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ICF ICF-ACC

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QUESTION NO: 1

A client tells their coach that they can't stop thinking about harming themselves and shares specific information about when and how they are planning to do it Which action should the coach take first?

- A. Tell the client to call a therapist
- B. Contact the appropriate emergency response services
- C. Schedule more frequent coaching sessions
- D. Discuss the issue with the client's family

ANSWER: B

Explanation:

Contact the appropriate emergency response services is the appropriate first action because the client has disclosed both intent to self-harm and specific details about timing and method. This indicates a potentially imminent, life-threatening safety risk that requires an urgent response beyond the scope of a coaching conversation. The coach's priority is to take reasonable action to protect the client's immediate safety, using the applicable local emergency number or crisis-response process and providing responders with the information necessary to locate and assist the client. Where it can be done safely, the coach should remain engaged while help is being arranged and follow any emergency-service instructions.

The ICF Code of Ethics requires coaches to maintain confidentiality while also recognizing exceptions when disclosure is required by law or when there is an imminent danger to self or others. Coaches should establish these limits of confidentiality in their agreements, but a client's acute safety need takes priority when a credible and specific risk is disclosed. Emergency intervention also appropriately recognizes that suicide-risk assessment and crisis treatment require qualified mental-health and emergency professionals, rather than additional coaching support. See the [ICF Code of Ethics](#) and the [ICF Core Competencies](#).

QUESTION NO: 2

Your session has a few minutes left, and the client has discovered some great new insights and has a good plan of action in place. To close the session in a partnering way, the worst response is:

- A. Inform the client that the time is almost up and close the session with some insights gained.
- B. Inform the client that the time is almost up and share what stood out for you as a coach during the session.
- C. Inform the client that the time is almost up and ask how they would like to close.
- D. Inform the client that the time is up, but in the last 2 minutes you can summarize the session for the client.

ANSWER: D

Explanation:

"Inform the client that the time is up, but in the last 2 minutes you can summarize the session for the client." is the least partnering response because it takes control of both the session boundary and the closing process away from the client. The statement first declares that the agreed session time has ended, then directs an additional activity chosen by the coach. More importantly, it positions the coach's summary as the necessary final step rather than inviting the client to decide what would be most valuable to acknowledge, integrate, or carry forward.

ICF coaching is grounded in a collaborative relationship that honors the client as the expert in their own life and supports the client's autonomy, choice, and responsibility. A partner-oriented close makes room for the client to identify their learning, commitments, support needs, or preferred way to end the conversation. When the coach unilaterally determines that they will summarize, the client's ownership of meaning-making and closure is reduced. This is particularly significant after the client has already generated insights and an action plan: the coach should support integration in a way that remains led by the client's agenda and preferences. This approach aligns with ICF's [Core Competencies](#), especially facilitating client growth, and its [Code of Ethics](#) commitment to client autonomy and clear agreements.

QUESTION NO: 3

Which reflects an ethical violation that would fall under a coach's responsibilities related to practice and performance?

- A. Providing coaching to some clients and consultation to others
- B. Breaking confidentiality when a client is threatening to harm themselves
- C. Meeting with a sponsor to discuss their role in the coaching process
- D. Failing to alert involved parties when there is a conflict of interest

ANSWER: D

Explanation:

Failing to alert involved parties when there is a conflict of interest is an ethical violation because a coach must actively identify, disclose, and appropriately manage actual or potential conflicts that could affect the coaching relationship or the coach's professional judgment. Transparency allows the client and any relevant sponsor or stakeholder to understand circumstances that may influence the coaching engagement and to make informed decisions about how to proceed. Merely recognizing a conflict internally is not sufficient; the ethical responsibility includes bringing it forward openly and discussing an appropriate course of action. Depending on the situation, this may involve clarifying boundaries, modifying the arrangement, obtaining informed agreement, or withdrawing from the engagement. This obligation supports trust, objectivity, and the client's welfare, which are central to ethical coaching practice. The ICF Code of Ethics requires coaches to disclose actual or potential conflicts of interest and to discuss how they will be managed. See the [ICF Code of Ethics](#) and ICF's [Ethics resources](#) for the governing principles and guidance on ethical professional conduct.

QUESTION NO: 4

Which sentence best describes the coaching process?

- A. Providing wisdom to individuals teams and organizations
- B. Supporting change through collaboration and facilitation
- C. Improving well-being by working with the client on their issues
- D. Creating customized solutions that meet clients' needs

ANSWER: B

Explanation:

Supporting change through collaboration and facilitation best describes the coaching process because coaching is a collaborative, client-centered partnership designed to evoke the client's own awareness, learning, and action. The coach does not take responsibility for solving the client's situation; instead, the coach facilitates reflection, discovery, and purposeful choices so the client can move toward goals that matter to them. This approach supports meaningful and sustainable change while respecting that clients are naturally creative, resourceful, and whole. The International Coaching Federation defines coaching as partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential. That partnership requires ongoing collaboration: the client determines the agenda and desired outcomes, while the coach uses competencies such as active listening, evocative questioning, and facilitating client growth. Facilitation is central because the coach helps create conditions in which clients generate their own insights and commitments, rather than receiving prescribed answers. This description is therefore aligned with both the ICF definition of coaching and the client-centered practices assessed on the ACC examination. See the [ICF definition of coaching](#) and the [ICF Core Competencies](#).

