

# ETHICS IN COACHING

## EP #33

**“Do I need a life coach?” You’re listening to Episode 33, with Rhiannon Bush**

**Welcome to the Do I need a life coach? Podcast. We’re here to discuss the ins- and outs- of the life coaching industry and give you tools to use, to see for yourself. I’m your host, Rhiannon Bush. Mother, management consultant and a passionate, certified life coach.**

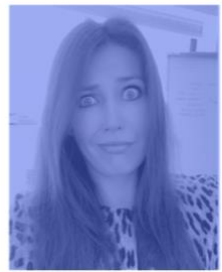
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**So it happened again. Wanky crap, inflated egos, some egos inflicting bruises, some egos being bruised, I see it far too often... This particular Facebook post was where a client was looking for a coach, signed up to a free training they were holding, and then gave the feedback that it didn’t align with them, it wasn’t quite as, I think they used the word, ‘advanced’ as they thought it maybe and that on this basis, they wouldn’t be continuing with the program. The coach then wrote a post in rebuttal about how this client was clearly being defensive and unable to change or open themselves up to the possibility of what could be etc. etc. I’m not giving a great account of it because honestly, I rolled my eyes and continued scrolling, but it was the same BS, different day. From what I did read, the client was giving honest and quite constructive feedback, and it was actually the coach’s ego that was bruised and so they felt the need (for what reason I’ll never know) to publicly roast the client to save face.**

**If anything, that’s the coach’s problem, not the no-longer-a-prospective client. Self-development is a, for lack of a better term, ‘journey’. There, yes I said it. And as you learn and grow and learn and grow, you level up and require greater knowledge and expertise, or something different, for you to continue to grow. Just as in life. You run 5km, you either run it faster or you run longer. You get your L plates, then you get your P plates. We level up throughout the course of our lives. I take my hat off to this client for actually a) being honest and b) providing the feedback. Because without feedback we don’t know. I was actually really disappointed in the coach, because I know that coach, and for her to respond that way actually surprised me. She didn’t take what I consider to be one of the principles of coaching which is feedback is a good thing, because it provides us an opportunity to grow and to learn and to be a better coach. Instead she shut it down and became extremely defensive when actually had the criticism being flippant or lacking thought, I would have understood her reaction. Probably wouldn’t have condoned it, but would have understood it.**

**Whereas this feedback was very well thought out. While it might not have needed to be public, it was still very considered. And there is a missed opportunity for learning, when our ego comes in and defends us when instead maybe we should take it on the chin consider it and then if they**





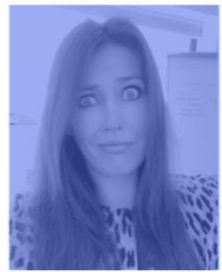
**throw it away if we don't agree with it, or take it on board and make changes if we think it has validity.**

**On the flip side of this, there is a cohort of people who find coaching and are vulnerable to the, let's call them highly ambitious coaches who are not only in it to help and serve, but are equally in it to win. These coaches are often very interested in their own self-gain, millionaire status, laptop lifestyle and again, ego and selling. But let me be clear, this doesn't mean that the coach doesn't want to help someone. A coach like this who is incredibly ambitious, and wanting to grow their profile, their name, their business is often just as likely to be in it to help people. And often they believe the more people they reach, the more people they can help and serve and I agree with that, but sometimes if you don't know yourself and what you want as a client from the outset, this may not be the ideal coaching relationship for you to start with. At the end of this episode I'll take you through some questions to answer and things to consider if you're looking to get a coach.**

**A very good girlfriend of mine once called out a coach for paying for a magazine to call him one of Australia's best business coaches. And I know this coach, not well, and I absolutely don't know him in a coaching capacity as to whether he is a good coach or not, and I don't really know is ethical compass. But I do know I wouldn't feel right paying for an article to be published about me that calls me Australia's best business coach. That, to me, only has credibility if it was published by the ICF or NLPAA and it wasn't something I, the coach, paid for. If the label of 'Australia's Best Business Coach' is coming from the ICF or NLPAA, then they have evidence to support that in the way of qualifications, memberships and accreditations. Throughout their process of credentialing, I know with the ICF at least, coaches are actually audited (as in an actual, paying client consents to having a certified ICF mentor listen to a live coaching session the coach is doing, to accredit and critique the coach – not only for feedback, but to actually earn their credential). So it's not somebody just declaring it for themselves.**

