

# THE BEAUTIFUL **ATTITUDES** OF **EFFECTIVE** LIFE COACHING

**How important is it that you trust the people in your life: your wife, partner, boss, friends or mother? If we don't have anyone in our lives who we believe we can trust, we'll find it difficult to open up and be ourselves around people.**

Trust is a complex concept that exists on different levels; for example, you may trust your boss to give you the benefit of the doubt and be fair when it comes to scheduling your holiday time, but you may not necessarily trust your boss with your money, your children or even your house. Another example may be that you trust your partner with your life, your home, your belongings and money, but you may not trust them to remember dates, do the cleaning or water the plants.

The quality of our lives will always be heavily determined by the quality of our relationships, and the quality of our relationships depends upon the quality of trust we have built in those relationships. Even if we consider ourselves trustworthy people, we often forget that trust isn't a given standard: we are responsible for winning and earning the trust of other people. However, because we're always more focussed on how others are for us, we tend to overlook and forget to monitor how we are for other people and thus never consider our impression we leave on them about our trustworthiness.

Trust is only developed over time after we've demonstrated to another person that we are consistent for them: this is the same for our clients. Clients develop trust in their life coach when the life coach has demonstrated that they are of a consistent attitude. We need to prove to our clients over time that we are for them, not against them; that we are here to build them up, not tear them down, and that our agenda is their agenda (or that we have an agenda that is better than theirs: but for their benefit, not our own).

The thirteen beautiful attitudes of effective life coaching are applicable to all aspects of your life, including your personal and professional relationships. These attitudes are not universal facts which are meant to be agreed with or disagreed with: they are here to be wrestled with, challenged and understood on your own terms. The lens I urge you to look at these attitudes through is by asking yourself, **'how can these ideas enable me to be more valuable and effective in my day to day relationships, including those which I have with my clients?'**

## **1. THE MIND AND BODY AFFECT EACH OTHER**

I once worked with a young man years ago who struggled with stress and depression. Every cause has an effect, so I knew when he came to me about his depression that his depression wasn't actually who he was: it was the effect that manifested from an unknown cause. This particular man was morbidly overweight and he was struggling to walk up and down his stairs at work, which caused many of his colleagues to bully him. He hated his job, his body and wanted to find a girlfriend and be found attractive by people.

His inner monologue went as follows: **"I'll be stuck in this dead-end job forever. I'll always be fat and single."** This perpetuated inner monologue ultimately justified him staying the way he was in life because he genuinely believed he would never be capable of anything other than his present state. This example demonstrates the vicious circle we get stuck in: our thoughts affect our behaviours, which ultimately affects our physical body. Sometimes this takes the form of overeating, other times undereating; sometimes it leads to us not exercising, or not showering or brushing our teeth. Our thoughts can manifest themselves as physical pains, acne or even digestion issues!





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Sometimes, our role as life coaches is to ask our clients how their mind is affecting their body and how their body is affecting their mind; or help them identify the link if they can't see it for themselves.

## **2. EVERY BEHAVIOUR HAS A POSITIVE INTENTION**

This is the most controversial idea I bring to my courses. Most people contest this idea with the "What about murderers/rapists/paedophiles/etc.?" argument, to which I always reply: who are we to judge someone's intentions? This concept isn't about condoning or even forgiving other people's behaviour; it's about ensuring that we don't judge what other people's intentions are and, instead, accept people as imperfect beings. 'All behaviour has positive intention' isn't a universal fact; we know there are people with bad intentions in the world. Yet, for the purpose of being an effective life coach, we must subscribe to the idea of positive intentions so that we treat all our clients equally and fairly.

There will be clients who we fundamentally disagree with (personally, morally, politically or philosophically), but in a client-life coach relationship, they are deserving of the same unconditional acceptance and support as those clients who we do agree with. In order to build trust in a relationship, we must demonstrate that we do not judge people based on their actions and behaviours.

## **3. BEHAVIOUR IS GEARED TOWARDS ADAPTATION**

When we feel like we don't fit in in life, or that we don't live up to a certain image we wish to portray, we will gear our behaviour and appearance in order to blend into the environment and image we wish to be part of. Whether you feel like you don't fit into your family, workplace, your job title, your role in society or even a group of friends, there's a chance you adapt your behaviour in order to "fix" your sense of isolation and lack of belonging.

