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Intrinsic Coaching®

“The Thinking Behind Choices”

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Philosophy and Background

The overarching philosophy of Intrinsic Coaching is that people are their own change agents in their own lives and that they themselves have their own intrinsically derived, unique answers to achieving such changes.

Underlying this philosophy are two foundational premises of Intrinsic Coaching

- Intrinsic Coaching is based on an “asset-oriented” approach to individuals
- Intrinsic Coaching is based on an established and powerful science of thinking [[“Axiology”](#)]

Intrinsic Coaching elicits new thinking from the individual being coached (the “coachee”) using an “asset-oriented” approach to goal setting. This focuses and builds on the positive qualities (“the assets”) the person already possesses but either do not yet realize they have, or have not yet accessed it.

Educational research out of Stanford University in the 1980’s (on what was ultimately termed “Cognitive Coaching”) reported that an approach focusing and building on teaching “strengths” (i.e. assets) elicited high quality learning, while an approach focusing on teaching “deficits” (i.e. telling people what they were doing “wrong” and correcting “mistakes”) was far less effective in eliciting quality learning.

Intrinsic Coaching is “...a conversation that elicits best thinking and decision making so people can create results that are important to them”[®]. Intrinsic Coaching is about taking actions based on reflection, self-assessment, and self-determined decisions and plans. It can be integrated into wellness programs, presentations, disease management, weight management or any other aspect of wellness or health care. Such an approach engages people to think “better” (more deeply and reflectively) about the goals they want to accomplish. It also recognizes that effective long term change occurs when someone is making a goal related decision, thinks better about it, and then makes a better decision. It is the step beyond simply receiving information and knowing what you “should” do – or knowing what would work “if you would only do it.” It is also - as experience has told us all too frequently – that step is rarely taken. Providing information/knowledge is the easy (and usual) approach. Although research and experience has told us for decades that knowledge itself is a poor agent for changing behaviors, this continues to be the predominant approach to achieve such change.

In summary Intrinsic Coaching, uniquely, has the constant aim to elicit “best thinking” about choices, especially by thinking more intrinsically about choices. It is focused on achieving goals rather than overcoming obstacles. The power of such thinking is that it can be applied not only to professionals



dealing with health care/health related behavior change issues but also be integrated into the lifestyle of any individual.

The Intrinsic Coach[®] chooses to regard their coachees as “capable, creative and complete”[®]. In other words they understand that coachees are the experts on themselves, and so already have in place all the “assets” needed to discover their own answers which, uniquely, reside within them. Intrinsic Coaching therefore is not about “telling”, “advising”, or even “guiding”, since this approach invariably involves the imposition - in however benign a form - of other people’s thinking (and so other people’s answers) about what is “best” for the coachee.

The Intrinsic Coaching model is diametrically opposed to the current wellness/disease management model, which is predominantly based on a “deficit approach”. This, in essence, primarily tells people what is “wrong” with them, or what they are doing “wrong” (too fat, too inactive, too high cholesterol, too much of the wrong foods, smoking etc). It often also tells them the “bad” things that will happen to them if they continue to do things “wrong”. THEN it tells them what they “need” to do, “have” to do or “should” do to “put them right”. In addition, personal trainers, wellness experts, health educators/case managers are trained to offer - indeed are expected to offer - their own thinking and expertise to the client as to what they “should” do. With this highly “deficit based” approach there is an unspoken assumption (whether conscious or unconscious) that the client needs to be told what to do, or is not capable of doing it without help. In contrast an “asset based” approach builds on people’s strengths and what is important to them. It focuses on goals to accomplish, rather than obstacles to overcome, thus eliciting a generative and empowering process, the results of which have been shown to be far more readily assimilated into new lifestyle behaviors.