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FabJob Guide to
**Become a
Life Coach**



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1. Introduction

1.1 What is Coaching?

Welcome to the *FabJob Guide to Become a Life Coach* and congratulations on choosing an exciting career that helps so many people to succeed in their lives. You've taken the first steps to your own personal success by purchasing this guide.

We all know people who help others achieve their goals, who inspire friends and family to persevere in the face of adversity, and refuse to allow them to wallow in the seeming security of a mediocre job or life. They inspire others to greatness by gentle persuasion, constant encouragement, or a kind of in-your-face inducement. Perhaps you know someone like that. Or perhaps you are someone like that, which is why you are reading this guide.

It's a myth that the reason so many people never accomplish their goals is because they don't really want them, or don't want them badly enough. Life coaches understand that. People use life coaches for the same reason that they use sports coaches or personal trainers: they

want someone to work with them, to encourage them, to push them. It's easy to find excuses for not exercising when you don't have someone to push you; not as easy when your personal trainer shows up at your door three times a week wearing a jogging suit.

As a coach, your job is to provide objective, unbiased feedback to clients. Yours is not to judge or determine what clients should do or what they need, but to act as a facilitator so that they can figure it out for themselves. Well-meaning though they may be, friends and family members may think that they know what is best for someone, and their ideas often conflict with what the individual thinks is best for him or her. Life coaches free their clients from expectations imposed on them by others.

Life coaches can help people who are trying to do too much, and guide them towards what they would really like to be doing, and what gives them the most satisfaction. Often clients find that it is not what they are currently doing at all.

People sometimes spend their entire lives doing what they are told that they should do, what their parents expect of them, or what they think that society expects of them. What about doing what they really want? Some of them have been caught up in this cycle for so long that they are not even sure what they want. But they can still find out. Life coaches do not have an agenda. They leave that up to the client.

Another big issue in life coaching is helping people prioritize, helping them to find balance in their busy lives. Coaches report that a lot of their clients are already successful people, many whose upper level positions in the corporate world have left them feeling isolated. They want someone who is both willing to listen and provide honest, sometimes blunt feedback. They need to hear what employees and subordinates won't tell them, which is why a lot of executives are turning to personal coaches.

Life coaching does not carry the stigma that therapy does. Men in particular are often reluctant to see a therapist, and even more reluctant to admit to seeing one. But life coaches report that their clients are about evenly divided between the genders.

Over the past decade, the number of self-employed individuals has skyrocketed. Surveys indicate that more than half of the population is not satisfied with their jobs, their lives, or both. Some are disillusioned, feeling that their employers do not value them, and subsequently come to the conclusion that they owe them no loyalty. Others want the independence and flexibility that self-employment offers, and enjoy facing new challenges and responsibilities. Whatever the reason, the trend is evident. Perhaps this is one reason why so many are turning to life coaching, as both clients and coaches.

Another issue that has become increasingly important to people in North America recently is global warming. The debate surrounding ratification of the Kyoto Protocol and Al Gore's Academy Award-winning film, *An Inconvenient Truth*, especially have had a major impact on people's awareness and perception of their own, individual impact on global warming, and closely associated with this is the "carbon footprint." As a result, people are turning to carbon coaches to help them understand and reduce their contribution of CO₂ into the atmosphere. This field is wide open since carbon coaches are still relatively rare in the U.S. and Canada.

We've all heard of the "Baby Boom Generation," people who were born between the end of World War II and the early 1960s when birth control pills were introduced. Approximately 76 million babies were born during this period, a time of growing affluence in North America. This is also a generation that can expect a longer life than previous generations. Now that many in this affluent group of people are retiring or are close to retirement they are seeking advice about what to do with their retirement savings and what to do through their retirement years to maintain a healthy and productive lifestyle.

