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What Does a Health Coach Actually Do?

Fitness, Nutrition, and Accountability



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What Does a Health Coach Actually Do?



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What Does a Health Coach Actually Do?

A personal trainer is really a coach, right? You guide clients to set and meet goals through fitness and training sessions. You provide motivation and education. The same is true of a health coach, but with a focus on nutrition, diet, and overall wellness rather than strictly fitness.

A health coach combines several skills to help clients set and meet health-related goals:

- Knowledge of diet and nutrition, and how they impact health
- Personal training and fitness expertise
- Coaching and motivation
- Behavioral science and psychology

As a health coach, a client may come to you with a general or specific need: to lose weight, to get healthier or fitter, to manage a chronic illness, or to improve their diet, for instance.

You would then use your background knowledge in fitness, diet, nutrition, and health to discuss setting specific goals. Together you talk about what holds them back, what motivates them, and the concrete steps they'll take to meet their goals. Along the way, the coach evaluates the client's progress, adjusts the plan as needed, and provides motivation.

Qualities of a Great Health Coach

Just like many other professions, there are lots of different personalities and styles when it comes to health coaching. Here are a few qualities clients look for when trying to find a health coach:

- **Great listening skills:** Before they can be a source of support, a health coach needs to connect with and understand the client. They do this by taking their time with each client and using motivational interviewing and active listening skills.
- **Practice what they preach:** As with most health and fitness professions, it's important that health coaches approach their own lives with the same principles they communicate to their clients.
- **Organization:** From paperwork, to scheduling, to boundaries, a good health coach should be organized so there isn't any confusion for the client.



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- **Invested in their education:** Health coaches should be continually learning and growing. There is so much to learn about different health topics, approaches, and a plethora of valuable research out there today. All this information can't be consumed all at once, so, it's important that health coaches value and prioritize this for themselves.

Health coaching skills are valuable for personal trainers. And, personal trainer knowledge is valuable for health coaches. So, whether you refer your clients to a health coach or add health coaching to your skillset, accountability and support for long-last behavior change is something that many people can benefit from.

Are you passionate about behavior change? Do you want to understand how to influence your clients' behavior patterns in regard to their mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing? If so, check out [ISSA's Transformation Specialist Course](#) and become a specialist from the comfort of your own home.

What Does a Health Coach Do for Clients?

A health coach supports and guides clients in making better food and lifestyle choices to improve nutrition and health. You work with individuals to learn their strengths, weaknesses, and goals, and craft individualized plans.

Health Coaches Educate Clients

Coaches are teachers. You provide guidance, plans, structure, and motivation, but you also teach clients about health, wellness, and food. Rather than simply giving you a shopping list for the grocery store, a good health coach will teach clients how to shop and make smarter choices in the store. You give tips and tools to help clients succeed long after they stop using your services.

A Health Coach Finds Your Motivation

Clients may seek out a coach because they want to lose weight or they need guidance making healthier food choices. A good coach does more than just give them a basic plan. You will help them understand the reasons they want to make changes on a deeper level.



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This is important because it is where they find the motivation to make lasting changes. Simply wanting to lose weight is not enough to help them during difficult times, when they feel like binging on food. If you help them determine that their desire for weight loss is rooted in their self-confidence or wanting to be healthier for their children, they will be more motivated to persist.

Motivation is a huge tool for [overcoming the barriers to making healthier choices](#).

A Coach Provides Accountability

If a client's biggest issue with making positive changes is sticking with them, you have the opportunity to help them as a health coach. A health coach is an accountability partner. You check in with clients, monitor their progress, and push them to do better. On those days when they just feel like giving in to bad habits, you're there, in person or a phone call away, to get them back on track.

Health Coaches Guide and Empower Change

This is what it all comes down to: a coach is there to be a guide to lasting, positive health changes. You empower with education and by listening to and understanding your clients' needs and challenges. You guide with information, accountability, and advice. If they struggle to make healthy changes in their lives, your skills as a health coach can help.

What Are the Limitations of a Health Coach?

A health coach is not a medical professional. This is important to understand. You cannot diagnose medical conditions or treat them, interpret medical test results, or even recommend supplements. You do not diagnose or treat mental health conditions.

