 25 clients. And finally the gold standard is MCC (Master Certified Coach) that will require you prove you have 2,500 hours of coaching under your belt, something many coaches never achieve in a lifetime.

If you want to do corporate work I would suggest at the very least you'll need the PPC. Otherwise it's unlikely you'll be taken seriously by any HR Department and never get your foot in the door. I doubt they'll be swayed too much by the fact 200 people follow you on Twitter and you once wrote an ebook.

I have seen all sorts of prices for coaching certification ranging from about \$2k up to \$10k with timescales ranging from 3 months up to 18 months.

My favorite coaching book of all-time is Your Brain At Work by David Rock. The author also has his own coach training company called '[Results Coaching Systems](#)'. I have spoken with two people from this company and researched what it is they do and how they operate.

If I were about to train to become a coach I would have zero hesitation in signing up this company. Unlike some high profile companies I could mention, they don't make promises they can't keep, they don't hard sell and they adopt some of the most cutting edge approaches to coaching on the planet.

Although they are an Australian company, they also offering training in the US.

Do your due diligence and try and get to speak with people that have used the companies you're thinking of training with. Remember though, people usually gush about training they have done (nobody wants to admit they blew \$6k, even to themselves), so dig as deep as you can as to what they really got out of it.

I trained with a company called [Achievement Specialist](#) in the UK. I'd read a book called [The Life Coaching Handbook](#) by Curly Martin one of Europe's top Life Coaches and noticed she had her own training company in Bournemouth, England.

The course was great, but fairly basic only spanning a weekend. However, to get the certification I then had a number of modular assignments to complete followed up by a final thesis.

Concurrently I had to chalk up a number of client hours, I think it was 75, but I'm honestly not sure now it may have been a few more or a few less. It took me about 7 months to complete although I know people that got done in under 6 and some that took over 12, it was very much dependent on what speed I wanted to work at.

I would also recommend NLP training and thoroughly endorse [Phoenix Services for Personal Development](#) here in Orlando and Salad in the UK. Michael from Phoenix and Jamie from Salad are two of the best trainers I have ever worked with.

I know Jamie has scaled back his training recently, but he still brings in some of the best guest trainers the world has to offer.

Can I Train Myself?

Some training is highly advisable because it allows you to interact with your peers and make mistakes (which you will do) in a safe environment. However, I appreciate many people don't have a few thousand dollars lying around and if that's you, it shouldn't be a barrier to chasing your dreams.

If there is genuinely no way you can afford to pay for training (and that isn't the same as not wanting to pay by the way, which simply demonstrates a lack of commitment), then it is possible to teach yourself. You have to be prepared to do the research and read the books and kick off your career by working for free with people that understand you're still a novice and working this stuff out.

I've read and listened to hundreds of books on life coaching and self development and it is something that I never tire of. Amazingly I've spoken to coaches that have read a handful of the better-known intros into the topic and think that's all they need to know. It isn't.

Start with books (or audio books) purely on life coaching before you move into self-development material because that way you'll learn the fundamentals first. There is a list at the end of this ebook with some books, DVD's and audio programs I have found to be the most useful.

You may also want to consider getting a mentor. I personally have mentored a number of younger coaches and it's always great fun for me and a way of giving back. You can ask me if you like. although I only ever work with one person at once and I usually have a list of people waiting, but if you truly wow me, who knows?

Also do whatever you can to hire a coach of your own to help you. Better still work with 2 or 3 to experience different styles. This may well prove cheaper than paying for training and you will get a real insight into how different coaches operate and which methods you like best.

By the way, if you are going to train yourself, I kid you not when I say 'How To Be Rich and Happy is a great starting point. It has a lot of the best stuff I do with clients in it as well as some really cool stuff that my co-author John Strelecky uses.

You can help yourself and also help others (90% of money goes into producing free copies for people less well off) [by grabbing a copy here.](#)

How Do I Get Clients?