As a result, a need for retirement coaches has arisen. Like carbon coaching, this is an area of opportunity with many potential clients for life coaches. Issues surrounding the sudden loss of friends and coworkers as a result of retirement, loss of status, uncertainty about the future, or even if retirement is the right course of action, all create a need for retirement coaches. Retirement coaches help people sort out important questions about retirement and assist them in setting fresh goals.

1.2 The Growth of Coaching

The world is quickly becoming faster, more intense and more chaotic. People are turning to life coaches to help sort everything out, to prioritize, and to make sense of things. Various estimates put the number of life coaches practicing in the United States and Canada between 10,000 and 15,000. Some have turned to practicing full time, while the rest have incorporated coaching with their regular occupations.

The vast number of coaching organizations and practicing coaches has created a market for dozens of online coach referral services, as well. Many of these services charge the coach to be listed, but allow potential clients to freely search the database.

According to a recent article in the *National Post* by Ray Williams of Premier Career Management Group in Vancouver, Canada, coaching is one of the fastest growing professions in the world, second only to information technology. Hundreds of newspaper and magazine articles have explored the topic, among them *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Harvard Business Review*, *Kiplinger's Personal Finance* and *Family Circle*.

In addition, coaches have been interviewed on television programs such as *The Today Show*, *Later Today*, *American Journal*, *NBC Nightly News* and *Oprah*. But the market is far from saturated, and there are still plenty of people who have never heard of life coaching.

Thomas J. Leonard: The Father of Coaching

The late Thomas J. Leonard has been called “the father of coaching.” A former financial planner, he began in the early 1980’s by assisting his clients to lead more fulfilling lives, before this was officially called life coaching. By nature a workaholic, he authored six books on coaching, and traveled extensively—lecturing, teaching, speaking and appearing on talk shows. Leonard founded Coach U in 1992, International Coach Federation in 1994 and Teleclass.com in 1998. His premature death of a heart attack in February, 2003, at age 47 was a serious blow to the coaching establishment. Memorial services were held for Leonard throughout North America and Europe.

Admittedly, not all of the press about life coaching has been positive or inspirational. Like any new field, it is not without its detractors, but life coaching thus far has proven to be a juggernaut that won't be slowed by a few naysayers. And for every naysayer, there are people sharing their personal success stories like these:

"My experience with life coaching was integral in helping me make a life-changing decision," recalls John, a real estate developer. "I had been employed for 12 or 13 years with a real estate company, and coaching helped me realize that I needed to start my own business, and that I had the aptitude for it. I wound up quitting my job and starting my own company, and now I have two companies. Recently, I successfully completed a major real estate development, and in the process, secured my personal freedom."

"My coach's assistance was invaluable," says Katherine, an investment planner. "She skillfully assisted me through a mid-life job search and career change in a new city. She helped me perfect my interviewing technique, made excellent suggestions about job search strategies, offered enthusiastic support and helped me through a successful negotiation process. Her efforts made a real difference in my securing the ideal job."

1.3 Who Becomes a Life Coach?

Although life coaching is relatively new as a profession, a lot of people who enter this field have already been utilizing the skills required for a long time. Many come from careers that involve significant interaction with people—human resources managers, public relations officers, and educators, as well as personal trainers, hair stylists and massage therapists.

Others have no formal experience working with people, but are very social individuals who enjoy becoming involved and derive great satisfaction from assisting others. They are accustomed to listening, asking questions and giving feedback. They just never thought of it as life coaching before. One common denominator for coaches is that they are used to and enjoy working with people. Obviously, this encompasses a wide range of professions and individuals.

Nearly a third of coaches are former therapists, and although coaching is distinct from therapy, there are some overlapping aspects. Both are skilled at listening closely, observing behavioral patterns and asking

powerful questions. Neither attempts to pass judgments or decide what clients are supposed to do. Both assist people to look inside themselves to find solutions. Many therapists become life coaches because they are tired of dealing with pathology; they are sick of sickness. They want to work with people who are well but want to be better; who are happy but want to be happier. Many are also exasperated with insurance companies, mountains of paperwork, referrals and other bureaucratic burdens.

