Co-Active Coaching: Changing Business, Transforming Lives

Whether or not coaching is a formal part of your everyday world, every one of us fills the role of coach in a variety of relationships throughout our lives. That said, every one of us can benefit by enlarging our coaching tool kit. To that end, enter *Co-Active Coaching: Changing Business, Transforming Lives*(by Henry Kimsey-House, Karen Kimsey-House, Phillip Sandahl, and Laura Whitworth). In this classic textbook on the topic of coaching the authors put forth their seasoned understanding of this ever-growing discipline: *We believe that coaching is chiefly about discovery, awareness, and choice. It is a way of effectively empowering people to find their own answers, encouraging and supporting them on the path as they continue to make important life-giving and life-changing choices.*

Since as a leader you are constantly coaching, this book will provide you with an unending resource of how maximize this vital role in the lives of those who look to you for leadership.Check out these Book Notes to see what awaits.

Title: **Co-Active Coaching:** *Changing Business, Transforming Lives*

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Book Description:

Co-Active Coaching *remains the 'bible of coaching guides.' Written with a powerful, distinctive approach, no other book gives you the tools, the skills, and the fundamentals needed to succeed in these delicate relationships.*— STEPHEN R. COVEY, best-selling author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*

Book Quotes:

We believe that coaching is chiefly about discovery, awareness, and choice. It is a way of effectively empowering people to find their own answers, encouraging and supporting them on the path as they continue to make important life-giving and life-changing choices. (xvi)

Co-Active coaching is a form of conversation with inherent ground rules regarding certain qualities that must be present: respect, openness, compassion, empathy, and a rigorous commitment to speaking the truth. (xvi)

A coach is someone who will absolutely tell the truth—the truth about where clients are strong, for example, and where they hold back and give up, deny, or rationalize. (xvii)

In Co-Active coaching, this is a relationship—in fact an alliance—between two equals for the purpose of meeting the coachee's needs. (3)

And so at one level, the client's action is always wrapped in these three core principles of fulfillment, balance, and process. (8)

1. Fulfillment: The coachee's definition of fulfillment is always intensely personal…It's not about what fills the client's pockets or closets—it's about what fills the client's heart and soul…At its deepest level, fulfillment is about finding and experiencing a life of purpose and service. It is about reaching one's full potential. (9)
2. Balance:Ultimately, balance is about making choices: saying yes to some things and no to others. (10)
3. Process:The coach's job is to notice, point out, and be with clients wherever they are in their process. The coach is there to encourage and support, provide companionship around the rocks, and escort clients through the dark waters as well as to celebrate their skill and success at navigating the difficult passages. (10)

The Five Contexts:

1. Listening – It is the listening for the meaning behind the story, for the underlying process, for the theme that will deepen the learning. The coach is listening for the appearance of the coachee's vision, values, purpose. The coach is also listening for resistance, fear, backtracking, and the voice of the saboteur, who is there to object to change, point out the client's shortcomings, and bring up all the reasons why this idea, whatever it is, won't work. (12)
2. Intuition – By listening below the surface, the coach finds the place where the hard data and soft data merge…Our culture doesn't validate intuition as a reliable means of drawing conclusions or making decisions, so we hesitate to say what our intuition tells us. We hold back because we don't want to appear foolish. And yet intuition is one of the most powerful gifts a coach brings to coaching. (12)
3. Curiosity – One of the fundamental tenets of Co-Active coaching is that clients are capable and resourceful and have the answers. The coach's job is to ask the questions, to lead the discovery process. (13)
4. Forward and Deepen – The outcome of the work that client and coach do together is both action and learning. These two forces, action and learning, combine to create charge…But coaching is not just about getting things done it is just as importantly about continuing to learn, especially to learn how the action is or is not contributing to the core principles. (13)
5. Self-Management -Self-management is the coach's ability to set aside personal opinions, preferences, pride, defensiveness, ego. The coach needs to be "over there" with the coachee, immersed in the coachee's situation and struggle, not "over here," dealing with the coach's own thoughts and judgments. (14)

The coach is a catalyst, an important element in the process of accelerating change. (14)

An effective coaching conversation gets to the heart of what matters. It is a focused, concentrated conversation designed to support the coachee in clarifying choices and making changes. (17)

