



# The Punk Edition

Dynamic Designs for Education and Change

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*"For an effervescent life, keep your thoughts fearless, your emotions constructive and your actions venturesome..."*

## A Client's Guide to Engaging a Coach: How to find the right Coach in an unregulated industry and get the most out of your sessions

## A Client's Guide to Engaging a Coach

Issue 10, February 2018

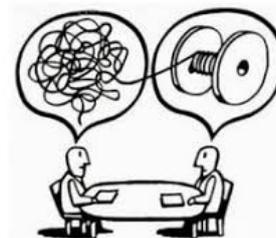
The start of a new year is a common time to consider investing in a Coach. There is a generalised optimism that accompanies the fresh slate of a brand new year. It is a time when a lot of us reflect on how we want this year to be better, brighter or different from the last. I see a spike at this time of year from new clients wanting to decode, unpack and strategise their goals for the year ahead. So for me, this is the perfect time to publish a guide to help people looking for a Coach separate the good, the bad and the ugly!

My motivation is to assist you, the reader, to understand this industry better and be armed with some helpful questions and information to make sure your investment and your Coaching experience is a positive and productive one. In the current climate, the demand for (quality) Coaching is booming and an increasing number of people are calling themselves Coaches. It is helpful to understand the lay of the land so that you know what to look for, as well as what to steer clear of, when finding yourself a professional or personal Coach.

As a Coach, I come across a wide range of misconceptions and confusion associated with this side of my profession almost daily. This Edition will focus on busting 10 common myths surrounding what Coaching is and what a Coach does, and while doing this provide some pointers for choosing the right Coach for you and some tips for getting the most of your sessions. The 10 myths I address below are those commonly raised by new clients or through conversations I have with people about Coaching and they can have a huge impact on the quality of Coaching you receive.

I will preface this by saying that the myths I bust below and the advice I provide about Coaching is from my philosophical position as a qualified practitioner. It is designed to provide a starting point for conversations with your future Coach to help you ascertain if they are the right fit for you. In the end, it comes down to the relationship and connection you have with your chosen Coach, and the quality of the outcomes of the Coaching conversations.

**YOU HAVE  
EXACTLY ONE LIFE  
IN WHICH TO DO  
EVERYTHING  
YOU'LL EVER DO.  
ACT ACCORDINGLY.**  
-COLIN WRIGHT



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## A Client's Guide to Engaging a Coach

### Myth Busting:

#### Myth 1: Coaching is a regulated industry.

Quite frankly, any cowboy can don a hat these days and call themselves a Coach. Currently, the Coaching industry is unregulated and it is very important for you, the potential client, to do your research and check in with your Coach about what training they have had, what frameworks their approach is built on and who they are registered with or accountable to.

#### Myth 2: All Coaching is the same.

Every field has differing frameworks or approaches. Consider medicine as a common example. There are many perspectives on the 'right way' to treat a patient. Some people are holistic practitioners, and they look at the emotional and physical wellbeing of the whole person, some have a diagnostic approach and focus only on the primary symptoms, some come from a deficit perspective, others from a natural medicine perspective, etc. Each of these approaches will change the way a patient is treated. The same is true for Coaching.

Finding a Coach that is the right fit for you is twofold. Firstly, you need to have a good and relaxed relationship/rapport with this person. More on this later... Secondly, you want to find a Coach that is a good fit for your goals and your philosophical standpoint so make sure you ask about their areas of specialisation and their approach. Broadly speaking, a Coach is trained in the art of asking questions and does not need to be an expert in the area or field they are Coaching. However, in reality, most Coaches tend to specialise within certain fields. There are Coaches that specialise in all kinds of things from interview preparation, presentation and confidence, weight loss, career development, etc. Always ask for an 'intake interview' or preliminary discussion with your Coach to make sure that they are a good fit for your goals. If they are not, ask them to recommend someone else and don't feel guilty about saying 'thanks but no thanks!' You wouldn't go see an Ophthalmologist if you had an issue with your kneecap! The same is true for finding the right Coach.

Similarly, a well trained Coach will have a finely tuned understanding about the frameworks that they use, the limitations of these, when to move beyond them, when they know their skills are not suitable for the client, the philosophical beliefs that underpin their practice and the areas of Coaching that they specialise in.

