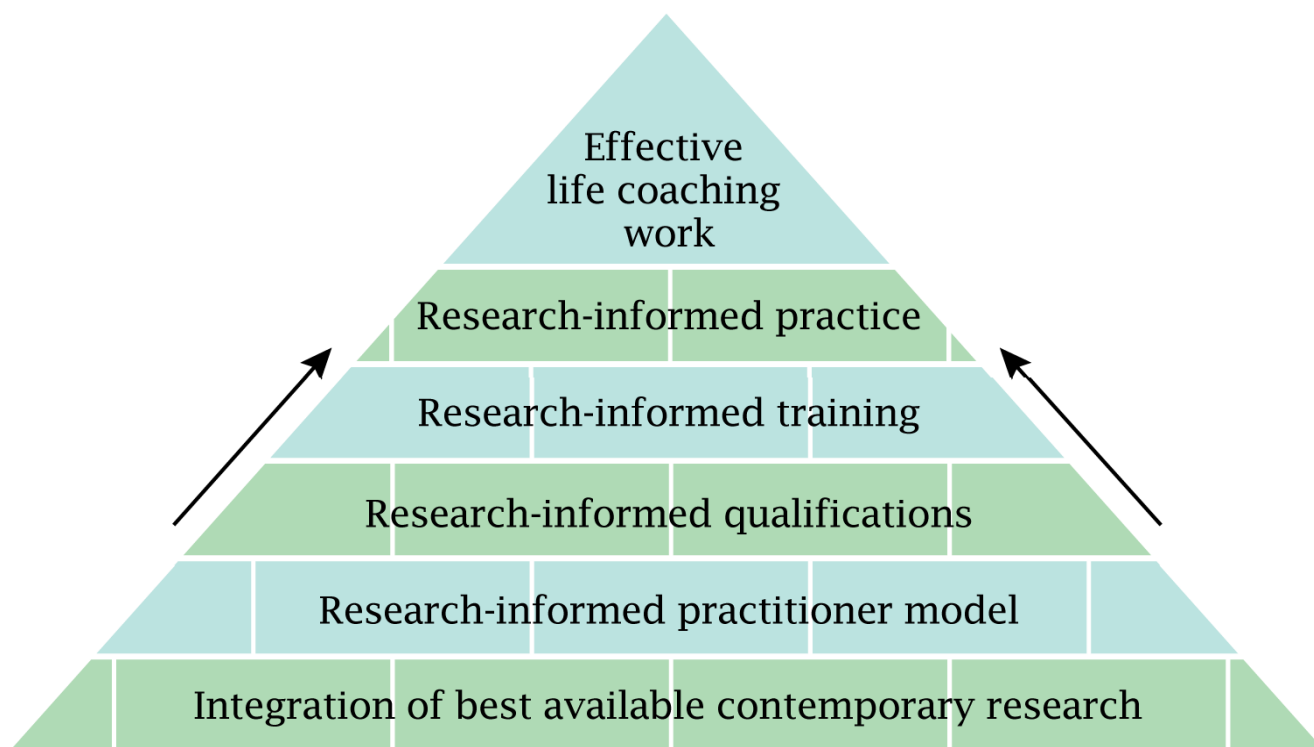


The CPCAB life coaching practitioner model

Over the past three decades CPCAB has provided a coherent progression route for counselling qualifications, underpinned by our unique, research-informed model of practitioner development and proficiency. In 2012 we broadened this model to life coaching. Unlike counselling, we see life coaching as a similar type of role to that of a personal trainer – although life coaching is focused on life’s problems, challenges and opportunities rather than physical fitness. We see counselling, in contrast, is concerned with supporting vulnerable people in distress, together with working with clients presenting with mental health problems such as anxiety and depression.

The CPCAB model has been developed and refined on thousands of courses at hundreds of training centres, and many helpers and counsellors have now trained within its framework. The continuous integration of research findings on effective practice, including the factors that contribute to change, is central to the design and development of the model. Although the roles of life coach and counsellor are different, they are both focused on facilitating client change and we have therefore been able to apply to life coaching key elements of the CPCAB counselling model, together with the underpinning research findings.

