

# How Coaching Can Boost Employee Development and Well-Being

A Guide for HR and People Leaders





# Table of contents

1	Coaching is part of the <i>spectrum of care</i>
2	<i>What is coaching</i> and how is it different from therapy?
3	Coaching as a <i>preventative measure</i>
4	Coaching specialties can be <i>beneficial for employees</i>
5	Coaching is <i>proven</i> to work
6	Where existing coaching solutions <i>fall short</i>
7	Factors to consider when choosing a <i>coaching</i> solution
8	The Spring Health <i>difference</i>

The growth potential and productivity of a company or organization is bounded by the individual well-being of its employees. Employees who are given the tools for personal and professional growth are more likely to contribute to organizational success.

Consequently, focusing on building employees' skill sets—especially in the areas of interpersonal communication, goal attainment, productivity, and overall well-being—is a pathway to company growth. It can also be a pathway to personal fulfillment.

Coaching is a powerful and underutilized tool for employee development and well-being. It can play a critical role in creating a workplace where employees have the capacity to flourish, and also delivers many benefits for employers.

In this white paper, we'll explore the differences between coaching and therapy, discuss coaching specialties that are particularly impactful for employees, look at where existing coaching solutions fall short, and finally, discuss key factors to consider when choosing a coaching solution.

## Coaching is part of the *spectrum of care*

A comprehensive mental health and well-being benefit offers a spectrum of services. Coaching is a powerful and often overlooked part of that spectrum. There's a need for more care options beyond therapy, or that work in parallel with therapy.

Although often considered solely a means of professional development, it's now [understood](#) that coaching may be used for employees who are struggling with anything in their personal or professional lives, or, for employees interested in personal betterment.

Gallup's 2023 [report](#) on the global workforce found that low engagement costs the global economy \$8.8 trillion. Only 23% of workers are fully engaged, 44% experience a lot of daily stress, and that percentage goes up for workers who are disengaged. In fact, engagement has 3.8 times the impact on daily stress than work location.

Coaching, as part of a comprehensive mental health solution, is one way to address the lack of employee engagement and daily workplace stress. Having a personal coach to guide an employee in meeting their personal and professional goals can fulfill that very human desire for growth, keeping employees from checking out.





## Other benefits of a quality coaching solution include:

- **Cost savings:** replacing multiple vendors that offer duplicative coaching services
- **As a preventative measure:** providing employee's support before personal challenges worsen and raise health spend
- **Addressing retention, burnout, and presenteeism:** [94% of employees](#) say they'll stay longer at a company with learning and development investment
- **Career development**
- **Confronting stigma:** unfortunately, there's still stigma around therapy. Coaching can function as an approachable entry point

Coaching is its own professional service, distinct from therapy but also can be integrated into an individual's personalized care plan as a first step toward mental and physical well-being, independent from other care modalities. It can also be used as a complementary aspect of care, in parallel with therapy or self-guided digital resources.

## *What is coaching and how is it different from therapy?*

Coaching is a collaborative, solution-focused partnership between a professional coach and their client. It is meant to facilitate the achievement of both personal and professional goals. It's not meant as a substitute for therapy or as a treatment for clinical mental health conditions.

However, coaching and therapy can complement each other for individuals who are experiencing mental health difficulties and also seeking help in bettering their lives.

Coaches use evidence-based tools and strategies to help their clients break through whatever is holding them back from becoming the best version of themselves.

Therapists help clients feel better.  
Coaches help clients do better.

Therapy requires a diagnosis for insurance purposes, while coaches are not qualified to diagnose or provide treatment for mental health conditions. Instead, coaches focus on cognitive-behavioral patterns that may be hindering growth and goal achievement.

These goals may include career advancement, financial planning, fitness improvement, navigating relationships, and enhancing executive functioning.

Both therapists and coaches utilize cognitive-behavioral techniques (CBT) and solution-focused models. CBT can be used to identify thought patterns influencing emotions and behaviors.



## Coaches act as *co-pilots*

Life truly is a journey—the greatest road trip of all. What roles might a coach and therapist play helping individuals navigate their journey?

A coach is like a copilot. You tell them where you want to go, or the kinds of places you like to travel, and they help you explore your options for how to get there and what you may need to bring with you.

