



Health Coach Scope of Practice & Business Guide



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A hand holding a graduation cap with a tassel against a blue sky background. The cap is dark purple and the tassel is gold. The hand is wearing a silver bracelet and a blue sleeve.

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Introduction

In this guide, we will explore the various facets of health coaching, including the scope of practice, business considerations, and legalities. Understanding what health coaches can/cannot do, can/cannot say is crucial to maintaining professional boundaries and ensuring ethical practice. Additionally, we will delve into the essential aspects of setting up and managing a successful health coaching business, from marketing strategies to financial management.

Furthermore, we will introduce you to various tools and resources that can enhance your coaching practice. From coaching techniques and behavioral change models to technology and software solutions, these resources will equip you with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively support your clients.

Finally, we will discuss the characteristics of the ideal health coaching client, helping you identify and attract individuals who are most likely to benefit from your services. By understanding what makes a great client, you can build a thriving practice that delivers meaningful results.

This guide aims to be a comprehensive resource that supports you at every stage of your health coaching journey. Whether you are looking to refine your skills, expand your knowledge, or grow your business, the information provided here will help you achieve your goals and make a positive impact on the lives of your clients.

What Health Coaches CAN Do



Health coaches play a crucial role in the wellness industry by helping clients develop and implement sustainable health and wellness plans. Their responsibilities include:

- **Assessment and Goal Setting:** Conducting comprehensive health assessments to understand clients' current health status, lifestyle habits, and wellness goals.
- **Education:** Providing clients with information on nutrition, exercise, stress management, and other health-related topics.
- **Behavioral Support:** Using motivational interviewing and other coaching techniques to help clients overcome obstacles and make lasting behavioral changes.
- **Action Planning:** Collaborating with clients to create realistic and achievable action plans.
- **Monitoring Progress:** Regularly reviewing clients' progress and adjusting plans as needed to ensure they stay on track toward their goals.
- **Encouragement and Accountability:** Offering continuous support and accountability to help clients maintain their commitment to their health and wellness objectives.

What Health Coaches Can NOT do



Health coaches must adhere to ethical and legal boundaries to avoid practicing outside their scope. They cannot:

- **Diagnose Medical Conditions:** Health coaches are not licensed medical professionals and cannot diagnose or treat medical conditions.
- **Prescribe Medication:** Health coaches cannot prescribe or suggest medications.
- **Provide Medical Advice:** Offering medical advice or making medical recommendations is beyond the scope of health coaching.
- **Perform Clinical Procedures:** Health coaches cannot perform clinical procedures or interventions.
- **Replace Medical Care:** Health coaching is intended to complement, not replace, medical care provided by licensed healthcare professionals.



What Health Coaches CAN Say



Examples:

- "Based on your goals, incorporating more fruits and vegetables into your diet could be beneficial."
- "Regular exercise can help improve your energy levels and overall health."
- "Let's set some achievable goals for your stress management practices."
- "I recommend reading a book about habits or mindset, to provide some extra support when making lifestyle changes."



What Health Coaches Can NOT say



Examples:

- "You should stop taking your current medication and try this supplement instead."
- "I can help you cure your condition with this specific diet."
- "You have [specific medical condition] based on what you've told me."
- "These essential oils will treat your depression."



Legal Requirements for Health Coaches



The legal requirements for health coaches vary by state, but several common elements apply across the United States. Health coaches should be aware of these, to ensure they practice legally and ethically. Here's an overview of the general legal requirements:

1. Scope of Practice

Health coaches must understand and adhere to their scope of practice, which typically includes:

- **Wellness Promotion:** Focus on promoting general wellness and healthy lifestyle changes.
- **Behavioral Change Support:** Assist clients with setting and achieving health-related goals.
- **Education:** Provide information on nutrition, exercise, stress management, and other wellness topics.

2. Title and Representation

- **Accurate Representation:** Health coaches must accurately represent their qualifications, training, and scope of services. Misrepresenting oneself as a licensed healthcare provider is illegal.
- **Protected Titles:** Certain titles, such as “nutritionist” or “dietitian,” may be legally protected and require specific credentials. Coaches should use titles like “health coach” or “wellness coach” unless they hold the appropriate licensure.

3. Licensing and Compliance

- **Business License:** Depending on local regulations, a business license may be required to operate. Coaches should check with their city or county government for specific requirements.
- **Practice license:** GEHA, offering USA citizens an Ecclesiastical license to keep wellness services safe/legal.
- **Zoning Laws:** If conducting in-person sessions, coaches must ensure their office space complies with local zoning laws.