This may seem limiting, but keep in mind the main roles of any coach: motivation, guidance, accountability, and education.



What Does a Health Coach Actually Do?

Health Coach vs Personal Trainer

The scope of practice of a health coach is very similar to what a personal trainer does for clients. The difference is that a trainer focuses on physical fitness, crafting workouts, and helping clients set and achieve goals for weight loss or maintenance, muscle growth, strength, athletic achievements, or overall fitness.

Many personal trainers are knowledgeable about nutrition and general health and can provide some advice. Adding the additional certifications, such as Nutritionist and Transformation Specialist, can really help personal trainers level-up to Health Coach status. You'll be more qualified to help clients who:

- Need accountability and guidance in setting and meeting health goals
- Want to learn more about healthy diet and healthy lifestyle habits
- Would benefit from a motivating mentor to meet health goals
- Want to make lasting changes to their lifestyle that are not tied to specific medical conditions

For clients who have struggled with health, nutrition, wellness, and lifestyle choices, a health coach provides that extra boost to help them make positive changes and meet their goals.

To learn more about what these coaches do and how to become one, [check out the ISSA's Nutritionist program](#).



How to Provide Accountability Training



How to Provide Accountability Training

Being a personal trainer, nutritionist, or health coach involves creating an program that enables clients to reach a specific fitness or health goal. It also requires finding a way to increase client accountability during this process. Thus, in addition to being an exercise coach, for example, you are responsible for accountability coaching as well.

Merriam-Webster defines [accountability](#) as “an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one’s actions.” Being an coaching accountability means helping your clients develop this responsibility toward their workout or nutrition plan.

An example of this is when you notice that your client isn’t making progress toward their weight loss goal. They tell you that they’re following a low-calorie meal plan and adhering to the training program, but their weight isn’t decreasing.

In your role as a certified personal trainer, you must have a real conversation about whether their actions match what they are telling you. Is it possible that they aren’t paying as much attention to their nutrition as they think? Have they skipped a workout here and there without telling you about it?

Importance of Providing Accountability Training

Accountability is important in a personal training and nutrition environment because it takes consistency for clients to reach their fitness goals. Holding clients responsible for following their training plan enables them to stay the course long enough to get their desired results.

This is true whether their goal is to lose weight or to increase muscle mass. Realistic goals involve working toward both slowly. They require taking small actions consistently over time. [Research](#) reveals that the more clients are held accountable for taking necessary actions, the higher their success rate. Plus, sometimes clients don’t have much support from family and friends. Their loved ones help them create excuses about why they can’t attend their training session. Challenging these excuses enables clients to see the consequences of their actions.



How to Provide Accountability Training

Ways to Make Your Clients More Accountable

The first step to increasing accountability in your clients is to get them to understand how their actions are impacting their ability to reach their goal. Help them realize that not completing their weekly exercise routine slows their weight loss. Talk about how not giving their all during a training session means that it will take longer to build their strength.

Though they may know this on an intellectual level, they may struggle with making the connection between their actions their results. They have convinced themselves that having that one dessert or skipping that one workout won't matter. While this is true, small transgressions can lead to big transgressions. Missing one workout leads to missing two. Before they know it, they've abandoned their workout routine completely. Their fitness journey is over.

Holding your client more accountable may require digging deeper into their belief systems. Do they believe that they can reach their fitness goals? Do they have an "I can do it" mindset? It's possible that they don't think they have what it takes to succeed. As their coach, it's your job to get them to realize that they do.

Other ways to increase accountability in your personal training clients include:

- **Holding regular accountability sessions.** During a personal training session, you're focused on their cardio or strength training routine. Hold a dedicated accountability session and it provides the opportunity to learn more about where they are struggling. Talk about their challenges and work together to find ways to overcome them. In the next accountability session, ask whether they're implementing their plan. Once they realize that you're going to follow up, they're more likely to do what they say they'll do.
- **Starting an online accountability group.** If you have a lot of clients who all want the same thing, create a private [social media](#) page just for them. This gives them a place where they can hold each other accountable on their weight loss or muscle building journeys. Check in with the group often



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to make sure they're on the right path. As their personal fitness trainer, they still look to you for advice if they're not achieving their goals.