A therapist is like a trusted mechanic who helps you diagnose your ‘check engine light’ and tune up your car to ensure it’s running well. They can also help you learn to recognize and navigate around potholes and bumps.

### **Which is to say that coaches help their clients:**

- Set and achieve personal goals
- Build new skill sets
- Develop healthier habits

A coach doesn’t tell their client what to do, but recognizes that they are the expert of their own life—while helping them discover their own solutions or what works best for their situation.

Coaching is a solution-focused modality. It enables coaches to encourage the client to envision their life without the problem they are seeking to address, while also helping them amplify strengths and collaborate on actionable plans. These aspects of coaching make it a useful preventative care option.





## Coaching as a *preventative measure*

Preventative care is critical for staying healthy and addressing potential mental or physical health problems early on—before they cause more severe issues and become difficult and costly to treat.

Integrating coaching into mental health and well-being benefits can create a dynamic where employees are able to get ahead of potential breakdowns, [burnout](#), or long term health effects by engaging in holistic [personal growth](#). Coaching plays a crucial role in promoting preventive care through behavioral change, risk assessment, and lifestyle adjustments.

For example, an employee may be struggling to quiet their mind from the busyness of the work day and experience difficulties falling asleep. A coach might help them plan a before bed routine that gradually brings calm to their mind and preps their body for sleep.

By addressing such struggles proactively, the employee doesn't develop more serious problems. Employees dealing with [sleepiness at work](#) are [70% more likely](#) to be involved in workplace accidents.

Another employee may be struggling to get enough physical activity during their work day and seek out a coach to help. A coach might partner with the employee to co-develop a plan for fitting activity into their normal routines. They may also work on meal prepping healthy foods so the employee is better able to take care of their body, possibly preventing future health issues.

As these examples illustrate, there are certain coaching specialties that may prove especially helpful for the unique needs of employees.





## Coaching specialties can be *beneficial for employees*

Employees all have unique needs. They struggle with anxiety, balance multiple roles, deal with sleep issues, and desire personal and professional growth. And they bring these issues with them when they walk through the office door or log on at the beginning of a workday.

Coaching can be as broad or narrow as the individual needs of an employee. Some employees may have one specific issue they want to hone in on—financial management, for example. Another employee may be having a hard time balancing raising a child with work, and also dealing with some sleep issues. A third employee may want help reaching their professional development goals while also to reduce burnout.

There are specific types of coaching that can address these needs, which are widespread in the workplace. Many employees are not getting the support they desire, as [51% of currently employed workers](#) are watching for or actively seeking a new job. Another 44% of workers say they experienced a lot of stress the previous day at work, and [25% of working parents](#) are suffering from burnout.

Let's take a look at some of the coaching specialties in more detail, to show how employees and employers might benefit from having access to them.

### Parenting coaching

No matter what working parents do for a living, they are constantly torn between the demands of their families and personal lives. Even mild stress from this constant juggling can [affect cognitive function](#) and overall well-being.

To make matters worse, stress is compounded when support isn't readily available. One way employers can support working parents is by

offering parent coaching. This can allow them to identify the source of their stress, adopt coping tools, and prevent burnout.

With the guidance of a professional coach, parents receive assistance with addressing various challenges that can often emerge in child development. **Common issues that parent coaching can help with include:**

- Developmental challenges
- Mental and physical health
- Behavioral and learning challenges
- Substance abuse
- Trauma
- Family transitions
- The experience of being a new parent
- The importance of self care for parents and caregivers

Parent coaching provides caregivers with insights that allow them to embrace their roles as parent-leaders. It empowers them to make intentional decisions in their parenting approach and strategize methods to create a fulfilling, well-rounded experience for their family's well-being.

### Personal and professional development coaching

A coach who specializes in personal and professional development can encourage an individual's progress toward greater fulfillment and purpose. **Areas of focus may include:**

- Life transitions
- Identity support
- Career growth
- Improved communication
- Self-development
- Work-life balance

People who choose this route may not necessarily need therapy, but are seeking professional support for the many complex situations that arise in our lives. Or, they may feel stuck either personally or professionally (or both), and working with a coach is a way to create some momentum in their life.

## Health and wellness

A health and wellness coach can help an individual who is seeking improvements in their physical health and wellness through sustainable lifestyle and behavior changes. A coach can partner with their client to identify goals, and then work together to create a plan for achieving those goals.