GEHA - providing a legal
scope of practice to
Health Coaches:
www.GEHAssociation.org



4. Insurance and Liability

- Professional Liability Insurance: Carrying professional liability insurance is highly recommended to protect against legal claims.
- Client Agreements: Coaches should use clear client agreements that outline the nature of the coaching relationship, including the coach's qualifications, scope of practice, and limitations.

5. Confidentiality and Privacy

- Client Confidentiality: Coaches must maintain confidentiality of client information and adhere to best practices for data protection.
- HIPAA Compliance: While health coaches are typically not covered entities under HIPAA, those who work with covered entities or handle protected health information must comply with HIPAA regulations.

As a GEHA practitioner, you are pre-qualified for a liability policy with Lockton.



The Ideal Client for a Health Coach

The perfect client for a health coach is someone who is motivated and ready to make positive changes in their lifestyle. This individual is typically seeking guidance, support, and accountability to achieve their health and wellness goals. Here are some characteristics of an ideal client for a health coach:

1. Open to Change

A great health coaching client is someone who acknowledges the need for change and is open to new ideas and strategies. They are willing to step out of their comfort zone and try new approaches to improve their health and well-being.

2. Committed to Their Goals

The perfect client is committed to setting and achieving specific health goals. They have a clear vision of what they want to accomplish and are dedicated to working towards those goals, even when faced with challenges.

3. Ready to Take Responsibility

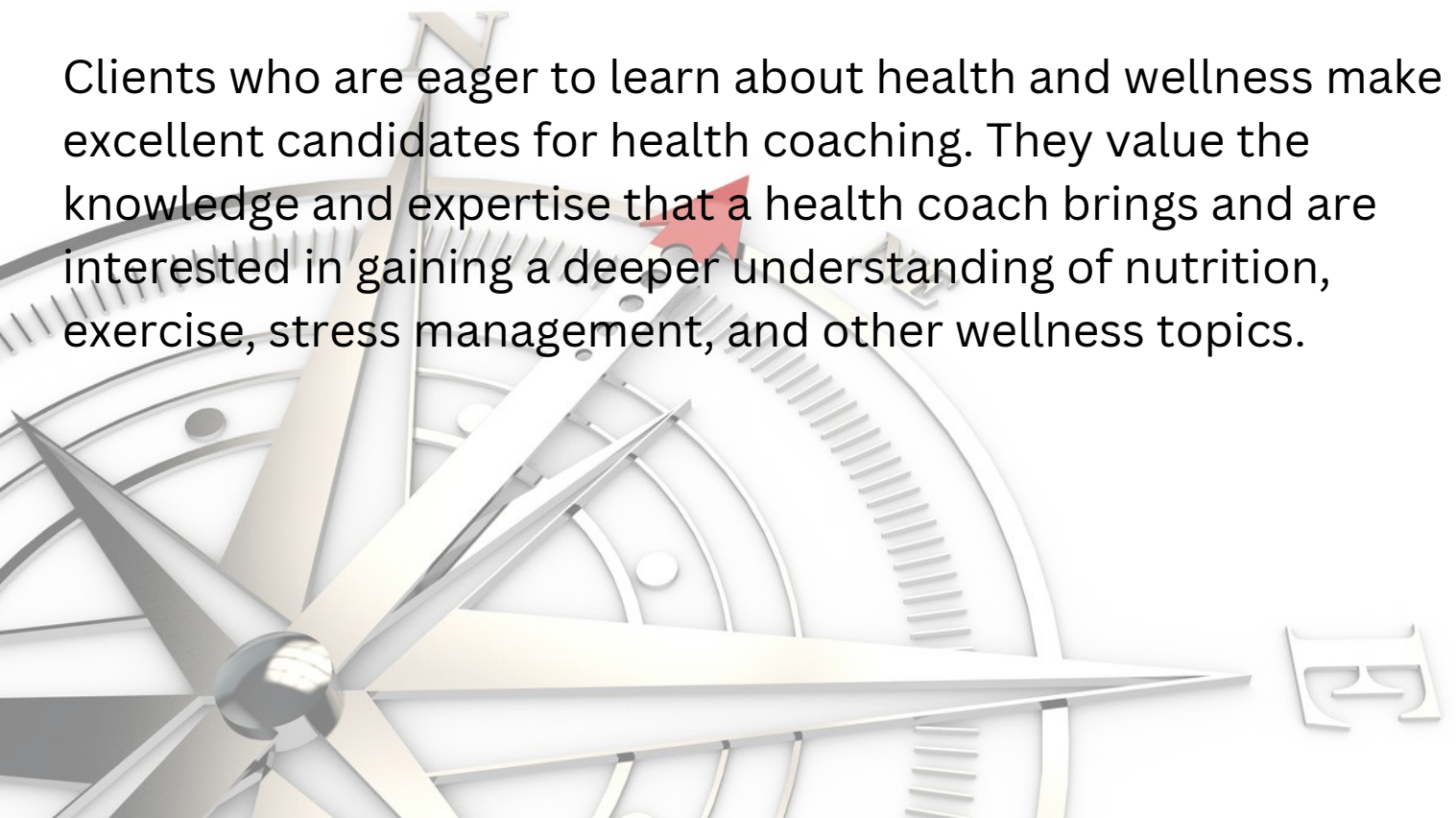
Ideal clients understand that they are responsible for their health and are ready to take ownership of their actions and decisions. They recognize that a health coach can guide and support them, but the ultimate responsibility for making changes lies with them.