- **Assigning a workout buddy.** Another way to increase accountability as a trainer is to connect two clients who have a similar fitness level or exercise goal. If you're busy, you may not be able to check in as often as you'd like. By giving them someone else who will follow up to make sure they are following their food or workout plan, they get the same effect without requiring more of your time.
- **Calling them out if they're making too many excuses.** There are going to be times your clients won't be able to follow their fitness program. They get too sick to exercise or they have to work late and are unable to meet you at the gym. When these happen once or twice, that's understandable. But if they become a pattern, you may need to call them out. Maybe they don't realize what they're doing or they didn't think it was a big issue because you've never brought it up. Part of being a personal trainer is helping clients see how their actions are impacting their fitness level. You can do this kindly while still getting your point across. If they want fat loss or more muscle, they must first admit to how their behaviors are helping or hurting the process.

Qualities of an Effective Accountability Partner

Some fitness professionals are great at creating personal accountability in their clients. Others, not so much. What qualities would place you in the first category?

One is the ability to effectively communicate. You must be able to talk about your client's behaviors in a way that doesn't make them feel attacked or worthless. This requires having tact while still getting your point across. You must also be able to listen, ensuring that you understand why the client is acting in a particular way.

Successful coaches also help clients see them as more than just a workout partner. They create a relationship based on being someone who cares about helping them reach their fitness goals. They make their clients feel comfortable talking about the challenges they face with eating or exercise.



How to Provide Accountability Training

The more valued your clients feel, the more likely they are to be honest about the ways they may be self-sabotaging their fitness journey. This requires showing empathy for their situations. It involves being able to understand why they may be taking specific actions and working with them to find ways to change their path in life.

How to Increase Client Motivation Between Training Sessions

Since you can't be with your training clients 24 hours a day, it's also helpful to [give them the tools needed to motivate themselves](#) between gym sessions. These same tools also work if you're an online personal trainer.

The more self-motivated your clients are, the more they will be accountable to themselves. This sets them up for long-term success. Options that fall into this category include:

- **Encouraging a fitness journal.** The good thing about keeping a journal is that it helps the client see the actions that have helped them get closer to or further from their goals. Ask clients to review their journal often. Inquire whether they notice any trends. Suggest that they highlight behaviors or thoughts that seem to consistently emerge. Increasing their awareness helps them make better decisions in the future.
- **Reinforcing their 'why.'** Why is it that your training client wants to get into better shape? Are they trying to prevent or heal a chronic health issue? Is their goal to be around long enough to walk their daughter down the aisle or see their grandkids graduate from high school? The stronger their reasons for wanting to improve their fitness, the more likely it is they will succeed. Continue to reinforce why they show up at the gym every week or meet with you online.
- **Suggesting a visualization exercise.** Sometimes clients lack motivation because they can't clearly see what life will look like once they achieve their goal. There's a disconnect between where they are now and where they want to be. Encourage clients to take a few minutes every day to visualize their life after reaching their goal weight or developing the desired physique. Get them to think about how they would feel. Help them realize how their life will change. The more clearly they can see their future selves, the more they are driven to make it a reality.



How to Provide Accountability Training

Become more effective at providing your clients lasting results—sign up for the ISSA's [Transformation Specialist certification](#). In this course, you will learn how to boost your client's motivation from day one. You'll also discover how to help them make a lifelong commitment to improving their fitness. A commitment so strong that it's just a matter of time before they hit all their health and wellness goals.



How to Make a Lifestyle Change that Actually Lasts



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How to Make a Lifestyle Change that Actually

As a personal trainer, you spend your days sharing tips related to diet and exercise. Your primary mission is to help others create a healthy life. Yet, many clients still struggle to meet their fitness goals. Why?

Developing a healthy lifestyle isn't always easy. It's even harder for those who've had not-so-healthy habits for a long period of time. How do you overcome these challenges as a fitness professional so your clients can enjoy lasting results? The first step is actually more mental than physical.

Get Their Brain in the Game

Before you even start to talk about healthy eating or discuss a regular exercise routine, it's important that your client's brain be on board with the upcoming changes. If they are not [mentally committed](#) to losing weight, growing muscle, or otherwise improving their health, they're not likely to stick with your suggestions for the long haul.