One of the sessions on my initial training was about how to sell the concept of life coaching to potential clients. It was only an hour or so and covered off some relatively basic stuff for anybody that has worked for any length of time in sales.

The session was just after lunch and I'm guessing close to half the people were either completely disinterested or not even there.

According to [Stephen Fairley and Christ Stout in Getting Started in Personal and Executive Coaching](#) 80% of coaches earn less than \$20,000 per annum.

The biggest single reason for that is because they have no idea how to sell or market themselves. If you fit into that category go and buy Bob Poole's book, ['Listen First – Sell Later'](#)

If you can't sell yourself and your services, you'll be living under a cardboard box by the end of year one. I don't care how brilliant a coach you are; you have to sell that to people. We're all sales people, it's just that some people get that and others refuse to accept it and suffer accordingly.

Learning to sell isn't enough on its own though; you have to have people to sell to.

My blog/website is my shop window to what I do and an important element in attracting new clients. I would estimate that 75% of people that call me have checked my blog out first, and yes that does include referrals. If you don't have a professional looking website/blog that will seriously impede your growth.

Utilizing social networking tools like [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#) is crucial if you want to establish credibility and start to build your own 'tribe' (I dislike that term by the way, but it seems to be de rigeur at the moment). You can interact with more people in a week using the Internet than you could in a year of face-to-face networking and spend a fraction of the cost.

A word of warning. You are better having 25 followers that interact with you and value what you offer, than 1,000 who are simply following you because you followed them first. This isn't really a numbers game although you could be forgiven for thinking otherwise.

YouTube is another useful source of traffic and therefore, potential clients. My [YouTube clips](#) have been viewed thousands of times and although I don't get swamped by traffic coming in from YouTube, the quality of the traffic that does arrive is very high. By that, I mean people tend to stay longer and read more posts indicating they are serious about what I do.

Public speaking is another great way to generate potential clients as people get to see what you offer before hiring you as is offering free workshops or training sessions.

I could write an entire ebook just devoted to using the Internet to generate clients but it wouldn't be as good as either the excellent [Career Renegade](#) by

Jonathan Fields or the equally useful [Trust Agents](#) by Julien Smith and Chris Brogan, so if you want to expand your knowledge check those out.

What About Ongoing Education?

Ongoing learning is crucial if you have aspirations of being a world-class coach. If you have your expensive shiny new certificate hanging on your wall and think that's all you need, you're not serving your clients very well. And you'll certainly never be the best coach you can be. Think 'Kaizen', the Japanese philosophy of daily incremental improvement and you'll be good to go.

I often tell clients that the people that really excel in any field are those that do the things most people won't do, and Life Coaching is no different. I probably spend a dozen hours a week either reading or listening to new material. I have to admit though, I'm fortunate in so much as if you offered me rip-roaring page-turning thriller to read or a book on self-development, I'll take the latter.

There are lots of different approaches and tools out there that can help you help your clients more effectively, but if you aren't prepared to learn them, then they may as well not exist and your skill levels will plateau fairly quickly.

I'm a big advocate of NLP (neurolinguistic programming) and it is without doubt the most important tool I have. It isn't the panacea for all ills as some NLPers foolishly claim, but I lean on it heavily and quite honestly I'm not sure how I would do my job effectively without it.

If you want to know more I'd encourage you to read this post: [What Is NLP?](#)

I'm also a certified hypnotherapist although I no longer practice hypnotherapy. I learned it more for the language side of things so I could help shift clients thinking in more subtle ways.

I also want to learn the Sedona Method and EFT at some stage because both have proven track records of helping people, and that's what I do. If ongoing learning is anathema to you, drop the idea of being a coach, because you're probably going to be crap at it.

Can I Be A Great Life Coach?

