

What is Brain-based Coaching?

Brain-based coaching can best be defined as facilitating positive change by first improving thinking.

Brain-based coaching is a new approach rooted in contemporary neuroscience, or the scientific study of the brain and nervous system. It uses the latest insights into how the brain works to complement and amplify the principles and practices of coaching. This helps clients break out of their deeply hardwired “autopilot mode” and move into conscious thought and deliberate action. This helps them embed new and positive habits in their brains to create long-lasting, transformational changes.

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How and why does brain-based coaching work?

Brain-based coaching works by bringing to bear all the resources and resourcefulness of you, the client, in focused and motivated effort to progress your goals. It does this by creating an environment conducive to new insight, creating the space to think deeply about the topics that matter most to you; and in the way most appropriate for you and your brain.

Within a coaching conversation, as a client, you will experience a focus and attention that enables you to develop greater self-awareness and a deeper appreciation of your circumstances: both challenge and opportunity. You will create for yourself new ways to resolve issues, produce better results and generally achieve goals more easily.

What makes brain-based coaching so different?

Latest neuroscientific research (since the relatively recent advent of brain-imaging techniques in the 1970s and 1980s) has uncovered a number of discoveries that expose many of the otherwise standard practices for self-improvement as largely ineffective.

These insights tell us that the key to helping others improve, achieve and succeed, is to help them think for themselves. Brain-based coaching is founded on this principle.

Here are 6 fascinating insights about the brain that have helped shape brain-based coaching as a new approach to thinking, learning, development and lasting change.

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- Insight #1: The brain is a connection machine.
- Insight #2: No two brains are wired the same.
- Insight #3: The brain sees the world according to its own wiring.
- Insight #4: The brain hardwires everything it can.
- Insight #5: It's practically impossible to deconstruct our hardwiring.
- Insight #6: It's really easy to create new wiring.

ref. David Rock, *Quiet Leadership* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006).

Applying these insights to the practice of coaching produces impressive and long-lasting benefits for clients, including:

- Greater clarity for an improved sense of direction and focus.
- Increased self-awareness and responsibility.
- Improved ability to relate to and influence others.
- Increased confidence, motivation and conviction.
- Improved personal productivity and effectiveness.
- Increased resourcefulness and resilience.

Achieving a "Toward" State

Another important insight from neuroscientific research involves putting the brain in a "toward state," which means the brain is ready to explore new ideas and does not feel threatened. Being in a toward state while coaching allows the clients to fully explore, discover and define their vision, identify their barriers and limiting beliefs and set challenging -- but achievable -- goals that keep them motivated to move forward. Acknowledging the fear center of the brain and understanding how our limiting beliefs are formed ensures that clients are not settling for limited aspirations. Additionally, it allows them to ensure their long and short-term goals mesh with their core values.

When working within the brain-based coaching framework, much or all of the neuroscience will be invisible to the client: After all, it's a coaching session, not a science lesson. But as a coach, we use our deep knowledge of neuroscience at every step, developing a brain-friendly coaching environment that will focus on clients' thinking; help clients break out of autopilot; encourage new thinking and insight; leverage the brain's preference for hardwiring; and embed new learning and behaviors.