



My Human Coach™
myhumancoach.com

Introduction

Health & wellness coaching (HWC) is a relatively new profession. It is a participant-centered intervention where coaches and clients work collaboratively to identify goals and desired outcomes informed by the client's values, preferences, resources, and strengths. Significant training is necessary to become a qualified and credentialed health and wellness coach (board certification (NBC-HWC) was introduced to the field in 2017). Health coaches view their clients as having the ability to overcome barriers and create positive change. The communication between coach and client “focuses on motivational processes, support, and accountability to build patient self-efficacy for positive change” (Gierisch, Hughes, Edelman, et al., 2018).

Text-based Coaching

My Human Coach uses text coaching because it is an evidence-based way to provide effective health coaching that is accessible and scalable. Texting is “a widely adopted mobile function, an inexpensive mobile phone feature, and has been proven to be effective in supporting behavior changes” (Bäcman, Linda Bergkvist, Wästlund, et al. 2023).

My HUMAN Coach

Free access to self-help tools “may not necessarily be sufficient to sustain wellness among healthy employees, as indicated by our finding that the well-being levels of noncoaching [control] users declined over time” (Strudwick, Sockalingam, et al., 2021). Compared with coaching, “self-help features were less able to be contextualized to the needs of every individual user” (Mehrotra, Kumar, et al. 2017) and currently, “of the numerous digital health applications, few seem to offer personalized support” (Bäcman, et al., 2023).

In contrast, My Human Coach is focused on a “collaborative and supportive relationship between the coach and client thought to be critical in attaining valued outcomes” (Richter, van Zyl, et al., 2023). Studies have shown that the more personalized the coaching is, the more effective it is for behavior change (Bäceman, et al. 2023) as interventions adapted to individual needs “improve prevention, self-management and access to healthcare” (Hägglund, Cajander, et al., 2022).

Health and wellness coaches provide continual support in “monitoring progress and reframing unhelpful thinking styles while emphasizing accountability of change for the user” (Toh, et al., 2023). A relationship with a skilled human coach fosters the “ongoing participant satisfaction and accountability” (Spark et al., 2015) that leads to positive health outcomes.

Accessibility and Affordability

Text-based communication is particularly effective in health care because it is “an inclusive method regardless of the type of mobile phone the participant owns, and the focus is not on the technical device but on the intervention itself” (World Health Organization. 2018).

Text-based coaching is a convenient, cost-efficient, and discreet modality for improving people’s health. In addition, “digital health innovation can reduce health inequities” (McCool, Dobson, Muinga, et al., 2020) because health and wellness coaches are “professionally trained and committed to increasing clients’ introspection on their needs and goals” (Toh, et al., 2023). Digital health coaching “has the ability to address Social Determinants Of Health and stage-match the intervention to the patients' level of motivation and literacy in order to overcome the barriers traditionally faced by the under-resourced”(Azelton, et al., 2021).

Positive results of HWC can occur across multiple demographics. For example, working with digital health coaching significantly improved insulin resistance for people with diabetes compared with a control group (Azelton, Crowley et al., 2021) and “this significance remained after controlling for years diagnosed, enrollment in Medicaid, access to food, baseline stage of change, and race.” The authors of the study concluded that “increasing access to digital health coaching may lead to more effective control of diabetes for under-resourced patients.”

My Human Coach offers an affordable, highly personalized, professional health intervention that can adapt to the needs, culture, preferences, and resources of every client, making personalized text-based coaching scalable and accessible to a diverse population who can benefit from this type of intervention (Bäceman, et al., 2023).

HWC for Business

HWC “is an effective preventive workplace intervention” (Toh, et al., 2023). Employee assistance programs (EAPs) are “typically costly and heavily underused with only 2.6%-3.5% uptake rates on average across 133 EAPs in Canada” (Toh, et al., 2023). A more individualized, whole person care model of health coaching can have “positive behavior change effects” (Nelson, et al., 2021) and coaching in a business setting has been shown to “improve skill-based outcomes (ie, leadership skills, technical skills, and general competency), well-being (eg, positive emotions, self-efficacy, life satisfaction, and reduction in stress), and organizational outcomes (eg, employees’ goal attainment and returns on investments” (Bäceman, et al., 2023).

