

BEYOND SELF-HELP

REACH YOUR POTENTIAL WITH A LIFE COACH

Words by **Maggie Malam**

Athletic coaches can be tough. They scream, blow whistles and make you do push-ups. If you feel like you're stuck on the bench, consider a different kind of coach—a life coach. They won't throw a chair across the room during halftime, but they will lead you toward the goal. All you need is an open mind.

Pace yourself

Don't expect a therapist, personal assistant or substitute mother. Life coaches won't give you answers, but they will help you find them by asking the right questions.

The process starts with conversations to uncover your values and motivations, but it's more than just dialogue. Powerful assessments, which uncover strengths and weaknesses, also play a part in the session. Personality assessments offer a chance for reflection and help your coach understand what makes you thrive. Even if you're unsure of exactly what you want in the beginning, your coach helps develop strategies to reach your goals. "Over the course of time you really get clarity and when you have clarity, the decisions are easy," says Wanda Ropa, life coach for Feroce Coaching, an online group of coaches from all over the country.

The contract is usually 10 or 12 sessions, with email support. You call or meet two to four times a month for 30 to 60 minutes per session. Expect to pay upwards of \$125 every time, but each coach has different options, payment plans and contracts, so it's easy to find one you're comfortable with.

Put me in, coach!

"A coach tactfully and diplomatically holds a person accountable for actions and behaviors," says life coach Marty Baddeloo. But you won't have to run 30 laps after practice for being late. Coaches keep you on track from session to session by working on action steps. There aren't consequences if you don't meet your goals, but be ready to be challenged and questioned as to why you aren't meeting them.



Sandi Hoover, a 32-year-old Des Moines resident, hired a coach two and a half years ago when she was anxious about big decisions like whether to have another baby, leave the corporate world or buy a house. Money was an issue, too. "I needed help seeing how all these pieces come together," she says.

Hoover chose local coach Tiffany Deal because she wanted an objective outsider who could be supportive of her agenda. "It took a little bit of maturity to see that I needed that—someone with no strings attached to my relationships," Hoover says. Deal helped Hoover decide on short-term steps that would help her achieve long-term goals. "There was a lot of anxiety that came along with that time in my life," Hoover says. "Breaking things down into small pieces made it manageable to accomplish things."

Play by play

As you consider coaching, figure out if you need a therapist or a coach. Therapy is about the past while life coaching is about the future. In coaching, you're working from the present and moving toward your best self.

Felipe Donnelly, 27, wanted to find a new job in advertising that better suited his strengths. By working with Ropa, he relocated from a small general firm in Miami to a larger office with multi-cultural clients in New York City. Coaching appealed to Donnelly because of the possibility for rapid progress. "With coaching, you know you have 12 sessions," he says. "And at the end, you're going to feel completely different from when you started."

You can set up face-to-face sessions with a local coach, or you can choose someone from any location based on their personality. Ropa lives in California but her clients live everywhere, because she coaches over the phone. "When you don't see a person, you lose that type of intimacy that would keep you from sharing certain things," Donnelly says. "You're more open and more able to talk to somebody when there's no fear of judgment." Get a free consultation from any potential coach to determine if he or she is a good fit. A life coaching session won't involve sweat, but it might get you off the bench and into the game. •