



Intrinsic Coach™

# Interview

“Intrinsic Coaching™ confirms  
that we all have so many  
answers within ourselves and  
these answers make a difference  
in our lives.”

- Susan Dirr, classroom teacher,  
health coach, cross country  
coach, and runner



**Susan Dirr** is a classroom teacher, runner, cross country coach and health coach from Toledo, Ohio. Susan is currently teaching at the middle school level, coaching high school runners and employed by Achieva Lifetime Health as a health coach. She thoroughly enjoys working with others, especially in relation to improving one's quality of life through better health and achieving goals. Susan has two grown children and lives with her husband in the Toledo area. Besides running, she loves to read and practice yoga.

## Jodi Sivon



M.Ed. in Community Health, BA in Exercise Physiology, CHES, and certified by ACSM, ACE, and through the Cooper Institute, is an Intrinsic Coach™ Mentor for Totally Coached, Inc. and Manager of Health & Wellness for Cuyahoga Community College's Metropolitan Campus. As Intrinsic Coach™ Mentor, Ms. Sivon trains new coaches in the Intrinsic Coaching™ methodology. As Manager of H&W for Cuyahoga Community College, Ms. Sivon manages the campus H&W Center, designs, promotes, and implements all campus wellness programs, and serves as a resource and coach for healthy lifestyle choices for over 450 full-time employees and 6,000 students.

**Q** Hi, Susan! Thank you for taking the time to talk with us today. Please tell us a little bit about yourself.

**A** I'm married, am a mother, a teacher, a cross country coach and also a runner myself. I have two grown children and my husband and I are both educators. He's in administration and I've been a classroom French teacher for 25 years now, twenty of which have been at the middle school level. I really enjoy that part of my life and my career has been a very fulfilling one. Outside of the classroom, my passions are running and coaching runners. My knowledge and awareness of health and wellness have come from the years of running and the pursuit of developing the athletes I work with. I've been head track coach and cross country coach for eight years at the high school level and am currently an assistant coach for the high school in the district in which I teach in Sylvania, Ohio, a suburb of Toledo.

Coaching athletes has been the spark of my interest in the physical and mental sides of being healthy and accomplishing goals. I have seen runners who have not had a lot of natural talent make extensive improvements in their fitness levels and in racing when they believed in their pursuits. I've always been intrigued by that tight bond between the mental and the physical. With the

Intrinsic Coaching™ methodology, I learned about and experienced that same relationship in terms of what's going on in our mind relating exactly to what we're able to achieve in improving the quality of our lives.

**With the Intrinsic Coaching™ methodology, I learned about and experienced what's going on in our mind and how it relates to what we're able to achieve in improving the quality of our lives.**

**Q** In terms of that physical and mental connection you see with running and with Intrinsic Coaching™, have you used Intrinsic Coaching™ with your athletes?

**A** I haven't had a season since I've completed the Intrinsic Coach™ Development Series (ICDS), but we're currently starting to train for the fall season. I plan on incorporating the Intrinsic Coaching™ approach when we get closer to competition. Asking questions such as, "What would make you feel more confident in race preparation and how can you practice that?" Or "What makes you feel most ready for racing? What can you/we do as a team to build that feeling?" Bringing out the athletes best thinking in relation to their own specific needs and wants would build their level of confidence and increase the possibilities for success.

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**Q** There's a lot of potential. Intrinsic thinking is something they can carry with them both with running and outside of running.

**A** Absolutely. Again, I haven't really applied it yet in my cross country coaching, but I'm extremely excited about the opportunity. With Intrinsic Coaching™ I feel as though I've hit upon something where I've just scratched the surface. It feels like I'm just at the tip of the iceberg in visualizing the kinds of things that adopting this approach can develop in runners that enable them to take more responsibility for their training—and set more specific goals for themselves. I've had runners who've had no fire in them and I'd try to direct them by saying 'try this, this and this' with little or no progress. Now I can ask a question to develop better thinking in that person such as, "What might work for you? What's important to you about running? Or, is there something you can do to light that fire?" I'm excited to give it a try this coming season and see the difference an Intrinsic Coaching™ approach could make.

With Intrinsic Coaching™ I feel as though I've hit upon something where I've just scratched the surface...Intrinsic Coaching™ can enable runners to take more responsibility for their training—and set more specific goals for themselves.

**Q** There is a correlation between that fire and inner desire and finding the intrinsic. Intrinsic Coaching™ shows us how to find that.

**A** And that's why goal setting is so important. Again, there are those members of the team who aren't necessarily the fastest, but because they have a goal set in their mind and they tell themselves they can do it, they will be more likely to accomplish it. That, to me, has an intrinsic tone to it.

**Q** Goals are very powerful. And Intrinsic Coaching™ focuses on the discovery of that goal—of what's important to that person in order to find that motivation and passion to move forward. Susan, how did you become interested in the Intrinsic Coaching™ methodology?

**A** Janet Walker, one of the owners of Achieva Lifetime Health, where I am working part-time now, contacted me to see if I had any interest in becoming a health coach. I was really attracted to the idea, but honestly wasn't quite sure what that entailed. I did like the idea of reaching out, helping others and tuning them into what was going on with their health. Janet talked about the research she and another owner, Regina Masters, had done on Intrinsic Coaching™ and some of the results they'd seen. They were both very excited about it. I caught their enthusiasm. I remember getting on the Totally Coached, Inc. website and reading the comic about conversations you no longer want to have. I could see the weaknesses in the "telling" kind of conversation, and I wanted to learn more. So between the reading I was doing on Intrinsic Coaching™ and talking with Achieva Lifetime Health, it sounded very appealing to me.

