

## Is age a limitation to coaching?

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age a limitation to coaching? No and Yes. There are two sides to this answer. The first is from you = There is no limitation to coaching unless you create it. And from the recipient/potential client end the answer is a Maybe yes. It depends on several factors - internal sense of value received by being in relationship with you, cultural biases, ageism (a true ism that goes both ways), and stereotypes. Some will say you are too young/old while most it will never make a difference, and there will be even some that will seek you out because of your youth.

I

started coaching when I was 21 (I am 37 now). I didn't call it coaching until about 7 years ago. I have coached young and old, however the majority of the people I've worked with are 10-30 years my senior. 95% of the time age was never an issue with them. Most of them saw me as their partner, their equal with a different perspective. Occasionally, when their state of mind fell way below the line, they saw me as a young whippersnapper.

My biggest challenge however, has not been with how others view my age, but rather how I view my age in relation to them. Was I old enough, would I have enough clout, can I lead this group, etc.? I built, ran, and sold a manufacturing firm by age 30. In 1999 I was serving on 3 boards, buying, rezoned, and converting a house to duplex, extensively participated in community leadership training - and doing all of these things simultaneously. Even with that under my belt, my biggest age enemy was my own view of my age. Until I conquered that, until I saw the value that I was creating for people being who I am in the world, age was a big obstacle.

Getting out of our own way may be the biggest obstacle that coaches face in our profession. Helps to hire great coaches to work you through it. I have hired many. (BTW - buddy coaches can't do this)

I know and have known great coaches who happened to be chronologically young. I have also known great coaches who happened to be chronologically older. It is always a matter of integrity, value, and skill, not age.

Alexander Caillet, a friend, mentor, and coach guru of mine started coaching in his twenties and by his thirties was partner in major consulting firm. He told me once about this battle he had himself when he first had to coach a senior executive of a larger firm. He referred to them as "the old grey hairs" (in a terrified and small voice) and upon meeting them face to face his realization that they were simply people, just like him, who needed perspective and had hired him to tease it out of them.

### Something

to consider. When Thomas Leonard (many consider the father of modern coaching) died in 2003 he was only 47. He had been coaching since the 80s, meaning he had been coaching since he was in his mid 20s and started a coaching school in his early 30s.

### Another thing to

consider and so often this is missed in our coaching discussions. Coaching is a skill set and an art form. Some people create a business and profession around it. Others use it to build teams, inspire people, lead, grow organizations, or simply apply coaching skills to their every day life. Once you become trained as a coach, nothing you do will be done the same way you did it before you went through coach training. So live life in a coach-like way, whether you are 20 or 92.

So, most of the challenge is in our heads. Do we choose to accept the challenge? Or do we choose to hold our gifts in exile?