To give you an example of what this might look like, here is an explanation I will commonly give when asked about my approach to Coaching:

"PunkPD specialises in developmental coaching for individuals or couples. My coaching techniques are firmly grounded in the fields of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), Neuro-Semantics and Meta-Coaching. This genre of coaching facilitates developmental and self-actualisation processes for the client in a way that creates transformational, lasting and positive changes in behaviour and the beliefs and values that will best support this desired state. Essentially, the coaching gets into the core of the client's 'human software' and facilitates the client to make the desired changes to give them their highest results and desired outcomes."

#### Myth 3: Registration with a professional body ensures competence.

I cringe internally every time I am asked if I am registered with a certain high profile registration body. I cringe because I have opted to register with a less well-known body, but one that requires each Coach to demonstrate their capacity against a complex series of benchmarks.

Just because a Coach is registered, even with a well-known body, does not necessarily make them competent. Granted, for one registration body, a Coach will demonstrate the hours of training they have had and also supply a log book of time spent actually Coaching. But this does not guarantee skill. It guarantees time spent and the two do not necessarily correlate. In fact on occasion, a skill set can be inversely proportional to time spent as people may become complacent, 'switch off' or stop learning new ways to do things.

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So it is a good idea to ask your Coach what the requirements are for their registration and how they had to demonstrate their competence, including their Coaching credentials and where they trained.

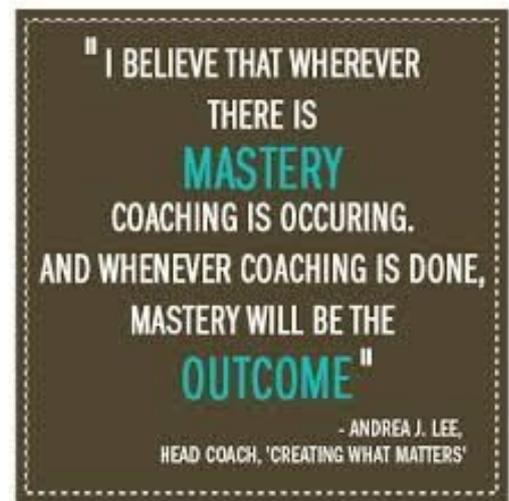
### **Myth 4: If I source my Coach through a well-known organisation, I am guaranteed quality.**

Nope! The same rules apply as I have mentioned above. Check with the Coach themselves about their credentials. I actually know of several companies who offer 'Coaches' that are not formally trained as Coaches. Granted, these professionals do have great experience in their field, but being an expert and being a Coach requires different skills.

### **Myth 5: The Coach does the work.**

Sorry folks! The client does the work. A great Coach will facilitate problem solving, shine light on previously untapped resources and unlock inhibiting patterns and beliefs, but it's what the client chooses to do once they leave the Coaching conversation that leads to change.

I have had a few clients come to see me, even a couple of times, but not want to face the reality that change and growth come from action. It is well and good to share an issue with me and we can talk about it and unpack it, but if the client leaves the conversation and does exactly the same things they have always done, the issue will remain. A conversation can't change interview performance- it's practicing the skills learnt and accessed in the conversations. A conversation can't change a relationship- it's using the insights in a practical way or using new approaches that will lead to the change.



A Coaching conversation facilitates and accesses the resources of the client to resolve their issue, achieve their goal or transition through a difficult phase. But, in order for this to be successful, the client needs to own their issue or goals. Amazing transformations can occur in a Coaching conversation because a client accesses a new belief or resource, or busts a limiting belief structure and these lead to different actions when out in the world again. My point here is to stress that the client is ultimately responsible for their results. A Coach's skills are crucial for accessing and developing these skills and insights, but the work to implement lies with the client.

As I mention above, some clients have chosen not to continue with coaching because they did not enjoy the Coaching approach and instead wanted to focus on blame or move the issue to an external locus of control. Coaching is not psychotherapy, which emphasises talking about an issue and unpacking it. Coaching is about responsibility and ownership. This beautifully leads into the next myth...



### **Myth 6: Coaching is like Counselling.**

Originally, I did training in Community Counselling and chose not to practice as a counsellor because the approach did not fit with me philosophically. Now I caveat this by saying that counselling, like Coaching or any other profession has different approaches. So my explanation below comes from my own training and my own personal experiences with it.

Check out this video for a great explanation of blame vs. Responsibility by Will Smith. I found this a great, short and sharp snap shot of the different attitudes people can bring to a situation. Responsibility is the position of power and change, and blame keeps the locus of control outwards (gives away power): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m0f21O-q08Q>

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The way I explain the difference to people is as follows: counselling, traditionally, focuses on the issue as it occurred in the past. It is a backwards-looking technique with the client often rehashing details of the past, what didn't work or what went wrong. Philosophically, I do not like this approach because this practice can actually make the problem 'grow' because we keep it present in our lives as we continually bring it up, re-story it and keep the focus on it.

