

Decision Making Coaching Processes in Health and Wellness Coaching



Sometimes we feel like we *have to* make a decision even though we're not happy with either choice, or that circumstances are forcing us into a decision that we don't feel ready to make. This leaves us feeling completely *stuck*. Sometimes we ruminate endlessly over possible options without closure or simply decide not to decide. Body-centered coaching provides the opportunity to get off one's head and to use the body to access a deeper and more quiet inner knowing. These processes help clients to arrive at a decision that is congruent and sustainable. This experience equips the client with an ongoing structure for tapping into their own inner guidance in the future.

Moving through Stages of Readiness for Change

Facilitating Movement through the Contemplation Stage of Change to the Preparation Stage of Change or the Preparation Stage of Change to the Action Stage of Change

James Prochaska describes the primary challenge for individuals who are in the Contemplation stage from moving into the Preparation stage of change because of "doubt and delay". Often, they have as many reasons for change as they have against it and they become trapped in their own ambivalence.

He describes the primary challenge for individuals who are in the Preparation stage of change from moving into the Action stage of change as a "dread of failure". This fear can have the impact of keeping people in a state of 'forever preparing'.

Employing one of the 3 processes for body-centered decision-making can actually provide clients with a felt sense of what it would be like to step into the next stage, without any requirement to commit to a decision. The processes remove the element of doubt and fear - and simply allow the client to test the water. It can also facilitate awareness of something that may need to be addressed before they can make a decision (i.e., a disempowering belief, challenging the "cons" of change or more exploration of the 'pros' for change). This can facilitate a clearer path towards forward movement.

- **Making a Mindset Shift**

On a recent coaching call, a coach explored in-depth with his client her well life vision and what all the pieces on her vision board represented to her. Her expression, tone and energy lit up as she described her board and what she would be doing – running again after several years of orthopedic surgeries and recovery. He asked her what she saw as her biggest challenge to arrive at her vision. She stated that it was her mindset. Upon further exploration, she described not being able to connect with the joyful feeling that she knew running gave her in the past. They experimented with the body-centered coaching strategy: *Stepping over the Line* which helped the client to investigate what she might need to let go of to move forward. She discovered that it was her fear of failure. This process allowed her to take a deeper dive into her fear and its purpose. She became acutely aware that she no longer needed that fear to protect her. This new awareness allowed her to re-connect with the joy she had felt in running. This was the motivation to work with a trainer who helped her begin to run again.

Deciding on a Goal or a Course of Action when a client is considering several options

- **A decision on when to have surgery**

My client was trying to decide when to schedule joint surgery. On the one hand she wanted it right away because of the pain she was experiencing. And on the other hand, she was thinking about work and feeling a sense of responsibility to complete current projects and worrying about what she needed to put in place for post-surgery recovery. As she considered several options (do it now, do it in 2 months, do it in 6 months) over and over, she found herself stuck on a merry-go-round of indecision and frustration while experiencing increasing physical pain. When she had an opportunity to explore each option without the pressure of having to make a decision, she became completely clear which path would serve her best. From there she was able to make a realistic plan and set a date for the surgery.

- **Resisting a feeling of being compelled to change and finding a self-directed path**

This client was ‘incented’ by her company to participate in a smoking cessation program. She knew she *should* stop smoking, but wasn’t ready to begin that process, which led to resentment towards the company for “trying to control my behavior.” She was scared that if she didn’t comply, there might be serious repercussions. She ruminated on worse case possibilities. After airing her fears and concerns with her coach, she was able to identify two other areas in her life that she did feel more ready to address. She was concerned that these areas did not seem related to smoking or getting her any closer to smoking cessation. Using a body centered coaching decision-making process to explore these two options, she became aware that addressing one of these two areas was on her critical path to smoking cessation. Now she had a sense of clarity, commitment, and empowerment. She was able to partake in the smoking cessation program without fear or resentment. Over time she was able to achieve the goals she needed to achieve before she could stop smoking and then embarked on a smoking cessation plan of her own making.

Making a difficult but critical decision that may impact the client's well-being and/or health

- **Deciding if/when/how to connect with children and grandchildren during the code of a pandemic**

During the first year of the COVID pandemic a coach who is a parent and a grandparent found herself in the position of having to make a heart wrenching decision whether or not she would see her grandchildren as winter approached. During the warm summer months, she and her husband had continued to see the grandkids every week because they could get together out-of-doors, wear masks and practice social distancing. But as Autumn and Winter approached, she and her husband had serious concerns for their own health and questioned whether they should continue to see their young grandchildren indoors, especially knowing that the kids were back at school and highly exposed to the possibility of getting COVID. She felt devastated at the thought of not seeing her grandchildren who were growing and changing so fast. She was equally concerned about the health risk to herself and her husband. After using a body-centered coaching strategy to explore 3 options, she was completely clear. The option that had a big "should" attached to it (and the one she felt sure she would select) fell away completely. Of the two other options, she realized she did not need to make a one-time final decision, but rather could decide on a weekly basis. She felt immense relief and at the same time total surprise about the clarity, decisiveness, and self-permission she experienced using this approach.

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