



INTRODUCTION

Why *Simply Coaching*, Why Now?

*The purpose of coaching is to help
individuals or groups be their Highest and Best.*

In 1997 I did the unthinkable. I sent my first book out into the world, without me. I did so with the understanding that if my work was worthwhile, it would have a life of its own, and if so, I was to return to it once my sons were raised.

Turns out, *Simply Coaching* has had quite a life. Without fanfare or obvious notoriety, it traveled around the world, teaching and influencing thought and development of the burgeoning profession of personal and professional coaching. Labeled timeless, it became a guide to establishing the coaching industry's core competencies and influenced methodologies, standards, ethics, and educational programs worldwide. Not bad for an orphan!

The time is right for *Simply Coaching* to return. Framed within the context of striving for our Highest and Best, this expanded

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work is for those who would like to learn our basic, but oh-so-powerful, coaching principles. Within, you will find help in personal insight and understanding, interpersonal communications skills, and finding and pursuing your direction. These are the very principles that we,

as coaches, employ to help our clients reach their Highest and Best in a manner that is kind and respectful to themselves and others. In short, you will be aided in your pursuit of your Highest and Best as you create your life each moment of each day.

To say that throughout the world clashes of opinions and ideologies in politics, religions, nations, races, and classes are proving quite difficult for us would be an understatement. These conflicts are interfering with our ability to communicate and cooperate with one another at our best. And you and I both know that's a recipe for trouble!

We could all be part of the solution by improving the way we interact with one another. You see it all around you: the need to talk with one another in meaningful and respectful ways, the need to support one another to be our best, and the need to address the difficult issues at hand. Whether it's personal, professional,

or societal, these interactions could be accomplished in thought-provoking and action-oriented ways that support who we are at our very Highest and Best, rather than our lowest and worst. Having coaching skills at your disposal can definitely help.

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Imagine what your Highest and Best would be like if you were able to have meaningful and respectful conversations about the things most important to you. What if you had support to identify and take positive and productive actions toward your Highest and Best? If you are like most of us, you would love that! You would love the peace of mind knowing that you're on the right track, with agreed upon, doable actions and steps to guide you to your Highest and Best, be it for a major life event or simple everyday challenges. Wouldn't you love to be able to provide that for others as well?

How differently would you see yourself if you knew your individual improvements in understanding and interacting with yourself and others, and the authenticity of your life and your contributions had a direct impact on reversing the ever-increasing discord we are experiencing throughout the world? Wouldn't that be something?!

At its core, coaching helps individuals and groups be their Highest and Best. To be your Highest and Best, you need to know

4 **Simply Coaching** for Your Highest and Best

yourself more intimately than you may have previously experienced. Coaching leads to more profound self-knowledge, greater self-acceptance, and increased self-responsibility. As a result, you will find yourself strengthening, regaining, or perhaps most notably for some, experiencing personal power for the very first time.

Coaching happens in meaningful conversations, gently bringing light on difficult subjects, supporting self-discovery, championing visions, celebrating gifts, and illuminating next steps. These are the kinds of conversations we all hope, even desire, to have.

Coaching happens in meaningful conversations.

The focusing tools of coaching foster understanding, agreement, and action. These three, when working in collaboration, help you and those you love, live, work and play with, adjust and thrive in our increasingly complicated world.

Simply Coaching provides a guide and tools for these conversations, simple or complicated, while accepting and championing one another with grace and dignity. During these discussions we identify what we need to do to be our Highest and Best, be it our focus, skills, attitudes, and habits, or how we manage our gifts, spaces, and development.

As you develop your coaching skills, you will discover that your conversations become much more useful because you are incorporating many of the gifts I identified early on in my practice.