I genuinely believe that the vast majority of people can become good life coaches, if they're, prepared to put the work in. All the requisite skills such as listening and questioning ability, rapport building, flexibility, selling yourself, marketing and even creativity can be learned, **if the will is there.**

However, if you think simply because your friends insist you're a good listener, that's enough to be a good coach, then you're probably going to get very frustrated when you come across more challenging clients.

Life Coaching is a practice and as such it is a constant process of refining and adjusting your approach. I am a far better coach than I was 5 years ago. In fact, I'm a better coach than I was 1 year ago, but I'm not as good as I'll be next year.

There really is no substitute for experience and working directly with clients. It doesn't matter how many books you've read, courses you've attended or Life Coaches you've spoken to, you have to apply that knowledge at some point.

I sometimes get asked if there is a minimum age and it's a really tough question to answer. I want to say no, anybody over the age of 18 can do what I do and I have no wish to be viewed as a dream-crusher. Then again, I'm not sure if I believe it's true, because I do think life experience is important.

Also, being too young creates a real barrier to attracting clients. They may see you (rightly or wrongly) as lacking the gravitas and credibility and not give you the chance to prove you're capable.

I know I couldn't have done this job in my twenties, but people are different and theoretically it's about your ability to help your clients reach their goals that really matters.

Maybe if you are fairly young you can tailor your coaching to people of your age. I'm pretty sure that if you have just left university then you may have way more in common with an 18-year old that is struggling with school than I have.

And Finally...

Before I wrap up with some amazing resources below, I'd like to thank you for taking the time to read *What The Hell Is Life Coaching?*

I truly hope you've found it useful and you can forward it on to anybody else that you think may get some benefit.

I also hope to see you on the [A Daring Adventure blog](#) where I post 2 or 3 times per week on self-development topics as well as the occasional humorous post and rant.

I'm passionate about Life Coaching and doing what I can to help my clients. If you are a coach or plan on becoming a coach, I hope you share that passion and can help spread the word that life coaching can help more or less anybody achieve more out of life.

If you are thinking of becoming a coach I hope this book has given you food for thought and a solid basis from which to decide where your future lies. Coaching is a brilliant and fulfilling profession for people that really want to help others. If that's you, I'd urge you to go for it.

Cheers

Tim

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Life Coaching Resources

Training Companies

[NLP/Hypnotherapy Training In Orlando from Phoenix Services](#)

[Life Coach Training in the UK from Achievement Specialists](#)

[Life Coach training in the US and Australia from Results Coaching Systems](#)

[NLP/Hypnotherapy Training in the UK from Salad](#)

Books

[How To Be Rich and Happy by John P Strelecky and Tim Brownson](#) – This contains a lot of the best stuff I do with clients and that John teaches people at his seminars. If you buy it and don't get lots of value I'll happily give you your money back. Oh and you also help those less well off, so what a great win/win/win that is!

[The Life Coaching Handbook by Curly Martin](#) – The book that got me into coaching. Fairly basic, but an excellent introduction for anybody that wants to know what is involved in becoming a Life Coach.

[Caching With The Brain In Mind by David Rock and Linda Page](#) – A heavyweight academic book that combines cutting edge technology with modern coaching practices. For the serious coach and not really suitable for self-coaching or the mildly curious.

[Co-Active Coaching by Laura Whitworth, Karen Kimsey-House, Henry Kimsey-House, and Phillip Sandahl](#) – I have mentioned co-active coaching several times and this book is possibly the best ever written on the topic.

[Supercoach by Michael Neill](#) – The guy I would hire to coach me if I could afford him!

[The Success Principles by Jack Canfield](#) – A very solid and entertaining book packed full of stories that will inspire and motivate you – hopefully!

[The Structure of Magic by John Grinder & Richard Bandler](#) – A dry read, but an excellent introduction to the Meta Model of language specificity. The first ever book on NLP.

[NLP The New Technology of Achievement – by Charles Faulkner & Steve Andries](#) – Good introduction to many elements of NLP and very easy to read and understand for the NLP novice.

