

ANTONIA BOWRING

COACH YOURSELF!



INCREASE
AWARENESS,
CHANGE BEHAVIOR,
AND **THRIVE**

WILEY

Praise for *Coach Yourself!*

“Coach Yourself! is full of practical advice and hard-earned wisdom. Antonia Bowring bravely shares her own story, and through this book, continues her passion to give caring coaching ideas that can lift your career prospects and deepen your self-awareness.”

—Sally Susman,
Chief Corporate Affairs Officer, Pfizer and
Author of *Breaking Through: Communicating
to Open Minds, Move Hearts, and Change the World*

“Antonia Bowring has given us two gifts in this book—insights into successful executive coaching practices and tools to apply these insights in our own lives. Her frameworks are practical, thoughtful, and readily adapted by readers to fit their life. Antonia’s wisdom and experience shine through. I highly recommend her book for current and future coaches, and for all those who wish they had one.”

—Kerry J. Sulkowicz, M.D.,
Managing Principal, Boswell Group LLC

“Antonia Bowring has laid out her ‘go to’ executive coaching frameworks beautifully. She takes you on a journey of both self-discovery and concrete ways to put your new awareness into action. As CEO of a growing company, I see the need for this book. It has something for everyone from the most junior employee up to the C-suite.”

—Sarah Slusser,
CEO, Cypress Creek Renewables

“We all need to build our own toolkits for better professional performance and deepen our life satisfaction. Antonia has given us a comprehensive, masterful playbook to help us on this journey.”

—**Khe Hy**,
Founder and CEO of RadReads

“Thank you, Antonia Bowring. This book is a labor of love and it contains so much of your executive coaching expertise, and is so accessible and practical. Anyone who buys this book can put these coaching frameworks into action and they will see an immediate impact in how they show up at work and in the rest of life.”

—**Pat Mitchell**,
Cofounder, ConnectedWomenLeaders;
Editorial Director, TEDWomen, and Author of
*Becoming a Dangerous Woman: Embracing Risk to
Change the World*

“If you are struggling to manage your ADHD symptoms, then you should put this book on your reading list. It’s a game-changer! It completely opened my eyes to what was possible as an adult living with ADHD. A lot of self-help books give advice on how to change certain areas of your life, but they don’t address the habits and patterns that are likely to creep back in and ruin your progress. This one does! Thank you, Antonia, I’m recommending it to everyone!”

—**Andrew Fingerman**,
CEO Photoshelter

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Between stimulus and response, there is a space and in that space lies our power to choose and in our choice lies our growth and freedom.

—Victor Frankel

I merely took the energy it takes to pout and wrote some blues.

—Duke Ellington

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Introduction: Preparing for the Journey

“Life is a journey, not a destination.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

A couple of years ago, I called my coaching colleague, Lisa, to ask her advice.

“Lisa,” I said, “I feel like it’s time for me to work with a coach again, is there anyone you’d recommend?”

“If someone asked me to refer them to a master coach, I’d recommend you,” she said. “And besides, can’t you coach yourself with the frameworks you use with your clients?”

I was shocked by her response. Is that me she’s talking about? I didn’t consider myself to be a master coach, but I felt incredibly validated hearing her refer to me that way. (Yes, coaches can have moments of imposter syndrome, too!)

I am passionate about what coaching can do and that exchange with Lisa got me thinking about how to spread what I knew about coaching with others.

I realized I rely on certain “go-to” coaching frameworks when I hit bumps in the road—ranging from small speed bumps to major obstacles that require a metaphorical four-wheel all-terrain vehicle to overcome. My recent bumps have ranged from needing to develop better communication skills with my teenage sons to grappling with my adult ADHD diagnosis.

After receiving my diagnosis, I found it challenging at first to apply the label of ADHD to myself although I immediately felt a

sense of relief: “Oh, so that’s what’s going on. . . . It’s not just that I lack self-control.” It also became the catalyst for me to write this book.

A great deal of my journey in accepting my ADHD was about reframing how I saw myself: building new awareness of my strengths and challenges, and using coaching frameworks as additional scaffolding in my work and personal life.

I started cataloging my favorite coaching frameworks, specifically the ones that had brought the most success to my coaching clients and me. That led to my decision to write this book: I wanted to share these powerful tools to help people become more effective leaders, better parents, and ultimately happier and more accomplished people who are successfully living up to their potential.

In this book, I detail the knowledge and experience I have gained from a decade as a coach, and two decades as management consultant and in the C-suite. These frameworks and tactics will help you be a more empathetic, realistic, and effective coach to yourself. This book will help you lead by example as you employ the practices described here with your clients, colleagues, family members, friends, and romantic partners!

Your Journey of Self-Discovery

If you are reading this book, you are a motivated learner and already on a journey of self-discovery. You want change and progress, and you want to harness your gifts and strengths in new ways. This book will teach you more about yourself and help you acquire tools to be more successful at work and at home. Keep in mind these three “Ps” as you move through the book:

- Practice – these frameworks require practice to implement them well.

- Patience – be kind to yourself and recognize you are on a journey. Moving in the right direction of real change and staying the course, even when it's challenging, is success in and of itself.
- Party – celebrate along the way. This is a joyful learning journey that benefits from positive reinforcement.

My Journey of Self-Discovery

Before I became a coach, my education included one undergraduate degree and two masters; and my 20-plus-year career spanned Canadian politics and international economic development to management consulting and female founder start-ups. I pivoted from the C-suite to coaching full time 10 years ago and never looked back.