### Areas of improvement may include:

- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Stress management and resiliency
- Sleep habits
- Mindfulness
- Self care

These coaching specialties are great for bolstering employees' mental and physical health, which contribute to their holistic well-being.

## Coaching is *proven* to work

In a [2013 meta-analysis](#) on the effects of coaching outcomes in an organizational context, the effect size was significant, pointing to the effectiveness of coaching in creating positive outcomes. The outcome categories in the analysis include: performance and skills, well-being, coping, work attitudes, and goal-directed self-regulation.

An even more recent [meta-analysis](#) of contemporary evidence-based coaching approaches found that psychologically informed coaching facilitates effective work-related outcomes, particularly in the areas of goal attainment and self-efficacy.



A 2016 randomized controlled [study](#) about the effectiveness of different forms of coaching (individual, group training, and self-coaching) found significant positive effects for participants engaging with individual coaching, in the realms of satisfaction, content-related knowledge, goal attainment, and procrastination.

They found individual coaching to be the most effective intervention to facilitate participant's goal attainment outcomes. Researchers also found that individual coaching "created a high degree of satisfaction and was superior in helping participants achieve their goals."



## Where existing coaching solutions *fall short*

As the coaching industry has [rapidly expanded](#), coaching solutions have also proliferated, leading to a crowded arena. Many of these solutions do not function in ways that effectively address the needs of employees.

Here are some common pitfalls to watch out for within existing solutions. **Often, they are:**

- **Overly narrow.** Many coaching solutions only focus on one type of need, such as nutrition, financial wellness, health coaching, or executive coaching. People are not single issue beings. Coaching solutions function best with the understanding that a holistic picture of health is needed.
- **Rife with duplicative services.** Some companies are paying for multiple vendors that offer coaching. This gets expensive and is not an effective way to deploy benefits.
- **Choice overload for employees.** Too many solutions create a confusing and disjointed process for employees to access benefits. If an employee is seeking coaching and sees their benefit includes coaching options from multiple vendors, it can be challenging to determine which one is most suitable for their needs.





## Factors to consider when choosing a *coaching* solution

In such a crowded market, what should HR and benefits leaders look for when choosing a coaching or well-being solution that includes coaching? How might they know whether a solution is capable of meeting the specific needs of its employee populations? Fortunately, there are several key criteria that are meaningful in determining how a quality solution is constructed and deployed.

### To get started, HR and benefits leaders might consider these guiding questions about their company's current benefits options:

- How many vendors in your benefits ecosystem offer coaching?
- How much are you paying for these services annually?
- What does current utilization look like?

Once these questions have been investigated, leaders may want to consider the following questions when searching for a quality coaching solution.

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#### ACCESSIBILITY

- Do coaches have appropriate specializations to meet the unique needs of an employee population? Examples might include: executive functioning, neurodiversity (ADHD), women's health (PCOS), and/or maternity care (doula).
- What is the average time to appointment?

#### EQUITY

- Are there comparable programs for US and global workforces?
- How is diversity prioritized during the process of hiring coaches?
- Can the solution ensure quality of care across multiple regions, for employees in both the U.S. and globally?

#### QUALITY MANAGEMENT

- Can your population receive multiple types of care at the same time (i.e. coaching and therapy)?
- Is everyone directed to one type of care, as a first step, or is there flexibility based on need?
- How are care options recommended?
- What is the escalation process if an individual is in need of clinical care?

#### OUTCOMES

- Does the solution utilize an evidence-informed coaching approach?
- What outcomes are tracked and shared with the buyer?
- How does the solution measure improvements among the populations using it?

Answering these questions can lead HR and benefit leaders to a better understanding of what a quality coaching solution might look like.



## The Spring Health *difference*

Spring Health’s comprehensive benefit offers a one-stop shop that includes coaching as part of a holistic ecosystem of care for employees. Our benefit’s coaching options are built on the foundation of a precision mental health assessment, a personalized care plan, and a dedicated Care Navigator. Any Spring Health member can access coaching—either on its own, or in parallel with other care modalities.

