

Life coaching is not about telling the client what to do. This is a common misconception. Some life coaches are reasonably successful in their business careers, and then make the crossover to life coaching, thinking that they will merely be required to share their pearls of wisdom with the client. This is more like mentoring an apprentice in a specific environment. Coaching is instead about life as a whole.

Life coaches teach clients skills to enable them to find their own solutions. They do not tell the client what to do.

There are simple but vital reasons why telling the client what to do is wrong:

- Some of the problems the client have may be due to others bossing them around. You doing the same will either worsen their condition, or drive them away.
- Giving someone a possible solution disempowers them. It is important to teach the client that they are strong and worthy enough to choose their own path. Giving them the answer is treating them as inadequate.
- You can not be an expert in every person's life! Every person and their lives are unique. There are a multitude of financial, spiritual, legal, social, sexual, religious, racial, geographic, employment, medical etc. situations that can affect the client. You can not be an expert in all of these.
- You must not give direct advice in an area you are not qualified in. If, for example, you are not qualified appropriated in financial matters, you should not give financial advice.
- Solutions that you or others have found to problems may have worked for you/them, but may not be suitable for your client. Therefore they may be worth the client considering, but you must not impose them on the client.

Life coaching is about:

- Helping the client to identify those areas that need addressing.
- Helping the client to see issues from another (external) perspective.
- Helping the client formulate lists of reactions or solutions. If the client is creating a list, you may suggest additions to consider, but you must not spoon-feed or impose answers.

- Helping the client to choose their outcomes, responses and behaviours.

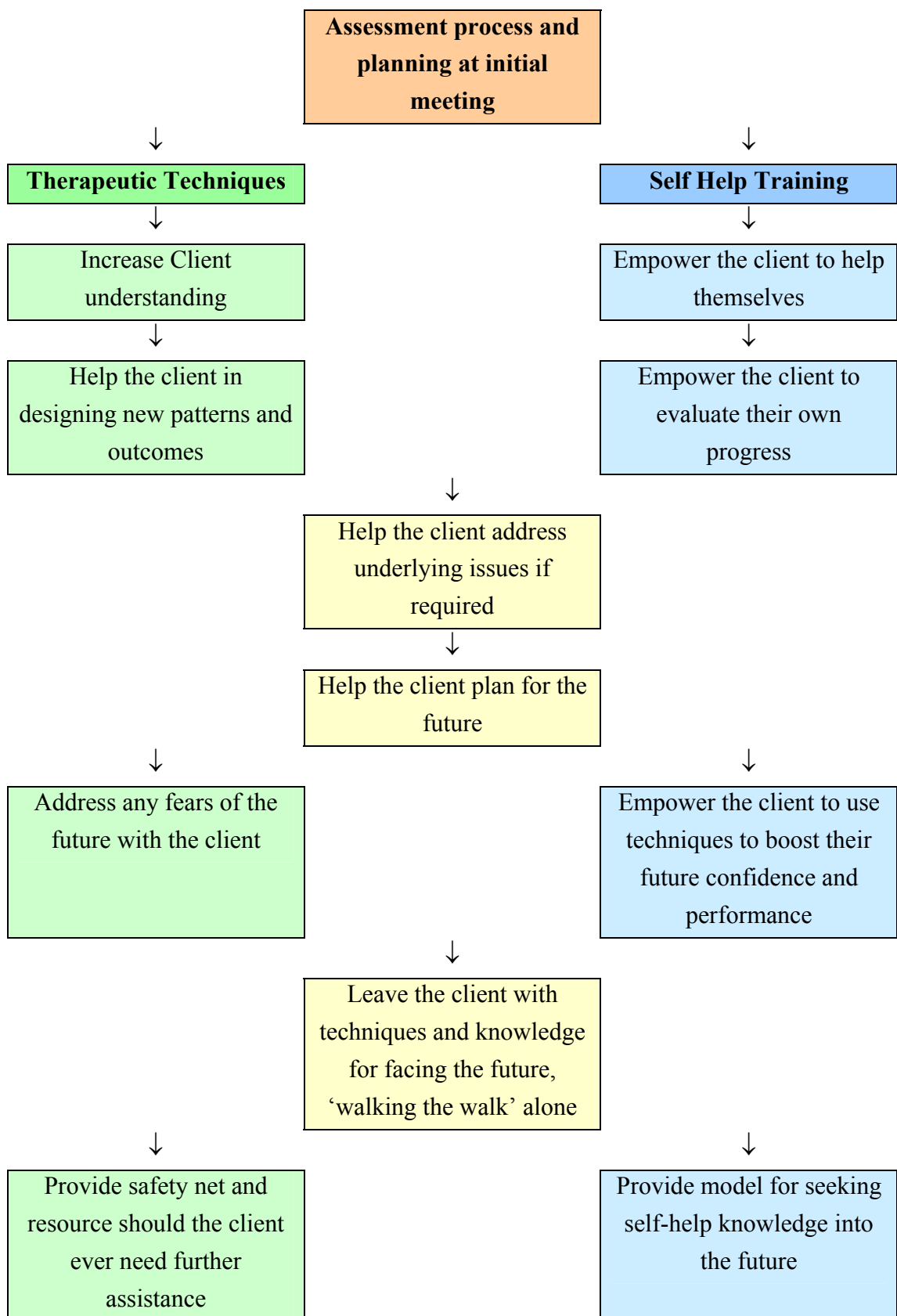
The above is not an exhaustive list, and we will look in more depth at what life coaching involves as the course progresses.