Members of the clergy often go into coaching, some tailoring their practice with a religious or spiritual slant. Retired people can be very effective coaches, as they have lots of life and business experience. Many coaches who specialize in corporate training or career development are former job counselors, business consultants, CEO's or teachers. To some extent, their previous professions entailed what they now know was coaching, and they bring with them a wealth of practical experience. They are accustomed to guiding people, to helping shape young minds or to putting motivated individuals on the track to success. They have seen countless examples of what works and what does not.

Carbon coaches also come from a wide variety of backgrounds, and you don't need a science degree to become one. While some are architects or engineers, most come from all walks of life and have one thing in common: a concern for global warming and a desire to help others do something about it. All a carbon coach needs is a good understanding of the effects of carbon in the atmosphere on global warming and a knowledge of what solutions can be implemented by individuals to offset this.

Coaches are an eclectic lot, and not all of them hail from careers typically associated with coaching. Those from "non-traditional" backgrounds often find themselves drawn to coaching because it offers them the opportunity to extract what they liked best about their old jobs—working with people—and make that the focus of their new endeavor. Bartenders, merchants, sales people, reporters, nurses and restaurant workers can all be great coaches. There are even those who have never worked closely with other people as part of their job, but become coaches because they realize that they have always wanted to do so.

Coaches have something in common with their clients: both want to succeed, to become the best that they can be, to move their lives and

careers in a bold new direction. When clients succeed in attaining their goals and realizing their dreams, life coaches succeed as well. Coaches have already taken the first step towards changing their own lives for the better by committing to doing the same for others, and it is on this common ground that the coaching relationship begins.

1.4 Are Coaches Consultants?

Webster's *New World Dictionary* defines a consultant as "an expert who is called on for professional or technical advice or opinions." Generally speaking, people who hire consultants are looking for specific recommendations. They want someone who will tell them the best course of action or develop solutions designed to fit their unique situations. They don't want someone who is going to ask them a lot of questions and insist that they figure it out on their own.

Like consultants, coaches occasionally work with clients on short-term projects or very specific situations. Coaches can help someone design a marketing plan for a business, come up with a diet and exercise regimen or prepare for an upcoming event. They can help management and executives reduce their stress levels or create new management policies. However, the key distinction is that the coach is helping others to do these things, not doing them him or herself.

According to the *National Post* article mentioned above, a coach is not "a therapist, counselor or management consultant" although sometimes consulting and coaching overlap. Typically, individuals who provide both coaching and consulting services will refer to themselves as a coach and consultant. This guide focuses on coaching as a career. If you are also interested in doing consulting work, you can find useful advice in a guide such as the [FabJob Guide to Become a Business Consultant](#).

1.5 Coaching is Not Therapy

Coaching is sometimes confused with counseling or therapy. According to the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Counselors assist people with personal, family, educational, mental health, and career decisions and problems." While counseling may sound similar in some ways to coaching, there are fundamental differences.

As mentioned, coaching clients are generally well-adjusted, successful individuals who would like to be more successful. As a coach, you are there to help them achieve a more fulfilling life, a more rewarding career, or more effective interaction with others. Establish up front that you are not, nor do you intend to be, a therapist. While a lot of mental health professionals do transition into coaching, they are not acting in the capacity of therapists when they do so.

There are several major distinctions between coaching and therapy. The primary difference is that therapy deals with what is wrong with the individual. This is why coaches have clients as opposed to patients. Secondly, therapy digs into the past, in order to establish the roots of current problems. Life coaching occasionally explores a client's past, but does so in order to recall successes and sources of inspiration, not hang-ups. Life coaches start in the client's present and work with them toward a better future.

