

The ICF Philosophy, Definition, and Pledge of Ethics

The ICF Philosophy of Coaching

The International Coach Federation adheres to a form of coaching that honors the client as the expert in his/her life and work, believes that every client is creative, resourceful, and whole. Standing on this foundation, the coach's responsibility is to:

- Discover, clarify, and align with what the client wants to achieve
- Encourage client self-discovery
- Elicit client-generated solutions and strategies
- Hold the client responsible and accountable

The ICF Definition of Coaching

Professional Coaching is an ongoing professional relationship that helps people produce extraordinary results in their lives, careers, businesses or organizations. Through the process of coaching, clients deepen their learning, improve their performance, and enhance their quality of life.

In each meeting, the client chooses the focus of conversation, while the coach listens and contributes observations and questions. This interaction creates clarity and moves the client into action. Coaching accelerates the client's progress by providing greater focus and awareness of choice. Coaching concentrates on where clients are now and what they are willing to do to get where they want to be in the future, recognizing that results are a matter of the client's intentions, choices and actions, supported by the coach's efforts and application of the coaching process.

- ***Coaching:*** Coaching is partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.
- ***A professional coaching relationship:*** A professional coaching relationship exists when coaching includes a business agreement or contract that defines the responsibilities of each party.
- ***An ICF Professional Coach:*** An ICF Professional Coach also agrees to practice the ICF Professional Core Competencies and pledges accountability to the ICF Code of Ethics.

The ICF Pledge of Ethics

As a professional coach, I acknowledge and agree to honor my ethical obligations to my coaching clients and colleagues and to the public at large. I pledge to comply with ICF Standards of Ethical Conduct, to treat people with dignity as independent and equal human beings, and to model these standards with those whom I coach. If I breach this Pledge of Ethics or any ICF Standards of Ethical Conduct, I agree that the ICF in its sole discretion may hold me accountable for so doing. I further agree that my accountability to the ICF for any breach may include loss of my ICF membership or my ICF credentialing.

The ICF Standards of Ethical Conduct

Preamble: ICF Professional Coaches aspire to conduct themselves in a manner that reflects positively upon the coaching profession; are respectful of different approaches to coaching; and recognize that they are also bound by applicable laws and regulations.

Section 1: Professional Conduct At Large

As a coach:

1. I will not knowingly make any public statement that is untrue or misleading about what I offer as a coach or make false claims in any written documents relating to the coaching profession or my credentials or the ICF.
2. I will accurately identify my coaching qualifications, expertise, experience, certifications and ICF Credentials.
3. I will recognize and honor the efforts and contributions of others and not misrepresent them as my own. I understand that violating this standard may leave me subject to legal remedy by a third party.
4. I will, at all times, strive to recognize personal issues that may impair, conflict or interfere with my coaching performance or my professional coaching relationships. Whenever the facts and circumstances necessitate, I will promptly seek professional assistance and determine the action to be taken, including whether it is appropriate to suspend or terminate my coaching relationship(s).
5. I will conduct myself in accordance with the ICF Code of Ethics in all coach training, coach mentoring and coach supervisory activities.
6. I will conduct and report research with competence, honesty and within recognized scientific standards and applicable subject guidelines. My research will be carried out with the necessary consent and approval of those involved and with an approach that will protect participants from any potential harm. All research efforts will be performed in a manner that complies with all the applicable laws of the country in which the research is conducted.
7. I will maintain, store, and dispose of any records created during my coaching business in a manner that promotes confidentiality, security and privacy, and complies with any applicable laws and agreements
8. I will use ICF Member contact information (email addresses, telephone numbers, etc.) only in the manner and to the extent authorized by the ICF.

Section 2: Conflicts of Interest

As a coach:

9. I will seek to avoid conflicts of interest and potential conflicts of interest and openly disclose any such conflicts. I will offer to remove myself when such a conflict arises.
10. I will disclose to my client and his or her sponsor all anticipated compensation from third parties that I may pay or receive for referrals of that client.
11. I will only barter for services, goods or other non-monetary remuneration when it will not impair the coaching relationship.
12. I will not knowingly take any personal, professional or monetary advantage or benefit of the coach-client relationship, except by a form of compensation as agreed in the agreement or contract.

Section 3: Professional Conduct with Clients

As a coach:

13. I will not knowingly mislead or make false claims about what my client or sponsor will receive from the coaching process or from me as the coach.
14. I will not give my prospective clients or sponsors information or advice I know or believe to be misleading or false.
15. I will have clear agreements or contracts with my clients and sponsor(s). I will honor all agreements or contracts made in the context of professional coaching relationships.
16. I will carefully explain and strive to ensure that, prior to or at the initial meeting, my coaching client and sponsor(s) understand the nature of coaching, the nature and limits of confidentiality, financial arrangements, and any other terms of the coaching agreement or contract.
17. I will be responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries that govern any physical contact I may have with my clients or sponsors.
18. I will not become sexually intimate with any of my current clients or sponsors.
19. I will respect the client's right to terminate the coaching relationship at any point during the process, subject to the provisions of the agreement or contract. I will be alert to indications that the client is no longer benefiting from our coaching relationship.
20. I will encourage the client or sponsor to make a change if I believe the client or sponsor would be better served by another coach or by another resource.
21. I will suggest my client seek the services of other professionals when deemed necessary or appropriate.

Section 4: Confidentiality/Privacy

As a coach:

22. I will maintain the strictest levels of confidentiality with all client and sponsor information. I will have a clear agreement or contract before releasing information to another person, unless required by law.
23. I will have a clear agreement upon how coaching information will be exchanged among coach, client and sponsor.
24. When acting as a trainer of student coaches, I will clarify confidentiality policies with the students.
25. I will have associated coaches and other persons whom I manage in service of my clients and their sponsors in a paid or volunteer capacity make clear agreements or contracts to adhere to the ICF Code of Ethics Part 2, Section 4: Confidentiality/Privacy standards and the entire ICF Code of Ethics to the extent applicable.

This is the current version from the ICF site, as of January 2013. The Ethics FAQ page has useful information about each of the standards. See <http://bit.ly/18YAvqs> for more details.