

How to be your own Life-Coach

by Alison Waines

When we start to engage with our own 'inner Life-Coach', we can gain a fresh perspective that is both SUPPORTIVE and CHALLENGING (which is what a good Life-Coach should be!)

Whatever problem you're facing or whether you're just feeling low, you can open up a dialogue with our inner Coach and gain new insights you never knew you had. You just need to imagine you're encouraging a friend - there's nothing new in that - we've ALL listened and been supportive to someone at some point - helping them to work something through in their own time. This time you're doing it for yourself.

How does it help?

Getting in touch with your own Life-Coach helps you, by allowing you:

- to step back a bit and see the situation more clearly
- to work on something more slowly and in more detail
- to break it down - look for steps, bite-sized chunks
- to ask yourself new, deeper questions
- to shake you out of your usual 'story' (for example *'it's just how I am...I'll always be like this...'*)

How to get in touch with your own 'Inner Life-Coach'

You need paper and pen or a PC. Make sure no one will disturb you. Focus on a single situation or problem you're facing at the moment. It can be any issue at all: work, a relationship, your children/parents, a fear, a dilemma - anything.

1. Write down the issue you're going to work on at the top of the page. This will be the focus of your dialogue - just a sentence or two capturing the essence of the difficulty you want to explore, such as: *'I'm feeling really stressed about work at the moment, because my boss gave me a poor appraisal'*.

2. Then start off by putting your initial in the margin and introduce yourself to your inner Life-Coach. Something like:

'T: I'm Tim and I'd like to talk to you about my current difficulty.'

3. Then imagine someone who is interested and concerned about you, responding with something encouraging, like: *'Ok - let's look at this in more detail'*. Your coach may then ask you one or all of the following questions:

- What is this issue *really* about?
- What are you afraid of?
- What are you avoiding?

- What is the worst thing about this problem?

4. Then start writing down your answers. Don't think about it too much - just keep writing.

5. Continue the dialogue, back and forth between you and your Coach - and write it all down.
Your Coach may ask you Questions involving:

- why you think this difficult/situation has occurred (and when the issue first started)
- how you feel - how it is affecting you
- if anything similar has happened before - and how you coped with it then

Your Coach may give you Advice about:

- how you might cope this time
- what you might need - how you could look after yourself better
- what you might also need to avoid (doing, saying etc)
- What steps you could take

- in other words, all the sorts of questions and advice that you will have offered a friend in need when they have called upon your support with a difficulty.

6. Let the questions, statements and replies come one after another, as you swap between speaking from yourself and then from your Coach. Write quickly, faster than you can worry about whether it makes sense. Keep moving forward, accepting whatever comes - don't analyse as you go along, just keep writing.

7. Then read it through to yourself. Write down any new perspectives, courses of action or ideas that have emerged for you.

8. This process will help to give you some **understanding and clarity** about the problem and may even tell you what you need to do next towards resolving it.

Don't forget that sometimes 'self-help' of this kind isn't enough - and you may need the support of a professional Counsellor or Life-Coach.