

# Discover: Coaching!



## What Makes a Great Coach?

*by Tony Stoltzfus*

What does a great coach look like? Most people's first answer would be the basic listening and asking skills coaches use. But skills are only one facet of what makes a coach—and in fact the transformational results coaching promises only come by going beyond the skill level. If you are looking to hire a coach to experience deep life change, here are four things to look for:

### The Heart of a Coach

I believe the most important key to coaching excellence is cultivating the heart of a coach—deeply embracing the value system that underlies coaching. Learning to see the greatness in people is the foundational discipline in coaching. A coach looks at you and sees not your warts or failings or liabilities, but what you were born to be and what you are capable of achieving. And your coach believes that life has you on the road to becoming just that. Coaches are people who have cultivated that posture of believing in and seeing the best in others—because when someone believes in us, we find ourselves doing things even we didn't believe we could.

So look for a coach who believes in you—who sees your potential and calls you to become all you are capable of becoming.

### An Other-Centered Outlook

This discipline of belief in others also leads coaches to a place of humility: our part in changing people is much smaller than what we used to think. You have already begun becoming a person of destiny: a coach simply comes along side you, helps you discover the future you want, and walks with you as you take responsibility and take action to make it a reality. When a coaching client gets a win, it is your victory, not the coach's, because you've done the work.

A great coach is someone who has gotten beyond his or her ego needs enough to help you win and let you take the credit when you do. To coach well, you must actively cultivate the discipline of laying aside your own needs for the sake of others. So look for a coach who pays attention to you, respects you, promotes you and loves you well.

### Great Coaching Skills

This is the familiar part of coaching: listening, asking powerful questions, getting buy-in, helping you take responsibility for your life. If you are looking for a coach, does s/he ask questions that really make you think? Listen intently and help you clarify your thinking? Dream up options you hadn't thought of before? Your coach's ability should take you beyond what you are capable of on your own to a place of greater creativity and accomplishment.

### The Lifestyle of a Coach

Here's another widely-overlooked part of being a coach. Your life is the reservoir you draw from when you work with others. Coaching is the art of drawing things out of people; and it's hard to draw out of others if you haven't dug your own well and learned to draw deeply from it. A proverb of wise King

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Solomon from 3000 years ago states, "The purpose in a man's mind is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out."

That understanding comes from life experience. For instance, many people come to coaches to get perspective on their circumstances. The coach who is able to help you find a life-changing attitude will most likely be someone who has gone the distance to seek out new perspective in his or her own difficult places. Great coaching is drawn out of the well of a great life.

This is not about merely accumulating data or information. It's about being fully, highly engaged with life. Coaches are people who help others live life at a higher level. To do that requires that you live a significant, growing, purposeful, heart-engaged life. Living at a high level means cultivating deep relationships, giving and receiving genuine feedback, loving and grieving, reaching for the stars, or going out of your way to find personal wholeness.

This is something crucial to look for in a coach as well: is this person living the kind of life I want to live? Is it a life of purpose, of intelligent risk-taking, a creative, productive, authentic, worthwhile life? The best companion on the road toward leading a life of significance is someone who is walking that road himself.