

Coaching the chiropractors

According to life and business coach Cheryl Donnison, there is a remarkable degree of similarity between coaching and chiropractic.



BOTH PRACTICES focus on prevention rather than cure," says Cheryl, founder of Lumina Coaching. "Both can have very powerful positive benefits for people and both have had to expound a number of myths before being generally accepted by mainstream thinking."

Cheryl, whose coaching practice is based in Ilkley in Yorkshire, coaches a broad range of clients from a chief executive of a large public limited company to a tai chi trainer, from a managing director of a national marketing organisation to a headteacher, from a painter and decorator to ...yes, a chiropractor.

In fact, Cheryl now coaches a number of chiropractors in the UK. "As I've got to know more about the profession of chiropractic, I've come to realise that the similarities are quite striking," says Cheryl. She points to the North American heritage of the two professions and their relatively slow, organic growth and take-up in Great Britain. "But it's interesting how many people are now using both techniques and are coming to realise their benefits," she adds.

Cheryl also sees the two-way relationship between chiropractor and patient as having similarities with that between a coach and his/her client – the 'coachee'. "Coaching doesn't involve any 'giving', as such. There's no passage of information or direct transfer of knowledge from one person to the other. Neither is there any teacher-pupil relationship," she says. "Coaching involves encouraging coachees to formulate their own way forward and align their personal drive and energy with their own goals and dreams in an equal partnership."

Progress towards a coachee's goals can be surprisingly fast when the 'terms of engagement' are clear – something which can be reflected in the relationship between a chiropractor and a patient. Cheryl's experience in coaching chiropractors has been fascinating for her and surprisingly successful for her chiropractor clients. Two case studies illustrate the point.

Patrick* is a successful chiropractor in a growing practice with a number of clinics. "He is a very determined young professional who puts a huge amount of energy into developing the practice," explains Cheryl. "Not only was he spending a massive amount of time in helping to grow the practice, he was also writing lots of academic articles about the technical aspects of chiropractic medicine."

Patrick's profile was rising fast in the chiropractic community but to the detriment of his social life and any sense of personal equilibrium. "Put simply, there was very little time left for any form of quality recovery or leisure time," says Cheryl.

As a workaholic, Patrick just couldn't relax. He found it difficult to switch off and even said he felt 'twitchy' when he took time off. "He knew he needed balance in his life but finding it was difficult."

The solution was to focus Patrick on the benefits of life outside work and helping him find his own way to achieve it. "Now he's much more balanced and relaxed. He's got a great social and leisure life and he's managing to grow the practice faster than he anticipated – but without the stress that he had been feeling before," says Cheryl.

Patrick is so convinced of the benefits of coaching that he has started to use some of Cheryl's techniques with a new member of staff. "Prior to working with Cheryl, life was successful but hectic," says Patrick. "I never seemed to take time out to relax and was always on edge if not working. Cheryl's coaching has allowed me to develop a healthy work-play balance without compromising any aspect of my life. Professional confidence and growth has never been better."

Lucy*, meanwhile, had been lacking self-belief as a practitioner. Although she had been practising chiropractic for some years, she was relatively new to UK practice. She had a tendency to be negative about herself, which led to poor self-confidence and procrastination in the business. This was having a negative effect on developing her practice in a big town environment.

Cheryl embarked on a coaching route of building on the skills and knowledge Lucy already possessed and adding a number of new techniques to develop her self-esteem. She encouraged Lucy to take action on a weekly basis. "Through building on Lucy's potential, we worked together to develop her sense of belief. As her confidence started to grow, the faith in her abilities started to come back," says Cheryl.

Although Cheryl believes Lucy has some way to go, she is growing in confidence every day and has started to take control of her life. "Having worked with Cheryl on developing my self-esteem and self-confidence, the results are now reflected in my personal and professional growth and satisfaction in practice," says Lucy. □

*The names of the chiropractors involved have been changed to protect their confidentiality. For further details contact Cheryl Donnison on 01943 605597 (office), 07899 751667 or email info@lumina.coaching.co.uk