4. Willing to Collaborate

A successful health coaching relationship is built on collaboration. The perfect client is willing to work closely with their health coach, actively participating in sessions, sharing their thoughts and concerns, and providing honest feedback.

5. Seeking Education and Guidance

Clients who are eager to learn about health and wellness make excellent candidates for health coaching. They value the knowledge and expertise that a health coach brings and are interested in gaining a deeper understanding of nutrition, exercise, stress management, and other wellness topics.



6. Open to Accountability

A perfect client appreciates the role of accountability in achieving their health goals. They are open to regular check-ins, progress tracking, and constructive feedback from their health coach to stay motivated and on track.

7. Positive Mindset

Having a positive mindset and a willingness to focus on solutions rather than problems is essential for a successful coaching experience. The ideal client approaches challenges with optimism and resilience, believing that positive change is possible.

8. Seeking Long-term Wellness

The perfect client for a health coach understands the importance of sustainable, long-term wellness. They recognize that true health is not achieved through quick fixes or fad diets, but through consistent, healthy habits and lifestyle changes that can be maintained over time. These clients are committed to making lasting improvements that will enhance their overall quality of life. They are interested in learning how to create balanced meal plans, incorporate regular physical activity, manage stress effectively, and establish routines that promote overall well-being.

9. Clear Communication

Effective communication is essential for a successful health coaching relationship. The ideal client communicates openly and honestly with their health coach, sharing their thoughts, feelings, and any challenges they encounter. They are willing to discuss their goals, progress, and any obstacles that may arise. Clear communication allows the health coach to provide tailored guidance and support, ensuring that the client's needs and preferences are met. This also includes being receptive to feedback and willing to make adjustments as necessary.

10. Respectful and Appreciative

A great client respects the professional boundaries and expertise of their health coach. They value the knowledge and experience that the coach brings to the table and appreciate the time and effort invested in their wellness journey. This mutual respect fosters a positive and productive coaching relationship. Clients who are respectful and appreciative are more likely to engage fully in the coaching process, follow through on recommendations, and achieve their health goals.

Health Coaching Business Topics

Setting Up a Health Coaching Practice

Starting a health coaching practice involves several steps. First, choose a legal business structure, such as a sole proprietorship, LLC, or corporation, that best suits your practice. Next, obtain the necessary business licenses and permits required by your state and local government. It's also wise to consider obtaining professional liability insurance to protect against potential legal claims.

Marketing and Client Acquisition

Building a successful health coaching practice requires effective marketing and client acquisition strategies. Develop a strong brand identity, including a logo, website, and marketing materials. Create a website and utilize social media platforms to reach potential clients. Networking is crucial, so build relationships with healthcare professionals, wellness centers, and community organizations to generate referrals. Additionally, share valuable content through blogs, newsletters, and webinars to establish yourself as an expert in the field.

Client Management

Managing clients effectively is key to a successful practice. Develop a thorough intake process to gather necessary information from new clients. Plan and structure coaching sessions to maximize their effectiveness and maintain detailed records of client sessions, progress, and communications. Ensure client confidentiality by complying with relevant privacy laws, such as HIPAA in the United States.

Financial Management

Effective financial management is crucial for the sustainability of your practice. Determine your pricing strategy, including session rates, packages, and payment plans. Keep accurate financial records and consider using accounting software to manage your finances.

