

Health and Wellness Coaching Code of Ethics

The present code of ethics expresses the general meaning and the principles that each person personally commits to respect within the framework of their commitment as health and well-being coaches to their clients. It is based on all the shared professional rules of coaching, and the commitments of each coach towards their respective professional federations.

This code is a guide that brings together the good practices and ethical requirements of coaching sick people and is not a binding legal document. Its purpose is not only to establish rules protecting the coachee but also to constitute a reference text of coaching practices that the coach can communicate to the coachee and his environment.

Beyond that, this code settles the work of health and wellness coaching in relation to that of health professionals, in a complementarity, respectful for each person's skills.

Definitions and basic principles

The practices of health and wellness coaching bring together and combine the ethical rules and professional standards of coaching by integrating requirements and issues related to health and wellness, with particular attention to never interfere in the medical field.

A definition of health

For the practice of health and wellness coaching, the definition of health used is that of Huber M et al, "Health: How should we define it?" published in the BMJ 2011; 343:235-7: "Health is the ability to adapt and take charge of oneself in the face of physical, emotional and social problems. »

This definition provides a framework for health coaching actions and specifies its key points:

- a global or holistic approach to health (physical, mental and social) that aims to restore and develop the individual's well-being.
- a personalized approach that takes into account the unique profile of the individual, with his or her own history, needs and personal goals.
- a participatory approach in which the individual becomes an actor in his or her own health, exercises his or her own power over his or her health, and develops the capacity for resilience to face life's difficulties.
- a dynamic approach that involves changes in lifestyles and whose evolutions are measurable on external/objective (biological and physical) and internal/subjective (well-being) criteria.

The goals of health and wellness coaching

The goals of health coaching fall on the one hand within the framework of professional coaching, and on the other hand within the definition of health (see previous paragraph) and in its non-medical aspects.

Health coaching works towards an improvement of the clients' well-being and health.

It aims at the acquisition of balance, physical, mental and emotional coherence. This balance implies the development of levels of consciousness and ways of thinking that are consistent with the clients'

goals and values and that respect their safety and integrity. These new ways of thinking will enable autonomous and sustainable changes in the client's lifestyles.

The individual coaching objectives are defined and declined according to the needs expressed by the coachee and attainable in a progressive context related to the disease and its management. These elements are considered when defining the objectives and will be re-evaluated to adapt to the context of the coachee.

Intervention frameworks for health and wellness coaching:

A relational framework: in the course of their activity, health and wellness coaches demonstrate unconditional respect and kindness towards their clients, an absence of judgment, and a belief in their ability to change.

A framework for change: Health and wellness coaches recognize that each client is an expert in his or her own life, that each client can play an active role and be an actor in achieving health and life goals. In the context of health, this fundamental notion mirrors the so-called empowerment approach, which aims to enable sick people to acquire and maintain control over the events that concern them, to be autonomous in their personal choices.

A framework of guidance and not of advice: the coach intervenes to accompany his client in his approach to change, in a framework of guidance and not advice. The health coach is part of this practice.

A deontological framework: the practice of health and wellness coaching is codified, the coach does not intervene in the medical field (execution of a diagnosis, a medical act or a treatment). Coaching is complementary to medical care. The coach makes sure that the coachee has a medical care during the exchanges prior to the signing of the contract.

A contractual framework: the contractual agreement clearly establishes the rights, roles and responsibilities of the client and the sponsor (if they are different people). It also specifies the duration of the contract, rates and remedies for each party.

Stakeholders in health coaching

The parties involved in health coaching described below operate within a contractual and relational framework:

A health and wellness coach (also referred to below as a "Coach") is a professional coach who wishes to specialize in the accompaniment of health problems, not related to the medical field. The health and wellness coach is one who has benefited from a double recognition of his skills: those of his coaching skills, and those of his skills to accompany health problems. At the end of a specific training including an evaluation of his professional skills, and a commitment to respect the following Code of Ethics, he receives a professional certification as a health and wellness coach.

The coach practices while always being aware of his responsibility towards the coachee. The coach's intention is active and when faced with a problem, he is vigilant and knows that it is better to refrain from doing something or even better to do nothing at all than to risk doing more harm than good.

The coach practices always being aware of his responsibility towards the coachee. He is vigilant to remain within his field of competence. In case of doubt, he is careful and he takes care in priority to be useful and not to harm.

The client: the "client" is the person(s) being coached. He can also be referred to as the "person to be coached" or "patient" in the medical field. The client can be a sick person seeking to improve his or her well-being, or a healthy person wishing to develop new levels of well-being.

