

## **Book Shelf:**

### **Title: Values and Ethics in Coaching**

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### **Reviewed by Kathy Taberner**

Coaching is a relatively young profession that anyone can be part of with little or no training. For those of us who have a recognized coaching certification and accreditation from a known and respected professional organization, this can be frustrating and challenging. I often wonder if everyone who calls themselves a coach is ethical at all times in their practice. If not, these actions can reflect adversely on the entire profession. More, many coaches work in isolation. How do we know if, in fact, our interactions and our relationships are ethical at all times? What can we be doing to ensure we always walk the walk of an ethical practice?

#### **A Definition of Ethics**

These are some of the questions that drew me to this book. The authors do an excellent job of asking us to become aware of our values, personal and professional, how we incorporate them into our lives, and how they can influence our coaching practice. As coaches, we aspire to live our values at all times and support our clients in exploring theirs, creating a greater awareness so they can align their life actions and decisions with them. The authors believe our values support our ethical practices and state:

“Ethics, therefore, refer to a person’s decisions and actions, as dictated by their beliefs and values. Put more simply, ethics is the practice that determines what is good or bad, right or wrong (de Jong, 2010). In comparison to values, ethics do not merely relate to ‘our general notions of what is important, but to actual rules, codes, and principles of conduct’ (Beckett and Maynard, 2013: 20). In other words, ethics can be seen as the practical application of values. In coaching, according to de Jong (2010), ethical practices determine the virtue of helping others, focusing on the needs and interests of the client, honouring trust and confidentiality, and promoting individual autonomy.”(p. 31)

Know Thyself

As coaches, the authors believe we need to understand our values and the alignment of our personal and professional values so we can develop awareness of how these influence our approach to coaching, as well as the questions we ask and why. They write that our values can bias our practices, by bringing in a subjective bias or slant that influences the questions we ask and process we follow. This self-knowledge forms the basis of an ethical practice, one, which can be developed through a reflective practice.

#### Applications of Ethics in the Field

The book on this important subject is written using a simple, straight forward approach with examples that support the authors' ideas. The authors explore the application of an ethical practice in different coaching arenas such as business, coaching training, sports, and healthcare in the United Kingdom. Having a lot of experience in healthcare, I particularly appreciated their perspectives on the changing approach to attitudes of healthcare professionals in their work with patients, shifting at times from a "doing to" patients to a partnering of "doing with" patients. They believe there is a role for both approaches and a need to understand when to use each one. Similarly, they discuss the value of internal and external coaches in all organizations and the different value each can bring to an organization.

An ethical practice should be something every professional coach sets intention around and continually focuses on developing in all aspects of their profession. This book provides an excellent foundation from which a coach can learn and develop an ethical approach to their profession dealing with clients, colleagues and others to ensure they are respectful of themselves and others at all times, ensuring they provide support that is confidential and meets the needs of the client.