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Ashridge's Code of Conduct for Coaches

Introduction
The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to establish and maintain standards for coaches and to inform and protect members of the public, their individual clients and organizations seeking their services.
Ethical standards comprise such values as integrity, competence, confidentiality and responsibility. Ashridge coaches, in assenting to this Code, accept their responsibility to clients, colleagues and Ashridge. The client's interest is paramount, but where coaches have a conflict of responsibilities they have to use their considered judgment. Therefore the Code of Conduct is a framework within which to work rather than a set of instructions.

General principles
Firstly, we maintain that:

1. Coach and client enter into an equal relationship which is used intentionally for the benefit of the client.

2. Clients ultimately know best what is best for them and can decide for themselves what they do or do not want, both in their private and in their professional lives; clients are therefore also responsible for the choices that they make and accountable for their actions.

3. The responsibility of the coach is to give the client an opportunity to explore, discover and clarify ways of living and working more satisfyingly, effectively and resourcefully.

4. During coaching the goals, resources and choices of the client have priority over those of the coach.

Code of Ethics

Issues of responsibility

- Coaches are responsible for observing the principles embodied in this Code of Conduct.

- Coaches accept responsibility for encouraging and facilitating the self-development of the client within the client's own network of relationships.

- The coach takes account of the developmental level, abilities and needs of the client.

- The coach is aware of his/her own cultural identity and that of the client and of the possible implications of any similarities and differences for the coaching.

- Coaches are responsible for ensuring that they are not dependent upon relationships with their clients for satisfying their own emotional and other needs.

- During coaching the coach will not engage in non-coaching relationships, such as friendship, business or sexual relationships with their clients. Coaches are responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between working and other relationships, and for making the boundaries as explicit as possible to the client.

- The coach will cooperate in the handling of a complaints procedure if one is brought against him/her, and make sure that reasonable arrangements have been made for professional liability.

Issues of competence

- Coaches recognize the power inherent in their position: they realize that they can exert considerable influence, both consciously and unconsciously, on their clients and possibly also on third parties.

- Coaches are aware of the limitations both of their coaching and their personal skills and take care not to exceed either. They refer a client to a colleague, if necessary, and maintain a professional network to that end.

- Coaches commit themselves to training in coaching and undertake further training at intervals during their careers.

- Coaches seek ways of increasing their professional development and self-awareness.

- Coaches monitor their coaching work through regular supervision by professionally competent supervisors, and are able to account to individual clients, colleagues and client organizations for what they do and why.

- Coaches monitor the limits of their own competence.

- Coaches, along with their employers and organization clients, have a responsibility to themselves and their clients to maintain their own effectiveness, resilience and ability to help clients. They must be able to identify any situation in which their personal resources have become depleted to the extent that they must seek help and/or withdraw from coaching, whether temporarily or permanently.

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Code of Practice

This Code of Practice is intended to provide more specific information and guidance in the implementation of the principles embodied in the Code of Ethics.

Management of the work

- Coaches should inform clients as appropriate about their training and qualifications, and the methods they use.

- Coaches should clarify with clients the number and duration of sessions and level of fees. They should also explore a client's own expectations of what is involved in coaching with him/her.

- Coaches should gain the client's permission before conferring with other people about the client.

- Coaches should abstain from using any of the information that they have obtained during coaching for their own personal gain or benefit, except in the context of their own development as a coach.

- If there is another internal client (e.g. a manager), coaches must ensure before the coaching starts that all parties have the same information concerning the goal and structure of the coaching and the intended working method. The coaching can progress only if there is agreement between them with respect to its goals and structure. If there is any change in the situation or the assignment, the coach formally revises the arrangements with all parties.

- Coaches who become aware of a conflict between their obligations to a client and their obligation to an organization employing them will make explicit the nature of the loyalties and responsibilities involved.

- In situations where coaches have a difference of opinion with the client or other involved parties, they will maintain a reasonable attitude and keep dialogue open.

- Coaches work with clients to terminate coaching when the clients have received the help they sought, or when it is apparent that coaching is no longer helping them.

Confidentiality

- Coaches regard all information concerning the client – received directly, indirectly or from any other source – as confidential. They protect their clients against the use of personal information and against its publication unless this is authorized by the client or required by law.

- Treating information 'in confidence' means not revealing it to any other person or through any public medium, except to those whom coaches rely on for support and supervision.

- If coaches believe that a client could cause danger to others, they will advise the client that they may break confidentiality and take appropriate action to warn individuals or the authorities.

Advertising/Public Statements

- The coach obtains the agreement of the client before using the name of the client's organization or other information that can identify the client as a reference.

- Coaches do not advertise or display an affiliation with an organization in a manner that falsely implies the sponsorship or verification by that organization.

- Coaches do not make false, exaggerated or unfounded claims about what coaching will achieve.