Finally, life coaches are their clients' equals, their collaborators in success. They are not authority figures. Therapists typically address their patients by first name, while the patients call them "doctor." Coaches are often characterized as having a skilled friendship or being in partnership with their clients. Some coaches will consent to see clients who are in therapy, with the clear understanding that the coaching relationship is entirely separate. However, you would do best to avoid coaching clients with psychological issues.

You may begin a coaching relationship with the belief that a client is well-adjusted, and then start to notice warning signs that suggest psychological problems. According to Lynn Meinke, a life coach and former psychotherapist, a coach should be aware of certain behavioral patterns that suggest psychological duress. These include lack of interest in accomplishing stated goals, sudden mood changes, or excessive fatigue or excitability. Also, the client may begin to persistently have negative thoughts or feelings of self-doubt or worthlessness.

Everyone has a bad day or a bad week occasionally, but if a client fails to follow through on a plan of action for two or three weeks in a row, or keeps missing or canceling appointments, the coach needs to ask the client to consider re-evaluating his or her goals. Perhaps focusing on more appropriate goals is the solution to the flagging motivation.

If this approach is ineffective, the coach needs to ask the client if he or she has experienced this type of decrease in motivation before, and if so, whether he or she has sought help from a mental health professional. The situation is a delicate one, but the coach needs to tell the client what the coach is observing in order for the two to explore options for dealing with the situation.

Meinke says that dropping a client who needs therapy is tantamount to abandonment and could be psychologically devastating. Continue with the coaching, but make the immediate goal to have the client consult an appropriate mental health professional. This allows the client to decide whether or not to continue coaching while in therapy.

In the event that the client refuses to consider therapy, then the coach may have to stipulate that the continuation of the coaching depends upon it. If the coach is forced to end the coaching relationship, he or she should continue to remain compassionate and supportive of the client and give referrals. If the coach does not know any therapists or mental health counselors to recommend, he or she can call a hospital or mental health clinic in the client's geographic area, or call the American Psychological Association's Public Education Information line at 1-800-964-2000.

1.6 Inside This Guide

The *FabJob Guide to Become a Life Coach* will take you step-by-step through getting started and succeeding as a life coach. These steps, and the chapters they appear in, are as follows:

In Chapter 2, we will introduce you to the many specialty areas in which life coaches operate. From carbon coaching to weight loss/body image coaching, we'll introduce you to a variety of coaching niches from which you can choose.

In Chapter 3 you will learn more about what is involved in life coaching and find sample questions, exercises and coaching sessions. You will also learn about various delivery systems for getting your services to clients, such as e-coaching, workshops, and retreats and offer some of the advantages of each. This chapter has a wealth of information for you to learn more about the basics of what's involved in life coaching.

In Chapter 4 you will discover how to learn life coaching through educational programs, mentoring, volunteering, and self-study. This chapter lists a variety of organizations that offer programs you can take to become certified as a professional life coach. We'll also offer tips on how you can learn coaching and get coaching experience in other ways.

Chapter 5 focuses on starting your own business. As a life coach you will be a small business entrepreneur, and as such you will need to be prepared for the many exciting challenges to opening your own business. Whether you choose to do business in a home-office or rent office space, you will need to learn about creating a business plan, choosing a name for your company, legal issues and more. We'll also offer you some suggestions for setting up your office space and point you to further resources you will find useful as you start out on your new business venture. This chapter also addresses that all-important topic: Setting Your Fees. We'll show you how to set your rates for individual and corporate clients, for a variety of different services.

Your business will need clients, of course, so that is the focus of Chapter 6. You'll learn about choosing a target market and about the promotional tools many of our experts have told us they have tried and found effective. The information you will find in this chapter includes tips about what print and electronic tools to use as well as information about a variety of marketing techniques, all of which will help you find new clients and let people know you're in business. We'll also offer some additional advice about marketing your services to a corporate clientele in this chapter.

In Chapter 7 we have included a number of tips from our experts. We're sure you will find their advice both helpful and encouraging.

So let's get started. Your new career as a Life Coach is just pages away!