The contemporary workplace normally requires that practitioners demonstrate that their work is informed by research on effective practice – that it is “evidence-based”. Research on the development of professional expertise, however, has concluded that practitioners gradually evolve a special type of expanded working memory that requires years of development. Genuine evidence-based practice, therefore, cannot simply be a matter of reading research articles, but requires a long-term commitment to training and practice that is centred on the factors that contribute to change. The life coach needs to develop, for example, an understanding and ability to work with the life coaching relationship that is developed gradually with time and experience.



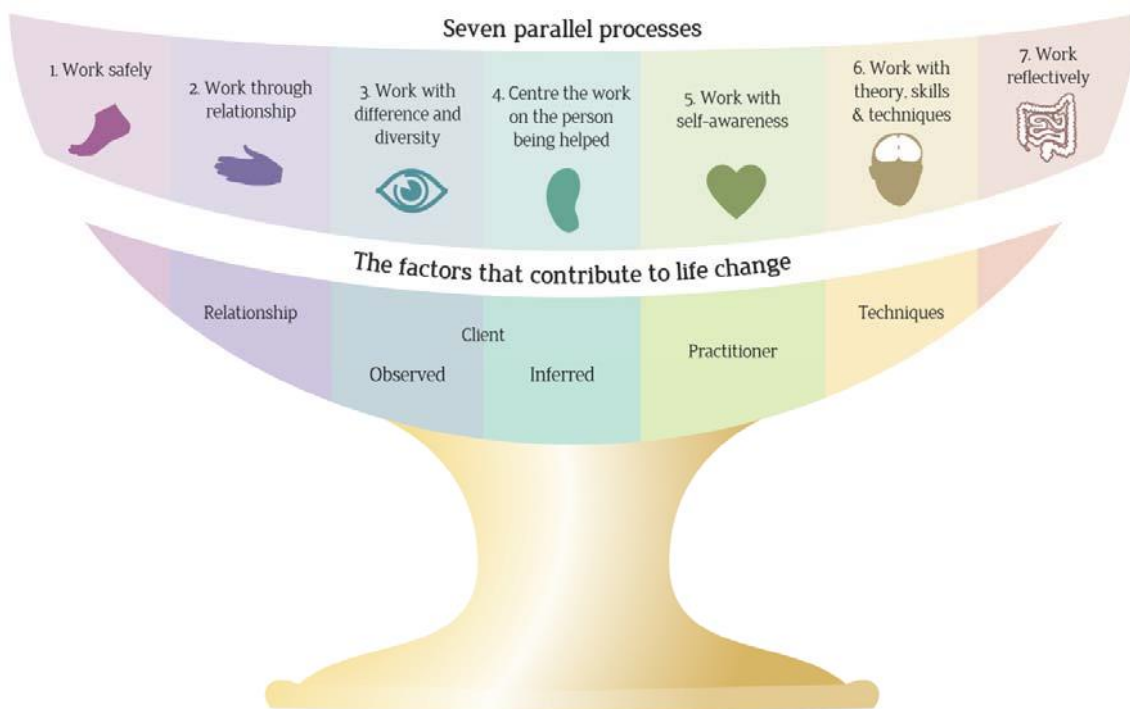
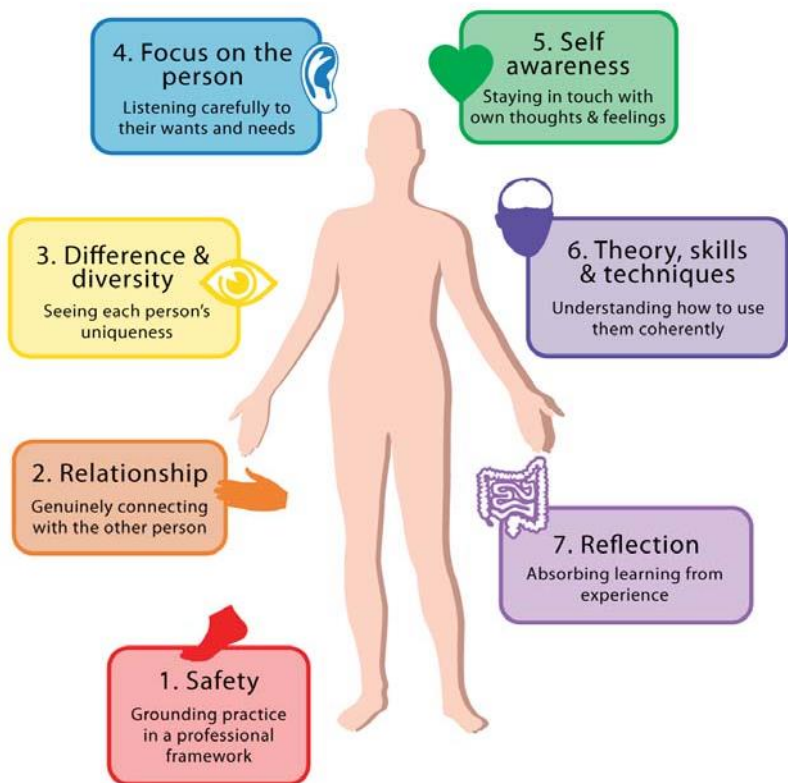
The CPCAB life coaching model consists of three elements, which together set out what a trainee needs to learn in order to work as an effective life coach:

