

Handout

Integrating Behavior Change for Client Success

In this session, we will explore how to implement Health & Wellness coaching strategies and techniques with a new or current clients that you're working with to better understand their wants and needs allowing you to understand how to guide them on their path to better understanding and self-efficacy. These methods may be applied in most of any field and offer up better communication with your team, clients or both.

To better understand how this is accomplished let's first understand what Health and Wellness coaches (HWC) are and what they are not. HWC are highly trained professionals who serve as catalysts for meaningful behavior change within the healthcare and wellness industries. Working in partnership with clients, they empower individuals to take ownership of their well-being by supporting sustainable, self-directed changes aligned with each person's values, goals, and lifestyle. HWCs are not therapists, nor do they diagnose or treat psychological conditions.

What strategies do health & wellness coaches use to inspire lasting change—and how can you apply similar practices in your own life or work, even if you're not a coach? By learning just a few essential tools and guiding principles—and making small shifts in how you communicate and support others—you can begin to foster meaningful, lasting change in yourself and those around you. Let's explore some of these powerful techniques together

What a Health Coach Is

- **A Partner in Change:** Health coaches work with clients (not on them) to explore their goals, values, and motivations for improving health and well-being.
- **A Facilitator of Behavior Change:** They use evidence-based techniques (like motivational interviewing and appreciative inquiry) to help clients create sustainable lifestyle changes.
- **Client-Centered & Non-Judgmental:** The client sets the agenda. Coaches listen deeply, ask powerful questions, and support self-discovery rather than dictate plans.
- **A Guide for Whole-Person Wellness:** Health coaches address multiple aspects of well-being—nutrition, exercise, stress management, sleep, relationships, and more—while respecting each client's priorities.
- **Trained Professionals:** Many hold recognized certifications (NBC-HWC, ACE, etc.) and are trained in communication, behavior change psychology, and coaching methodology.

✘ What a Health Coach Is Not

- **Not a Doctor or Therapist:** Health coaches do not diagnose, treat, or prescribe for medical or psychological conditions.
- **Not a Nutritionist or Dietitian (unless separately credentialed):** They don't prescribe strict diets or meal plans but can support clients in making healthier nutrition choices.
- **Not a Personal Trainer (unless also certified):** They may encourage physical activity but do not replace structured exercise programming without proper credentials.
- **Not Judgmental or Directive:** Coaching is not about telling clients what to do, scolding, or "fixing" them.
- **Not a Quick Fix:** Health coaching is about sustainable, long-term changes, not crash diets, gimmicks, or miracle solutions. Think of a health coach as a catalyst—someone who helps clients unlock their own potential for lasting change, rather than a provider who gives out solutions.

What is Appreciative Inquiry?

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a strengths-based approach that focuses on exploring and amplifying the success stories in a client's life. Rather than concentrating on problems, AI highlights moments when the client felt empowered, successful, or fulfilled. By encouraging clients to reflect on these positive experiences, AI fosters confidence, optimism, and a sense of possibility. This approach supports lasting change by helping clients recognize their own strengths and potential through the lens of appreciation and self-discovery.

The four stages of Appreciative Inquiry with a client are:

- **Discovery:** Inquire into the best of the past and present, focusing on strengths and successes.
- **Dream:** Use findings from the Discovery phase to envision a positive future.
- **Design:** Create shared images of a preferred future based on the Dream phase.
- **Destiny:** Determine innovative ways to achieve the desired future.

These stages help clients identify strengths and envision positive changes in their lives or organizations.

What is Motivational Interviewing?

Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a collaborative, goal-oriented communication style designed to strengthen a person's own motivation and commitment to change. Rather than directing or advising, MI focuses on evoking the individual's own reasons for change in a respectful and empathetic manner.

Key elements of MI include:

- **Partnership:** Working together as equals, not as expert and patient.
- **Acceptance:** Honoring the client's autonomy, strengths, and perspective.
- **Compassion:** Prioritizing the client's well-being.
- **Evocation:** Drawing out the client's own motivations and values.

MI is especially effective when someone feels ambivalent or uncertain about change. It helps people move from indecision to action—on their own terms.

SMART Goals: Creating a Roadmap for Success

Once you and your client have identified the area they want to work on, it's time to bring structure to their vision through goal setting. In coaching, we often use the SMART framework as a practical tool to transform broad intentions into clear, actionable steps. SMART goals not only guide clients toward success but also reveal hidden roadblocks that may otherwise go unnoticed.

Breaking Down SMART Acronym

S – Specific: Goals should be clear and well-defined. A specific goal answers what, why, and how.

Example: "I will drink one 8-ounce glass of water every morning at 8 a.m."

M – Measurable: Progress must be tracked in a way that shows evidence of success. Measurable goals provide benchmarks to celebrate along the way.

A – Attainable: Goals should be challenging but within reach. Setting unrealistic expectations can lead to frustration and disengagement.

R – Relevant: Goals must align with what truly matters to the client. When goals reflect personal values, motivation naturally increases.

T – Timely: Every goal needs a deadline or timeframe. Without time boundaries, goals often lose urgency and momentum.

Strong vs. Weak Goals

SMART Example:

"I will prepare a homemade lunch three times this week and bring it to work on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday."

This is precise, measurable, realistic, and tied to a clear schedule.

Not a SMART Goal:

"I will eat healthier throughout the week."

→ This is too vague and lacks specifics in every area of the acronym, leaving no way to measure success or hold accountability.

Why SMART Goals Matter in Coaching

- They provide **clarity** instead of confusion.
- They create **accountability** for both clients and coach.
- They reveal **barriers** early, making it easier to adjust strategies.
- They turn vague aspirations into a **step-by-step plan** for real change.
- SMART goals aren't just checklists, they're **living guides** that keep clients focused, motivated, and confident in their ability to succeed.

RESOURCES:

Catalyst Coaching Institute: Health & Wellness Coaching Certification:

<https://www.catalystcoachinginstitute.com/>

Health Coach Training | Wellcoaches: <https://www.wellcoachesschool.com/>

National Board Certified Health & Wellness Coaches | NBHWC: <https://nbhwc.org/>

Books:

Wellness Coaching for Lasting Lifestyle Change by Micheal Arloski PhD

The Coaching Lab: Health Wellness & Performance by Brad Cooper PhD

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