

# **Life Coaching**



**Techniques  
for Personal Coaching  
and Self Coaching**

**Compiled by Dean Amory**



**TECHNIQUES  
FOR PERSONAL  
COACHING AND  
SELF  
COACHING**

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**Dean Amory**

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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

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# **Techniques for Personal Coaching and Self Coaching**

## **INTRODUCTION**

**This is the second in a series of three books about Personal coaching.**

**Part 1, “Personal Coaching” is about what Personal Coaching is and offers a survey 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.**

## **3.1 ACTIVE LISTENING**

Listening is an art. A lot of people stop talking and in their mind they're already trying to think of what they're going to say next. That is not really listening. If you are (pre)occupied with your own thoughts, then there is no room for the coachee anymore. Not really.

And even if you are listening and not busy with your own thoughts on the matter, listening is so much more than just hearing the words and being able to repeat them. To get the essence of what's being said -the words behind the words, is just as important, if not more so. While the coachee is telling his story, try to also listen for things like a slip of the tongue, jokes, omissions, recurring themes, metaphors and contradictions. They can speak volumes.

Apart from the intonations you can pick out the different emotions in the coachee's voice. Body language and other signals can strengthen or weaken the story. Contradictions are called incongruence and the coach can either keep these in mind or ask about them. Make sure you do this carefully, so the coachee won't feel caught out.

In active listening, the coach has an open and alert attitude, he's completely there for the coachee and is peeling his ears, so to speak.

To listen empathically means the coach shows a lot of understanding for what the coachee is experiencing and in a way he manages to convey this warm understanding to the coachee, who can appreciate it.

Before asking questions, we must learn to listen attentively and effectively. Active listening includes a number of

techniques: encouraging, paraphrasing, reflecting feelings, and summarizing. But also other techniques are important.

### Body language

Body language is important. Excessive eye-contact may be felt as threatening. Not maintaining enough eye-contact on the other hand might be interpreted as a lack of interest (e.g. when listener is repeatedly looking at their watch or documents on their desk!), or as an indication that the listener is hiding information or is not sufficiently open or honest. Body language includes (affirmative) head nodding and the use of silence, which are powerful tools in any conversation.

### Gerard Egan describes the correct position for listening as follows:

SOLER S : Sit squarely, face coachee

O: keep an Open posture

L: Lean forward when appropriate

E: maintain regular Eye contact (don't stare)

R: Relaxed body language

Show coachees that you are interested in the situations, experiences and feelings that they are communicating and that you care not only about what they are saying, but also about how this affects them.

### Encouraging

Humming, and short expressions like "Yes", "I see" ... are used to confirm coachee that you are listening to him keenly. These expressions also help them to understand which part of their message is being appreciated and to elaborate on that particular topic.

Asking questions is another way of showing your interest and making coachees feel understood, valued, respected and listened to.

In its purest form, life coaching is a technique that uses powerful questions to facilitate you in finding your own answers. (Life-coaching for dummies – Jeni Mumford)

Clarifying and reflective questions often are a very good idea:

**Examples of clarifying questions:**

- Tell me more about ...
- Go on ...
- I am interested to hear more about ...
- What did you do then?
- You say ..., why is this so ?
- Is this always the case?

**Clarifying:**

1. Restate what you heard the trainee say
2. Listen for confirmation that what you are saying is correct
3. Encourage trainees to tell you if you are right or wrong

**Examples of reflective questions:**

- How was this different from ...?
- What would it look like if ...?
- What would happen if ...?
- What do you wish ...?
- What did you want him to do instead?
- How would this impact / change ... ?

Often enough, it is also very useful to repeat in some way what they have said.

This forces coachees to concentrate on what you are saying, thus helping them to take some distance from their own story and obtain an improved general view of the whole

situation. By repeating coachees' messages, you also stimulate their thought process, without introducing new subjects.

Different options to repeat a message are available:

1. **Parrotting** : literally echo their exact words. Often, only the last words are repeated (mirror-questions) in an invitation to amplify on them. The use of parrotting should however be limited, since hearing your own words echoed repeatedly soon becomes very annoying.
2. **Repeating Content**: **This technique goes beyond parrotting: The coachee's exact words are repeated**, inviting them to elaborate on their story or to continue it.
3. **Repeating Conflict**: Repeat both sides of a conflict situation, opposing pros and cons stimulate coachee to make a considered choice.
4. **Paraphrasing or Reflecting Meaning**: Repeating coachee's message in your own words, that is: reflecting the facts or ideas, but not the emotions and without getting emotionally involved, may open new perspectives.

Often an element of acknowledgement or positive feedback will be part of the paraphrasing, thus motivating the coachee to continue sharing.

Simultaneously, paraphrasing is

- either a request for verification of your perceptions (feedback)
- or a confirmation that you have correctly understood the message.