The sponsor: the sponsor is the entity (including its representatives) that funds health and wellness coaching or sponsors the delivery of coaching services. In all cases, a contractual agreement clearly establishes the rights, roles and responsibilities of the client and the sponsor if they are different people.

A professional organisation: as soon as a sufficient number of coaches are certified, a professional organisation will be created in order to ensure, in particular, the respect of the professional rules in case of breach of these rules.

The professional practices of the health coach

In his professional practice, the health and wellness coach:

- expresses himself ethically about what he knows about the potential value of the coaching process or about himself as a coach, health professionals or other health coaches.
- clearly explains to any sponsor, client, health professional, what health coaching is, the activities that fall within his or her scope of practice, and the results that can reasonably be expected.
- takes responsibility for establishing clear, appropriate and culturally sensitive boundaries in the interactions, physical or otherwise, that he or she may have with clients or sponsors.
- respects the client's right to terminate the coaching relationship at any time during the process, subject to the provisions of the agreement.
- remains attentive to signs of a change in the value received from the coaching relationship.
- strives to protect the health, safety and well-being of the client.

The limits of the coach's intervention

Health coaching is not a medical act.

The coach scrupulously respects his territory of intervention without going into the field of medical care. The coach commits himself never to give any advice or counselling about the disease itself. He does not intervene in the patient/healthcare professional relationship. Otherwise, the non-physician may be sought for illegal practice of medicine under Article 4161-1 of the Public Health Code.

Referral to qualified professionals

If he is solicited beyond the scope of coaching, the health coach will make sure to reposition the field of his intervention. He may be led to direct the coachee towards qualified professionals. This orientation cannot include any recommendation to a named professional.

The coach takes care to avoid any existing or potential conflict of interest, to openly disclose such a conflict should it occur and to offer to withdraw in such a situation.

Exchanges with health professionals

The health coach recognizes and values among his clients the multiple contributions and benefits of modern medicine as a whole and its major impact on health.

Coaching is complementary to medical care.

As such, the health and wellness coach clearly commits the coachee to inform his health professional of the coaching in progress. Although this approach is recommended, the coachee is responsible for informing the health professional(s) who treat(s) him/her, he/she makes his/her own decision.

Clearly this informing of the Medical Professional can occur after the beginning of the work and at any stage of coaching and as the condition of the coachee evolves.

Confidentiality of information acquired during coaching

The information exchanged during coaching is confidential whether it concerns health or any other area.

In accordance with articles 34 and 35 of the modified law of January 6, 1978 relating to data processing, information files and freedoms as well as articles 32 to 35 of the general regulations of data protection of April 27, 2016, the coach commits himself taking all precautions in accordance with the usage and the state of the art within the framework of coaching in order to protect the confidentiality of the information to which the coach has access and to prevent that such are communicated to persons not expressly authorized to receive this information.

He or she agrees to maintain, store and destroy all records, including electronic files and communications, created during these coaching engagements in a manner that promotes confidentiality, security and privacy and complies with all applicable laws and agreements.

The coach also undertakes not to use the information for his or her own benefit, particularly when it comes from fragile persons, nor to take undue advantage of the state of health of the coachee.

Commitment to Continuing Professional Development

The health coach engages in a process of continuous training:

- He is regularly trained on new models or tools that can enrich his practice as a health coach and contribute to the improvement of practices.
- He is informed of new scientific data and publications on health coaching or on the evolution of competencies in health coaching.
- He participates by various means (association, information gathering, publications...etc.) in the promotion of the profession of health coach.

The commitments of the health and wellness coach

The health and wellness coaches are bound by this code of ethics, which is specific to them and which they undertake to respect.

Prerequisites for the implementation of coaching

The coach commits himself to clearly explain the framework of his intervention as defined in this document.

He makes sure that the coachee is well medically monitored and reserves the right to interrupt the coaching if he considers that the conditions are not met for the coaching to take place in favourable conditions.

He ensures, before the coaching begins, that his client and sponsors understand the nature of health and wellness coaching, the duration of the coaching, its limits, the rules of confidentiality, the roles,

responsibilities and rights of all parties involved, the financial terms and any other conditions of the coaching agreement.

Signing a coaching agreement

The health coach formalizes his coaching relationship by signing a contract to which the above code of ethics is attached.

The framework of application of the code of ethics

The commitment to this code of ethics applies to the trainee during his or her training and then to the health coach during his or her professional practice.

The regulation of this code of ethics will be ensured by the future association of health coaches which will be created after the certification of the first class of health coaches.

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