Life Coaching

Essential Knowledge
for Personal Coaching
and Self Coaching

Compiled by Dean Amory

Essential Knowledge for Personal Coaches

Dean Amory

Title: Essential Knowledge for Personal Coaches
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ISBN: 978-1-4716-6926-2

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The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches, but to reveal to him his own. – Benjamin Disrael

Cover picture: 70-ies commercial ad

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INTRODUCTION

This is the third part in a series of three books about Personal coaching.

Part 1, "Personal Coaching" is about what Personal Coaching is and offers a surview of the most popular models for Personal Coaching (or "Life Coaching") and Self Coaching.

Part 2, "Techniques for Personal Coaching and Self Coaching" introduces you to the most powerful coaching techniques in use and describes the most successful questions and strategies for coaching.

Part 3, "Essential Knowledge for Personal Coaches", is a practical standard reference work highlighting the knowledge and skills that are indispensable for anybody who is considering life coaching as a career or as a serious self coaching process,

Dean Amory's Complete Life Coaching and Personal Coaching Course is your best guide for coaching your coachees and yourself towards maximizing your life potential and achieving a happier and more fulfilled life. Personal Coaching is an invaluable training manual for anybody who takes life coaching seriously.

4/ Useful Skills

4.1 PROBLEM SOLVING

The ability to respond effectively to problems is associated with improved treatment outcome.

Supporting development of problem solving skills can be clinically useful and is best achieved through:
- a combination of verbal and written information
- demonstration (when possible)
- learning through practice and feedback

Developing problem solving skills can consist of identifying occasions when the coachee has solved other problems and noting the steps they took.

Effective problem solving can be learned.
It consists of five steps:

1. Orientation
Stand back from the problem; view it as a challenge, not a catastrophe. How might someone else solve this?

2. Define the problem
it is important to be specific
Coachee: 'My wife and I do not get on'
Clinician: 'Give me an example of what you mean'
Coachee: 'She doesn't like me being out on Friday nights'

3. Brainstorm solutions
At this stage, anything goes. Identify as many solutions as possible — discourage evaluation and a search for quality.

4. Decision making

The coachee (with your help, but not direction) reviews the positives and negatives of each of the options, and their ability to implement them, and makes an informed choice of the best option(s) to embrace.

5. Implementation

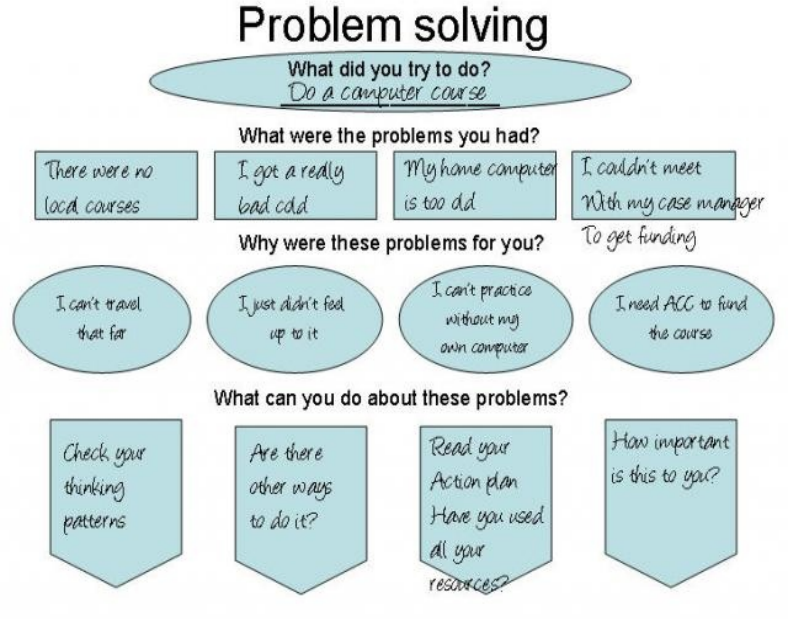
A plan of action is developed and the option is implemented. Sometimes it is useful to rehearse the option (where possible) to test out the viability of the strategy and to increase self-efficacy (confidence).