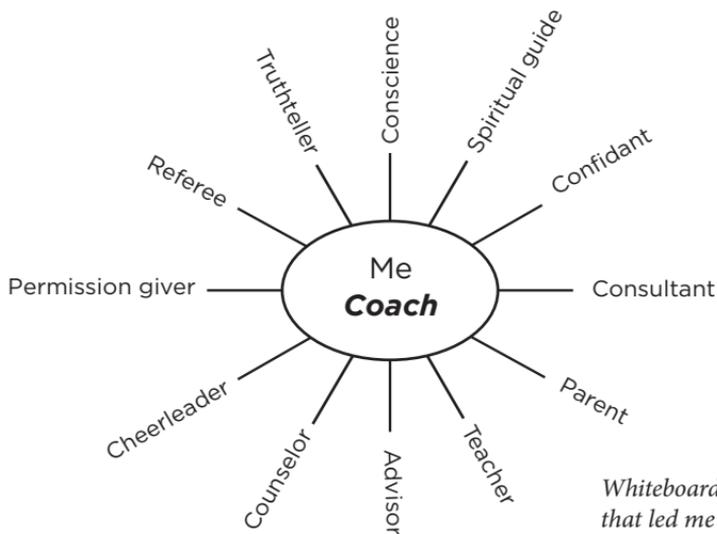
I assure you that if you enter into conversations with the following in mind, you will be far more successful and satisfied with the results:

- Seeing without judgment;
- Understanding with insight and discernment;
- Simplifying, saying things in a manner that is easily understood;
- Creating new awareness and understanding;
- Guiding and advising without attachment to the outcome; and,
- Creating with clarity, vision, and insight.

Just as each coach has a variety of capabilities and gifts to draw upon, so do you. The more skilled and comfortable you are with your talents, the more easily you will employ them, according to what is needed in the coaching moment. All gifts seek expression. Some gifts you are born with, some gifts are developed. Most gifts can be learned and all gifts can be improved. Making the most of your gifts will help you reach your Highest and Best in coaching as well as in creating a full and fulfilling life.

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In 1988, determined to understand how I kept getting such amazing results with my consulting clients, I drew the following diagram to illustrate many of the different roles and gifts I drew upon when engaged with my clients.



*Whiteboard session
that led me to the
idea of coaching.*

It was this exercise that originally led me to realize that what I did and who I was becoming was very similar to my brothers' high school athletic coaches. Without realizing the significance, I began calling myself a coach. I set to work creating, developing, and enhancing the ideas, methods, tools, skills, and standards and boundaries for my work as a coach. This work ultimately influenced and helped define a new industry.

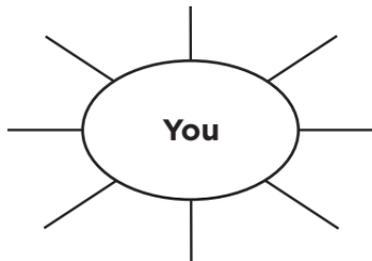
At the same time I was developing my version of coaching; others were also looking at their constellation of gifts and giving them the name of "coaching" as well. This resulted in the development of a diversity of styles, methods, and approaches to coaching. This was and is a very good thing, as there is a tremendous variety among those who want and need coaching.

You have your own style as well. You will adopt the methods and tools that fit your background, personality, and gifts. And please, don't let anyone tell you that there is only one way to coach or that you can only ask "meaningful" questions! These are styles that some have taken on and insisted upon but are certainly not the only way to coach!

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Now, let's get to you. Take a minute and grab a journal or notebook; you are going to want one as you continue to read and work through this book.

It's your turn to create a circle of your capabilities and gifts. What do you bring to the table? You might be surprised by how many you have or you might be at a loss to think of any. Don't worry; they're in there. Just start with what you can think of for now. Look back at mine to get some ideas. As you continue to read this book, do keep your journal handy. Add to your circle as new ideas come to mind. You'll have many opportunities to think more specifically about your amazing gifts. I promise!



As you continue reading, see yourself in the role of coach, not necessarily as a professional, but as an approach you take. Imagine how you might use the ideas presented when talking or working with someone—family, friend, client, colleague, or subordinate, even your boss! By blending these powerful ideas, skills, and methodologies with your own strengths and knowledge, you will improve your ability to have focused, meaningful conversations. Not only that, you will understand what it takes to be your Highest and Best and how to guide and be guided on this amazing journey. You will be in a much better position to create your reality based on your dreams and desires for Highest and Best.

