

THE



PEAK OF SUCCESS

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NEWSLETTER

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“What Is A Coach Anyway?”

I have been ignoring the issue of just anyone calling themselves a coach for a long time now. Oh, yes, I grumble about it and tell my “inner circle” about my feelings, but I have just figured that it would look a little self-serving to “go off” about it publically. Now, however, I must speak up. I was checking out one of the social network sites when I came across the name of someone I happen to know. She used to be in real estate, and shockingly, now calls herself a personal and business coach. I was absolutely dumbfounded. This person has no coaching qualifications whatsoever. How could this be happening? Okay, there are no real official requirements or government licensing. Even the title “Certified Coach” is bestowed by an organization that is “of the coaches,

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by the coaches and for the coaches” in a self-regulating fashion. But, come on. Those of us who know, know that an unqualified coach can be dangerous. A person working with your motivations, change processes, and other inner details should have a background in mental health. Now maybe some of you think there is a stigma attached to mental health and therefore do not want to be seen cavorting with those of us in the business. But people should not look askance at the quest for mental *health*. Mental and emotional *dysfunction* will naturally call negative attention to those who display them. And mental and

emotional dysfunction is exactly what can happen when the wrong people give advice and coaching. So, how do some of these people come to be coaches? Some of them purchase a package from a national company that purports to train them in coaching. I call these people “coaches in a box.” There are people out there who are trained in nutrition and exercise science who claim to be able to do “stress management.” Just because stress is a modern day buzz word does not make it any less of a real psychological issue. Some others write books about “secrets” that are only secrets to uneducated people. Those of us who have made a point of studying human potential and positive psychology know better. We know that achieving excellence and fulfilling one’s potential are much more complicated than some “secret” or some simple-minded advice to “be happy.” Real experts know there are good reasons we were required to go to school 4-8 years beyond high school. Many people who served for years as managers in a company believe that this qualifies them to coach others. Even if they were really good managers, all their experience really qualified them to

PEAK TIP

It is great to “like” the people that you choose to work with and it is fine if they are in your circle. Just be sure that they have real qualifications as well.

do was to help another person achieve a specific goal in a certain environment. The company most likely did not care about the rest of the employee’s life and problems, as a real, holistic coach must. Other so-called coaches just failed in some other business or got bored and became coaches because there is no legal certification required yet and they could operate under this unlicensed label. It is time for the public to get educated and stop this travesty. Much of the time, these posers can cruise by having just enough skills to

“pass” as competent, or they are lucky and don’t do too much damage, or their “mishaps” just crawl away in silence, the victims of low self-esteem and unassertiveness which have been further diminished. A real coach knows that life is not a list of *shoulds* or even of *hows*. Human motivation and positive change go much deeper than these two. The real issues are usually the *whys*, and getting at the whys takes real training. Furthermore, like it or not, to dig deep enough to get at a person’s whys, the coach needs to understand and be an expert in pathology. That might not be what most people want to hear and it may even make some uncomfortable, but it is true. If your coach cannot recognize trauma, cannot work with the misguided thinking and dim worldviews underlying anxiety disorders or depression, cannot see through the hollowness of a charming psychopath, then he or she can actually be dangerous. Coaching a person in certain directions when there is something else seriously wrong can cause more problems and set a person back very badly. It can be the equivalent of telling someone to “just work that sore leg and it will get better,” only to find that the leg is broken, or throwing a screaming child into the deep end of the pool to get them over a fear of swimming.

I actually met a man who had been a victim of violence and believed this qualified him to be a keynote speaker to audiences of rape victims. This man lacked the training and qualifications to have heard the term “abreaction.” Abreaction takes place when a person who has experienced trauma is re-triggered by something resembling or otherwise connecting with the trauma and then, in lay terms, “freaks out.” If this happens in the presence of untrained people, the trauma survivor’s progress is not just halted. He or she may deteriorate rapidly and seriously, and then have to fight just to regain basic emotional stability. And before you dismiss this point saying, “Oh, well, that just applies to trauma victims,” understand that trauma covers a lot of ground and a lot of people. It includes, but is not limited to, violent crime, war, neglect, car or work accidents, natural disasters, being the victim of or first-hand witness to physical, verbal, emotional or sexual abuse, coming from a very unstable home environment, and losing a loved one at a vulnerable point in one’s life. In very susceptible individuals, or those with very poor emotional support systems, we may see trauma-like responses to much less dramatic events. So if you are contemplating receiving coaching, please consider checking into the background of your coach. Ask if they have a background in mental health. And don’t

stop there. Have they actually practiced under the supervision of a psychologist or seasoned social worker? In other words, make sure that they did not just get a certificate from The Acme Academy of Coaching and then hang out a shingle. Being excellent at counseling and coaching takes many years of training *and* experience. And here is the real treat – many coaches who buy their experience from a box or who set up shop without the needed education charge an exorbitant amount per hour, while most of us who have our background in mental health charge less. I get a real “shudder” when I hear the term “Executive Coach.” As though coaching executives is any different from coaching anyone else. It makes them feel important and usually allows the coach to charge more money. My own motto is: “I know more and charge less.” To those of you who still insist on going with the sanitized coaches who don’t exude any odors of mental health, well, *Caveat emptor*, “Let the buyer beware.”

Amy Remmele is a personal and professional consultant, working with people who want to overcome the roadblocks to success. She has her formal education and degree in Psychology. Amy authored the book, Chief Life Officer: Your Life Is The Most Important Business You’ll Ever Own and co-authored Re-Phrase It: Adding Empathy and Emotional Intelligence to Your Everyday Life, and the relationship workbook, Empathy, Communication and Conflict Resolution Home Study Program with her husband and business partner, Dr. Kent Bath. Amy and Kent provide assessments, seminars, counseling and consultation to individuals and businesses. Amy can be reached at 716-626-5977 or visiting her website at www.peakofsuccess.com.

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