It is not the coach's responsibility to solve the coachee's problems, but to teach a skill that he or she can use in a variety of circumstances.

IDEAL METHODE OF PROBLEM SOLVING

Whatever issue you are faced with, some steps are fundamental:

- Identify the problem
- Define the problem
- Examine the options
- Act on a plan
- Look at the consequences



There are several stages to solving a problem:

1) Evaluating the problem

- **Clarifying** the nature of a problem
- **Formulating** questions
- **Gathering** information systematically
- **Collating** and organising data
- **Condensing** and summarising information
- **Defining** the desired objective

2) Managing the problem

- **Using the information gathered** effectively
- **Breaking down a problem** into smaller, more manageable, parts
- Using techniques such as **brainstorming** and lateral thinking to consider options
- **Analysing these options** in greater depth
- **Identifying steps that can be taken** to achieve the objective

3) Decision-making

- **deciding between the possible options** for what action to take
- **deciding on further information** to be gathered before taking action
- **deciding on resources** (time, funding, staff etc) to be allocated to this problem

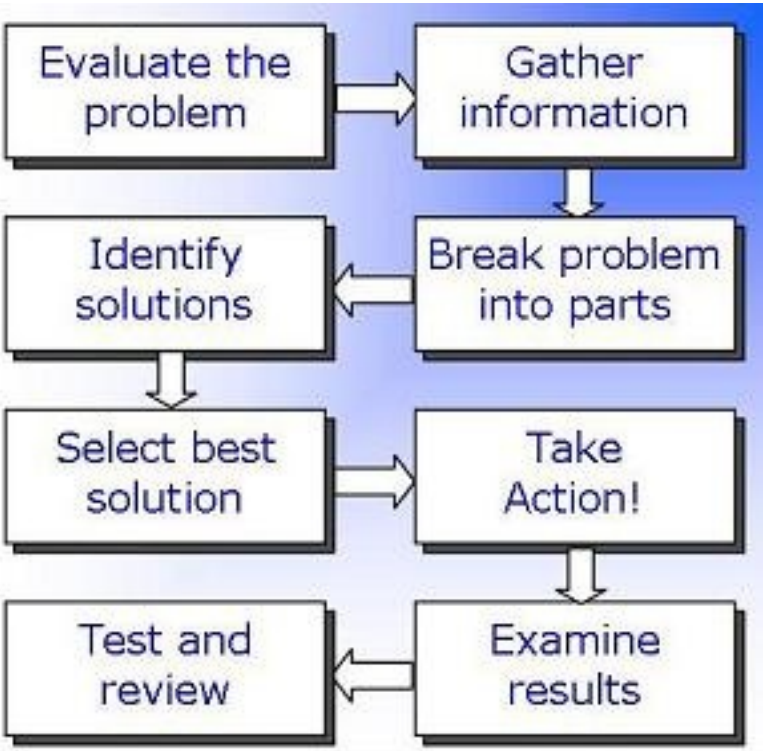
4) Resolving the problem

- **Implementing action**
- **Providing information** to other stakeholders; delegating tasks
- **Reviewing progress**

5) Examining the results

- **Monitoring the outcome** of the action taken
- **Reviewing the problem and problem-solving process** to avoid similar situations in future

At any stage of this process, **it may be necessary to return to an earlier stage** – for example, if further problems arise or if a solution does not appear to be working as desired.