In Co-Active coaching, we talk about two core characteristics of an effective coaching environment; it is safe enough for clients to take the risks they need to take, and two, it is a courageous place where clients are able to approach their lives and the choices they make with motivation, curiosity, and creativity. (17)

Truth telling refuses to sidestep or overlook: it boldly points out when the emperor is not wearing clothes. (19)

Ultimately, coaching is not about what the coach delivers but about what clients create. (20)

Coach and client work together to clarify the goals as well as develop strategies for achieving them. Just as important to achieving results is putting new practices in place. Eliminating life-draining habits while implementing sustaining, life-giving practices is another important focus of the coaching process. (25)

We can be pushed down the road by deadlines and expectations and to-do lists. We can be driven by the desire for money or accomplishment or by the promises we make. Or we can be pulled down the road by the gravitational force of a compelling vision, like water running downhill. You can feel the difference between these two forces: pushed or driven on one hand, or pulled irresistibly on the other. (25)

In order to achieve the results they want, clients very likely will need to change attitudes, paradigms, or underlying beliefs. (25)

Homeostasis, the natural tendency to keep things just as they are, is also inherent in the system. Every individual—whether a private client or one coached in an organizational setting—lives within a system, and the system itself often contributes to the resistance to change. (26)

At Level I, our awareness is on ourselves. We listen to the words of the other person, but our attention is on what it means to us personally…At Level I, there is only one question: *What does this mean to me?* (34)

At Level II, there is a sharp focus on the other person…When you, as a coach, are listening at Level II your awareness is totally on your clients. You listen for their words, their expressions, their emotions, everything they bring…Level II listening is the level of empathy, clarification, collaboration. (36)

When you listen at Level III, you listen as though you and the client were at the center of the universe, receiving information from everywhere at once…One of the benefits of learning to listen at Level III is greater access to your intuition. Through your intuition, you receive information that is not directly observable, and you use that information just as you'd use words coming from the client's mouth. (38)

Articulation is the ability to succinctly describe what is going on. Clients often can't see for themselves what they are doing or saying. Or perhaps they can see the details but not the bigger picture. With this skill, you share your observations as clearly as possible, but without judgment. (40)

Clarifying brings the image into sharp focus, adds detail and holds it up for inspection, so the client can say, "Yes! That's it!" It's a way to move past the fog and get back on course. (41)

Meta-view presents the big picture and opens up room for perspective. (42)

The skill of metaphor enables you to draw on imagery and experience to help the client comprehend faster and more easily. (43)

Speaking from your intuition is extraordinarily valuable in coaching. It is right up there with the ability to listen deeply and deftly. (48)

But instead of insisting that there is only one form of knowing, let's suppose there are two. Conventional,

observable knowing is one form; intuition is the second. Together these two dimensions give depth and perspective to any issue. (50)

As a context for coaching, curiosity may be the quality that starts the process and the energy that keeps it going…Curiosity starts with a question. (63)

In coaching, the ideal is to ask truly curious questions with a curious frame of mind…Curiosity invites the client to look for solutions. (65)

Curiosity builds relationships; interrogation builds defenses. In the coaching relationship, curiosity invites the client to search and reveal while permitting safe exploration. (66)

Being curious in coaching is two things: not being attached to a particular path or destination and yet always being intentional about seeking out meaning, uncovering important insight, discovering learning for the client. It is not aimless meandering. (66)

Powerful questions invite introspection, present additional solutions, and lead to greater creativity and insight…The simpler and more direct, the better, when it comes to making questions powerful. (72)

The most visible outcome of coaching is also the primary reason clients want coaching in the first place: action. Clients want change; they want to see results. (78)

In Co-Active coaching, we would say that a second, complementary, and just as important outcome is learning. (78)

From the client's perspective, the emphasis in the previous sentence would be on the words "action" and "learning." The coach, however, would focus on "forward" and "deepen." Action and learning are what the client experiences. Foward and deepen is the job of the coach. (78)

We would say that in the best coaching relationships, coaches bring their own 100 percent in four areas: authenticity, connection, aliveness, and courage.

