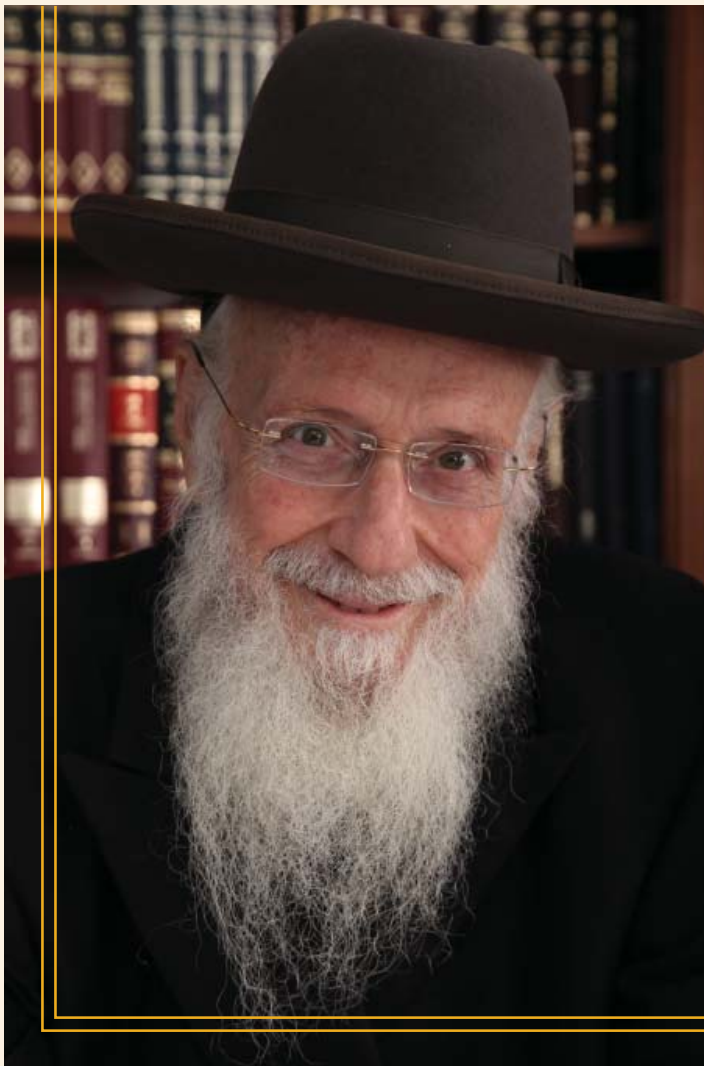


# COACHING

ACCORDING TO



TRADITION

*The Refuah Institute is more than a professional training program for personal growth. Its unique qualities were inspired by the personal journey of Rabbi Professor Joshua H. Ritchie, MD. The Institute gives coaches the tools to help their clients get in touch with the singular abilities that Hashem gave them. Because that was exactly what Dr. Ritchie learned to do from Harav Yerachmiel Yehudah Meir Kalish, the Amshinover Rebbe, zy”a, and also Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach, z”l.*



Dr. Ritchie transmitting a lecture

### **A Childhood in Arizona**

Based in Ramot Bet, a peaceful, verdant neighborhood in northern Yerushalayim, the Refuah Institute is both the working center of the Institute and home to Dr. Ritchie and his wife. A wintry gray light filters in from outside, trying unsuccessfully to subdue the multicolored pastels of Liliane Ritchie’s numerous paintings that cover the walls. I settle into my seat, eager to learn about the world of coaching and wondering how I’m going to apply what I learn to my own life.

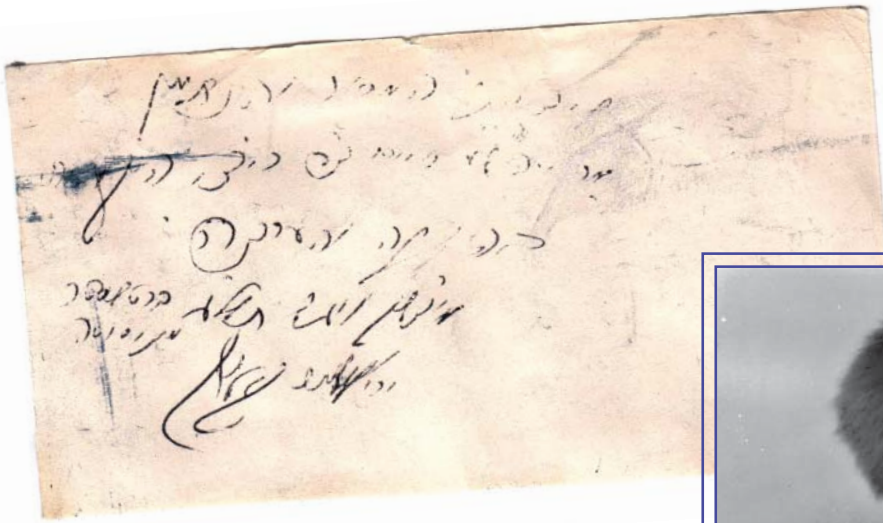
Born in New York City in 1938, Joshua Ritchie, as well as his younger brother, spent their childhood in Phoenix, Arizona. “Although my family was traditional, they had no Jewish education, so I didn’t have a strong faith in Hashem,” says Dr. Ritchie. However, at 17, while pursuing a degree in philosophy at Phoenix University, he began to think about where life would take