**I'm not on Facebook very much, I feel like it really steals my focus and time flies when I'm on it and I achieved nothing, and it also removes my presence from those around me so I try to avoid it. I was flicking the other day and I came across this post by a coach I must follow and it was very lengthy around the coaching industry, ethics, and why she left the coaching industry and yet in that same post she talks about the fact that she was a very successful coach (if earning millions of dollars through coaching is what we deem "successful"), so I don't know how true the post was. For me personally, this is what, if anything, has tainted my experience of the coaching industry. It's not actually the coaching that's the problem – the art and science that is coaching, as much as it is the business building and the sales and marketing tactics within the coaching space, and sometimes using coaching tools and models to sell and get ahead. And I have been a sales coach, so I know how they can be used and that's also why I'm about to tell you what I'm about to tell you.**





**This is the main reason I started this podcast. Because I want people to understand how to recognise in themselves firstly what they want in their life, how to employ a coach to get it, and to understand their own boundaries before they step in. Or to recognise that they are feeling less than their best self, know that they have the opportunity to change that if they choose, and that they are in complete control of the outcomes that they have.**

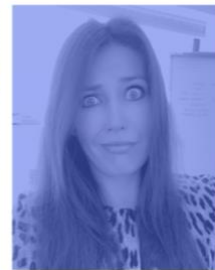
**This Facebook post spoke about somebody not realising that their life was actually awesome as it was before they were in the coaching space. They described the industry as wanting more and more, and saying there were things that were “wrong” with them and that they needed “fixing”. I can see that. I can see where that perception may’ve come from. I also understand that once you’ve studied personal development and self-help, that there seems to be this notion of constantly having to improve, and grow, and push your boundaries and expand your comfort zone and ‘be’ more. It even resonated with me when this post said “normal life” isn’t enough.**

**But my rebuttal, is that you always have a choice. And actually the way I've always seen the coaching space, and I say this to every client I have, but coaching is a tool. And a tool in the hands of well-intentioned people, like qualified coaches with good intentions, or clients who are looking to enhance their education and self-help tool kit to be better humans, will use coaching for good purposes. As will client, trainers, employers, etc. Or, if you want to use the tools negatively, the same applies. You will and you can. We can all use coaching for good or for evil. The choice is yours. And that applies to coaches, that applies to clients, that applies to trainers and let’s be honest, this same principle applies to any tool, anywhere in life. Firearms being the main example that comes to my mind. In the hands of a farmer to end the pain of a suffering animal – good. A mentally deranged person who walks into a café one day and open fires on everyone in there – evil.**

**I also think it's very easy to look back in hindsight and think things were great. Especially if you're somebody who thinks about things positively, and when you focus forward you always consider the future to be bright and hopeful and positive and sometimes maybe that things will be better. I think when you focus forward that way, sometimes you focus backwards that way as well. So when you look back you think about all the good things, or most of the good things, and because you do that, it's then easy to look at where you are now and think about it negatively.**

**I've been through many different jobs and places and circumstances in my life, and part of the reason I have moved on and on and on was not only because I wanted adventure and diversity and change and to experience all that I could, but also because I was often moving away from something I wasn't enjoying, and I wanted to find what was going to make that difference. So I can reflect on my time in London, which was in 2013 / 2014, and from 2023's perspective, that time of my life was incredible. When I think about that time, I think about being in this awesome office, with this job that I loved and got to travel with, with people who I think respected my**





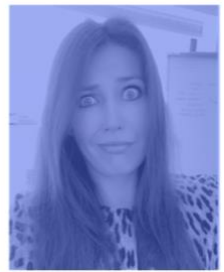
**work ethic and really embraced me as part of the team, housemates that are still friends today, well two out of the three and the house we lived in was lovely, lots of social time com the most travelling I've ever done – not only in frequency but also in where I got to go which was all around Europe, the UK, Spain, France, Iceland... so many places that I still wouldn't have seen had I not lived in London.**

**And yet I have diaries from that time, and if I read them, what I was actually experiencing at that time underneath all that amazingness, was real conflict over my future, and whether I was going to have enough money to buy house, the fact that I actually didn't want to come back to Australia but I missed my family terribly, being single and doing it alone, while I was still pining after this guy who was never really interested in me and that hurt, missing a lot of Australian culture despite trying to embrace the differences that I was experiencing in England, not earning much money at all despite being extremely happy in my work... so the discontent was there. It was real and it was intrinsic. It was within me. And I can follow that similar discontentment throughout many phases that I went through, not just London. There's that expression "you can't run away from your problems" or something like that. And in my experience, that's true. But looking back from where I am now, it was all rainbows and butterflies. And my future is similar. Rainbows and butterflies. But in actual fact, what Brooke Castillo talks about all the time, is 50/50. No matter what's happening for you in life, no matter where you are and what you're doing, you'll experience life 50/50. What you choose to remember and what you choose to focus on may not be.**