Conversely, Coaching is forward-looking. It provides the facilitation techniques to build a desired future. This may include analysis and acknowledgement of the issue to learn about the structure or what has kept it in place in the present, but the focus is on 'so what now'?

As a Coach, my role is to facilitate the personal resources of a client to resolve their challenge or create momentum towards their goal. It is not to provide direct advice from my own experience, because my lived experience is not their lived experience. This is a common misconception because when we think of a Coach, we often think of a sporting Coach, where the Coaching provided is both high support and high direction. This is accurate on the sports field, but in developmental Coaching, direction is not provided in the traditional sense.

However, I do contribute different perspectives, provide strategies or teach skills when they will be useful. But I always seek permission. I will say something like "would it be ok with you if I contributed another perspective at this point?" Most of the time, my clients will say yes and sometimes they say no. Both are what's right for the client at the time. The exception to seeking permission is when a client seeks Coaching for a specific skill, such as job interviews. I state, at the beginning of the session, that I will provide advice, strategies and offer suggestions and this is mentoring rather than Coaching. I clarify the difference between mentoring and Coaching throughout my sessions when required to maintain the integrity and distinction of the two.

### **Myth 7: The Experience/Reputation of a Coach matters more than how comfortable I feel with them.**

Nope. Nope. Nope. Imagine sharing your vulnerabilities, challenges or beliefs with someone you weren't comfortable with or didn't feel safe with. It simply would not happen because when we look at the nature of rapport, which is essential for a relationship, trust is an essential factor. If I have low trust and low rapport with someone, I will be polite and courteous but I am not going to speak my authentic and raw truth.

I have a Coach. I actually trained with her and as such had a solid rapport with her before I engaged her as my Coach. However, I also vary my Coaches from time to time in the interest of experiencing a range of styles. In one such endeavour, I had two sessions with a Coach who runs a very successful business, Coaches famous people and is very well known in their field. The first conversation we had was pleasant but not groundbreaking for me. During the second session, they were clearly distracted and we were without eye contact for a good proportion of the session. They also used a word I was using, but didn't check in with the meaning and so was using it in a different context which did not relate to what I was saying. In short, the rapport just wasn't there and their style did not suit my requirements. Reputation or not, this wasn't the Coach for me. Choose a Coach who you feel comfortable with (it may take a session or two to really resonate) or you'll always have your guard up!



Image Credit: <https://www.slideshare.net/amandajune/day-2-ilm-award-in-lm>

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### **Myth 8: My expectations will be clear to my Coach.**

Pfffft. I only wish this were the case in all our interactions with people! The short story of this myth is to be really clear about your expectations, no matter how small you think they are. You will have expectations and these can be simple, such as 'I expect a chair and a private room to be Coached in', to complex expectations such as 'I expect my Coach to have the answers and provide solutions'. Ask yourself what it is you want and communicate this with your Coach. They will then be able to let you know if your expectations can be met. To illustrate, I had made an assumption about my Coaching sessions with the aforementioned Coach that I only saw twice, that we would be Coaching in a private room. This was not the case. One session was on a park bench and the other was sitting uncomfortably on a cement stair. I had taken for granted that a private room was a standard expectation that didn't need to be discussed. But after this experience, when I meet a new Coach, I check what facilities are available for our session.

The second example I gave is important to voice because this is where a conversation can occur and the Coach can explain that the nature of Coaching means that this expectation cannot be met. The client can then choose to continue or close the conversation at that point.

Similarly, I have clients who prefer texting to arrange appointments, others prefer email or a phone call. Some are happy to meet via Skype and others prefer my Coaching space or their office, or a cafe or even while walking by the lake. Some like to contact me between appointments for emergency calls or ask to receive reminder texts to keep them on track with their goals. All of these requirements are unique to each client and your needs and expectations are important to the success of your session, so make sure you share them with your Coach.

**"WHO EXACTLY  
SEEKS OUT A COACH?  
WINNERS."**

*Chicago Tribune*

### **Myth 9: My Coach will lead each session. I don't need to prepare.**

Here's the thing, imagine making an appointment with a doctor. You walk in, sit and down and the doctor says, "how can I help you today?" You sigh, shrug and say, "I don't know. You're the doctor. So start asking me questions and we'll see if we uncover something." This would be an expensive waste of time for you.

