Coaching People is Complex!

Introduction

When we study how to become a personal trainer, the manuals, articles and textbooks would have us believe that coaching people to a progressive linear rise towards their maximum potential is a relatively simple process that looks a little something like this:

1. We ask a client what they want
2. We test for what they may need
3. We plan a course of action
4. We deliver those actions
5. Our clients reach a new level of fitness
6. We reflect on our success or failures and create an evolved programme.

However, it is important to be aware that the process is rarely that simple! There are so many variables that can affect the process at any stage, impacting ability, commitment and motivation to train (amongst other things). Here's a little food for thought…

Variables

In no particular order, here are just some variables that mean a 'linear' approach to coaching as above occurs rarely!

• Clients physical capacities change (fitness progression/regression, injuries, daily ups and downs)
• Social factors influence success and failure (peer pressure, solicitous spouse, social group)
• Values and beliefs may change on a daily basis (linked to a true understanding of their self)
• Motivations come and go (depending upon their true value)
• Work ethic has ups and downs (mental health balance related)
• Physical and psychological health can impact performance

Without all variables being controlled or mitigated, then progress will naturally be slower than the maximum potential. Of course, life is chaotic and therefore we cannot expect to control all variables. Neither we, nor our clients, should stress about the things that we/they have no control over. However, there are strategies that can be implemented to try to establish some control over things that are within our sphere of influence and allow us to make the best of any given situation.

TRAINERMAKER

Minimising the impact of variables

Creating a healthy 'culture' within your fitness environment and scope of practice is key to overcoming the negative effects of these variables and stabilising/maximising your clients' progress. The following are pointers in how to create that culture:

1. Have a clear vision

- Is your vision and purpose known to the client?
- Does your client understand exactly how you will achieve this vision?
- Do you really understand your client's own vision (their goals)?
- Do you record these goals and make your clients accountable?
- ➢ If you or your clients do not come up to expectations, then address the issues involved!

2. Create a challenging environment

- Are you pushing your client's comfort zones just a little bit each session?
- How are you stretching your client?
- How do you know if there is the right amount of stretch?
- ➢ If you do not add enough stretch, interest and progress may be lost!

3. Create a supportive environment

- How are you supporting individuals?
- What fall-backs are in place for your clients who may be struggling?
- What networks have you created to make your client feel comfortable?
- ➢ If your client is under pressure, support them. If they are struggling, be their source of comfort and inspiration!

4. Instil high levels of motivation

- Is your client's motivation intrinsic or extrinsic?
- What, when and how are you motivating?
- How do you know if your motivation is working for your client?
- ➢ Think about your body language and communication so that you emanate a positive and rewarding persona that puts a smile on your client's face!
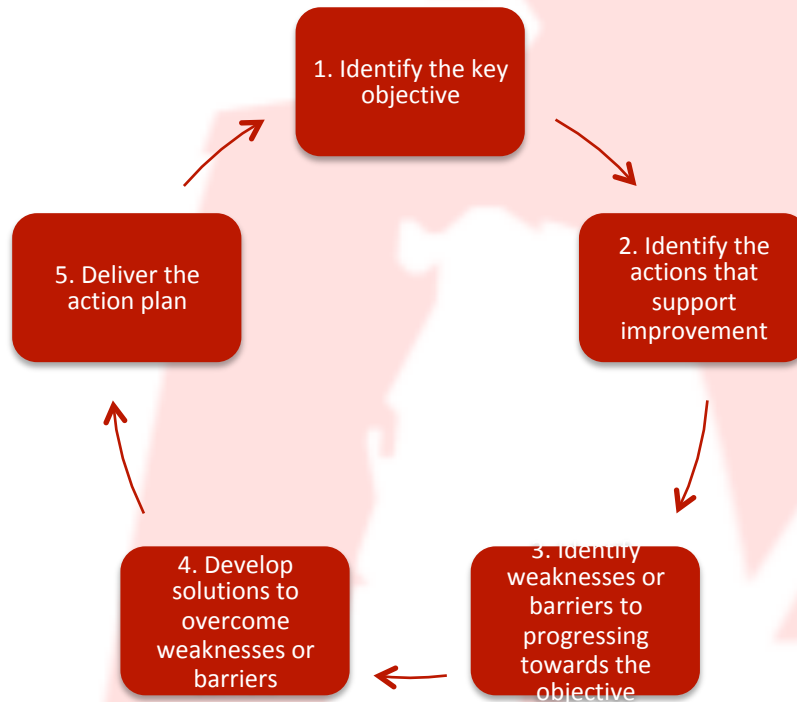
5. Communicate effectively

- What methods of communication do you use with your clients?
- How do you determine what communication methods work best for your clients?
- How do you know what and when to communicate?
- Are you getting regular, honest feedback?
- ➢ Communication changes from individual to individual. Use appropriate methods and language that keep you professional, but that allow a deep rapport to be built.

Self analysis

It is obvious from the above, that self-analysis is a fundamental tool that should be implemented constantly. In fact, many successful fitness professionals will set aside time every night to reflect on successes and failures. Below is a reminder of what self-analysis is!

```
        1. Identify the key
            objective

5. Deliver the                2. Identify the
action plan                    actions that
                                support
                               improvement

    4. Develop              3. Identify
    solutions to            weaknesses or
    overcome                barriers to
    weaknesses or           progressing
    barriers                towards the
                            objective
```

Conclusion

The aim for any Personal Trainer, is to develop an effective culture, where high quality actions lead to high quality outputs and where everyone pulls together in the same direction with a clear vision. Constant self-analysis, systems analysis and environment analysis will help you to optimise your client's experience, and will mitigate the variables that so often de-rail the best intentions of your client and yourself. Not everything can be controlled, so learning to allow some deviation whilst 'steering the ship' as best as is possible is an essential skill.