



BetterBalance Coaching Coaching Tool Kit

The I.C.F. codes of conduct and competencies



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The ICF CODE OF ETHICS

Part One: The ICF Philosophy of Coaching

The International Coach Federation adheres to a form of coaching that honours the client as the expert in his/her life and work and believes that every client is creative, resourceful, and whole. Standing on this foundation, the coach's responsibility is to:

- Discover, clarify, and align with what the client wants to achieve
- Encourage client self-discovery
- Elicit client-generated solutions and strategies
- Hold the client responsible and accountable

Part Two: The ICF Definition of Coaching

Professional Coaching is an ongoing professional relationship that helps people produce extraordinary results in their lives, careers, businesses or organizations. Through the process of coaching, clients deepen their learning, improve their performance, and enhance their quality of life. In each meeting, the client chooses the focus of conversation, while the coach listens and contributes observations and questions. This interaction creates clarity and moves the client into action. Coaching accelerates the client's progress by providing greater focus and awareness of choice. Coaching concentrates on where clients are now and what they are willing to do to get where they want to be in the future. ICF member coaches and ICF credentialed coaches recognize that results are a matter of the client's intentions, choices and actions, supported by the coach's efforts and application of the coaching process

Part Three: The ICF Standards of Ethical Conduct

Professional Conduct At Large

As a coach:

- 1) I will conduct myself in a manner that reflects positively upon the coaching profession and I will refrain from engaging in conduct or making statements that may negatively impact the public's understanding or acceptance of coaching as a profession.
- 2) I will not knowingly make any public statements that are untrue or misleading, or make false claims in any written documents relating to the coaching profession.
- 3) I will respect different approaches to coaching. I will honour the efforts and contributions of others and not misrepresent them as my own.
- 4) I will be aware of any issues that may potentially lead to the misuse of my influence by recognizing the nature of coaching and the way in which it may affect the lives of others.
- 5) I will at all times strive to recognize personal issues that may impair, conflict or interfere with my coaching performance or my professional relationships. Whenever the facts and circumstances necessitate, I will promptly seek professional assistance and determine the action to be taken, including whether it is appropriate to suspend or terminate my coaching relationship(s).



6) As a trainer or supervisor of current and potential coaches, I will conduct myself in accordance with the ICF Code of Ethics in all training and supervisory situations.

7) I will conduct and report research with competence, honesty and within recognized scientific standards. My research will be carried out with the necessary approval or consent from those involved, and with an approach that will reasonably protect participants from any potential harm. All research efforts will be performed in a manner that complies with the laws of the country in which the research is conducted.

8) I will accurately create, maintain, store and dispose of any records of work done in relation to the practice of coaching in a way that promotes confidentiality and complies with any applicable laws.

9) I will use ICF member contact information (email addresses, telephone numbers, etc.) only in the manner and to the extent authorized by the ICF.

Professional Conduct With Clients

10) I will be responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries that govern any physical contact that I may have with my clients.

11) I will not become sexually involved with any of my clients.

12) I will construct clear agreements with my clients, and will honour all agreements made in the context of professional coaching relationships.

13) I will ensure that, prior to or at the initial session, my coaching client understands the nature of coaching, the bounds of confidentiality, financial arrangements and other terms of the coaching agreement.

14) I will accurately identify my qualifications, expertise and experience as a coach.

15) I will not intentionally mislead or make false claims about what my client will receive from the coaching process or from me as their coach.

16) I will not give my clients or prospective clients information or advice I know or believe to be misleading.

17) I will not knowingly exploit any aspect of the coach-client relationship for my personal, professional or monetary advantage or benefit.

18) I will respect the client's right to terminate coaching at any point during the process. I will be alert to indications that the client is no longer benefiting from our coaching relationship.

19) If I believe the client would be better served by another coach, or by another resource, I will encourage the client to make a change.

20) I will suggest that my clients seek the services of other professionals when deemed appropriate or necessary.

21) I will take all reasonable steps to notify the appropriate authorities in the event a client discloses



an intention to endanger self or others.

Confidentiality/Privacy

22) I will respect the confidentiality of my client's information, except as otherwise authorized by my client, or as required by law.

23) I will obtain agreement from my clients before releasing their names as clients or references, or any other client identifying information.

24) I will obtain agreement from the person being coached before releasing information to another person compensating me.

Conflicts of Interest

25) I will seek to avoid conflicts between my interests and the interests of my clients.