QUESTION NO: 5

At the beginning of a coaching engagement, a client says that their main goal is to receive a promotion within six months. The client asks the coach to guarantee that this will happen. What is the best response?

- A. Agree to guarantee the promotion if the client completes all agreed actions.
- B. Clarify the coach's role and partner with the client to identify outcomes within the client's control.
- C. Explain that promotion goals are not suitable topics for coaching.
- D. Recommend that the client focus instead on finding employment elsewhere.

ANSWER: B

Explanation:

The coach should clarify that coaching can support the client's learning, choices, and actions, while the client and external circumstances determine the outcome. A promotion may depend on organizational decisions, job availability, performance criteria, and other factors outside either party's control. The coach can then partner with the client to identify what they want to develop or accomplish in service of that goal.

Guaranteeing the promotion would create an inappropriate expectation and misrepresent the coach's role. Rejecting the goal outright or immediately replacing it with a different goal does not partner with the client to establish a meaningful agreement.

QUESTION NO: 6

At the end of the session, the client states that they are quite happy with their new awareness and are ready to leave. The best response is:

- A. Ask the client whether it might be helpful to explore some actions and accountability measures.
- B. Are happy for the client and let them go.
- C. Tell the client that a coaching session is not finished until they have an action plan.
- D. Ask what they would like to work on next time.

ANSWER: A

Explanation:

"Ask the client whether it might be helpful to explore some actions and accountability measures." is the best response because it preserves the client's ownership while offering a purposeful opportunity to translate awareness into growth. A meaningful insight can be complete in itself, and the client has indicated readiness to finish; therefore, the coach does not assume that action planning is required. By asking permission and framing the exploration as something that "might be helpful," the coach remains responsive to the client's agenda and lets the client decide whether to continue or conclude.

This response also reflects the ICF competency of facilitating client growth. ICF describes this as partnering with the client to integrate learning and insight into the client's worldview and to design goals, actions, and accountability measures when appropriate. The question invites the client to consider how their new awareness could be carried forward without directing the outcome or imposing a process. It supports a deliberate close by allowing the client to choose whether an action, experiment, reflection, or no further step best serves them. This maintains a collaborative coaching relationship and honors client autonomy. See the [ICF Core Competencies](#) and the [ICF Code of Ethics](#).

QUESTION NO: 7

A coach believes that a client is trying to work on too many goals in too short a period of time. Which approach reflects the best way to address this?

- A. Invite the client to consider how realistic it is to achieve so many goals that quickly
- B. Suggest that the client work on the hardest goal until they have more time
- C. Help the client develop a plan to accomplish the goals within the timeframe

D. Ask the client if they would consider focusing on the hardest goal during coaching

ANSWER: A

Explanation:

"Invite the client to consider how realistic it is to achieve so many goals that quickly" is the best response because it preserves the client's ownership of both the agenda and the decisions that follow. Rather than treating the coach's belief as fact, this invitation creates space for the client to assess the scope of their goals, available resources, competing commitments, desired outcomes, and the consequences of the proposed timeline. The client can then decide whether to maintain the goals, adjust timing, prioritize, or redefine success.

This approach aligns with the ICF Core Competencies. In particular, it supports Evokes Awareness by using inquiry to help the client examine assumptions and see their situation more clearly. It also supports Facilitates Client Growth by enabling the client to identify an appropriate path forward that is realistic and self-directed. A coach can deepen the conversation with questions such as, "What would make this timeframe achievable?" or "What would you need to change to pursue all of these goals sustainably?" The coach remains curious, collaborative, and respectful of client autonomy while helping the client make an informed choice. See the [ICF Core Competencies](#) and the [ICF Code of Ethics](#).

QUESTION NO: 8

Your client is a very creative person who thinks in pictures and learns visually. You, as a coach, are not naturally visual. In order to encourage and facilitate your client's learning, the best response is:

A. Tell your client that you are not able to work with them, as you are not a visual and creative person, therefore not a good coaching match.

B. Bring a whiteboard into the coaching session where you and the client can use the space to draw pictures, connections, or add any visual aids that might encourage your client's learning.

C. Let your client know that to solve problems it is more important to be rational and to approach the problem from a more sensible point of view.

D. Ask the client about what they know about their preferred learning style and enquire whether using a whiteboard would be a good idea.