Rather, we would make an appointment with a doctor to discuss a specific thing, like a sore elbow. The doctor can then examine the elbow, ask questions specific to the elbow, run some checks on surrounding areas, etc. This would be a useful conversation and the same is true for Coaching.

When we see a Coach, it might be to work on a long term goal, or to work through a specific challenge, or improve in a certain area. It is helpful to know what you want out of a session. A good Coach will ask you this at the start of the session so that the conversation can stay focussed.

I have had clients come to Coaching and when I ask them what they want to focus on, they have said something like, "I don't know. You're the expert. You tell me." Earlier in my Coaching career, I was not as direct as I am now, and I would have played into the client's pattern by asking more questions to find the thing the client would like to focus on for that session, but the time spent searching for a topic to discuss could have been better spent focusing on the thing that will give you, as the client, maximum benefits.

Now that I am experienced in Coaching, and just between you and me, I will say something like "do you often expect others to take the lead in your life?" I know this may look harsh when you see it in black and white, but a good Coach is challenging and will hold a mirror up to their client's patterns.

In short, have in mind, even if only vaguely, what you want to get out of your Coaching session. This will give you the best bang for your buck as you'll be able to dive straight in!

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### **Myth 10: Coaches charge standard fees.**

Nope. Coaches vary wildly in the fees they charge and vary what is included within their fee. Some Coaches charge one fee for those wishing to access their services privately, while they charge a different fee if a company or organisation is paying for the sessions. Ask your Coach about their fee structure and also remember that more expensive is not necessarily better!

Similarly, if you are going through a Coaching company who does not employ full time Coaches but gets them in on a sessional basis, the fees are structured to reflect a financial split. For example, 50% of the fee may go to the company and 50% to the Coach. This doesn't matter for you as the client, but it is helpful to know how these arrangements work.

Some Coaches also offer packages which include a number of sessions at a discounted rate. I used to offer this as it is a widely accepted practice in the field. I don't any longer because I feel this is presumptuous and locks someone in. The length of time or number of sessions a client needs or wants varies too much to suggest that a particular number of sessions are needed. A client may get all they need from one session but be left with several sessions that they have paid for but feel they do not need. This is not a meaningful investment in my perception.

A good question to ask is what inclusions the fee covers. For example, standard Coaching sessions are usually one hour. I offer sessions that are an hour and a half, so someone might be comparing my fee with another Coach thinking they are similar, but they need to factor in the additional time that is included. Similarly, some Coaches offer services that include reminders or sms's for important events, emergency phone calls if required or email contact outside of the scheduled sessions. If these aspects are important to you, it is important to ask if they are included.

***In Conclusion:*** Finding the right Coach who is a good fit for you is an excellent investment of both your time and your money. Quality Coaches have the skills to propel you forward, access resources you didn't know you had and even help you to decide what your focus is or where you want to take your life, career or relationships.

*As a Coach, and someone who engages in Coaching, I cannot stress enough the importance of finding a Coach who is dedicated to their own ongoing development. If they are not continually learning and developing to expand themselves, they cannot grow and develop you to the best of your potential. They will be limited by their own development.*

*With the myth-busting above, I aimed to provide you with some useful information to help you identify which Coach is right for you by arming you with an understanding of the industry and equipping you with questions to ask potential Coaches. Additionally, some of the myths provided tips to prepare and engage in Coaching sessions to maximise your benefits and take advantage of all the skills your Coach has to offer.*

*Coaching is an outstanding investment for those who are ready to own their 'stuff' and who want to challenge themselves and be challenged to tap into potential resources, skills and behaviours that will propel them into a different state of being. It's not for the faint-hearted!*



Abby Elizabeth Rees is PunkPDs director, a self-confessed 'education junkie', University Lecturer, Education and Empowerment Writer, Behaviour and Change Specialist, Executive Meta-Coach and artistic thinker.

Energy, Excellence and Tenacity capture Abby's drive and personality.

Thriving on new challenges to design for education and change, Abby leads with a level of energy that earned her the nickname '240' (240 Volt) from her former colleagues. With the tenacity of a Rottweiler, Abby lives and breathes her design projects, providing her clients with a commitment to excellence that is unparalleled. Abby has a lively personal presence, strong interpersonal skills and uses a wide range of innovative and inventive techniques. With rich experience in facilitating diverse groups, Abby has delivered a range of corporate training and developed education, change and communication tools to meet individual needs.

In addition to being recognised with numerous National and International awards for her work, Abby embodies the cliché of 'life-long-learning' and has achieved:

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