Source: university of Kent

B. Robert Holland set out a typical problem solving process in his manual “Sequential analysis” with the following steps:

Step 1	**Analytical problem solving**	**Scientific problem solving**
What is the problem? What question do you want your analysis to answer?	Visualise the difference between the results you get and the results you want.	Define the discrepancy between the results you get and what you expect.
Where does the problem lie? How can be picture the current situation?	Visualise the structure elements of the present situation causing the result.	State the traditional assumptions of the theory that give rise to the discrepancy.
Why does the problem exist? How can we isolate the problem?	Analyse each element whether it is the cause.	Create hypothesis that give alternative structures to eliminate the discrepancy.
What can we do about it? What options do we have?	Formulate the logical alternative changes.	Devise experiments that will exclude false hypothesis.
What should we do about it? What recommendation can we give?	Create a new structure incorporating the changes.	Reformulate the theory on the basis of the experimental results.

Questions and observerations for Problem Solving and Decision Making

1. Definition of the problem

1. What can you see that causes you to think there's a problem?
2. Where is it happening?
3. How is it happening?
4. When is it happening?
5. With whom is it happening? (HINT: Don't jump to "Who is causing the problem?" When we're stressed, blaming is often one of our first reactions. To be an effective manager, you need to address issues more than people.)
6. Why is it happening?
7. Write down a five-sentence description of the problem in terms of "The following should be happening, but isn't ..." or "The following is happening and should be: ..." As much as possible, be specific in your description, including what is happening, where, how, with whom and why. (It may be helpful at this point to use a variety of research methods.

Defining complex problems:

If the problem still seems overwhelming, break it down by repeating steps 1-7 until you have descriptions of several related problems.

Verifying your understanding of the problems:

It helps a great deal to verify your problem analysis for conferring with a peer or someone else.

Prioritize the problems:

If you discover that you are looking at several related problems, then prioritize which ones you should address first.

Note the difference between "important" and "urgent" problems. Often, what we consider to be important problems to consider are really just urgent problems. Important problems deserve more attention. For example, if you're continually answering "urgent" phone calls, then you've probably got a more "important" problem and that's to design a system that screens and prioritizes your phone calls.

Understand your role in the problem:

Your role in the problem can greatly influence how you perceive the role of others. For example, if you're very stressed out, it'll probably look like others are, too, or, you may resort too quickly to blaming and reprimanding others. Or, you are feel very guilty about your role in the problem, you may ignore the accountabilities of others.

2. Look at potential causes for the problem

- It's amazing how much you don't know about what you don't know. Therefore, in this phase, it's critical to get input from other people who notice the problem and who are effected by it.
- It's often useful to collect input from other individuals one at a time (at least at first). Otherwise, people tend to be inhibited about offering their impressions of the real causes of problems.
- Write down what your opinions and what you've heard from others.
- Regarding what you think might be performance problems associated with an employee, it's often useful to seek advice from a peer or your supervisor in order to verify your impression of the problem.
- Write down a description of the cause of the problem and in terms of what is happening, where, when, how, with whom and why.

3. Identify alternatives for approaches to resolve the problem

At this point, it's useful to keep others involved (unless you're facing a personal and/or employee performance problem). Brainstorm for solutions to the problem. Very simply put, brainstorming is collecting as many ideas as possible, then screening them to find the best idea. It's critical when collecting the ideas to not pass any judgment on the ideas -- just write them down as you hear them. (A wonderful set of skills used to identify the underlying cause of issues is Systems Thinking.)

4. Select an approach to resolve the problem

- When selecting the best approach, consider:
- Which approach is the most likely to solve the problem for the long term?
- Which approach is the most realistic to accomplish for now? Do you have the resources? Are they affordable? Do you have enough time to implement the approach?
- What is the extent of risk associated with each alternative?

(The nature of this step, in particular, in the problem solving process is why problem solving and decision making are highly integrated.)

5. Plan the implementation of the best alternative (this is your action plan)

1. Carefully consider "What will the situation look like when the problem is solved?"
2. What steps should be taken to implement the best alternative to solving the problem? What systems or processes should be changed in your organization, for example, a new policy or procedure? Don't resort to solutions where someone is "just going to try harder".