**So when I see coaches I know having it out on social media based on ethics and ego, and where they see their offer and honest feedback. Ethics in coaching is a really interesting dilemma. And the reason that it's so important to recognise it because it's so subjective. I know what I mean when I say ethical or unethical and you can think of something as ethical or unethical and they could be the exact same thing. There are so many shades of grey. For instance I don't have a problem with pushy sales, as long as I've ascertained that somebody is just a little bit scared. I know I can support you in overcoming hurdles you're currently experiencing, and that I can get you to that point where you will really thrive, but I absolutely do not feel ethical about pushing when there is a significant monetary objection. I've met many people, and I've even been somebody who has pushed and sold very hard, and it's never fared very well. It feels horrible, it's hard work and they've often been the most difficult clients because they've been the most pressured and insecure, because money is black-and-white. Whereas if it's fear-based, we can work with that to make somebody stronger, to take the adversity head on together and overcome hurdles. That type of work is fun and empowering and challenging but in a really resourceful way. We can really change somebody's life when they can overcome their fears and start to see the potential they have within them, and that what they're feeling right now is manageable, temporary and they can actually achieve what they want to achieve. Money is a different story. And yet I've seen many coaches hard sell**







**in a way that's made me quite uncomfortable, and I really truly believe it's unnecessary.**

**But this is why there's always going to be disagreements about what is what is not ethical in coaching. The ICF is incredible for having a code of ethics, and being a governing body, but on the same hand, I like the fact that the coaching industry is unregulated and not ladled with red tape. I've wondered whether not having my certificate in training and assessing has held me back from people hiring me as a trainer in their business. Because training and assessing is an RTO standard, and some businesses, specifically government, require that check-box to met to employ you. But I find it bureaucratic, a somewhat false standard as I don't believe for one second that it guarantees a level of competence, or quality unfortunately, because any RTO standard can keep things really outdated because of the process they have to follow to change the curriculum to keep it relevant and up-to-date. So for those reasons, I'm really happy to coaching industry is free reign. It involves a level of experimentation with the latest neuroscience to get results, it often tests and pushes new boundaries and if it was forced to conform, it would lose it's progressiveness. So the freedom the industry has is not something I would change but it does mean I want to help educate people to make the most of it that they can, while having a level of protection against the negative side, which let's be honest, exists in every industry.**

**So if, like me, you've seen Facebook posts like this and it's slightly turned you off hiring a coach, all you need to do is to be careful about what it is you look for and that's why I'm here. And to be honest, this is more about you trusting yourself and your decision making than it is about the coach. So, providing you do your due diligence (see Episode 1 for more information and a download to help you here), having a coach will change your life in whatever way you choose.**

**Why are you seeing a coach? What outcome do you want specifically? Who are you looking at to coach you and what is it about them that drew you to them? Is it because they have something you want? Is it that they have an ex-factor about them? A confidence about them, or their results? Do you want someone that's going to hold space for you and be able to coach you to the best of their abilities? You absolutely want to confident coach.**

**Remember: Ethics are subjective, so know yours – what are some things you're willing to consider and open up to, to achieve what you want, and what will you absolutely never find ethical – what are your hard 'no's'? Also, it's not up to you to decide what is or is not ethical for somebody else.**  
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**I believe coaches come in with absolutely pure intentions. I believe coaches want to change people's lives and in the most, extreme changed the world, through coaching techniques and empowering people, by raising their client's awareness and education, and giving them strategies to overcome personal emotional hurdles that they are experiencing today, to life a fulfilled and happy and conscientious life.**





**Whether you choose to keep growing, and expanding your horizons and conquering new challenges is up to you. You can do some self-improvement to feel better day-to-day, and then find contentment and be settled and happy in that. Or you can choose to continue to grow. You can start and stop whenever you like, because once you know it, you can't un-know it. How you use it, is always up to you. The choice is always yours.**

**See you next week!**

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**Please note, this transcription may not be exact.**