I see now how my work experience helped prepare me to be an executive coach. I confronted a number of challenges during my career without the benefit of a coach, and I could have used one! I also could have used more strategic career guidance along the way.

- Managing up was a big challenge, especially early in my career when I worked across cultures with founders much older than me. I needed help to learn the best strategies to influence and persuade, and how to balance respect for them and their views with the work goals I was accountable for. Later I worked as COO at an organization where I had two bosses, and successfully managing up was complex and critical to my ability to do my job well.
- Getting fired was a deeply humbling experience. When the new president of the foundation where I was working told me that I was being let go, it was a tremendous blow to my ego and my confidence. I remember thinking, “I don’t get

fired. I get promoted! How can this be happening to me, I thought I was a winner?”

- I also wasted years not doing the work I was born to do (coaching). For years I kept thinking I needed more credentials to be qualified enough and I undersold my skills. It took me too long to fully tap into my interests and strengths, and I often doubted my expertise. My level of confidence varied; I usually felt I was only as good as the client presentation I'd just made or the last deal I'd negotiated.

The humility I learned, the empathy I developed, and, ironically, the confidence I ended up having in my judgment were all benefits of going through experiences like these. That said, I needed time to hone my perspective, but I could have accelerated the learning, insights, and subsequent positive actions if I'd had the benefit of working with a good coach.

This is what inspires me to be in service to others. Of course, you have to learn your own lessons and forge your own pathway, but a coach can help you move through this process faster.

I wake up every morning feeling blessed and privileged to do this work. I get to support people who want to understand themselves better and take actions based on their new insights and new self-perceptions. Many of my clients have achieved goals they never thought possible, just by making small changes in their behavior and making sure those changes stick. This book will help you make changes too.

Call to Action

Why am I inspired to share these coaching frameworks with you? In three words: these frameworks work. And this book will help you master them. This isn't a book you have to start at the beginning and read to the conclusion. I think of it as a very friendly

reference book. Pick it up and start with a chapter that speaks to you. Where are you challenged right now? Is it having tough conversations? Then you'll want to hone in on Part III, which is all about communication frameworks. Managing a team? Part IV covers individual management skills and team dynamics. Over the past 10 years, I have employed every one of these frameworks with dozens and dozens of clients. They all work.

You will need to adapt these frameworks to your specific needs and your learning style, and, of course, you will need to keep your organization's culture in mind too.¹

And if you have a diagnosis of ADHD, you will find the frameworks in this book extremely helpful in times of need. It's simple: people with ADHD often require more scaffolding to be productive and efficient, and this book provides it.

The insights I provide on active listening and suggested open-ended questions in Chapter 8 resonate with many ADHD clients since sometimes they feel uncomfortable in meetings interacting with colleagues, and are looking for hacks to make it less awkward. I end the book with a section dedicated to helping you maintain your coaching wins. Once you have developed more awareness and shifted behaviors, what support do you need to avoid regressing to prior behaviors you worked hard to change?

I am so glad to be going on this journey with you.



Launching the Journey

In Chapter 1, I review some of the basics about what executive coaching is (and is not), and why it has experienced such growth in the past two decades. I then describe my coaching philosophy and coaching process in Chapter 2. I wrote Chapter 3 specifically for my readers with ADHD and it includes a framework for living successfully with ADHD. Finally, I share my thoughts on how to navigate the rest of the book in Chapter 4.

1

The Executive Coaching Context

Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts

—Winston Churchill

What Is Executive Coaching?

In the most basic (and driest) terms, “executive coaching is a regular one-on-one development process designed to produce positive changes in business behavior in a limited time frame.”¹ Building from there, when I am hired as an executive coach, I serve as a professional reframer, cheerleader, sounding board, and accountability partner to my client. I help you develop awareness about yourself, help you unearth your challenges, and create actionable goals related to them, and then hold you accountable for achieving those goals. And the ideal result is an improved situation where you thrive (and if you lead a team, it will thrive, too).

Coaching isn’t therapy because the focus is forward looking, not backward, and is strongly focused on action and results, rather than unearthing the reasons for past and present behaviors. Coaching isn’t consulting either because a coach is not telling

you what to do, or even making strong recommendations about what you should do, which we expect from consultants.

The essence of coaching is that we all have the answers inside ourselves, and the role of the coach is to help us access our own answers by shifting perspectives, developing new insights and strategies, and accessing new resources.

Executive coaching is different from life coaching. Life coaching helps people attain greater fulfillment with an emphasis on their life goals, relationships, and day-to-day lives.² Executive coaching is more focused on the work environment and business results, but it also incorporates elements of life coaching since we can't (and shouldn't) separate the "rest of our lives" from our "work lives."

Why Is Executive Coaching So Popular?

In an increasingly complex and competitive global economy, businesses and organizations of all sizes are looking for ways to differentiate their brands and enhance their value propositions. Enlightened organizations realize that maintaining a strong cadre of motivated managers and leaders is critical to their bottom-line success. Executive coaching empowers individuals, which, in turn, positively impacts the bottom line.

I believe the enormous growth in coaching is based on several linked factors:

- Information bombards us daily and the pace of change keeps accelerating. Coaches help curate a professional development journey that helps leaders better handle the complexities and keep pace with acceleration.
- Demands on us to perform underscore the need for us all to cultivate external perspectives—good coaches are a combination of cheerleader, truth-teller, and professional reframer. In his TED Talk, surgeon and bestselling author Atul Gawande speaks