Key Learning Points

1. Life coaching is the combination of therapeutic techniques and training the client in new skills and knowledge.
2. You must not give direct advice unless qualified in that area.
3. Your role is to enable the client to find their answers, not to impose your views or solutions.
4. Your assistance should be carefully planned, yet adaptable to the feedback and experiences of the client.
5. The client should, where possible, be able to resolve their own problems in the future, or at least be able to deal with new issues more effectively.

Basic Flow diagram of Life Coaching



At every stage the practitioner seeks feedback from the client in order to modify and adapt where appropriate. The initial meeting plan is never ‘cast in stone’. As military leaders have long since known, the initial battle plan rarely survives first contact with the enemy. Although the coaching process should not be seen as combative, the principle still applies, since therapy interventions always throw up additional variables and feedback, especially if underlying causes are present.

What are life skills?

One of the things that a life coach teaches (or coaches their clients in) is a variety of ‘life skills’.

There is no set definition of what life skills are. Some examples are provided below, and you are encouraged to make additional lists of skills and knowledge that can be added to the list. Draw on your own experiences as well as those you have seen in others.

Personal Life Skills

For example:

- Choosing appropriate clothing and presentation for specific situations
- Qualifications
- Ability to handle money or debt
- Ability to act appropriately in different environments
- Ability to avoid or moderate certain behaviours (e.g. drinking sensibly rather than binge drinking)
- Loving yourself
- Respecting yourself
- Looking after your health

Spiritual Life Skills

- Being in touch with aspects of the environment such as the countryside that make you feel good.

- Being able to express yourself and feel the expression of others through art forms such as music or paintings.
- Feeling at ease and content with your faith model of the world, whether you are atheist, agnostic or religious.
- Being in touch with your inner needs and feelings.
- Being at ease with any moral implications of your practical day to day actions.

Business Life Skills

- Effective communication and presentation
- Sales ability
- Being personable
- Being professional
- Being on time
- Being competent at your job in terms of performance and quality
- Feeling job satisfaction from your work.

Crisis Life Skills

- Crisis management
- Helping others
- Survival, physical and emotional
- Dealing with illness, injury or pain
- Helping others to deal with illness, injury or pain

Parenting Life Skills

- Caring for children materially, emotionally and physically
- Setting boundaries
- Coping with stress
- Anger management
- Coping with external agencies and professionals
- Coping with ex-partners