

## PAAC Professional ADHD Coaching Competencies

### A. Partnership – Establishes a strong partnership with the client.

1. Establishes Ethical Standards and Conduct
2. Creates a Respectful, Collaborative Partnership
3. Co-Creates a Clearly Articulated Coaching Agreement
4. Embodies a Passionate, Engaged Presence

### B. Exploration – Invites the client to fully explore, learn, and reach clarity.

5. Demonstrates Listening through an ADHD Lens
6. Asks Evocative, Insightful Questions
7. Delivers Insights, Wisdom, and Intuition
8. Facilitates Learning and New Awareness

### C. Action – Fully supports the client in examining possibilities and creating powerful actions to forward his/her progress.

9. Explores Choices and Invites Action
10. Encourages Responsibility and Establishes Accountability
11. Connects to Powerful Possibilities



### A. Partnership – Establishes a strong partnership with the client.

- 1. Establishes Ethical Standards and Conduct:** Demonstrates an understanding of, and commitment to, the professional and ethical standards for ADHD coaching and is able to communicate and apply those standards appropriately.
  - a. Understands and adheres to the PAAC Code of Ethics (see separate Code of Ethics document).
  - b. Demonstrates a good working understanding of the nature and symptoms of ADHD and how it affects the daily functioning and overall quality of the client's life.
  - c. Coaches from a foundation of current theoretical models of ADHD and executive functioning, and applies ADHD best practices.
  - d. Clearly conveys to the client the distinction that ADHD coaching is an ongoing collaborative partnership that empowers the client to understand and manage his/her attention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity, and ADHD coaching is not medical treatment, counselling, consulting, psychotherapy, financial or legal advising, training, or advocacy.

- e. Has the ability and knowledge to distinguish ADHD coaching from other professional services, stays within the boundaries of the coach’s training and expertise, and refers a client to appropriate professionals when additional or alternative services are indicated.
  - f. Obtains written permission from the client or the client’s guardian to discuss the client with client’s other professional/medical service providers.
  - g. Works as part of a multi-modal team around the client and collaborates respectfully and professionally with others on the team.
  - h. Ensures that a written coaching agreement is reached with the client and, as required, with other professionals, persons, or organizations with a client-approved interest.
- 2. Creates a Respectful, Collaborative Partnership:** Sets a strong foundation of partnership with the client by establishing a safe, supportive environment based on mutual respect, trust, appreciation, and confidentiality.
- a. Identifies that a “good fit” exists between the client’s needs and his/her readiness to be coached, and the coach’s experience, style, and approach before taking the client on.
  - b. Establishes expectations for an open, honest, non-judgmental relationship, and always holds the client in unconditional positive regard.
  - c. Demonstrates integrity, confidentiality, respect, and caring at all times while sharing, as appropriate, the coach’s own experience.
  - d. Is genuinely concerned about the client’s welfare, mindset, self-talk, and future.
  - e. Encourages the client to seek formal and informal ADHD accommodations in the workplace or at school, as appropriate for the client’s situation.
  - f. Sets clear boundaries for the relationship and encourages and respects the client’s boundaries.
  - g. Knows when and how to intervene based on the unique qualities and learning/communication modalities of the client and reaches agreement with the client how coach will respectfully interrupt.
- 3. Co-Creates a Clearly Articulated Coaching Plan:** Collaboratively establishes an overall coaching agreement and plan with the client, clarifies and measures the client’s desired outcomes for each coaching session, and attends to the ongoing coaching goals and partnership.
- a. Reaches agreement with the client about the coaching process, expectations, guidelines, and specific parameters of the coaching relationship (e.g. logistics, fees, scheduling, etc.).
  - b. Assists the client to identify short- and long-term objectives while recognizing the impact of ADHD and executive function challenges in decision making, goal setting, and prioritization; understands that the client may not always know what he/she wants.

- c. Clarifies that it is the client's ultimate responsibility for his/her decisions and for producing results.
- d. Determines together how the client wishes to be supported and held accountable for ongoing goals.
- e. Clarifies and confirms the client's desired outcome(s) of the session and how to measure the success of the session related to the desired outcome(s).

**4. Embodies a Passionate, Engaged Presence:** Is a fully present and collaborative partner with the client, employing an appreciative, flexible, and confident manner.

- a. Is fully present with the client and to the client's situation, and assists the client to be fully present within the coaching environment.
- b. Powerfully holds and consistently speaks to the client's strengths, accomplishments, values, vision, and highest self, even when the client isn't able to do that for him/herself.
- c. Appreciates that ultimately the client is the expert in his/her own life.
- d. Acknowledges the client's challenges and life situations, without trying to put a positive spin on them, yet validates and normalizes the client's experience.
- e. Recognizes many ways to work with the client, drawing seamlessly from coaching experience, wisdom, insight, and intuition.
- f. Is able to speak about difficult issues to help the client reach new perspectives and growth.
- g. Brings a big-hearted compassion, acceptance, patience, and curiosity about the opportunities and specific experiences of each client impacted by ADHD.
- h. Takes the client's emotional volatility in stride and creates a supportive space for the client to express and name his/her strong emotions.
- i. Invites lightness and humour into the coaching relationship, as appropriate.
- j. Manages own thoughts and strong emotions, not getting enmeshed in or letting them overpower or hinder the coach's effectiveness with the client.