We are not living in easy times. There is a daily barrage of lowest and worst trying to take us down. My hope for you is that you can use these tools for conversations, personal insights, standards and boundaries, clarity, space, and personal development to coach yourself and others to a better life. Doing so will make life better for you and those around you and will contribute to making our world a better place.

Just one word of caution: when coaching another person, your job is not to fix them or to get attached to their result—that is the job of each individual. If you are using these tools to coach yourself (yes, you can do that too!), getting attached to your own results may be a bit trickier.

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Bottom line: these tools are designed to help you be a support to yourself and others while striving for Highest and Best. Plain and simple.

Now let's take a look at what we are going to cover.

Your Basic Tools

It is important for you to have the best choice of methods, tools, skills, and understandings to guide and support you in this marvelous dance called coaching. If you are a professional coach, you have undoubtedly seen elements of these ideas throughout the coaching industry. If you are new to coaching as a profession, looking to add to your skill set, or looking for ways to grow, hold on tight because we are going to cover a lot of ground quickly.

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Your Highest and Best

Understanding and adopting a Highest and Best approach will make your world brighter, happier, and healthier. It will contribute to more productive and satisfying relationships, work, love, and play. Sometimes, you just need to be pointed in the right direction. In Chapter 1 we will look at what Highest and Best means and what it doesn't and ways to point you in the right direction.

The Powerful Four:

Focus, Skills, Attitudes & Habits Method

As a mental organizing tool for coaching, *The Powerful Four* Method will help you gain a better understanding of yourself and others, specifically and in general. It provides a simple yet powerful structure to assist you in identifying the specific elements as well as actions needed for success. All things being equal, if these four things are in place, you can't help but succeed.

The Basic Coaching Conversation:

Listen, Mirror, Path, Floodlight Method

If you are like most of us, you crave to be heard and understood. You seek an understanding of who you are as an individual. You search for focus, direction, meaning, and purpose. You want to know where you are going and what to do next. Straightforward and elegant, the Listen, Mirror, Path, Floodlight Method in Chapter 3 will guide you through the steps of a successful coaching conversation to accomplish these goals.

Combining Methods

In Chapter 4, *The Coaching Conversation and the Powerful Four* are combined into a simple format, creating an incredibly dynamic and powerful tool. Presented in outline form, it can be used as a roadmap as you practice and develop your coaching skills.

Standards and Boundaries

Over the years, it became abundantly clear to me that a good working knowledge of standards and boundaries is vital to a healthy approach to coaching, not to mention your own personal and professional life. I believe you'll find that when you are clear about your standards and have appropriate boundaries to protect them, life gets smoother and you have a much better chance being the kind of person you want to be at your Highest and Best.

Creating a Full and Fulfilling Life

More and more of us have come to understand that we create our realities. Fundamental to creating a full and fulfilling life requires that you foster clarity, have enough space—time, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual—and tend to your personal development.

We are at the forefront of our next level of consciousness, to a higher way of being, where we are aware that we create our reality and we actively and consciously participate in its creation. The material presented in *Simply Coaching* will give you the basic tools to guide your creations as you intentionally create through the power of your thoughts, words, and actions in a manner reflecting your Highest and Best.

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By applying what's contained within *Simply Coaching*, you will find that your relationships become easier, your challenges not as difficult, and your day-to-day life just a lot nicer.

Over the years, these simple processes and ideas have been successfully used by myself and many others to help countless thousands of individuals, groups, and organizations. The results have been significant, quick, effective, and sustainable.

I invite you to join me and rise to the challenge of being your Highest and Best!

Now, let's get to work!



CHAPTER 1

Your Highest and Best

*On behalf of the majority of the world,
I can state with great confidence
that we would prefer you
to strive for your Highest and Best.*

Highest and Best is a mindset, a way of life. It is not a destination. It comes from looking for and supporting the best in yourself and others. It may sound like a pretty lofty concept until you realize how accessible it is to you and the power it has in supporting you in creating a much better life for yourself and those for whom you care.

Focusing on your Highest and Best affords you a fantastic view of your life, gently supporting the “all too human” aspiration to be far more than you are now. Neglecting it gives rise to mediocrity at best and downright destruction at worst! That is not what you are going for, is it?

