



## Standard 1.1 – Case Study

### The Nature of Coaching and Agreements

#### Background

As an ICF professional, I should communicate (before coaching begins) with coaching Client(s), Sponsor(s), and/or other involved parties that the Coach is in a direct relationship with to explain the nature of coaching and to co-create a coaching agreement regarding roles, responsibilities, confidentiality, financial arrangements, and other aspects of the coaching engagement. Is there such a thing as too much information? Perhaps not when it comes to a coaching agreement. The more information that a coach can provide up front, the clearer expectations are understood. And it's okay to take a look at your agreement on a regular basis to see if anything needs to be updated.

#### Case Study

Gwen had been coaching Lissa for a few months now. Lissa was a recent University graduate who had hired Gwen to coach her through her job hunt and interviewing process. Gwen and Lissa had just finished a session where Gwen learned that Lissa's father wanted to speak with Gwen about Lissa's progress. Lissa did not want Gwen to speak with her father about her progress. She felt that her father would be disappointed that she was not doing more, but her father was paying for her coaching. Gwen sensed Lissa's discouragement and was concerned that Lissa would lose some of her forward movement if her father became more involved.

Gwen convinced Lissa to meet with her and her father for the three of them to discuss it together. Lissa seemed okay with how the conversation went, but the following session she began crying because her father was pushing her to do more. She was already stressed enough on her own and she didn't need her father adding to it.

#### Implications for Coaching

- When there is a sponsor who is financially involved, there should be an agreement with the sponsor as well as the client. And the agreements should be discussed with both parties for everyone to clearly understand their roles. (ICF Code of Ethics, Standard 1.1)
- The nature of coaching is a partnership between the coach and the client. ICF defines coaching as the partnering with Clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to recognize and maximize their personal and professional potential. (ICF's definition of coaching)

#### Possible outcomes or next steps

- **Seek outside support.** A coach in any ethical conundrum may choose to turn to their coach, mentor coach, coach supervisor, or coaching organization for support in navigating ethically confusing situations.
- **Listening.** A coach may just need to listen to their client express frustration. This also may help the client to sort out their feelings.

- **Revisit your sponsor agreement.** It is possible to review your agreement templates from time to time and see if anything needs to be updated. Consider what a sponsor agreement can look like when it's a parent/child relationship or an organization/employee relationship.

### **Discussion Points**

- Should Gwen have convinced Lissa to meet with her and her father because he is the Sponsor?
- What does Gwen do now that Lissa is feeling discouraged?
- If you were Gwen's coach supervisor, how would you support her?

### **Reference**

ICF Code of Ethics (2025)