To learn how committed a client is, ask them to rate their level of commitment on a scale of 1 to 10. If they're in the 8 to 10 range, you'll have an easier time getting them to make the changes necessary. If they're in the 5 to 7 range, it may take more work on your part. Anything lower and your training with them will likely be pretty short.

True behavior change requires a steely resolve to do what it takes to create a healthier lifestyle. This helps them overcome temptations and obstacles placed in their way. Though every client is different, here are a few ways to get their brain to support long-term lifestyle change.

A Visualization Exercise

Top Olympic athletes use [visualization](#) to help them get the gold. This same practice can help your clients create a healthy lifestyle. Ask your client to close their eyes and visualize themselves as if their goal has been reached.



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Have them imagine that they are at their goal weight or to picture themselves crushing their workout routine. Talk to them about how they feel when they do. Help them to see themselves making the necessary changes. This trains their brain to make changes more effortlessly in the future.

Talk About Why They Want a Healthier Lifestyle

What drove your client to come see you? What makes them want to change their eating habits? Is their cholesterol too high or are they tired of not being able to fit in their favorite jeans? What has happened that they've decided it's time to increase their physical activity? Do they feel winded going up the stairs at home? Are they lacking the energy necessary to keep up with their kids?

The clearer a client is about why it is time to create a healthy diet or engage in a regular workout routine, the easier it is to make changes long-term. Having them write a list of all of the reasons they want to change can help [clarify their goals](#).

Encourage them to dig deep when creating this list. For instance, it isn't enough to say that they want to increase their physical activity because they want to feel better. Ask them to explain what "feel better" means.

Is the client looking to gain more confidence, lower their stress, or is it some other outcome they seek? The more you understand what it is they want from your personal training sessions, the more you can tailor a program that helps them meet that goal.

Make the Connection Between Mental Health and Physical Health

Creating a healthy lifestyle is about making physical changes to one's daily routine. Yet, there is often a mental health component involved as well.



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Some clients seek out a weight loss program or workout routine because they know it can improve their mental health. Maybe they want to lower their stress or anxiety and know that exercise can help. Or perhaps they want to learn how to enjoy healthy food because carrying too much weight has resulted in low self-esteem.

Help clients make the connection between their physical and mental health. Talk about how [limiting processed foods can lead to reduced anxiety](#). Share the ways in which [strength training boosts mood](#) in addition to building muscle.

Create a Daily Motivation Habit

Another way to keep the client's head in the game is to suggest that they continue to stoke their motivation by creating a daily routine that supports their fitness goals. Meditation in the morning can help them deal with the stress of making a lifestyle change. The less stress and anxiety they have during the change process, the easier it is to accept their new lifestyle.

Listening to healthy lifestyle podcasts on the way into work every day can also keep clients motivated. If they're a reader, suggest that they follow a healthy eating blog or subscribe to an exercise magazine. The more they make healthy living a part of their daily routine, the easier it becomes to create a new healthy habit.

Once you've got the client's brain on board, the next step is to address the behaviors that will provide a healthy lifestyle change. These generally fall into one of two categories: healthy eating and exercise.

Eating Habits that Support Lasting Weight Loss

Some clients may have [poor eating habits](#) without even realizing it. Identifying these habits enables you to know what changes the client needs to make to their diet. Here are a few to ask about:

- *Do you ever eat due to mental health reasons, such as sadness or stress?* This question helps you identify if the client is an emotional eater. Mental health can impact their food choices. Suggest



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that they use stress as a trigger to take a walk versus going to the fridge. Talk about how chatting with a friend is a better way to deal with sadness than eating a carton of ice cream. If their mental health issue is more severe, suggest that they seek the help of a counselor or therapist.

- *Are you a fast eater or a slow eater?* The faster you eat, the more likely it is that you will take in too much food. Getting the client to slow down supports weight loss by giving the stomach enough time to realize when it has had enough. One way to achieve this goal is by setting a timer when they eat. Encourage them to make their meal last 20-30 minutes. This will help them achieve a healthy weight.
- *Do you multitask when you eat?* Watching the TV or checking your email while eating makes it incredibly easy to take in too many calories. Before you know it, your food is gone and your weight is on the rise. Change this habit by doing nothing else while eating. Focus only on the food. Pay attention to how it tastes and its feel. This helps keep the calorie count low simply by being engaged in the eating process.