1. Authenticity — In human terms, that means you, as the coach, must be yourself, authentically, so that the client can feel the honesty and integrity of who you are.
2. Connection –Part of the coach's job is to establish, monitor, and maintain the strongest possible connection signal with coachees.
3. Aliveness — We are referring instead to a feeling in the atmosphere between coach and client: it feels very alive.
4. Courage — This is a commitment to be fearless—to care more about the client's agenda than about being liked or winning approval. (79-81)

One of the defining qualities of coaching is that it creates accountability: a measuring tool for action and a means for reporting on learning. (82)

In the long run, it is more helpful for coaches to help clients (or their employees) find their own way and make their own choices. This puts the emphasis back on the person instead of the issue. (85)

Each of the following skills is designed to forward the action and deepen the learning.

- Goal Setting

- Brainstorming
- Requesting
- Challenging – A challenge asks clients to extend themselves beyond their self-imposed limits–way out to the edge of improbability. If the challenge is powerful enough, it should cause clients to sit up straight and exclaim, "No way." If that's the response, you know you're in the right territory. (86-91)

Self-management is about recognizing these are uncomfortable issues for you but then exploring them anyway for the sake of your clients. You must be willing to coach outside your comfort zone. (99)

Self-management is about recognizing the self-judgment going on inside your brain and knowing the difference between constructive analysis and self-destructive chatter. (99)

A number of coaching skills are generally associated with self-management.

- Recovery — Clearly, the most obvious skill for this context is the skill of recovery: the ability to notice the disruption or disconnection and to reconnect.
- Asking Permission –"Can I tell you what I see?"…Clients are honored when you ask permission; their boundaries are respected.
- Bottom-Lining — Bottom-lining is the skill of getting to the point and asking the client to get to the point, too.
- Championing — You champion clients by standing up for them when they question their abilities or their capacity to take on the task of challenge.
- Clearing — Clearing is that valuable skill of venting in order to become present and open to the coaching.
- Reframing — Your ability to reframe the experience provides a fresh perspective and a sense of renewed possibility.
- Making Distinctions (103-110)

Helping clients discover and clarify their values is a way to create a map that will guide them along the decision paths of their lives. (121)

Values are the qualities of a life lived fully from the inside out. (121)

Values are either present in or absent from the choices clients make every day, which means that any given daily activity can be linked to a value honored or value betrayed. (123)

A life purpose statement is another way of capturing the essence of what it means to be fully alive—living life intentionally, making choices that increase the value of life to one's self and to others. (126)

In the big picture, fulfillment is about living a life that is valued, purposeful, and alive, and balance is about choosing a life that is in action, aligned with a compelling vision. (130)

Balance coaching is designed to restore flow, to get clients into action on today's issues in a way that brings them back into alignment and back in control of their own lives. (131)

A Formula for Balance Coaching

- *Step 1: Perspectives*
  - The first step in balance coaching is to identify the client's perspective and then expand the perspectives that are available…That's why balance coaching starts with seeing the limiting perspective and then naming it. Once we can name it, we can work with clients to develop alternative perspectives that are more resourceful and creative and will provide more action possibilities. (133)
- *Step 2: Choice*
  - In our formula, "choice" is more than deciding on a certain perspective. To be aware of choice is to be aware of the power of choosing. It is crucial that clients feel they are absolutely, unequivocally in charge of their choices. (135)
- *Step 3: Co-Active Strategy*
  - A Co-Active strategy recognizes that moving into action is more than just activity. A strategy in the Co-Active model includes the attitude and emotional state that motivates and supports action. (135)
- *Step 4: Commitment*
  - One of the core questions for coaches is *What is it that sustains change over time?…*People gain a mysterious strength and resolve when they make a commitment. (137)
- *Step 5: Action*
  - The action of coaching does not take place in the coaching session…The real action of coaching takes place in the client's life, in the action he takes—or doesn't take—between coaching sessions. (138)

Without accountability, coaching has not happened, even if coaching skills have been used. (153)

Clients set the agenda for the coaching relationship and each coaching session. That is their responsibility. (157)

It is the coach's responsibility to determine which coaching approach to take. (158)

In coaching, our primary responsibility is to help clients determine their best course of action and support them in staying on track, helping them uncover the learning for themselves so that they become more resourceful over time rather than more dependent on the coach for answers. As coaches, we are always empowering our clients. (158)

As coach, you are the model of courageous questioning. Part of your job is to be blunt, say the unpopular or even unreasonable thing, for the sake of clients reaching their potential, living their fulfilling life, however they define it. (161)