



## [Becoming a Professional Life Coach](#)

By Patrick Williams and Diane Menendez

★★★★☆ (4 stars)

*Buy this book if you:*

- *Want an excellent introduction to life coaching in the secular or business arena*
- *Need coaching tools for helping others discover their life purpose, values and core beliefs*
- *Are a professional coach or therapist wanting to increase your skills and toolset*

This book, from the leaders of the Institute for Life Coach Training, is an excellent overview of the life coaching process and the core tools used in it. Williams is a therapist and a PhD who has trained a lot of therapists to coach, and one of the great strengths of the book is that it connects common coaching practices with tools and research from the psychological arena. For instance, the introduction is a lengthy look at the roots of coaching in psychology and psychotherapy, specifically listing what coaching draws from different schools of thought.

### What You'll Learn

The book begins with a solid section on the coaching fundamentals (listening and asking skills), then goes on to present some more advanced skills like endorsing and reframing. Several developmental models for stages in life or the change process are presented that I found quite helpful. Knowing these models helps a coach tune in more quickly to what is going on inside the client. For example, the cycle of renewal (pg. 93.) is a great tool to help clients decide if it is time to really go for it, to step back and retool, or to think about changing roles and activities. Another interesting tool in this section is a continuum of escalating ways to challenge a client's thinking (pg. 122).

The second half of the book introduces tools and methods for discovering and living out your life purpose. Along with an excellent discussion of what life purpose is (and the difference between vision, mission and purpose) are some great exercises to help clients tune into their own purpose. There is a section on life purpose statements, on helping people discovering destiny clues in past events, and a section on life design that helps you home in on the "gap" between what you want and where you are. The values chapter is particularly useful, with exercises approaching values discovery in several ways (different personality types do best with different approaches.) A chapter deals with blocks, energy drains and internal obstacles, with more exercises you can hand to a client.

I found the section starting with chapter 12 on boundaries, wealth and mind-set less helpful. It brings folds together ideas from different streams of psychology, neurological research, self-help concepts (like the law of attraction), NLP, etc. Christianity has a very particular set of beliefs, values, tools and vocabulary for dealing with internal issues and attitudes. While there are parallels here with biblical principles, some readers may object to the references to karma, energy, possibility thinking, etc, as well as to the underlying idea (common in self-help literature) that your mindset brings into being your reality.

#### Examining Life Coaching Values

As a Christian coach, you are going to have to do some sorting through of the underlying values and beliefs presented in this book, and in the life coaching movement as a whole. There are many things here I strongly agree with, such as the need to live toward a purpose, to understand yourself, and to know your strengths and weaknesses.

There are also some underlying beliefs I strongly disagree with. For instance, one theme in the book that is widespread in the life coaching movement is that "...we need to learn to love ourselves so that we have the capacity to love others" (pg 312). There is truth to that: it is hard to love when you are broken. But Jesus also models a different strain of love: a sacrificial, agape posture that proactively reaches out to the needy and demanding without regard to what it costs you. Here the authors encourage you to "set tight boundaries and attract great people... tight boundaries keep out needy and demanding people" (pg 261). Is that how Jesus would have us live? To put this values contrast in simple terms, Jesus says, "Give, and it will be given to you." The focus of life is on outflow, to others. Life coaching tends to tell us to, "Get, and you'll be able to give." The focus is on inflow, to me first. It's an important distinction. You need to be clear about your own philosophy as a Christian to integrate truths from other streams like this without wandering off course.

#### Summary

This book is the best introduction to the specific arena of life purpose coaching that I've seen. It's best strengths are the foundation in psychology and the tools and research it brings into coaching from that world. It also includes a plethora of exercises to use with your clients. The tone is on the academic side (although it is quite readable), and it needs more coaching dialogs and real life examples to bring it to life. This omission makes the book more suitable to those who already have a background in coaching. Don't make this the first coaching book you buy, but it is a great choice for the second or third one.

#### Reviewed by:

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