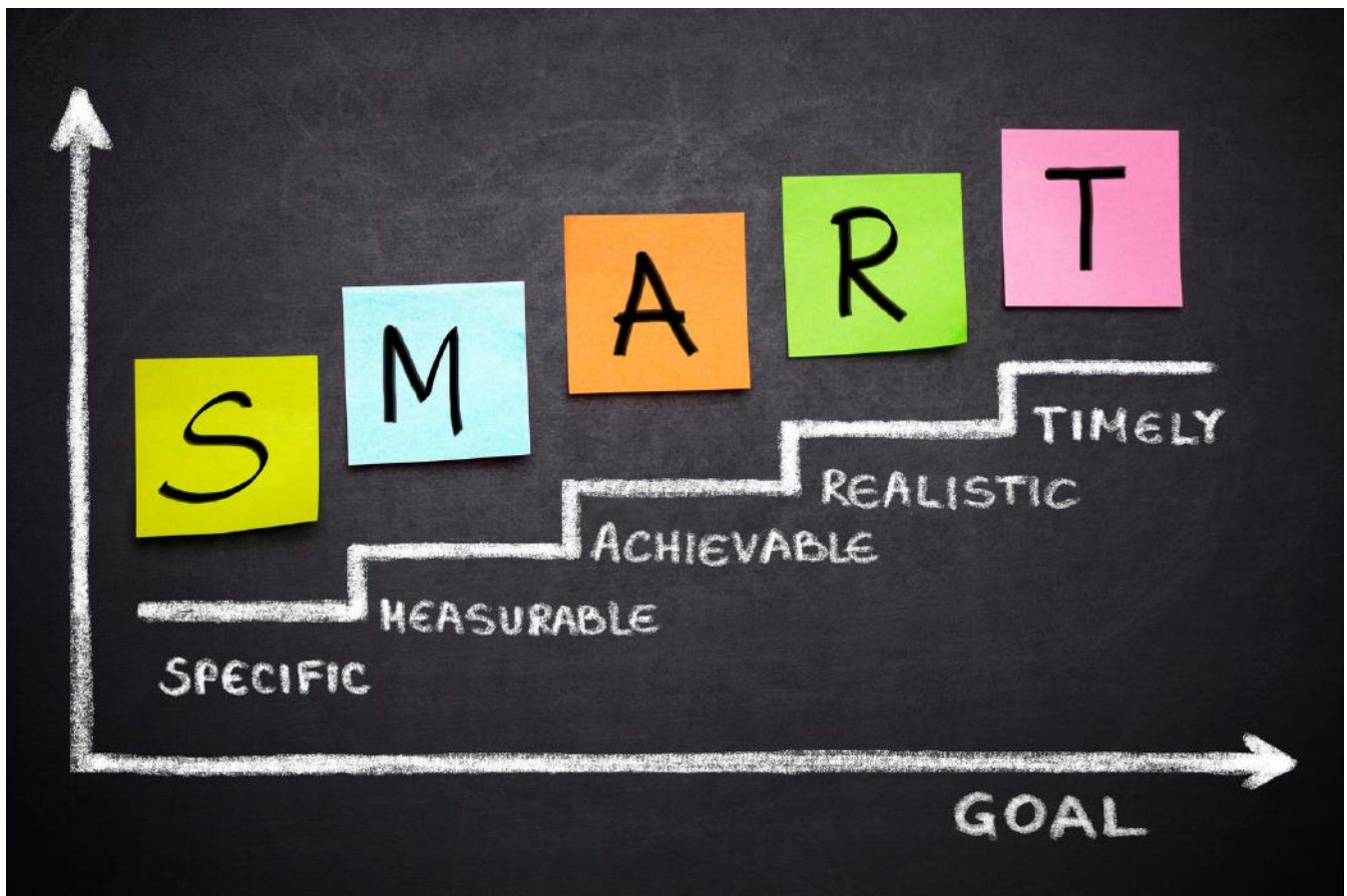
Understand your tax obligations and consider working with a tax professional to ensure compliance.



Coaching Tools

Coaching Techniques and Resources

There are several coaching techniques and resources that can enhance your effectiveness as a health coach. Motivational interviewing is a client-centered approach that enhances motivation to change by exploring and resolving ambivalence. The SMART Goals framework helps in setting Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound goals. Understanding behavioral change models, like the Transtheoretical Model (Stages of Change), can help tailor coaching strategies to meet clients' needs.



Technology and Software

Leveraging technology can streamline your practice. Practice management software such as [Healthie](#), [PracticeBetter](#), and [SimplePractice](#) can help with client management, scheduling, and record-keeping. Secure communication platforms like Zoom or HIPAA-compliant telehealth services are essential for virtual coaching sessions. Nutrition and fitness apps like MyFitnessPal, Cronometer, and Fitbit can help clients track their progress and stay engaged.