One study of 2,169 individuals showed that after 6 months of health coaching intervention, “there was a significant decrease in a total number of unhealthy days experienced by these employees” (Zbikowski, Wallace, et al., 2019).

It is not necessary for an employee to come to the point of illness or suffering to benefit from a health coach. “Even for flourishing clients with minimal needs, behavioral health coaches could leverage their character strengths and encourage positive habit formation to maintain wellness” (Toh, Lee, Sunderman, et al., 2023). In one study in a business setting, text based mental health coaching demonstrated a significant decrease in stress, depression, and anxiety (Lim, et al., 2023) and multiple studies now show the benefits of HWC, including “a significant decrease in HbA1c and health diet improvement” (Lin, Huang, et al., 2021), “significantly greater improvements in well-being than “control” participants across time” (Toh, et al., 2023), and overall well-being benefits including “self-reported improvements in physical health, burnout, psychological distress, and positive and negative affect (Toh, et al., 2023). Because HWC is designed to support people in making healthy behavior changes it can be helpful both in response to an acute need and as a proactive intervention to prevent health problems and improve overall well-being.

Empowering Clients

The HWC model is focused on empowering the client to take control of their own health with significant long term benefits. A literature review (Ahmann, Saviet, et al., 2023) showed sustained gains beyond the active period of health coaching, and that “in many instances, and across physiological, behavioral, psychological, and HRA variables, studies reviewed found sustained effects, and in some cases improvements, over a follow-up period.” Personalized text-based coaching has been shown to be an effective method for supporting healthy behavior changes (Bäceman, et al., 2023) and can “support lasting behavior change and improved outcomes, sustained over time, even after the cessation of the intervention” (Ahmann, Saviet, et al., 2023).

Conclusion

In contrast to the “mixed findings on self-help features,” behavior change coaching interventions have shown “consistent improvements in multiple individual-level outcomes” (Bäceman, et al., 2023). A systematic review shows digital interventions can be highly effective, with “a particular emphasis on the significance of personalization and tailoring for success” (Chatterjee, Prinz, et al., 2021). Both as a form of preventive care and as part of a treatment plan, health coaching “actively seeks to develop growth mindsets toward positive behavior change” (Toh, et al., 2023).

The American Medical Association defines health coaching as “a collaborative approach to care that informs, engages, and activates patients to take a prominent role in managing their health. By bridging the gap between the physician and patient, health coaches can help practices improve patient engagement in their care, leading to healthier patients with better outcomes” (AMA *Steps Forward*).

HWC outcomes have been shown to last beyond the active coaching period which “is particularly notable because with various other interventions—medication treatments for chronic conditions being a key example—beneficial effects are often not retained when an intervention is discontinued” (Ahmann, Saviet, et al., 2023). In business these positive outcomes translate into higher productivity and reduced sick days, and the use of HWC to maximize employees’ well-being through proactive and preventive care “may be fundamental to reducing these cost burdens” (Toh, et al., 2023).

Benefits extend to the coaches as well. Text-based health coaching intervention positively contributed to the clients’ relationship with their coach in comparison with controls and, significantly, a positive relationship “emerged as a theme articulated by the coaches” (Bäceman, et al., 2023). With a focus on creating a healthy, supportive, authentic relationship focused on the client’s well-being, My Human Coach offers a personalized, affordable solution to health challenges while creating a positive, sustainable business environment for delivering supportive, effective health services.

Instead of creating complex programs that require people to fit into a premade program, health and wellness coaches meet each client individually and collaborate to create plans for healthy behavior change that respect the needs, culture, preferences, and (at times, limited) resources of each client. As an evidence-based intervention, digital HWC shows that “intricate digital solutions to support behavior change are not always necessary” (Bäceman, et al. 2023). In the age of AI, the unique opportunity to have a compassionate and supportive relationship with a skilled human coach offers the “critical element of human connection” (Spark et al., 2015) that can lead diverse groups of people to more positive health outcomes and healthier, more productive lives.