26) Whenever any actual conflict of interest or the potential for a conflict of interest arises, I will openly disclose it and fully discuss with my client how to deal with it in whatever way best serves my client.

27) I will disclose to my client all anticipated compensation from third parties that I may receive for referrals of that client.

28) I will only barter for services, goods or other non-monetary remuneration when it will not impair the coaching relationship.

Part Four: The ICF Pledge of Ethics

As a professional coach, I acknowledge and agree to honour my ethical obligations to my coaching clients and colleagues and to the public at large. I pledge to comply with the ICF Code of Ethics, to treat people with dignity as independent and equal human beings, and to model these standards with those whom I coach. If I breach this Pledge of Ethics or any part of the ICF Code of Ethics, I agree that the ICF in its sole discretion may hold me accountable for so doing. I further agree that my accountability to the ICF for any breach may include loss of my ICF membership and/or my ICF credentials.



ICF PROFESSIONAL COACHING CORE COMPETENCIES

A. SETTING THE FOUNDATION

1. **Meeting Ethical Guidelines and Professional Standards** – Understanding of coaching ethics and standards and ability to apply them appropriately in all coaching situations
 - a. Understands and exhibits in own behaviours the ICF Standards of Conduct (see list)
 - b. *Understands and follows all ICF Ethical Guidelines (see list)*
 - c. *Clearly communicates the distinctions between coaching, consulting, psychotherapy and other support professions*
 - d. *Refers client to another support professional as needed, knowing when this is needed and the available resources*
2. **Establishing the Coaching Agreement** – Ability to understand what is required in the specific coaching interaction and to come to agreement with the prospective and new client about the coaching process and relationship
 - a. *Understands and effectively discusses with the client the guidelines and specific parameters of the coaching relationship (e.g., logistics, fees, scheduling, inclusion of others if appropriate)*
 - b. *Reaches agreement about what is appropriate in the relationship and what is not, what is and is not being offered, and about the client's and coach's responsibilities*
 - c. *Determines whether there is an effective match between his/her coaching method and the needs of the prospective client*

B. CO-CREATING THE RELATIONSHIP

3. **Establishing Trust and Intimacy with the Client** – Ability to create a safe, supportive environment that produces ongoing mutual respect and trust
 - a. Shows genuine concern for the client's welfare and future
 - b. Continuously demonstrates personal integrity, honesty and sincerity
 - c. Establishes clear agreements and keeps promises
 - d. Demonstrates respect for client's perceptions, learning style, personal being
 - e. Provides ongoing support for and champions new behaviours and actions, including those involving risk taking and fear of failure
 - f. *Asks permission to coach client in sensitive, new areas*
4. **Coaching Presence** – Ability to be fully conscious and create spontaneous relationship with the client, employing a style that is open, flexible and confident
 - a. Is present and flexible during the coaching process, dancing in the moment
 - b. Accesses own intuition and trusts one's inner knowing – "goes with the gut"
 - c. Is open to not knowing and takes risks
 - d. Sees many ways to work with the client, and chooses in the moment what is most effective
 - e. Uses humour effectively to create lightness and energy
 - f. *Confidently shifts perspectives and experiments with new possibilities for own action*
 - g. *Demonstrates confidence in working with strong emotions, and can self-manage and not be overpowered or enmeshed by client's emotions*

C. COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

5. **Active Listening** – Ability to focus completely on what the client is saying and is not saying, to understand the meaning of what is said in the context of the client's desires, and to support client self-expression
 - a. Attends to the client and the client's agenda, and not to the coach's agenda for the client
 - b. Hears the client's concerns, goals, values and beliefs about what is and is not possible
 - c. Distinguishes between the words, the tone of voice, and the body language
 - d. Summarizes, paraphrases, reiterates, mirrors back what client has said to ensure clarity and understanding
 - e. Encourages, accepts, explores and reinforces the client's expression of feelings, perceptions,



concerns, beliefs, suggestions, etc.

f. Integrates and builds on client's ideas and suggestions

g. *"Bottom-lines" or understands the essence of the client's communication and helps the client get there rather than engaging in long descriptive stories*

h. *Allows the client to vent or "clear" the situation without judgment or attachment in order to move on to next steps*

6. Powerful Questioning – Ability to ask questions that reveal the information needed for maximum benefit to the coaching relationship and the client

a. Asks questions that reflect active listening and an understanding of the client's perspective

b. Asks questions that evoke discovery, insight, commitment or action (e.g., those that challenge the client's assumptions)

c. Asks open-ended questions that create greater clarity, possibility or new learning

d. Asks questions that move the client towards what they desire, not questions that ask for the client to justify or look backwards

