

Q. I'm familiar with the meaning of Doctor and coach but what's a "life Doctor?"

One ancient Chinese text describes three levels of healing: The first deals with symptoms, the second helps the patient understand the nature of the illness and the third assists the patient to fulfill his or her destiny. My earlier practice focused on the first level; through coaching, I'm now working more purposefully on levels two and three. I want to be more involved with my patients and address their deeper needs. My clinic's mission statement had read: "Our mission is to invite you into a more vivid and present dance in your life. We will laugh, cry, grow, heal and possibly share the richness of the dying process together." I feel I'm just continuing that mission.

Q. How are you different from other coaches?

Dr. Dean:

Apart from training in three different coaching methods, I've accumulated a lot of other tools in my kit. I have taught human growth seminars for twenty-six years, both in the United States and abroad. I have been a mindfulness meditation and stress reduction instructor for thirty-one years. Working in my clinic as a holistic doctor and acupuncturist has given me a wealth of experience with how the physical body stores our deepest programs and unconscious beliefs. I use something called Neuro Emotional Technique to release these programs.

Let me expand on that question and answer that question from two different points of view—the relative and the absolute. On the relative level, you'd hire a coach simply to change something in your life or to achieve excellence. The Dallas Cowboys' legendary head coach, Tom Landry, put it beautifully: "A coach is someone who tells you what you don't want to hear, who has you see what you don't want to see so you can be who you've always known you could be."

Maybe some aspect of your life—relationship, career, money, spirituality, divorce, death of loved one, romance, etc.—has grown from a mere irritation to a roar of unhappiness. Or some unhelpful pattern in your life has become painfully repetitious. Or perhaps you're having difficulty achieving something. The need to change may go even deeper than these; we just had a worldwide shock that has shaken the illusion of security for many of us. For some, the need is even more immediate: They must change or die.

Most of us have had a coach for something: football, tennis, golf, singing, whatever. It's very unusual for someone to achieve excellence without a good coach. Probably the first people to understand the value of life coaching were peak achievers in business. Executive coaching is one form of life coaching. Successful artists and performers also have used coaching for some time; I met John Denver's personal coach twenty-nine years ago.

But at the absolute level, going from dream to dream, from one accomplishment to the next, even fulfilling one's greatest desire is *still* a limited view. As much as we "don't want to die with our song still in us," as Wayne Dyer put it, we also don't want to die with out knowing the song of sacredness in our lives. We want to wake up from dreams and desires completely. While I coach on the relative level, I do so from the view of your absolute natural brilliance and connection to sacredness.

Q. Why would I need a "death coach?"

Dr. Dean: Well, it's not just to entertain a morbid fascination with death or because you're a big fan of *Harold and Maude*. In the face of illness and dying, people get serious about what's truly important. A terminal disease alters our reality; it brings out our fragility and authenticity and cuts through our pettiness. That depth of honesty, that recognition of priorities, allows for an experience of greater truth, discovery and sacredness. It's an honor to be part of that.