



THE
Heart & Soul ♥
OF A MENTOR COACH

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In setting high global standards for professional coaching, ICF's credentialing system requires each applicant to partner with a Mentor Coach. Mentor Coaches focus on applicants' coaching skills, rather than coaching them on practice building, life balance or other topics.

One of my greatest professional passions is partnering with professional coaches to enhance and expand their skills and expertise. Based on my experience as a coach, coach trainer and Mentor Coach since 1999 and a primary trainer of Mentor Coaches over the past half-decade, what follow are my observations about the background, traits and experiences I believe contribute to becoming an effective Mentor Coach.

The following are musts for coaches interested in providing services as a Mentor Coach:

- In-depth familiarity with and consistent personal application of the ICF Core Competency skills and behaviors.
- Staying abreast of current ICF Credentialing requirements and procedures.
- Maintaining a current ICF Credential at or above the level for which the potential coach-client is applying and sustaining a coaching practice that is a key contributor to revenue streams.
- Specialized Mentor Coach training, ICF assessor training and/or ACTP Mentor Coach training.

MENTOR COACHING RELATIONSHIP IN PRACTICE

ICF Mentor Coaching has a built-in, focused agenda that consists of continued professional development and demonstration of and alignment with ICF Core Competencies. Just as in a coaching relationship, the coach-client (i.e., the coach who is being coached) is responsible for identifying goals and measuring progress. The coach-client comes to the relationship ready to listen to and discuss feedback with the Mentor Coach and willing to sample mutually agreed-upon perspectives and approaches as a result of those dialogues.

My experience has shown that for optimal results, the coach-client and Mentor Coach should agree to interact as colleagues, co-creating a learning environment that best suits the coach-client's specific needs. This allows for a non-hierarchical relationship that nurtures the coach-client's expertise, artistry and unique expression as coach. (This approach aligns closely with the approach we engage in when working with regular coaching clients.) Within this intimate and nurturing learning laboratory, the Mentor Coach can support expansion of the coach-client's expertise through sharing his or her own knowledge and experience—being of service without being in the way.

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TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

The most effective Mentor Coaches bring broad-based coaching education and experience to their interactions with coach-clients. In my experience, successful Mentor Coaches' backgrounds usually include the following:

COACH TRAINING

A minimum of 200 coach-specific training hours encompassing beginning, middle and advanced courses from a variety of coaching programs and other aligned modalities.

Exposure to this level and variety of training provides a wide array of tools, models and approaches that can be used to broaden and deepen a coach-client's self-awareness. It also provides the Mentor Coach with adequate practice of their own coaching skill set so they can provide and model examples for coach-clients to experiment with.

CLIENT EXPERIENCE

A minimum of 350 to 550 client hours delivered with ongoing coaching clients over a minimum of three to five years.

This amount of hands-on experience in partnering with coaching clients provides the Mentor Coach with experience of a depth and breadth of client situations and personalities, providing a solid basis for being able to provide a bird's-eye view of possible interpersonal dynamics present in recorded coaching sessions submitted for review.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

Simply being a credentialed, experienced professional coach doesn't ensure efficacy as a Mentor Coach. A battery of personal traits and soft skills are at the heart and soul of the Mentor Coaching endeavor.

SELF-AWARENESS

Discerning when a personal bias might affect feedback; willingly informing the coach-client when a bias might be present; consciously setting aside bias in order to eliminate preconceptions and be fully present in the coaching conversation; recognizing when a coach-client's developmental needs go beyond the Mentor Coach's current expertise and notifying the coach-client of this concern.

DISCIPLINE

Giving focused attention to a coach-client's submitted coaching session; engaging in feedback sessions from within a centered, open-minded and clear space; readily engaging in a mutually exploratory dialogue with a coach-client.

RESPECTFUL HONESTY

Expressing directly what is observed in a coach-client's skill set while respecting the unique expression of that coach, especially as it relates to areas for continued development.

An effective Mentor Coach also advocates for the ICF Core Competencies as a focal point of professional development. Without a solid belief in the skills and behaviors as represented by the ICF Core Competencies as a paradigm and process for professional coaching, it's virtually impossible to support development of these skills in another coach.

SOFT SKILLS

LISTENING

Engaging with a submitted coaching conversation on multiple levels; paying attention to the coach's presence, the overall flow of the conversation between coach and client and the energetic shifts within the conversation that illuminate various choice points of exploration; listening actively to the coach-client during Mentor Coaching conversations.

EMPATHY

Experiencing, articulating and exploring the coach-client's perceived presence and energy at each point in a submitted coaching session; inhabiting the coach-client's skin in service of accessing broader perspectives and possibilities for exploration.

INTUITION

Noticing what factors might impact a coach's ability to be present, listen, question and directly communicate with their client; engaging the coach-client's intuitive knowing about their own process and state of being in a Mentor Coaching conversation.

FEEDBACK

Using neutral and nonjudgmental language; displaying non-attachment to being 'right;' providing respectful yet honest feedback on the coach-client's skills and behaviors relative to the ICF Core Competencies; delivering feedback from a collegial, mutual-learning approach that perceives the coach-client as whole, capable and resourceful.

SENSITIVITY

Acknowledging where coach-clients are in relation to their developmental experience level while compassionately drawing them forward from that place to their next level of expertise and artistry; recognizing, engaging with and exploring underlying emotions or messages in the coaching conversation or in a submitted coaching session.



It is my sincere hope that this perspective about the heart and soul of a Mentor Coach inspires your appreciation of this valuable role in professional development for yourself and your coach colleagues.



Amoráh Ross, MCC, CMC, launched her coaching practice in 1997 and brings a holistic and compassionate viewpoint to her students as well as to her coaching and Mentor Coaching clients. In 2008, she was the primary curriculum designer for the inviteCHANGE Mentor Coach Certification Program. She serves the coaching

profession as Director of Programs, Education and Credentialing for the ICF Washington State Charter Chapter, an ICF assessor, and a member of ICF's Global Standards Core Team. A senior faculty member since 1999 at inviteCHANGE, an ICF Accredited Coach Training Program, she was one of the first coaches in the world to be awarded a PCC credential, later obtaining her MCC in 2005. Find her online at **amorah.com** or email her at **amorah@amorah.com**.

For more information on the nuts and bolts of Mentor Coaching, see Amoráh's article, "Sharpening Your Saw," in the September 2012 issue of "Choice."