- 1: Seven processes that contribute to life change
- 2: Three categories of life change
- 3: Two levels of life coaching work

These three elements of the model form a matrix that defines the knowledge, understanding and skills required in the form of learning goals/outcomes and learning tasks/assessment tasks criteria – please see the Qualification Document for more details.

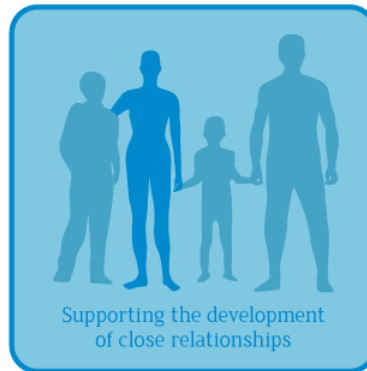
1: Seven processes that contribute to life change

People normally seek help because they want to change something about their lives – which often requires changing aspects of themselves. What makes a life coach *effective*, therefore, is their ability to support a broad range of clients to identify and then achieve *life change*. Contemporary research in counselling and psychotherapy has identified four factors that contribute to *therapeutic change* – factors concerning (i) the counselling relationship; (ii) the client; (iii) the practitioner; and (iv) the use of specific techniques (or treatment interventions). In practice, these factors cannot be isolated from each other – they work together in parallel, interacting and depending upon each other. Life coaching, in supporting life change, also relies upon these four factors. The first element of the CPCAB life coaching model integrates these research findings within seven parallel processes, which are embedded in the structure and content of our life coaching qualification as seven learning goals/outcomes. In order to provide an effective life coaching service, the practitioner therefore needs to be able to concurrently:



2: The person and their relationships across the life course: three categories of life change

This second part of the CPCAB model identifies three areas of interdisciplinary knowledge and understanding that the life coach needs to draw upon when supporting clients to identify and work towards their life change goals. The model views life's problems, challenges and opportunities as containable within these three categories of life change: (i) the person (including their lifestyle) and (ii) their relationships across (iii) the challenges and opportunities of the life course. Recently, for example, a policeman was unfortunately involved in a shooting that caused sight loss¹. The effect of that sight loss was threefold: it impacted upon (i) his person in that he eventually became severely depressed; (ii) his marriage broke down; and (iii) he lost his work at a mid-career point in his life course. This second part of the CPCAB life coaching model also provides a common framework that integrates with a broad range of approaches to life coaching – enabling centres to deliver their own individual training programmes based around their own particular approach.