him. It didn’t take long for Dr. Ritchie to realize that the survival of the Jews was connected to the Torah.

“I was aware of the Orthodox *shtiebel*, but seeing its congregants convinced me that entrance was barred to anyone under 65,” he says with a soft smile. That left the Reform clergyman in the tweed jacket to turn to for answers. “But he told me he couldn’t tell me about G-d because he was an atheist,” says Dr. Ritchie, who suggested to the man that perhaps he meant agnostic rather than atheist.

### **A Series of Turning Points**

Six weeks spent over the summer in Israel taught Dr. Ritchie that religion wasn’t only for the elderly. “It was the first time I met Orthodox Jews who were young,” he says. “Now, I was ready to believe in Hashem, but I thought that I should start doing things only once



Letter from the Amshinover Rebbe, zy" a, (below) to Rabbi Dr. Joshua H. Ritchie



I actually understood what I was doing. Then someone pointed out to me that at Har Sinai the Jews had said, ‘*Naaseh v’nishma* — We will do and we will listen.’” So Dr. Ritchie decided to follow the rules and trust that understanding would follow.

Dr. Ritchie had recently married Liliane, whom he had met while on vacation in Switzerland, and this took his religious observance to a level beyond just following the rules. “My wife is a deeply spiritual person with a strong belief and trust in Hashem. She couldn’t understand how I wasn’t building a personal relationship with Hashem and constantly encouraged me to grow in this area.” Dr. Ritchie pauses and then adds, “Building a personal relationship with Hashem takes time.” Mrs. Ritchie smiles.

A major turning point came in 1966 when Dr. Ritchie was studying medicine at the University of California in San Francisco. The couple, who already had three children, met Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach, a pioneer in the *baal teshuvah* movement. Using songs and inspiring storytelling, Reb Shlomo was encouraging estranged Jewish youth to re-embrace their heritage. “No one had even heard of the idea of *kiruv*. No one imagined that a Torah scholar could go out and shlep people back to *Yiddishkeit*,” says Dr. Ritchie.

When the Ritchies met Reb Shlomo at the *sheva brachos* of a friend, they had been searching for meaning for years and were excited about the opportunity for an active involvement in their heritage. The Ritchies were among the founders who helped Reb Shlomo establish a shul.

“Kids who were raised with nothing would arrive at six in the evening on Erev Shabbos. By the time we made *Kiddush* at midnight, despite having had nothing to eat or drink, they were flying high,” Dr. Ritchie says. Despite the success of Reb Shlomo’s shul, collecting funding for *siddurim* and other religious items was a challenge. “No one believed that we should be giving away good stuff to this kind of kid,” says Dr. Ritchie.

### Shimush with the Amshinover Rebbe

Two years later, in 1968, Reb Shlomo encouraged the Ritchies to move to Eretz Yisrael and to form a relationship with the Amshinover Rebbe. The Ritchies settled in Bayit Vegan, not far from Rechov Harav Frank, the heart of the Amshinover court. Dr. Ritchie practiced as a physician and held the post of senior lecturer and researcher at the Hebrew University School of Medicine.

Shortly after a warm and friendly meeting with the Rebbe, *zt”l*, at *Minchah* one Shabbos, Dr. Ritchie took his wife to meet the Rebbe.

“How are you adjusting to your new environment?” the Rebbe asked Mrs. Ritchie.

“She’s doing very well,” replied Dr. Ritchie.

“I didn’t ask you; I asked her,” the Rebbe said with a smile.

It was the beginning of a relationship that was to transform the Ritchies personally and impact mightily on the approach to coaching that Dr. Ritchie would later develop. Dr. Ritchie became a *ben bayis*, *shamash* and driver for the Rebbe. More than that, over the next eight years, Dr. Ritchie spent over 1,000 hours watching how the Rebbe listened to and strengthened those who came to see him.