ANSWER: D

Explanation:

"Ask the client about what they know about their preferred learning style and enquire whether using a whiteboard would be a good idea" is the strongest coaching response because it combines responsiveness to the client's expressed way of processing with curiosity, choice, and partnership. Rather than deciding unilaterally which visual method should be used, the coach invites the client to identify what genuinely supports their own thinking and learning. The whiteboard is offered as a possible resource, not imposed as a solution. This preserves the client's autonomy and keeps responsibility for the direction and value of the coaching with the client.

This approach also reflects active listening: the coach notices that images and visual processing may be meaningful for this particular client, then checks that understanding directly. It supports a trusting environment because the client's preferences, experience, and expertise about themselves are respected. If the client confirms that drawing, mapping connections, or other visual approaches would help, the coach and client can co-create an appropriate way to use those methods in service of the client's goals. The ICF Core Competencies emphasize partnering with clients and adapting coaching to what the client communicates and needs. See the [ICF Core Competencies](#) and the [ICF Code of Ethics](#).

QUESTION NO: 9

Your client shares that finally, after many months, they are making progress in an area that has been difficult for them. The worst response is:

A. Slam the desk, shouting "YES YES YES" and fist pump the air in celebration of your client and your good work.

B. Ask the client why they did not make this progress sooner, as they had a good plan in place, and should've resolved the issue already.

C. Remind the client that this change has come only because of the coaching and the help that the coach has been giving.

D. Listen to the client share, and after a few wows, reflect back to the client some of the path they have walked over the past few months, sharing what you respect and admire in the client.

ANSWER: C

Explanation:

"Remind the client that this change has come only because of the coaching and the help that the coach has been giving." is the worst response because it claims ownership of progress that belongs to the client. Coaching is a thought-provoking and creative partnership in which the client is the expert in their own life and is responsible for choosing and carrying out actions. Although coaching may provide a supportive structure for insight, accountability, and learning, the client's effort, choices, resourcefulness, and growth remain central. Taking sole credit shifts attention from the client's accomplishment to the coach's importance and can diminish the client's confidence and sense of agency. It also introduces the coach's self-interest into a moment that should reinforce the client's capability and autonomy. A coach who recognizes progress should remain curious, acknowledge what the client has learned or done, and support the client in identifying how they created the result and how they can sustain it. This approach is consistent with the ICF definition of coaching and the Core Competencies' emphasis on cultivating trust, maintaining a coaching mindset, and facilitating client growth. See the [ICF definition of coaching](#) and the [ICF Core Competencies](#).

QUESTION NO: 10

A client describes being interrupted during a presentation and then says quietly, "I felt stupid." The coach notices a long pause. Which response best demonstrates coaching presence?

A. You felt stupid. What is present for you as you say that now?

B. You should not feel stupid; being interrupted happens to everyone.

C. Why do you think the other person chose to interrupt you?

D. Let us plan exactly what you will say if this happens again.

ANSWER: A

Explanation:

"You felt stupid. What is present for you as you say that now?" is the best response because it reflects the client's language and allows the client to remain with, explore, or redirect their immediate experience. The coach does not rush to reassure the client, analyze the emotion, or move prematurely into planning.

Coaching presence includes being fully conscious with the client and responding to what is emerging in the moment. Telling the client not to feel embarrassed or immediately rehearsing a future response would shift attention away from the client's current experience.

QUESTION NO: 11

Your client shares that finally, after many months, they are making progress in an area that has been difficult for them. The best response is:

A. Slam the desk, shouting "YES YES YES" and fist pump the air in celebration of your client and your good work.

B. Ask the client why they did not make this progress sooner, as they had a good plan in place, and should've resolved the issue already.

C. Remind the client that this change has come only because of the coaching and the help that the coach has been giving.

D. Listen to the client share, and after a few wows, reflect back to the client some of the path they have walked over the past few months, sharing what you respect and admire in the client.

ANSWER: D

Explanation:

“Listen to the client share, and after a few wows, reflect back to the client some of the path they have walked over the past few months, sharing what you respect and admire in the client” is the best response because it centers the client’s experience, effort, learning, and progress. The coach first gives the client space to describe what the progress means to them, rather than immediately directing the conversation or making the moment about the coach. Reflecting the path the client has walked demonstrates active listening and helps the client recognize patterns, strengths, persistence, and choices that contributed to the change. Sharing genuine respect and admiration can also support the client’s awareness and confidence while preserving the client as the expert in their own life and work. This response is consistent with the ICF Core Competencies, particularly Cultivates Trust and Safety and Listens Actively. It acknowledges the client’s achievement without claiming ownership of it, and it invites the client to deepen their own meaning-making around sustainable progress. ICF describes coaching as a thought-provoking and creative partnership that inspires clients to maximize their personal and professional potential. See the [ICF Core Competencies](#) and the [ICF Code of Ethics](#).