[Awaken The Giant Within by Tony Robbins](#) – Love him or hate him, this book is still a classic of the genre. Also a useful introduction to some basic easy to learn NLP

[Your Brain At Work by David Rock](#) – I've mentioned this a few times and in my opinion it's a modern day classic and should be a must read for every coach.

[The Brain That Changes Itself by Norman Doidge](#) – The book that introduced the term neuroplasticity to the layperson. A brilliant explanation of the brains ability to change and adapt way more than we previously thought possible.

[How We Decide by Jonah Lehrer](#) – Very accessible for the layperson and offers some fascinating insights into why people do what they do. One of my top five favorite books.

[Blink by Malcolm Gladwell](#) – Excellent introduction to rapid cognition and in my opinion, Gladwell's best book to date and one I have read 3 times!

[Stumbling On Happiness by Daniel Gilbert](#) – Happiness probably isn't what you think it is. Gilbert explains why in a highly amusing, entertaining and thought provoking book.

[Predictably Irrational by Dan Ariely](#) – A really fascinating insight from world leading social psychologist Dan Ariely into why people do such weird things and how it may be way more predictable than you would otherwise think.

Audio & Video

[I Know What To Do, So Why Don't I Do It –by Dr Nick Hall](#) – Simply the best audio program I have ever listened to on coaching and self-development. Not cheap by any means but with 8 Cd's of amazing material, well worth the cost and I have had 10x my money back in value.

[The Maverick Mindset by John Eliot](#) – Another Nightingale Conant audio program that blew me away. I must have recommended this to a dozen or

more people and every single one has loved it. If you want a different take on confidence and love sporting stories, you'll absolutely love this.

[Better Coaching Skills with NLP](#) – Jamie Smart at his very best. If you want to be a coach or coach yourself, this is as good a starting point as there is.

Online Help

Note: None of the links below are affiliate links and all I get if you hire any of these fine people is a warm fuzzy glow.

Techie - Tim Gary from [Mindcue](#) – Tim does all the back end stuff for my blog. He uploads things that need uploading, downloads things that need downloading and generally pokes around doing stuff that seems a bit like magic to me.

He also does my SEO (Search Engine Optimization) and anything else web related. How highly do I recommend him and his services? Very highly. He's completely reliable, honest and an absolute diamond to work with.

If you need a blog setting up or some consultancy, he's your man. On the other hand, if you already have a blog but want to spruce it up and make it look more professional I'd recommend....

Design - Louise Varre from [De-Reva](#) – Whereas Tim is more at the techie end of things; Louise and husband Yus are at the design and arty end. If you like the design of my blog you'll love the work they do. Once again they are professional, honest and 100% reliable.

Copywriting – Amy from [Harrisonamy](#) – Do not under estimate the importance of the copy on your website. I do a lot of my own, but I also consult Amy, as she is an expert and I'm not.

Ebooks – If you like this ebook and you want to publish your own then get in touch with [Michelle](#) as she does all mine for me.

Coaches/Consultants

I am a Life Coach and as such there are certain things I either don't do, don't want to do, or I'm just not very good at. Below are the people I would hire if I needed coaching or general help in their area of expertise.

Business Strategy and Development – Charlie Gilkey - [Productive Flourishing](#)

Product launches – Dave Navarro – [The Launch Coach](#)

Marketing consultancy – Naomi Dunford – [Itty Biz](#)

Marketing/Small business consultancy – [Jonathan Fields](#)

Small business consultant – [Johnny B Truant](#)

Marital/Relationship coaching – Corey Allan – [Simple Marriage](#)

Diet/Weight coaching – Karen Paritee – [Effin Diets](#)

Branding and Design - [Logan Zanelli](#) (<http://loganzanelli.com/>)

Sales - [Bob Poole](#) (<http://www.pooleswatercooler.com/>)

Wordpress Security - Tim Gary - [Mindcue](#)