



## VA WHOLE HEALTH COACHING: WHAT TO EXPECT



### WHAT IS WHOLE HEALTH COACHING?

Coaches help people focus on goals, identify strengths and values, and work towards building the kind of life they wish to live. Your health coach will help you choose and work on goals that you find important for your life and health. For example, some people choose to focus on a goal related to fitness, while others want to improve their sense of purpose in life. If you're not sure about your goals, your coach can help you find an area to focus on.

“Whole health” refers to your health as a whole person, including your body, mind, personal development, community and surroundings, spirit and soul, social relationships, sleep, and nutrition. Starting with identifying what you want from your health, your health coach will help you explore different aspects of your life that can optimize your health and well-being.

### WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A HEALTH COACH AND OTHER HEALTH PROFESSIONALS?

Your health coach is not trained as a doctor, therapist, or other clinician; instead your health coach has been trained to motivate, guide, and support people as they work towards their goals. Your health coach cannot diagnose, prescribe medications, evaluate your mental health or medical condition(s) or symptoms, or provide treatment recommendations.

Coaching is not a substitute for care you would otherwise receive from your clinician(s). It is your responsibility to contact your clinician(s) or seek other healthcare if you have medical or mental health concerns. Coaching is also not a substitute for the professional advice you might receive from legal, medical, financial, business, spiritual, or other professionals. Any decisions you make in these and any other areas are your responsibility and not the responsibility of the coach.

### WHAT IS A COACHING MEETING LIKE?

Most Whole Health Coaching meetings typically last 30-60 minutes. Your health coach will have topics prepared and lead the meeting, but you will play an integral part in setting the agenda for each meeting.

A typical coaching meeting might include:

- Greeting, recap of progress since last meeting (10 min)
- Set agenda for the day (5 min)
- Conduct health/personal assessment and set goals (10-20 min)
- Create a personalized plan for the week (10 min)
- Discuss strategies to ensure success (5 min)

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## WHAT CAN I EXPECT OF MY COACH?

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Your health coach can help you set and achieve goals for your health and your future. Your coach is committed to ensuring that the time you invest in coaching is valuable and beneficial to you, and is open to your feedback about how coaching is working for you.

Your health coach may challenge you to think about what is really important to you and help you hold yourself accountable to achieving your goals. You are the expert on your life, not your coach, so your honesty and participation are needed for you to achieve success. You can expect that your coach will listen to you without judgement.

Your health coach will meet with you at the agreed-upon time and will give you their full attention during the meeting.

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## WHAT'S EXPECTED OF ME?

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Please be on time and ready for the meeting, and willing to talk honestly and openly with your coach. Please only share information with your health coach that you are comfortable talking about. You can refuse to answer any question you do not wish to answer. Telling your health coach, "I'd prefer not to answer that" or "I don't want to answer that" is okay. If you ever feel like your health coach does not understand you, it is your responsibility to tell your coach – this will not hurt your coach's feelings. While you should be respectful, normal rules of social niceties that you would use with friends or family are not necessary; being transparent about what you're thinking and experiencing is more important.

You and your health coach will sometimes use worksheets and other materials that are included in your Coaching Folder. Please have your Coaching Folder available for each meeting, along with a pencil or pen, so that you can use it with your coach. Be sure to save your folder in a place you remember between meetings.

### Cancellations or missed meetings

If you do not arrive at the agreed-upon time, your coach will try to contact you, up to 10 minutes beyond the scheduled time. After 10 minutes, you will need to reschedule.

If you know ahead of time that you will not be able to make the agreed-upon meeting time, please call your coach at least 24 hours in advance to reschedule your meeting.

**If you are experiencing an emotional, mental health, or physical concern or crisis**, you should contact the appropriate health care or emergency resources instead of your coach. Here are some options:

- If it is not an emergency, call your clinician(s).
  - VA Portland: 503-220-8262
- If it is urgent or an emergency:
  - Call the Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255, then press 1
  - Call 911
  - Visit your local emergency department

If you experience a crisis while speaking with your health coach, your coach may connect you to the Veterans Crisis Line, direct you to your local emergency department, or call 911 on your behalf.



**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Veterans Health Administration  
VA Portland Health Care System

## COACHING AGREEMENT

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My coach and I have reviewed the handout on what to expect from Whole Health Coaching. By agreeing to participate in the Whole Health Coaching program,

1. I understand that my health and the decisions I make are my responsibility.
2. I agree to engage fully and appropriately with my coach, as described above, to work towards my goals.
3. I understand that my coach cannot provide medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment for specific symptoms or medical conditions.
4. I agree to be available and prepared for my coaching meetings and to contact my coach within 24 hours of our scheduled meeting if I need to reschedule.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of coach

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date