## **4. ACCEPT THE PERSON, ENCOURAGE CHANGES IN ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR**

Have you ever been judged for saying or doing something which someone else deemed as 'wrong'? Whilst we would like to believe there is such a thing as universally recognised good and evil, cultures around the world vary widely, and people within those cultures also have a wide and unpredictable conceptualisation of what constitutes as "good" and "bad". What is right and wrong varies from person to person, and we all project our moral standards onto our expectations of other people.

Instead of imposing our moral judgement on others, life coaches need to instead choose to separate people from their behaviours. People may act and behave inappropriately or in a way we don't like, but the behaviour is not the person: behaviour can change. People who have been judged and torn down because of their actions assign these faults to their sense of self, which leaves them feeling under confident and worthless.

## **5. THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS FAILURE, ONLY FEEDBACK TO BE RECEIVED**

Think about the times in your life where you've failed miserably. Our relationship with failure is related to our ability to pick ourselves up and carry on: some people see failure as a good thing and others see it as a traumatic thing. However, the people who tend to view failure negatively are also usually the ones who believe that their past reflects their future; therefore they maintain the mindset that they are destined to always be a failure and





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fail at everything they do. This mindset limits people's ability to learn and grow because they see failure as a full stop rather than a comma. When we modify our relationship with failure, we give ourselves a more powerful foundation to build our life upon.

## **6. RESPECT THE OTHER PERSON'S MODEL OF THE WORLD (EVEN IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND IT)**

This principle does not endorse the idea that people have total freedom to do and say whatever they want to in life. However, as life coaches, our role requires us to remain entirely neutral and indifferent to our clients so that we're in the best position to ask the right question and understand their position and perspective in the world (particularly if we don't understand or agree with it). People's perspectives are influenced by their upbringing, background, culture and education which we, as life coaches, need to help them uncover and understand for themselves. They need to see the link between their perspectives and their life's experiences as much as we do, so it's important we guide them through this process with respect and patience.

## **7. THERE ARE NO BAD PEOPLE, JUST UNHELPFUL ATTITUDES, HABITS AND BEHAVIOURS**

This is another principle which many people find hard to swallow. Whilst we have all met 'bad' people in life who have offended, hurt, angered, or frustrated us or people we know, it's not like we are immune to doing these things ourselves. Can you honestly say you've never hurt, frustrated, annoyed, or upset someone in your life, and if you did, did you do so intentionally? People who are "bad" to us unlikely woke up that morning with the conscious decision to be a bad person today, as much as you have never woken up with such intention yourself.

As much as you have assigned the 'bad person' label to someone who has disrupted your life, there are people out there who have labelled you a bad person also because of something you did to them (consciously or unconsciously). Does that mean you are a bad person? As you can see from the complexity of this psychology, it's almost impossible to judge people as good or bad based on our limited interactions with them which usually don't reveal the deep psychology underlying their intentions. Therefore, embracing the idea that there are no 'bad' people but that there are 'different people' allows us to ask more helpful and empowering questions from a position free from judgement and prejudice.

## **8. THERE ARE NO INFLEXIBLE CLIENTS, ONLY RIGID THINKERS**

Sometimes we can be our own worst enemies in life thanks to the rigid rules we live our lives by; what we should do, shouldn't do, must do, must achieve, mustn't do, etc. We tell ourselves that we can't do something, that we shouldn't try something or that we'd be no good at another thing. The same goes for our clients. The thing to note about this is that the majority of people's rules aren't actually their own; they're unconsciously adopted from the rules which were once imposed upon them by others.

Clients come to us when they know something needs to change but they don't know how to facilitate the change they wish to see happen. When our clients start responding to our suggestions for change with 'I don't think I can x' or 'I can't do that because of x', they're not being inflexible: they're giving voice to those rigid rules they so deeply believe in. When this happens, it's important that life coaches don't become frustrated with an 'unwilling' client, but instead recognise this as a rule keeping defence mechanism which is their job to help the client recognise and break down.