Becoming your Highest and Best results from an alignment between what you value, what is important to you, and your thoughts, words, and deeds. You are authentic, true to yourself.

It is reflected in the reality you create, your relationship with

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yourself and others, and the experiences you have, day in and day out, throughout your lifetime.

Highest and Best shows up in predictable ways: acceptance, non-judgmental, support, empathy, genuine concern for others, positive self-image, hope, inspiration, truth, honesty, success, generosity, and integrity.

Lowest and worst also shows up in predictable ways: critical, rejection, judgment, blaming, ridicule, isolation, lack of sympathy or genuine concern for others, lying, stealing, cheating, and failure.

Your Highest and Best isn't about being perfect, that is not possible in this reality. Nor is it about setting unrealistic expectations of yourself, others, or life. To me, it means focusing on what is important to me and being the best I can be in the moment, over and over and over again, whatever my focus, whatever experiences I may encounter on my journey. It also means looking for and supporting the best in myself, others, and in situations.

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The concept of Highest and Best is also very powerful in your interpersonal and coaching relationships. Many a client, individual, and group reached far greater heights when their Highest and Best was identified and championed by their coach, parent, partner, or boss. Making a habit of seeing yourself and others at their Highest and Best has the potential of changing your relationships and your experience of the world. It provides opportunities to support that which is good in you, others, and the world.

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During initial intake meetings, a savvy college entrance coach asks parents to “sing the praise of their child.” One mother, whose son’s negative moods caused her great concern, noticed that as she spoke of her son’s qualities, his confidence shifted, his body straightened, his chin came up, and his eyes became engaged. It was then that she realized that his sour mood was in large part fueled by the way she was seeing him, always looking for any imperfections she should correct. She committed to change this and to see him at his Highest and Best on a regular basis. This resulted in astonishing changes in her son’s demeanor and confidence and, not surprisingly, their relationship.

Using a Highest and Best approach will help you embrace your possibilities and those of others. If you’re wondering how you

were doing, begin by listening to your own thoughts. Are they supportive or critical? Listen to what you say and how you talk about things. Watch what you do. Are you leading yourself to your Highest and Best or your lowest and worst? Your own introspection will pay off, giving you a clear picture of yourself and how you are treating others. Observing it in others will provide you with insight into who they are and where they are headed. When this is done in a non-judgemental way, you will have a much better chance of seeing *your* Highest and Best, and *theirs*.

Let's look at how focusing on Highest and Best might play out for something specific.

Stan values his car. What might Stan's Highest and Best be when it comes to his owning a car? Keeping it gassed, serviced, cleaned, repaired, and insured would be a reasonable, achievable start for Stan. For Bill, aiming for that might be completely overwhelming at first; gas and insurance may be his best for now. In time, Bill's focus on his best will make it easier for him to find a way to include servicing and repair.

Judy didn't practice Highest and Best. She practiced a get-by approach to owning a car. It was easy for her to keep her car gassed and insured and that was as far as she went. She ignored the dashboard light indicating it was time to service her car.

Months went by and the check engine light illuminated. She ignored this light as well. Within a very short time, the engine of her little car was destroyed. It had run out of oil. It was a tough lesson for her. From that point on, Judy understood that being her lowest and worst had significant and costly consequences.

With this thought in mind, you might ask yourself: “What can I reasonably do that would get me to my Highest and Best as it relates to my car?” Perhaps a habit of filling your gas tank when it gets to the quarter-full mark, or, changing the oil on a regular basis; maybe some gratitude thrown in for the fact that you have a car (if you do!) and the resources to keep it up, maybe even a special weekend washing.

How you think about something, what you say about it and what you do with it, will all reflect how you value it and the experience you have with it. The same is true for people and experiences. If you’re wondering how you are doing, just look at your results. If things aren’t the way you would like them to be, listen to your own thoughts. Are they supportive or critical? Listen to what you talk about and what you say. Watch what you do. You might find you are excellent at supporting yourself and others or you might find that you repeatedly shoot yourself in the foot with thoughts, words, and deeds that drag you and others down. Or you may realize that you support others thoughts, words, and

deeds more than you support your own. The important thing is to know yourself and to be able to make the adjustments needed to be your best.

