

Coach-Centered vs. Client-Centered

Chapter 4: Coaching

Are you sometimes too focused on your knowledge, expertise, and authority (what I call “coach-centered”) instead of focusing on the lives and embodied experiences of your clients (what I call “client-centered”)? If so, that’s normal, especially at the beginning of our careers.

Here’s one way to change that.

Coach-centered approach

If a client comes to you with a question that you think you have a slam-dunk answer for, it’s easy to feel like a kid in a classroom. “I know this! I know this!” For example, someone’s not losing weight, you look at their food journal, and boom! “Replace that potato with veggies and you’re all set!”

The problem is that, without a discussion, you don’t know enough about why the potato is in their diet in the first place. Nor, without the client’s input, do you know whether they’ll even want to remove it (or if they’d prefer to remove something else from a different meal).

Client-centered approach

Instead of blurting out your knee-jerk solution, this is a perfect time to ask questions about your client’s exercise, overall eating patterns, which foods they can (and can’t) live without, what’s convenient and easy to eat, and so on.

Once you learn more about the client, you can discuss how, for their goals, they might be eating more carbs, or calories, than optimal. Then, finally, you can ask how they might adjust their diet to make the necessary improvements. One of my favorite ways to open the discussion is: “I have a few ideas on what to do next here, but I’d love to hear yours first.”

Remember that while you’re expert on the body, your client is the world’s number-one expert on his or her own life. Therefore, great coaching can only happen when a coach integrates his or her own expertise with the necessary expertise of the client.

These activities and worksheets are taken from the book **Change Maker**: Turn your passion for health and fitness into a powerful purpose and a wildly successful career by John Berardi, PhD.

Check it out at: www.changemakeracademy.com/book