**B. Exploration – Invites the client to fully explore, learn, and reach clarity.**

**5. Demonstrates Listening through an ADHD Lens:** Focuses intently on what the client is communicating verbally and non-verbally, including the full text and subtext. Takes special notice of where ADHD traits are impacting and/or supporting how the client thinks and acts. Draws out the client's self-expression and self-awareness.

- a. Discerns the essence of the client's stories, goals, dreams, values, gifts, beliefs, and feelings.
- b. Listens beyond complaints, fears, and presenting concerns to what the client really wants and who the client really is.
- c. Listens for and appreciates the client's learning style, pace, life challenges, information processing needs, and how ADHD manifests in the client's life.

- d. Paraphrases, summarizes, reframes, or mirrors back what the client has said to ensure clarity, understanding, and awareness.
  - e. Distinguishes incongruities in verbal expressions, behaviours, energy, and body language relative to the conversation and, as appropriate, brings them to the client's attention.
  - f. Allows the client to vent or complete thought processing without judgment, interruption, or attachment, and summarizes or refocuses, as appropriate.
  - g. Provides ample space for the client to explore ideas and feelings, process questions, generate responses, as well as learn how to self-monitor responses.
  - h. Notices and reflects when the client has drifted away from his/her agenda, supports the client to consciously choose his/her priority, then re-establishes the appropriate desired outcome(s) going forward.
  - i. Helps the client identify limiting beliefs, assumptions, boundaries, and behaviour patterns as well as points out observed gaps in structures and routines.
  - j. Discerns appropriate opportunities to interrupt negative behaviours and/or thinking patterns and support the client to learn the skills of bottom-lining and boundary-setting.
  - k. Receives the client with compassion, empathy, and patience, attentive to learning/processing differences, and curious to understand the full impact of ADHD in the client's life.
  - l. Witnesses and acknowledges the client's ADHD behaviour traits and dominant thought patterns – both supportive and challenging – to further the client's understanding of his/her own ADHD, brain functioning, and executive function.
- 6. Asks Evocative, Insightful Questions:** Asks strategic, curiosity-based questions which engage the client to think deeply, observe his/her own strengths and processes, explore new information, challenge assumptions, and consider other viewpoints so the client may discern new possibilities, choices, discoveries, insights, or actions.
- a. Asks open, curious, engaging questions that reflect deep listening and appreciation for the client's stories, feelings, and perspectives, and how the client may be impacted by ADHD.
  - b. Asks questions that elicit clarity about the client's meaning-making, bigger picture, goals, and vision.
  - c. Uses questions, at times, to bypass the thinking mind and learn from the body and heart about passion and values.
  - d. Asks specific questions that support the client's executive functioning ability to find his/her own answers and remain engaged.
  - e. Recognizes when a question has shut the client down and reframes the question.
  - f. Takes risks with questions, challenging the client to explore what is under the surface and is not being said or faced; also challenges the client to find and embrace strengths and successes.

- g. Asks the client to self observe and develop awareness of the impact of ADHD on his/her choices; challenges the client to reframe thoughts and feelings in light of that awareness.
  - h. Asks questions that reveal limiting beliefs, perceived or real barriers, or missing links in support systems and structures.
  - i. Asks the client to abandon negative self-talk and judgments and, instead, apply the strengths he/she may possess in the areas of sensitivity, empathy, intuition, and divergent thinking to find answers and solutions.
  - j. Uses questions to interrupt verbal processing when the client is stuck or rehearsing old stories.
  - k. Challenges the client to take personal responsibility for goals and commitments, appreciating any ongoing executive function obstacles.
- 7. Delivers Insights, Wisdom, and Intuition:** Integrates what the client is saying, succinctly and effectively conveying insights, perspectives, intuitions, and wisdom to support the client's understanding and progress.
- a. Uses a combination of direct, positive, and affirming language appropriate to the ADHD client and his/her needs.
  - b. Succinctly shares feedback to help the client see and understand issues and concerns from multiple perspectives.
  - c. Uses metaphor, analogy, personal experience, and storytelling for the purpose of raising awareness, painting a verbal picture, and enriching the learning experience.
  - d. Educates and connects the client to resources and ongoing self-education, as appropriate and within the scope of the coach's knowledge and experience.
  - e. Highlights and builds upon the client's ideas, interests, passions, values, talents, strengths, and learning and communication modalities.
  - f. Paces the conversation to keep the client engaged, while giving the client space to make shifts in his/her thinking.
  - g. Communicates ADHD as a frame of reference, not a label or excuse.
  - h. Acknowledges that the client's actions and behaviours may have been perceived as willful or a character flaw in the past, or that the client used ADHD as an excuse, and redirects the client when he/she goes into self blame.
  - i. Acknowledges that the client may often be bombarded with many thoughts and encourages the client to explore whether he/she needs to act on or be responsible for all of them.
  - j. Clearly conveys the purpose of any coaching assessments, exercises, models, and tools that the coach might suggest for the client.
  - k. Champions the client's strengths, successes, courage, intention, and effort.
- 8. Facilitates Learning and New Awareness:** Assists the client in exploring new ideas while also developing a clear and empowered self-portrait of his/her unique characteristics, style, strengths, abilities, systems, and brain wiring.