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## **9. PEOPLE MAKE THE BEST CHOICES THEY CAN AT THE TIME**

None of us wants to hurt other people; we don't go out of our way to let people down, disappoint people or upsets others, yet all of us do. This can get frustrating to explain when the other person who we hurt or let down acts as though we did this to them purposefully; we know we had no ill intent, but conveying that to the hurt party is difficult and takes time. However, we know we feel the same way when others let us down or hurt us; we instinctively believe they did so with malintent. We have to learn that it can't work one way for us but a different way for others.

This attitude embraces the idea that everyone is doing the best they can; it pushes aside our temptations to assume the worst in people when they do or say offensive or hurtful things. This attitude extends to other people as well as ourselves; there's no use in beating yourself up in life for the things that you did or said which you regret. Provided you're open to learning from your errors, it's time to cut yourself, and others, some slack.

## **10. PEOPLE RESPOND TO THEIR EXPERIENCES, NOT TO REALITY ITSELF**

I have some bad news: just because you see something a certain way doesn't mean your perception is accurate. Reality is near impossible for most of us to grasp; we all have a unique perspective on the world which is skewed by our histories, values, ideas and ideologies. This is why, when something bad happens in the world, everyone has a different response to it. Someone may say or do something which hundreds of people find offensive or wrong, but thousands of others don't see as problematic. This isn't to say either party is right or wrong, it merely explains the division of opinion: people respond to experience more than reality. In other words, people who may have more socio-political experience of something similar to the offensive matter may use their experience as validation for its offensiveness, whilst those who are sheltered or inexperienced in this subject can't comprehend why it would be regarded as offensive. So, who is to say one is the reality and the other is not? Both opinions come from the real world, both arguments exist in reality, but both arguments aren't responding to reality, but to their perception of reality.

## **11. EVERYONE IS DOING THEIR BEST WITH THE RESOURCES THEY HAVE**

It's easy for us to judge our past selves for being subpar; we tear ourselves down and beat ourselves up for all the things we didn't do, failed at or underachieved in personally and professionally. In these cases, we need to practice self-compassion and acceptance to our past selves and accept that we couldn't do back then with what resources we have now. Just because we're wiser, better skilled and more equipped today ( and could, therefore, probably handle our past situations better), it doesn't mean our past selves were lesser than. We would never dream of berating and being ashamed of our six-year-old self for their poor grammar and spelling skills or our five-month-old self for being so dirty and unable to walk because we accept that our child selves were limited in their resources. The same compassion needs to be extended to our teenage and adult selves, even ourselves as of last week and yesterday. We're always on a journey of growth and with growth, we acquire more resources. Don't judge your past self for what your present self is capable of.



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## **12. ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE WITH THE RIGHT ATTITUDE AND STRATEGY**

Everything seems impossible when we first think about it. If someone had told Buzz Aldrin when he was six years old that he'd one day walk on the moon, he likely would never have believed it were possible; yet, he did. If you told seven-year-old Barak Obama that he'd be the first black president of the United States, he probably wouldn't have believed it; yet, he did. The only reason people achieve what they achieve in life is that they choose to believe they are capable of the impossible and work towards making it happen.

You're not going to know how to make the impossible happen, just as Buzz didn't know how to get to the moon or Obama didn't know how to become president, but in time, they learned how. They practised in the fields they knew would teach them what they needed to and worked their way up; they learned along the way how to get to the impossible. The answers didn't come to them in a dream or in a textbook: they discovered the answers themselves through growth and hard work. That's how you'll achieve your impossible dream as well. Don't allow yourself to become disenfranchised from your past failures: failure is part of the journey to success.

## **13. ALL COACHING MUST AID MATURITY, DECISIVENESS AND STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**

This is all about us developing a goal which we are committed to pursuing. Clients will come to life coaches when they have emotional problems such as depression, anxiety, stress or low self-esteem, but our job isn't to make other people feel better: our job is to help clients develop an authentic and strong sense of self which, in turn, helps them manage and regulate their own emotions without our help. Our job is to help clients become better people rather than help our clients feel better.

