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VOLUME 17 • NUMBER 1
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Does Mindfulness Belong in Coaching?

Exploring a mind-body approach

By Nicole Lovald, MS, BCC, E-RYT

One of the most widely accepted definitions of mindfulness from one of its early pioneers, Jon Kabat-Zinn, is bringing your awareness to the present moment, without placing any judgement on it. When you think about it, that's not all that different than the coaching principles we've come to learn and practice within our profession.

As coaches, our job is to be fully present with our clients. If we are distracted and thinking about things not related to our coaching session, they can feel it and sense that we are not fully en-

gaged. Likewise, if our clients are checking their text messages, preoccupied with their to-do list at work, or simply not fully available in the coaching conversation, we coaches can feel it.

For a client-centered coaching relationship to be effective, both the coach and client need to be equally present. For the coach to be subjective in their communication they must learn to set judgement aside and adopt an unbiased attitude of acceptance.

Enter mindfulness. Learning to bring your awareness to the present moment can help to set the stage for

your coaching session. Taking a few moments with your client to become centered and aware of both their body and mind can assist them in being more authentically available in the session.

In addition, providing the opportunity for your clients to get out of their minds and connect with their bodies may give them information about how they are feeling. We tend to use our brains throughout the day, but rarely do most of us take the time to tune into our bodies.

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Our bodies don't lie. If we are feeling stressed-out, our bodies might be trying to get our attention by holding tension in our shoulders or causing our breath to be quickly paced. Yet most of us don't notice those signs. We ignore them until the stress starts to impact our health, our work, and our families.

Enter mindfulness coaching. Helping clients learn to recognize the messages their body is giving them can be just as beneficial as a coaching relationship focused on what their mind is saying. Better yet, combine the two and work from a mind-body approach. Both the body and mind share great information and can assist in helping a client uncover what is getting in their way, what it is that they really want in their life, and so much more.

As coaches, we believe that everyone has the answers to the questions they have for their lives within them. Sometimes those answers are difficult to uncover. Utilizing the wisdom of the body and the mind can assist both the coach and client in recognizing their strengths, their struggles, and their truth. •