“I was running a pediatric ward and a research lab; I was making night calls; I was a family man. And somehow I spent hours with the Rebbe,” says Dr. Ritchie with wonder. “When I sat with the Rebbe, sometimes the petitioner would ask who I was. ‘That’s the doctor,’ the Rebbe would answer, putting an end to the questions and somehow

making everyone comfortable with my presence. I learned how the Rebbe counseled and coached people by absorbing — by *shimush*.”

What was it that made the Rebbe encourage Dr. Ritchie so? Could it have been the inkling of an idea that would motivate Dr. Ritchie to go on to establish a coaching institute that would pass on the Rebbe’s Torah-based approach to listening and strengthening fellow Jews?

### The Refuah Institute

Having helped Reb Shlomo establish Moshav Me’or Modiin and living there for three years, in 1979 the Ritchies traveled back to Los Angeles where Dr. Ritchie became the medical director at the Edendale Family Medical Center until 1991. After retiring in 1995, Dr. Ritchie established the Refuah Institute. In 2002, with the Ritchies back in Eretz Yisrael, the Institute also began offering courses to train life coaches there.

Dr. Ritchie bases his teachings on what he has learned from his mentors. Dr. Ritchie says, “When the Rebbe looked at someone, he didn’t see the outside. He related to the essence of a person. He saw the person’s holy *neshamah* and related to his potential.” Dr. Ritchie pauses, then adds, “Reb Shlomo’s approach was similar. He would see the strangest of people and call them *tzaddikim*. Both the Amshinover Rebbe and Reb Shlomo were motivated by tremendous *ahavas Yisrael*.”

The Amshinover Rebbe would listen to everyone with unconditional respect and ask questions that would encourage them to tap into their own inner resources



## TRANSFORMATION: COACHING CAN CHANGE LIVES

It was a beautiful *aufruf*. The beaming father of the *chassan*, resplendent in his *bekeshe*, looked familiar. In a flash, Dr. Ritchie recognized the father as the bedraggled, downtrodden beggar who had walked into the *beis medrash* a year before. The Amshinover Rebbe, *zy”a*, had taken him in and put him to work cleaning the kitchen. Over the next few months the man rose in the ranks to serving meals in the yeshivah. Soon he was carrying around all the keys of the yeshivah — he had become the manager. Six months after he had shown up, the man took his leave, with apologies, saying that he had to take care of pressing personal matters. Now he was back — basking in *nachas* at his son’s *aufruf*. “That was how the Rebbe changed lives,” says Dr. Ritchie.

of strength and wisdom. “I am teaching what I saw the Amshinover Rebbe doing. Using the language of science and medicine, I’m able to explain in words and give over what he did,” says Dr. Ritchie. This “client-centered” approach of rapt listening, respect and empathy emboldens the clients to evaluate their own resources and make their own decisions. This approach also reflects one proposed in the ’60s by psychologist Carl Rogers, who believed that all people share one basic motivation — the longing to self-actualize, to fulfill one’s potential.

At the Refuah Institute students can physically sit in a class in Israel; they can also connect to the class from all over the world via teleconference, video conference, Skype or WebEx. Lectures are recorded so that they are available for those who cannot attend the class itself. Students take part in supervised practicum sessions where they have a chance to observe coaching, role-play clients, act as a coach and receive feedback. “Participants learn how to heal others, but a tremendous amount of self-development is involved. Before you can help others, you have to have developed yourself,” adds Dr. Ritchie.

Rav Shlomo Wolbe with Dr. Ritchie

## What Exactly Is Coaching?

Coaching is the latest step in the growth of mental-health techniques. It all began with psychotherapy, where the therapist thought he was able to “fix” his client. Counseling came next. Here the therapist took a somewhat less active role and advised his client. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) followed. Here the therapist works with the client in solution-focused counseling. Coaching, the latest step, is where the coach and the client work together as equals to fulfill the client’s potential.

“Being a coach is delicate work. A good coach will help his client explore his options and then decide. You need to hear the person and help him to discover himself by asking him what he was considering. You must not lead him — unless he’s heading toward a cliff, in which case you’ll want to point out the dangers,” Dr. Ritchie says.

“Coaching isn’t about telling your client what to do. Life coaching is a way of putting your client in touch with his *neshamah*. We talk of real goals, values, resources and abilities so that the clients come to see what they really want — what Hashem created them for,” Dr. Ritchie adds. He elaborates further: “You can live your life as a coach. You can encourage and facilitate the growth of every human being that you come in contact with: your parent, spouse, child, friend and neighbor.”

Suddenly, the world of coaching becomes very relevant to me.