- a. Evokes client curiosity and exploration for greater understanding, awareness, and clarity.
- b. Helps the client to distinguish facts from beliefs and perceptions by exploring underlying concerns and fixed or limited ways of perceiving.
- c. Acknowledges and celebrates patterns of thinking and behaving that work for the client toward reaching desired goals.
- d. Looks beneath words, stories, and situations to bring to light underlying mindsets and rumination; does not get caught in the details.
- e. Pinpoints situations, specific executive functions, and fixed patterns of behaviour and thinking that exacerbate ADHD challenges and hinder performance and those that support them.
- f. Encourages the client to identify needs and requirements to function effectively and supports the client in self-advocacy.
- g. Communicates big picture context to the client to support shifts in viewpoint and to open new possibilities in thinking.
- h. Assists the client in identifying primary strengths, styles, interests, and patterns that can be enlisted to overcome challenges, achieve goals, and move forward.
- i. Helps the client understand that he/she is more than the sum total of any performance or results.
- j. Assists the client to acknowledge his/her ADHD and learn to stop self-blaming by identifying behaviours that have a neurobiological basis.
- k. Promotes active experimentation, stretching, and self-discovery at a realistic pace.

**C. Action – Fully supports the client in examining possibilities and creating powerful actions to forward his/her progress.**

**9. Explores Choices and Invites Action:** Explores options and ongoing learning opportunities with the client. Encourages prioritization leading to immediate actions.

- a. Acknowledges and reinforces new client awareness and choices, then invites the client to identify specific, immediate actions he/she might take from the new perspective. Challenges the client, as appropriate, to make a commitment to some action.
- b. Helps the client identify core projects and task, prioritize around most important areas for growth, and determine where immediate success can be realized.
- c. Invites the client to consider options, risks, consequences, and rewards when analyzing his/her situation.
- d. Directly asks the client what types of tactics/techniques/strategies he/she has employed in the past, inquires as to what has and hasn't worked, and brainstorms what is needed now to put effective new strategies into place.
- e. Helps the client learn to manage pressure, procrastination, distractions, and perfectionism.

- f. Assists the client to prioritize tasks, group similar activities in blocks of time, and be realistic about what is feasible to accomplish in a period of time.
- g. Challenges the client to remove or cut out ‘to do’ items that are overwhelming or negatively impacting performance.
- h. Encourages the client to explore his/her ways of getting started, monitoring progress, maintaining focus, and following through.
- i. Invites exploration and brainstorming around obstacles and barriers to action.

**10. Encourages Responsibility and Establishes Accountability:** Ignites the client’s sense of personal responsibility and accountability, while assisting the client to develop personally supportive systems and structures.

- a. Invites the client to evaluate results achieved without judgment and adjust behaviours to better reach desired outcomes.
- b. Identifies motivating factors that engage the client’s attention and momentum.
- c. Helps the client to better distinguish between potential “hot-button” words such as “blame, criticism, accountability,” and “responsibility,” recognizing that some ADHD clients may be especially sensitive to such language and unable to discern differences.
- d. Partners with the client to create actions and systems that remind and support the client to complete tasks and reach goals.
- e. Anchors the concept of breaking tasks into bite size pieces and doing it now as a model for ADHD success.
- f. Supports and builds on the client’s ongoing decision-making processes.
- g. Confronts the client with curiosity when progress isn’t occurring, and explores what the client needs in and between sessions to be successful.
- h. Determines with the client what aspects of identified goals are particularly challenging for him/her and explores delegation or obtaining support in those areas.
- i. Discusses with the client how he/she wants to be held accountable for any commitments made, and nurtures a practice of enlisting accountability partner(s).
- j. Holds the client accountable to commitments, as agreed to between the coach and client.
- k. Assists the client in building a diverse, supportive resource team.

**11. Connects to Powerful Possibilities:** Co-creates an empowering picture of what success could look like for the client which is grounded in client self understanding, strengths, values, clarity, and commitment to action.

- a. Acknowledges who the client is becoming as new results are achieved.
- b. Co-creates a picture of achievable, sustainable success for the client.
- c. Invites the client to explore his/her passions, imagine what’s possible, and embrace a higher self-perception.
- d. Invites the client to develop and articulate his/her powerful new story, including incorporating energetic, emotional, and physical shifts to support it.

- e. Speaks to the client's highest, best self, plants seeds for future possibilities, and invites the client to envision a future where the client has taken life to a whole new level.
- f. Invites the client to share new perspectives, ideas, and awareness gained during the session and how the client intends to remember and benefit from these.
- g. Reinforces and celebrates actions taken, successes, progress, learning gained, and capabilities for future accomplishments.
- h. Inquires whether the client feels the desired outcome(s) of the session were reached.
- i. Concludes the session with encouragement, expressing confidence in the client's ability to address challenges or goals and move forward.