

# Unleash Your True Potential

## Working with a Life Coach Can Help

by Sandra Yeyati



Hiring a life coach can be an empowering decision for people that want to understand themselves better and lead fulfilled lives. Coaches may specialize in distinct topics like business, parenting or weight loss, but, “It’s all life coaching,” says Patrick Williams, a master certified coach by the International Coach Federation, licensed psychologist and founder of the Institute for Life Coach Training. “If I hire a specialist like a wellness coach, I assume they’re going to know something about wellness, but I’m not hiring a consultant to tell me what I should do in diet and exercise. I want to be coached in living a more well life.”

According to master certified coach Fran Fisher, with 30 years of experience, “Life coaching is a safe environment or sacred space of unconditional love and acceptance where learning, growth and transformation naturally occur. It’s a partnership of two experts. The client is the expert of the content: who they are, what’s important to them and what they believe, think and feel. The coach is the expert of the process. They’ve been specially trained to help the client access their deeper wisdom and make better choices that align with who they are.”

### Going for Gold

Martha Beck, Ph.D., a Harvard-trained sociologist, renowned coach and bestselling author of *The Way of Integrity*, says, “Most problems can be resolved by simply talking to someone who is willing to listen compassionately and deeply to whatever is going on in their lives and to give them good feedback. A coach will get you to high levels of happiness, self-fulfillment and self-expression. Unlike therapists, coaches don’t deal with the mentally ill. They deal with the mentally well who want to maximize their performance.”

“A coach helps you think and say and dream of things you hadn’t thought before,” says Williams. “I can advise myself all day long, but as soon as I have a conversation with a trained coach, I hear myself differently. I get new ideas, and that motivates me to make change. The value may come monetarily. It may improve someone’s business or money decisions, but it also may come in how you live your life. There may

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be value in having less stress, more time, more fun. Anybody who is motivated to make a change or maybe is in the midst of change and they don't know what to do; that's who benefits from coaching."

### Limiting Beliefs and Turtle Steps

According to Beck, one of the most common issues a coach must address is their clients' limiting beliefs. "It's about freeing yourself from beliefs that are preventing you from moving forward or convincing you that you can't have what you want, so you never try," says Beck. "There's something in your behavior that's not allowing you to move forward. Let's find the behavior, figure out why you're doing it and change that belief. It's good old-fashioned problem solving in partnership with the client."

Beck's favorite tool for making changes is what she calls one-degree turns, or turtle steps, defined as the smallest steps you can take toward a goal. "Research shows that large steps tend to get discouraging," she notes. "We could do them at the beginning of a

really passionate, goal-seeking time, but we almost never sustain it. If we go in tiny steps toward what we really believe and what we really want, we get there. The tortoise wins the race."

### Achieving Goals and Feeling Free

When it comes to setting and achieving goals, coaches have different approaches. Williams, for example, considers himself an accountability partner. "I won't punish you if you don't achieve your goals," he says. "If you report progress, we celebrate and talk about what's next. If you say, 'I didn't get it done,' then we talk about what got in the way, what needs to change. We never make the client wrong. It's what's true for you."

For Beck, goals take a back seat. "My clients tend to give me goals that are culturally based on what they think they should do. People move forward much more rapidly when you don't hold them to a goal. When they have permission to do whatever they want, they actually start doing the things that all the goal setting in the world won't allow them to do. We have such a strong response to freedom. When we feel like we're forcing ourselves to do something, we won't do it because it's not free. When we're free, we do the things that are best for us."

For more information, visit [DrPatWilliams.com](http://DrPatWilliams.com), [FranFisherCoach.com](http://FranFisherCoach.com) and [MarthaBeck.com](http://MarthaBeck.com).

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## Finding the Right Coach

The search for a coach often begins online to check credentials, training and experience, and to understand the coach's approach and personality. "Trust your gut," says renowned coach and author Martha Beck. "See how you feel when you're looking at somebody's website or when you email them and get a response."

Master certified coach Patrick Williams recommends asking for referrals from friends or through the International Coaching Federation ([CoachingFederation.org](http://CoachingFederation.org)) and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council ([EMCCGlobal.org](http://EMCCGlobal.org)). "A coach should have some level of certification. You want to ask about their training and how long they've been coaching," he says.

Most experts recommend interviewing at least three coaches. Many offer a free, 30-minute sample session. "There has to be a feeling of safety and rapport with that person. You want to feel seen and heard," says master certified coach Fran Fisher.

"Any coach worth their salt will help you find out that you already know your path through life, so although you may feel challenged by this person, you should also feel excited, like this could set you free. If a coach gives you a list of things that will never fail you, and it doesn't feel like freedom to you, and you don't feel like your real self, find someone else," Beck says.



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