Members have more choice in what types of care they receive. We believe that a holistic spectrum of care must include more than just therapy. If a member is unsure about what course of care is right for them, they can always talk to a master’s level licensed clinician—a Care Navigator—to help them figure it out. **The backbone of Spring Health’s coaching solution includes:**

### ACCESSIBILITY

- Average time to appointment is 2 days.
- Unlike other solutions, Spring Health doesn’t step care. Members aren’t automatically filtered into therapy or coaching and can engage in both care options at the same time.
- Through assessment questions, we determine how coaching fits into a member’s care plan. Coaches work closely with other members of the Spring Health Care team, particularly Care Navigators, to monitor signs that a higher level of care (like therapy) is needed.
- Members with more severe mental health challenges are still able to access coaching, once they speak with a Care Navigator for risk assessment.
- We offer direct scheduling with a coach of their choice.


### CARE EQUITY

- Rather than use multiple vendors to provide different types of care, Spring Health offers an all-encompassing benefit, with one front door.
- Members mustn’t shoulder the burden of deciding what type of care they need. Through our precision mental health platform, we can find the right combination of care options.
- Coaching solutions of comparable quality are available for U.S.-based companies with global employees.

### QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Spring Health coaches go through a rigorous vetting process. They have formal certifications from institutions including the International Coaching Federation (ICF) and National Board for Health and Wellness Coaching (NBHWC), speak 20+ languages, and have unique specializations, including:

- **Women’s Health:** PCOS, hormone issues, infertility, pre- and post-natal support
- **Executive functioning, neurodivergence, ADHD, autism support**
- **Career and leadership coaching**
- **Financial well-being:** certified money coaching, financial empowerment, money mindset
- **Recovery and sobriety support,** including support for family and friends of people in recovery or who are experiencing a substance use disorder
- **Sleep:** including sleep stress and recovery coaching
- **Non-violent communication, conflict resolution**



Spring Health coaches are part of a member's dedicated care team. Coaches communicate with other care team members—therapists, Care Navigators, and support specialists—in the Spring Health Care Network. Coaches can also refer patients and share relevant care information (with consent).



## Coaching outcomes illustrate the Spring Health difference

The average member satisfaction rating for Spring Health's coaching options is 9.4 out of 10. Our members who utilize coaching are finding themselves with a better quality of life and improvements in overall well-being. **Digging a little deeper into the quantitative outcomes:**

- Recent [WHO-5 Wellbeing Index](#) data shows that members with enhanced coaching have an 18% average improvement in overall quality of life (10% is significant).
- Balance of Life Outcomes: a member survey that assesses percentage increase from pre-BoL to post-BoL shows sizeable improvements in multiple aspects of life:
  - **Finances: 23.8% increase**
  - **Health and Wellbeing: 51.2% increase**
  - **Career: 53.4% increase**

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### *In their own words*

#### **Spring Health members talk about how coaching has improved their lives:**

##### **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT COACHING:**

"I'm a manager trying to grow into a bigger role in the company and asked my coach for career support. She gives me smart advice on how to do things using my own strength with a structure that is easy to apply to many different situations." - **Spring Health Member**

##### **HEALTH AND WELLNESS COACHING:**

"My coach has helped me adjust to/navigate a physical health challenge which has been affecting my sense of mental well-being. She has helped me develop some clarity around the scenario. Together, we've come up with some activities to check into to support my well-being." - **Spring Health Member**

##### **PARENT COACHING:**

"Working with my parenting coach has been so productive and helpful in teaching me new skills and techniques to find a parenting approach that works. My stress level and feeling of parental helplessness were high prior to working with her. The outcome has been an overall healthier mindset and relationship with my child." - **Spring Health Member**

### **Final thoughts**

Workplace coaching is a valuable and underutilized tool for employee growth and development. Many employees are seeking out workplaces where they are given the tools to grow both personally and professionally, keeping them engaged and more productive. Simultaneously, workplace leaders are looking for ways to improve upon employee retention, presenteeism, and engagement.

Coaching is one possible avenue for achieving these converging goals. Research has shown that coaching is a boon to organizations and their people. Therefore finding a quality coaching solution amid a quickly expanding field of options becomes essential for HR and benefit leaders.

Locating the features of an effective solution is an important step for HR and benefits leaders—and one that you've now taken. Ready to take the next step?

[Request a demo](#) to experience the proven mental health solution for employers and health plans that changes lives and drives business results, everywhere.