## The Foundation of the Coaching Relationship

Before you can coach someone, you have to establish rapport and a relationship of trust. As Dr. Ritchie elaborates on this linchpin, I realize that the principles apply to every relationship.

- Show your client empathetic understanding. “Often, after listening attentively, the Rebbe would say, ‘*Ani shome’a* (I hear).’ You knew that he had understood, and not just listened.” Your client may have done something wrong, but your job is to see the positive motivation behind the wrong move. And then help him find a better way to react next time.
- Maintain unconditional positive regard, *ahavas chinam*. Accept your client with respect. If you criticize your client, you will give him a message that you dislike him and will in fact drive him away. You must believe that he wants to accept the responsibility of being good and that he is capable of accomplishing change.

## The ABC of Coaching

Once a relationship of trust has been built, the coach can begin to work with his client on two different fronts:



encouraging him to find role models and using his own skills to find solutions. Once again, Dr. Ritchie uses the language of science to translate into words what he watched the Amshinover Rebbe doing.

- **EMULATING ROLE MODELS.** To help someone transform, a coach provides his client with a role model. Timothy Gallwey, a tennis coach in the '70s, whose training methods have been subsequently applied to the fields of business, health and education, didn't give instructions about how to play tennis. He taught by encouraging his student to watch the game and then try out what they had seen — essentially an apprenticeship.

“When you see someone doing something, your brain immediately rehearses how to replicate what you see,” explains Dr. Ritchie. It's all about mirror neurons — a distinctive class of neurons discovered in the last decade. Mirror neurons discharge both when someone does something and also when he watches someone else doing that same thing. Therefore, by having a role model, your client is essentially training himself to act like his mentor.

- **FINDING SOLUTIONS.** “Real learning is experiential,” says Dr. Ritchie. “Your client can be in touch with his own *daas* (inner knowledge) to reach his own source of inspiration and find his own solutions. A coach uses questions to help the client — but not just any questions. The type of questions and their wording are the working tools of the coach, and are based on the assumption that the client already has his own answers, and the coach can help him uncover them. Asking for people's opinions and taking them seriously empowers them, moves them away from depending on the coach for answers.

Once your client has identified his goals, help him move into the desired future. Use vivid imaging to pull him toward the future, and then help him plan how to get there. If, for example, becoming a successful artist is your client's long-term goal, he'll have to plan the immediate goals that will help him get there. Help him discover the immediate steps that will lead him in the right direction.

## The Circle Closes

Educator, professor of medicine, family practitioner, pediatrician, author, coach, counselor, hypnotherapist and Rabbi, Dr. Ritchie wears many hats, but the hat he wears now, helping hundreds of people to reach their potential by teaching those who will in turn reach out to others, is the one that brings him the most satisfaction. “My desire to help others is magnified through the school and I'm grateful for that,” says Dr. Ritchie.

Over the years Dr. Ritchie was privileged to meet many Torah personalities. While in Los Angeles he met Harav

# CHECKLIST FOR HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIPS

We all want harmonious relationships. This checklist can help us get there.

1. Be understanding — understand with empathy.
2. Be respectful — honor every person.
3. Be sincere — show real interest.
4. Be exemplary — teach by example.
5. Be clear — communicate well so that the person understands you and so that he knows you understand him.
6. Be encouraging — praise the person's talents, positive attributes and goals.
7. Be supportive — offer all kinds of help.
8. Be empowering — help others make their own decisions.
9. Be optimistic — believe in the essential goodness of the person.
10. Be grateful — express your thanks.
11. Be kind — give of yourself.
12. Be a good friend — let the person give to you.
13. Be loving — give without conditions.

*Excerpted from “Thirteen Steps to Harmonious Relationships” by Dr. Joshua Ritchie*

Simcha Wasserman, *zt”l*. “His warm, kind words embraced you,” he says. In 1973, as the first medical director of the Laniado Hospital in Kiryat Sanz, he was privileged to spend two Shabbosos with the Klausenberger Rebbe, *zy”a*, in Union City. The Amshinover Rebbe made sure that Dr. Ritchie accompanied him on visits to the Gerrer, Vizhnitzer and Bialer Rebbes. When he met Harav Yitzchak Hutner, *zt”l*, in Eretz Yisrael in 1971, the Rav told him he would be accomplishing great things and spoke of opening a medical center.

“I don't think I lived up to his expectations,” says Dr. Ritchie modestly. But perhaps the Refuah Institute, in its serene, verdant neighborhood in Yerushalayim, has gone even beyond those expectations by giving hundreds of coaches the tools to help hundreds more clients through coaching by the light of Torah. ■