Supporting the development of the person and their lifestyle

Our sense of who we are as a person develops within the context of our relationships and throughout the course of our lives. The life coach draws upon their understanding of persons and lifestyles to support each client to identify their life change goals and then support them to work on the tasks that need to be accomplished in order to achieve their goals. One person, for example someone who doesn't feel so good about themselves, might need support to value their strengths, whilst another person might not really believe in themselves and may need support to develop their self-esteem, while someone else might need to change their lifestyle in order to reduce their weight as part of a post-cardiac arrest care programme. This aspect of the model also recognises that lifestyle and identity are intertwined and that making healthier lifestyle choices may also involve changes to a person's sense of their identity.

Supporting the development of close relationships

We are fundamentally social beings and many of our problems and challenges, together with our experiences of happiness and life satisfaction, involve our close relationships with others. Research has also identified the important part that close relationships play in a person's overall health and well-being. The life coach draws upon their understanding of close relationships to support the client in working towards the client's goal of (for examples) forming a close and committed relationship, *or* sustaining their friendships in the face of family and work demands, *or* coping with the challenges of parenting an adolescent child.

Working with life stage challenges and opportunities

Life is a journey of continual change – from conception to old age – in which we are repeatedly presented with the challenges and opportunities associated with our present life stage. The life coach draws upon their understanding of the life course to (for examples) support a young person starting at university, *or* support a young adult seeking to develop a satisfying career, *or* support a young parent trying to balance work and parenting, *or* support a person in their mid-life wishing to review their life in order to decide on what's really important, *or* support an elderly person who needs to give up driving and move from their long-term home to a new home that is well-served by public transport.

¹ People with sight loss have a substantially lower level of life satisfaction and a higher incidence of mental health problems.

3: Two levels of life coaching work

The life coach helps the person to clarify, and then work towards, their life change goals, but the achievement of those goals is dependent on where the person is starting from and the associated level of change that may be required. A person's starting point is their *capacity to* (i) cope with life problems; (ii) meet the challenges they face; and (iii) embrace the opportunities that life presents them with. This third part of the CPCAB life coaching model describes a continuum of two levels of life change and associated levels of life coaching work. The model doesn't set out to describe the complexity of individual clients and their needs but rather provides a framework for thinking about where the person is starting from, together with the level of life change that may be required to achieve their life change goals. This element of the model also provides a framework for defining the limits of the service that a life coach is able to provide, together with, where appropriate, a framework for referral to a counsellor or psychotherapist.



Informal life coaching work: Some people may simply need informal support to help them identify and work towards their life change goals – through the opportunity to explore the problems, challenges and opportunities in their life in the company of a practitioner who is using life coaching knowledge and skills within another role (in the fields of health, social care or education, for example).

Formal life coaching work: Some other people, those who are looking to make major life changes, or who may find change more intractable, may need to work in a more in-depth way on their life change goals through a formal relationship with a life coach.

Counselling and psychotherapy: Some vulnerable people, however, may need to work with a counsellor or psychotherapist to enable *psychological* change within themselves. People who need to work at this psychological level are often also trying to cope with symptoms of common mental health problems such as anxiety and depression, while some may be experiencing symptoms of severe and complex mental health problems and may need to work with a psychotherapist at a very in-depth psychological level².

For one person, for example, the goal of '*handling conflicts with my partner better*' might mean working to become more self aware during a conflict, and so move away from automatically *reacting* and towards choicefully *responding* (informal life coaching). For someone else, however, the same goal could mean developing both their understanding of close relationships together with their interpersonal skills, whilst for another client it might mean working on changing the intractable way in which they handle relatively minor rejections (formal life coaching). A more vulnerable client, however, might need to develop (through counselling and psychotherapy) the ability to care for the anxious part of the self that feels terrified whenever they get into conflict, whilst for someone else it could mean working on (again through counselling and psychotherapy) their automatic disassociation from reality when faced with relationship conflicts.

² At this level of work clients need supportive or therapeutic work for chronic, debilitating mental health problems often in relation to a fragile area of personality that has been a consistent source of difficulty throughout life.