7. Direct Communication – Ability to communicate effectively during coaching sessions, and to use language that has the greatest positive impact on the client

a. Is clear, articulate and direct in sharing and providing feedback

b. Reframes and articulates to help the client understand from another perspective what he/she wants or is uncertain about

c. Clearly states coaching objectives, meeting agenda, purpose of techniques or exercises

d. Uses language appropriate and respectful to the client (e.g., non-sexist, non-racist, non-technical, nonjargon)

e. *Uses metaphor and analogy to help to illustrate a point or paint a verbal picture*

D. FACILITATING LEARNING AND RESULTS

8. Creating Awareness – Ability to integrate and accurately evaluate multiple sources of information, and to make interpretations that help the client to gain awareness and thereby achieve agreed-upon results

a. Goes beyond what is said in assessing client's concerns, not getting hooked by the client's description

b. Invokes inquiry for greater understanding, awareness and clarity

c. Identifies for the client his/her underlying concerns, typical and fixed ways of perceiving himself/herself and the world, differences between the facts and the interpretation, disparities between thoughts, feelings and action

d. Helps clients to discover for themselves the new thoughts, beliefs, perceptions, emotions, moods, etc. that strengthen their ability to take action and achieve what is important to them

e. Communicates broader perspectives to clients and inspires commitment to shift their viewpoints and find new possibilities for action

f. Helps clients to see the different, interrelated factors that affect them and their behaviours (e.g., thoughts, emotions, body, background)

g. Expresses insights to clients in ways that are useful and meaningful for the client

h. *Identifies major strengths vs. major areas for learning and growth, and what is most important to address during coaching*

i. *Asks the client to distinguish between trivial and significant issues, situational vs. recurring behaviours, when detecting a separation between what is being stated and what is being done*

9. Designing Actions – Ability to create with the client opportunities for ongoing learning, during coaching and in work/life situations, and for taking new actions that will most effectively lead to agreed-upon coaching results

a. Brainstorms and assists the client to define actions that will enable the client to demonstrate, practice and deepen new learning

b. Helps the client to focus on and systematically explore specific concerns and opportunities that are central to agreed-upon coaching goals



c. Engages the client to explore alternative ideas and solutions, to evaluate options, and to make related decisions

d. Promotes active experimentation and self-discovery, where the client applies what has been discussed and learned during sessions immediately afterwards in his/her work or life setting

e. Celebrates client successes and capabilities for future growth

f. *Challenges client's assumptions and perspectives to provoke new ideas and find new possibilities for action*

g. *Advocates or brings forward points of view that are aligned with client goals and, without attachment, engages the client to consider them*

h. *Helps the client "Do It Now" during the coaching session, providing immediate support*

i. *Encourages stretches and challenges but also a comfortable pace of learning*

10. Planning and Goal Setting – Ability to develop and maintain an effective coaching plan with the client

a. Consolidates collected information and establishes a coaching plan and development goals with the client that address concerns and major areas for learning and development

b. Creates a plan with results that are attainable, measurable, specific and have target dates

c. Makes plan adjustments as warranted by the coaching process and by changes in the situation

d. *Helps the client identify and access different resources for learning (e.g., books, other professionals)*

e. *Identifies and targets early successes that are important to the client*

11. Managing Progress and Accountability – Ability to hold attention on what is important for the client, and to leave responsibility with the client to take action

a. Clearly requests of the client actions that will move the client toward their stated goals

b. Demonstrates follow through by asking the client about those actions that the client committed to during the previous session(s)

c. Acknowledges the client for what they have done, not done, learned or become aware of since the previous coaching session(s)

d. Effectively prepares, organizes and reviews with client information obtained during sessions

e. *Keeps the client on track between sessions by holding attention on the coaching plan and outcomes, agreed-upon courses of action, and topics for future session(s)*

f. *Focuses on the coaching plan but is also open to adjusting behaviours and actions based on the coaching process and shifts in direction during sessions*

g. *Is able to move back and forth between the big picture of where the client is heading, setting a context for what is being discussed and where the client wishes to go*

h. *Promotes client's self-discipline and holds the client accountable for what they say they are going to do, for the results of an intended action, or for a specific plan with related time frames*

i. *Develops the client's ability to make decisions, address key concerns, and develop himself/herself (to get feedback, to determine priorities and set the pace of learning, to reflect on and learn from experiences)*

j. *Positively confronts the client with the fact that he/she did not take agreed-upon actions*