Good openings for paraphrasing are:

- So you think, ...
- You don't believe that ...
- You don't understand why ...
- So, what you are saying is ...
- Sounds to me like you ...
- The way you see things ...
- To you, this means ...
- So, you are saying that ...
- I guess it is your opinion that ...
- If I understand correctly ...
- You've always thought ..., but now you found out that ...

Some manuals use the term "reflecting" to indicate reflection of meaning (thoughts) only and use "paraphrasing" for referring to reflecting thoughts AND emotions

5. **Reflecting - or Repeating Feelings** - is very similar to paraphrasing, but instead of reflecting the meaning, the coach now reflects the emotions that are the basis of coachee's words. Reflecting feelings resorts a much stronger effect, because coachee will experience that the coach is not only understanding him, but is also empathizing with his feelings.

Reflecting feelings is the basis of emphatic listening and creates rapport. Naming the feeling that you recognize in their story, helps coachees to define and explore their own feelings and become more aware of their seriousness. Reflecting is very useful also when you feel coachees are rattling information without feeling involved.

Good introductions for reflecting are:

- You feel doubly hurt, because ...
- The situation is worrying you, ...
- You are disappointed, ...
- You feel it's a shame, ...
- You are feeling sad, ...
- You were angry, because ...
- You don't dare to, ...
- You are afraid, ...
- You must be very fond of him.
- You feel you have failed ...
- You are worried that you ...
- You had the strong feeling that ...
- Yet, I notice some doubt in your voice
- You don't sound very convinced though
- And yet, you sound sad. Maybe you can tell me what happened?
- I sense you are still angry, troubled, mixed up, confused ... maybe that's why ...

6. **Clarifying brings unclear or vague subjects into sharper focus.** It is useful to confirm what was said, to get supplementary information, to present fresh points of view or add details, or to shed light on new elements.

Examples:

- Let me see if I've got it all ...
- Let me try to state what I think you said ...

7. Summative Reflection involves summarizing the message in order to provide a structured, complete and comprehensive feedback. Aside from organizing and integrating the major aspects of the dialogue, summarizing also establishes a basis for further

discussion and offers a sense of progress in the conversation.

It is required to also plan regular **summaries and evaluations** during which you

- repeat the essence of what has been said or done
- provide a clear image of the situation
- locate where coachee is with respect to the total journey

Logical moments for summarizing and evaluating are:

- At the start and end of each session
- At transiting to a new phase
- At any moment that you feel a summary might be helpful to keep track of the situation or to stimulate the coachee.

Alternatively, it is a good idea to ask the coachees every now and then to summarize and evaluate things themselves. This will help you to take notice of

- Their point of view
- Which elements have stuck
- What is most important to them now
- What they are “forgetting”
  
- The most important elements in a summary are:
- Accurate summary of core material
- Clarity and structure
- Reflection of content
- Reflection of feelings
- Deeper empathy

Possible opening lines for summarizing:

A. X, let’s see how far you got until now:

- You came to me X weeks ago, because ... and because ....
- We determined that ..., because ....

- Is there something you would like to add at this point?

B. So, to summarize, you say that ..., is that correct?

C. At that moment, you set yourself the target of .... Because

....

- To this end, we composed an action plan
- Now, the question is when to start with the execution of this plan.

D. Summarizing your story, you reported that ... , but ..., and

... - Can you agree with this presentation?

E. This seems a good moment to summarize what we have done during this session.

- Is there something you want to add?
- How did you experience the conversation?
- By the next session, I would like you
- to consider / go through today's points again
- to start the actions we agreed upon
- Which would allow us to proceed next time with ....

F. Is there anything you want to add?

**Examples:**

I don't understand why my wife is getting worked up, I for instance never get mad!!

Still I hear a bit of anger in your voice. Your wife might perceive this as you being angry.

If you think it helps, I'm quite willing to do it, you know?

You don't sound convinced, what might be holding you back?

I actually wanted to stop coming here as I think I'm doing much better now.

I'm glad you're feeling a lot better and of course you're free to stop whenever you want. However I've noticed there are still some things that seem to trouble you...

I haven't touched a drink in weeks, it's clear I'm not an alcoholic... (hiccup)

Being an alcoholic might be too strong a word, but something tells me you still do have a drink regularly.

I don't know what's wrong with me or where to start.

We can take our time. You sound very sad, maybe you could tell me what has happened?

#### 8. Empathy and deeper empathy

In coaching you want to build up a trusting relationship with your coachee in a short timespan. The coachee has often heard from people around him things like 'it's nothing to worry about', 'it will be all right', 'don't get worked up, you only make it worse' and more well intended things that unintentionally often made him shut up. With you he is allowed, or rather he should open up and get rid of this threshold. So you want to let him know he's at the right address with his story, his emotions and how he experiences things.

By showing him empathy, you welcome his inner experiences and invite him to explore his own feelings. Empathy is not a technique by itself, it is often part of paraphrasing or reflecting. You not only express empathy in the words you use, but also in your modulation, intonation and by showing the right feelings.

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