

SHOULD YOU FIRE YOUR COACH?

5 Glaring Red Flags

The relationship between client and coach must be based upon mutual respect, honesty, and trust. When even one of these characteristics is missing or thin, beware of what can evolve. But other “givens” have to be part of the picture too: coach competence, clear focus, good process, and sound purpose. If you’re feeling uneasy and/or questioning whether or not you should continue the relationship with your coach, the problem may very well lie with one or more of the following:

① Your coach is blurring the lines between his/her coaching business and other businesses he/she runs.

Recently somebody told me that she left a coaching relationship primarily because she felt like the coach was only using her to build a second data base. “The coach also had a skincare business and was looking for more customers to buy those products. In fact, she used to discuss the face creams with me during our coaching sessions,” the woman said painfully. “I didn’t know how to tell her that I wasn’t interested in them.” Embarrassed and frustrated, this client quit the coaching. The worst part? She fears another relationship as a result of the previous coach’s poor judgment. She also feels like someone has taken advantage of her during a vulnerable time in her life.

Credible coaches devote all sessions exclusively to coaching. They don’t confuse their clients about what is to be occurring during that sacred time. Further, they don’t make the sessions about them; they make the sessions about the client.

② Your coach appears to be incompetent.

People have shared with me that they often feel as if their coach has little or no idea what to do with them. Sessions come and go, and they spin their wheels. Progress eludes them. They stay locked in a stuck position but don’t understand why.

If you’re working with a coach who fails to guide you to new insights, to ask bold, probing questions, to explore fresh angles of an old issue, then you’re not going to move forward. It’s that simple. Perhaps your coach doesn’t know how to coach. Sound silly? I think this may be more common than we want to believe. Just because a person labels herself/himself a coach doesn’t mean she/he truly grasps what has to happen in the coaching relationship.

Credible coaches seek formal training, even certification. Credible coaches welcome continuing education, peer mentoring, and mastermind group sharing. Credible coaches serve as catalysts for change in their clients’ lives, refusing to accept stagnation.

③ Your coach tears you down while pushing you to grow.

A distraught middle aged executive recounted her current experience to me: in essence her male coach reduces her to tears by the end of each session. He has gone to great lengths to show her why her methods don’t work, why her opinions are wrong, why she isn’t going to succeed. Rather than creating a partnership, their relationship has taken the form of adversary. One upmanship. Right versus wrong. In a few months he has ripped her apart at the seams.

Credible coaching doesn’t tear clients down in the name of fostering growth. It builds them up. It builds them up while it facilitates necessary change. Credible coaching constantly and artfully sets the stage for the next phase of the client’s journey. It isn’t about making clients feel inadequate. The executive in this vignette said she has lost much of her confidence. Burdened by self doubt, she has wondered if she should remain in her professional position. She has minimized her skills, experience, and value.

④ Your coach lacks clear and correct focus.

What does this mean? Quite simply, the focus means YOU. You and your agenda. Your needs, goals, and dreams. The focus in coaching sessions is not the coach.

Although occasionally coaches may use self disclosure as a tool to help clients see certain truths or realities, they must not dominate sessions by spinning long personal narratives that overshadow client issues, drain their energy, and rob them of time. It is inappropriate for coaches to use coaching sessions as a stage to feature themselves. When coaches do this, they need their own coach or perhaps a therapist. And they need you to tell them that you are finished putting up with the situation.

Credible coaches show you that YOU are the most important person to them at the moment. They listen intently, ask clarifying and bold questions, and bring you to a new place after every encounter. Watch for the take-aways. If you’re not getting those new perspectives, new strategies, and new possibilities by the time you hang up the phone, you probably should shop for another coach.

⑤ Your coach abuses you.

While most coaches demonstrate that they truly have their clients’ best interests at heart, some coaches utilize tactics that can only be termed abusive. Shocking? Not when you consider the more subtle forms abuse can take: countering, control, discounting, insensitive jokes, blaming, judging, criticizing, trivializing, ordering, and inappropriate anger.

The coach who minimizes your thoughts and feelings...the coach who refuses to empathize...the coach who makes you wrong every time...who criticizes your ideas...who perpetually takes the opposite view...who tells you directly or implies that what you feel can’t be right...is a coach who is harming you, perhaps without you realizing the damage being done. You may sense that something is “off”. You may feel uncomfortable. You may dread your next session. But you may not know exactly what’s happening. Such ignorance can hurt you. *Such relationships need to end.*

If you are experiencing any of the aforementioned situations, cut the coaching. You deserve more and better. Remember: you are purchasing a service through which you bare your soul in order to reach new heights. Suffering due to incompetence, line blurring, shredding, unclear focus, and abuse isn’t going to get you where you want to go.

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