Now it's your turn. Get your journal out and do a little writing on these questions. Do it a few times to get the hang of it.

- Pick something you value: person, place, thing, idea, or experience.
- With this in mind, what thoughts, words, and deeds would support you in achieving your Highest and Best?
- Given the internal and external resources you have available, what is reasonable to ask of yourself?
- Set daily, weekly and monthly goals for yourself.
- Tell others about your goals.
- Now that you know what you are aiming for, focus on doing your best each day.
- Be honest with yourself about how well you are meeting your goals.
- Hold yourself accountable.
 - Check in with yourself daily:
 - How am I doing?
 - How well am I meeting my goals?

- Am I doing what I said I was going to do?
- Am I doing something that makes it hard for me to keep my promises to myself?
- Is something or someone in my way?
- Adjust as needed.
- Ask someone you trust and respect to give you feedback about how well you are doing and how honest you are being with yourself.

Sometimes we set goals that are too high or too low. We might expect results with little or no effort or in too short of a period of time. Again, be honest with yourself. It's important. And don't beat yourself up when you don't meet your goals, that won't help. Be kind to yourself and encourage yourself to continue.

Here is a very important part of this whole approach. Sometimes your Highest and Best will look magnificent and other times it won't. Even when you are at your lowest, the attributes in the Highest and Best approach can be of great service.

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Years after I wrote the original *Simply Coaching*, an illness left me in a very dark and arduous place. Stripped of vitality, I was literally at my lowest and worst. Harnessing the power of Highest and Best came to my rescue in a big way.

I established three daily rules that I believed would point me in the right direction.

- Do the best I can in the moment.
- Create some order each day.
- Celebrate at least one victory each day.

At this particular point in my journey, my Highest and Best wasn't very high nor anywhere near my best. Some days, my victory was as simple as making my bed, and others, a better attitude, a sparkle of hope.

It worked. Over time, my formula for shooting for my Highest and Best in the moment helped me navigate my way out of that dark period to a much better place. It has become a mantra for me when life gets tough. I cannot tell you how many times I have turned to this simple practice to redirect myself to a better place.

Feel free to use any or all parts of my formula to make it your own! Think of it as bread crumbs, leading you back to your Highest and Best. Remember, we need you, me, everyone, to be our Highest and Best as often and for as long as we can. It is important.

The Power of Permission

Early in my coaching career, I learned the power of permission. I experienced client after client who, upon receiving outside permission (in these cases from me), was able to take on new challenges, handle difficult jobs, escape abusive relationships, change jobs, start businesses, return to school, all soaring to success and their Highest and Best. At first, I wondered, “Who am I to give them permission?” It didn’t take long to realize it wasn’t me so much as it was someone believing in them and them hearing what they longed to hear: “You can do it! You can be your Highest and Best!”

There were times that many of them also needed permission to quit. I have lost count of the number of people, frustrated and scared, who wanted to throw in the towel as they were striving to accomplish their goals. They all found amazing strength to carry on when they knew they had permission to quit. I have seen it with clients, friends, and family, even myself. I can’t think of one person I have worked with whom I “gave permission to quit,” who actually gave up on their dreams. It was as if knowing that they could quit gave them the strength and courage to hang in there until they met with success.

You have my permission to take on your greatest dreams and succeed. If the going gets too tough, you also have my permission

to quit. Keeping your Highest and Best in your sights will guide you, moment-by-moment, day-to-day, in your work, play and relationships. Like I said before, some days, your Highest and Best

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will look amazing and sometimes it won't.

Embracing this can be a great motivator and increase your compassion for yourself and others. This can be life-changing, particularly if you are like the many who

have more compassion for others than for themselves.

As you get to know yourself from the vantage point of Highest and Best, you may find it necessary to make changes and adjustments to your thoughts, words, and deeds to point yourself in the right direction. Don't be afraid to get some support if you find you are continually running yourself or others down or just can't seem to do what it takes to be your best. Some of these habits can be hard to break, but it's so worth it.

Now let me show you some tools that will make aiming for your Highest and Best a bit easier.