While popular diets can help clients develop better eating habits in the short-term, long-term results are more about eating healthier food. Help clients understand that whole grains and fruit are good carb sources. Talk about how lean proteins supply energy and veggies are full of nutrients that improve health.

Making Physical Activity a Life-Long Lifestyle Change

Exercise is another lifestyle change some clients struggle to make. They may be all motivated in the beginning, following your aerobic and [strength training program](#). Then they start cancelling their training sessions. They have a million excuses as to why they can't exercise. Before you know it, you never see them again.

How do you help them make exercise a long-term habit? Here are a few ideas to consider:

- *Talk to them about the kind of physical training required to reach their goals.* For instance, if they want more muscle, their focus should be on strength training. If lowering their weight is their primary concern, cardio can help get them there. The more they are able to see how a particular



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activity gets them closer to their goal, the more willing they'll be to make it a habit.

- *Set weekly and monthly exercise goals.* When your goal is to get to a certain weight, you have an end goal in sight. Setting an end goal with exercise is a little harder because there isn't always a magic number the client wants to reach. This is where weekly or monthly exercise goals can help. It keeps them motivated because they're actually working toward something. Encourage an exercise goal that makes sense. For instance, maybe they want to exercise five days every week for 30 minutes at a time. That is a reasonable goal.
- *Encourage exercise between training sessions.* Creating a healthy lifestyle change involves creating habits both in and outside the gym. Encourage them to pursue their fitness goals outside of your training sessions. For cardio, they can walk, run, or cycle around their neighborhood. They can build muscle with relatively little home equipment. Bags of sand can stand in for hand weights. Bodyweight exercises don't require any equipment at all.

To learn more about how to keep clients motivated, take ISSA's [Transformation Specialist certification course](#). This course teaches you how to perform motivational interviewing. It also discusses how to help your clients better meet their long-standing health goals.



How to Market Yourself as a Health Coach



How to Market Yourself as a Health Coach

The wellness industry is growing in the U.S. and throughout the world. This includes health coaching as well as fitness, nutrition, spas, and personal and beauty care. Statistics show the industry has grown 6.4 percent over the last few years and is now worth over \$4 trillion worldwide ⁽¹⁾.

If you love working with people and have a passion for health and wellness, you could be a part of this big, big industry. Becoming a health coach isn't time-consuming, but you do need some foundational knowledge.

Besides education, what does it take to be a successful and impactful health, wellness, and nutrition coach? We outline [what you need right here](#).

And, if you're branching out on your own as many coaches do, you'll need to market yourself. Marketing is a skill, but it's not difficult to learn. Use these tips to get started.

Starting a Health Coaching Business

There are no formal requirements for working as a health coach. This lack of regulation makes entering the industry confusing. It can also get confusing for potential clients. One of your jobs will be to explain what you do and how you can help clients.

But first, in order to be a successful health coach, you should get certified. This means finding a reputable and accredited program that teaches you nutrition, fitness, and health. It may take more than one course or certification to get everything you need.

Getting certified is a bare minimum. Before you start out on your own, also consider getting some work experience. Intern with a health coach or nutritionist; get a job at a gym; or work with friends and family for free before diving into your own self-sufficient business.



How to Market Yourself as a Health Coach

How to Market Yourself as a Health Coach – Essential Tips

You don't have to take a course in marketing, or earn a degree, to get clients. A few tips on selling yourself, networking, and finding your target audience are really all you need to get started.

Once you've launched your business and have some clients, [take a look at these ideas for boosting sales and revenues](#).

1. Show off Your Coaching Certification and Skills

Before you begin any official marketing to get clients, be prepared to explain and show why you're worth choosing as a coaching professional. You may get interest right away in your services, but if you aren't prepared to explain your credentials and services, you could lose them.

Take some time to reflect on what you want to be able to do for clients, including specific services as well as your own special skills. Gather any references from past bosses and co-workers in the gym or related jobs. Also get references from any friends you've helped with meeting health goals.

