



Soul Meets Purpose

Are your client's goals driven by ego or soul?

By Tim Kelley

Coaching, as a relatively new profession, is still defining itself. A definition I favor is this, as a coach — I help my clients achieve goals. This contrasts with psychotherapy, which helps clients to fix personal problems. Goal setting is a key component of a coaching relationship, and it is a rich topic. I will address only one aspect of it — How do we know whether our clients' goals will serve them?

“An ego goal or desire that is not related to a person's life purpose will go nowhere.”

Most coaches have had a client set a goal the coach did not believe was healthy. Many of us have coached a client towards a reasonable-sounding goal, only to encounter ongoing resistance from the client. Most telling, it is often the case that a client's experience

of achieving a goal does not live up to their expectations. I contend that these are symptoms of poor goal setting, not necessarily poor coaching or bad faith on the part of the client. The distinction here is between goal *setting* and goal *clarification*.

More sophisticated coaching techniques establish a purpose (or mission) for the client first, then to set goals consistent with the purpose. There are two basic schools of thought about how to do this:

1. It is the coach's role to help the client create a purpose. Creating a purpose is much like setting a goal. It is the client's decision which purpose to pursue.
2. The client already has a purpose — they just don't know it. It is the coach's role to help the client to discover their purpose.

The first approach, while much simpler, has the same flaw as goal setting. How do we know whether the purpose a client creates will serve them? I submit that we have no choice but to assume that our clients already have a purpose and our role is to help them find it. Repeated experience with my clients has borne this

