

CASE STUDY:

Balancing Competing Demands

Great coaches don't just know their clients. They know themselves pretty darn well, too.

This case study follows a series of lessons related to personal work practices, fundamental concepts of coaching, and the importance of knowing yourself. Students learn how everything comes down to the core of identity and values, and how we set and uphold priorities.

In other words, this case study is really all about you, coach.

In the following scenario, you are playing “yourself” as closely as possible. Put yourself into these circumstances, and envision how you might respond. Use your imagination as necessary (e.g. if you don't actually have children, etc.).

The situation: You're a nutrition coach working at a large gym...

The gym is a pretty busy place, and you're seeing clients all day long.

At times, this can feel draining. The sheer volume of coaching you're doing is tough to maintain. Some days, it's hard to stay upbeat and energetic in the face of difficult and resistant clients.

Of course, the successful and positive clients make up for it. Sort of.

Along with work demands, you're trying to study for your Level 2 Certification and further your career. You're not sure exactly where you want to go, but you know that down the road you'd like to have a good career path.

Plus you've got a young family at home, with two small children and a partner. Your parents are getting along in years, and you try to see them now and again, but it's pretty tough with your job and other life demands.

This is all causing a bit of tension on the home front. You feel guilty about leaving the little ones behind for so long, and you miss your partner... never mind your friends, whom you haven't seen in ages.

Every day you commute in from the suburbs to the gym's downtown location. This takes you an hour each way, assuming the train isn't late.

On the plus side, you have time on the train to read blogs, journals, books, and other materials related to your field of nutrition coaching. This helps you stay on top of things — and the diversion comes in very handy for the inevitable weather delays or scheduling problems.

You're feeling OK about it all, though. As far as you're concerned, it's all part of the process. You make a decent wage, and there's the possibility of promotion... eventually.

One day, your manager calls you into her office.

She wants to make some schedule and personnel changes. These changes will affect your work. She's not quite sure yet what changes she wants to make, and she wants your input.

There are a few options.

Option 1. You get a promotion, which comes with more money. But it also comes with longer hours. You'll be expected to work a split shift — you'll open the gym at 6 am and close it at 11 pm. That means you'll need to buy a car with that extra money, since the commuter trains don't run at those times.

Option 2. You relocate to the gym's other franchise, closer to where you live. You'd work regular Monday-Friday 9-5 hours, which would be great for your family routine. Unfortunately, the pay is lower.

Option 3. You join a small team that tours the country, doing speaking events as part of the gym's corporate wellness training initiative. You'd get to be part of a cool group of people, and enjoy speaking about your favourite subject — nutrition! Unfortunately, there's obviously lots of travel, which means long hours on the road and time away from your family. You get a raise, though, and the benefit of working more closely with a team.

Option 4. You head up a new project, researching a new nutrition coaching strategy. This will require a lot of research and brushing up on your existing skills. Because the strategy is new, nobody's really sure if it will work. It's going to take a lot of creativity and innovation on your part. If it doesn't work, your head could be on the chopping block. But if you can make it happen, you'll look like a superstar. You hope.

Option 5. You take on a management role, supervising the other nutrition coaches. The pay isn't any better, since it's considered a lateral move, but there's a lot more responsibility. You get to boss other people around! But you also get all the hassles of administration and juggling the idiosyncrasies of other humans.

Option 6. You stay in your existing position, and someone else takes on these other opportunities.

"You don't have to decide right away," she says. "Could you think about this for a week and get back to me?"

You're not quite sure which option to choose. "What do you think?"

She shrugs. "It's up to you." Then her tone turns conspiratorial. "One more thing. Don't mention this to the other coaches. I wanted you to have the first shot at this."

As you leave her office, she gestures for another coach to join her. The other coach walks into the manager's office, and shuts the door.

You wonder what they're talking about.

Your assignment

Answer the following questions.

Again, assume that in the case scenario, you are playing “yourself” as closely as possible, imagining what you’d do in these circumstances.

1. In this case scenario, what are some of the challenges and competing demands that you’re experiencing in terms of your identity (i.e. who you are, what kind of person you are)?

2. In this case scenario, what are some of the challenges and competing demands that you’re experiencing in terms of your values (i.e. what you stand for, what your priorities are, and what’s important to you)?

3. What is the option you would choose first? Why?

4. What option would you choose last or never? Why?

5. What did you notice about your decision-making process as you went through this exercise? How did you work through the process of arriving at your decision? What questions did you ask yourself?