2. Knowing How to Market Yourself as a Health Coach Means Knowing Your Audience

Understanding your audience is marketing 101. If you don't know who you're selling to, your efforts will be too broad or totally misdirected. Maybe you have trained and specialized in youth fitness and health. Should you use the marketing platforms targeted at middle-aged moms? Probably not.

Find your niche, which doesn't have to be super-specific, and then figure out the target client. Is that client older or younger? Are they a senior? Is the client a mom or a dad? Is your client hyper-focused on weight loss or more interested in holistic health and wellness? Know your audience first, before doing any marketing and strategizing.



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3. Do Some Market Research

You may think you know your target audience, but do you really? What do they want in a health coach? What kinds of things do they want to change about themselves? This is what you need to know in order to focus your marketing efforts.

Ask your local gym if you can survey members as they come and go. You'll get some rejections, but it's worth a try. Most people will be willing to give you a minute and to answer one or two questions. This will give you an idea of what people really want in a coaching service, and you can tailor your marketing strategies accordingly.

4. Build a Website

Maybe you want to dabble in online coaching, maybe not. But what you should absolutely have is a website for marketing. Start by building a simple, well-designed site that outlines your credentials and services. Think of it like your storefront and the main representation of your brand. It's important, so take time to design and implement a business website.

Then consider going deeper into SEO marketing. Search engine optimization (SEO) is a set of strategies used to help a website or page climb higher in the rankings in search engines, mostly Google. SEO marketing is an entire industry in itself, and it can be daunting.

If you have the time and inclination, there are plenty of resources online to read. These will help you take steps to make your website appear higher on Google when potential clients search for health coaching. If you plan to work online, this can be general.

If you want to work locally and in-person, consider using tools like Google and Facebook ads. These are affordable advertisements that you can target to a specific geographic area. This narrows down your audience and they're easy to use, even for beginners.



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5. Leverage Social Media

One of the most useful platforms for reaching health and wellness clients is social media. Influencers in fitness, diet, nutrition, and coaching have major reach on platforms like Instagram and Facebook. It takes time and effort to get that kind of reach, but you have to start somewhere.

In fact, you don't even have to become a major influencer yourself to benefit from social media marketing. Get a small following going and share content relevant to health and wellness. Contact bigger influencers in the same niche, share their content, and ask for links and shares in return. This is what modern networking looks like and will help extend your reach. It also establishes your authority in health and wellness.

6. Offer Some Free Content

A freebie draws people in and may just get some clients hooked on your expertise and services. For example, host a free webinar about something specific, like how to improve digestive health with dietary changes.

Create a newsletter that you can use to build an email list. Ask visitors to your website or social media pages to opt in. When they do, they get free content, and you get contact information to sell them services later.

7. Go Offline Too

Yes, a lot of marketing, especially in health and wellness, is online, but don't limit yourself. Especially if you will be working with local clients, utilize all your local resources. This means going to community events related to health, nutrition, or fitness; handing out fliers or cards at the gym; offering free introductory classes, and more.



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Any way in which you can get in front of your target audience to show you how you can help them, do it. So, for example, if you are hoping to target female clients, don't limit yourself to the gym. Go to pregnancy and motherhood events, bridal shows, and yoga classes.

8. Connect with Related Professionals

You may be competing with other health coaches but look for professionals offering related but different services. Network with local yoga instructors, personal trainers, athletic coaches, and others in the fitness and health industry. You can share referrals to get more clients for targeted services. Be prepared to show these professionals what you have to offer so they feel good about sending clients your way.

Health coaching is a rewarding career, but you can't just get certified and expect clients to land at your feet. Any type of small business requires focused marketing. Take the time to use these and other tips to launch a successful coaching career.

What's the best way to jump start a health coaching career? Get the certifications that matter. The ISSA's Elite Trainer Certification is your ticket to success. You get the [Certified Personal Trainer Self-Guided Study Program](#), the [Nutritionist certification](#), plus a specialization of your choice, such as [Transformation Specialist](#). Together these give you the fundamental knowledge needed to be a successful health coach.

[Level Up Your Career - Become an Elite Trainer Today!](#)

Sources

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