**Q** Now that you are an Intrinsic Coach™, what does Intrinsic Coaching™ mean to you?

**A** I just completed my first ICDS and what Intrinsic Coaching™ is to me is adhering to some basic beliefs and truths about people. Coaching someone in an Intrinsic Coaching™ fashion means believing we all have the answers within ourselves and it's a method of discovery rather than directing. An Intrinsic Coach™ serves the coachee by asking questions that help him or her define what is really important and mapping out a pathway to get there. It also means providing the coachee with a place where he can really be listened to, respected, valued and supported in whatever direction he or she wants to take. It's a situation where someone can clarify what he or she really wants and discover a path to get there. My role as an Intrinsic Coach™ is to create an environment in which clients can focus entirely on creating their own fulfillment. The coaching conversation is to generate action and learning on the part of the coachee.

Intrinsic Coaching™ is a method of discovery rather than directing...My role as an Intrinsic Coach™ is to create an environment in which clients can focus entirely on creating their own fulfillment.

**Q** I like how you put that—Intrinsic Coaching™ is a method of discovery rather than directing.

**A** During the Intrinsic Coach™ Development Series we talked about metaphors of coaching. I see the conversation as a fork in the road and as a coach we encourage that person to pick a path that is most meaningful to them. An Intrinsic Coach™ is someone who listens and helps their coachees discover what is most important, identifying what hurdles there might be and asking questions to bring out their ideas in creating a path of discovery to overcome those hurdles.

**Q** You've talked a lot about what Intrinsic Coaching™ means to you. What is one thing about the Intrinsic Coaching™ methodology that stands out for you?

**A** What really stands out for me is the discovery that can happen when you truly listen to someone—when you really listen with your heart and spirit and what happens when you truly connect at each level. Through that listening you develop questions that pull out their best thinking. The key for me is listening.

**Q** How has the Intrinsic Coaching™ methodology enhanced your work professionally (as a teacher, coach, and a health coach at Achieva)?

**A** There are two major things that come to mind. The first is the way I look at my students in the classroom. I'm taking a different approach with how I regard them. There are times when we fall back into our old patterns, but in general I am looking at my students as more capable, more creative and more complete than I have before. Sometimes there are situations where a homework assignment wasn't turned in on time or there is a behavioral issue in the classroom. Rather than jumping in with the old pattern I refer to as directing and saying you shouldn't do that, I now say, "What could help you get your homework in on time? Or, if you came to class totally prepared and you were ready to go, what would that feel like?" One student responded, "Hey, that wouldn't be bad!" There is a bit of a shift going on in the classroom because I'm engaging my students' best thinking in problem solving, which leads to taking more responsibility. I can see this continuing to improve as time goes on, as I'll be more aware of situations that can be handled with an Intrinsic Coaching™ approach.

The second way Intrinsic Coaching™ enhances my work is, again, in coaching cross country (which we touched on some before). I'm responding more and developing

more questions to help the athletes grow and develop a plan which might work with them in combination with some of the training plans I have. Overall, Intrinsic Coaching™ has made me a better listener. It's that serving and listening that has helped me professionally both with my colleagues and students. I'm listening more thoroughly—quieting my internal dialogue and trying to be non-judgmental. I have a friend who mentioned she had noticed that difference in me, so there have already been positive results, both professionally and personally, in a short amount of time since beginning the practice of Intrinsic Coaching™. That's been very exciting.

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**Q** That's quite a compliment when other people notice those changes within you. Let's talk about Achieva Lifetime Health and the coaching you are doing with them. Can you talk about how Achieva integrates Intrinsic Coaching™ into their work and the results Achieva has seen as a result of integrating the Intrinsic Coaching™ methodology?

**A** I just recently started with Achieva and haven't done any active, formalized coaching as of yet. However, I can see Achieva uses a uniquely balanced approach to our coaching interventions. By this I mean, we combine a scientific-research based approach with a personal touch within the coaching model. Achieva Lifetime Health has partnered with and developed an intervention model specific to the University of Michigan Health Management Research Center's (UM-HMRC) health risk appraisal (HRA). Achieva's health coaches are "armed" with the UM-HMRC's HRA stratified data that allows us to know far more than risk data and biometric specifics. We have a higher level of understanding based on risk cluster and trend analysis on each HRA completer that helps us know how to approach each coachee even before we pick up the telephone to talk with them. This scientifically sound information along with the Intrinsic Coaching™ style/approach gives us Achieva health coaches a major advantage in individualizing each encounter and maximizing on all outcomes.

When I first heard that we use the HRA as a guide I felt that we might be limiting that person. But now I really see the HRA as a holistic approach because it does talk about things that the individual is doing right

and doesn't just focus on the risk—it looks at a broader picture. Achieva takes the information from the HRA and adds the Intrinsic Coaching™ approach to make the information more useable. In other words, we address the more personal side to what's most important to that individual. The coaching is done telephonically and over the internet, depending on the coachee's choice. However, the first session is almost always conducted telephonically and these conversations are based on the Intrinsic Coaching™ methodology. After a brief introduction and overview of the expectations of the conversation, the coach usually starts asking questions to find out what is most important to the coachee in regards to his or her health and what he would like to see happen. So, from the beginning, Intrinsic Coaching™ is integrated into these conversations.

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As I mentioned earlier, the HRA gives positive behaviors that are already in place, so it's easier for the coach to take an asset approach and build upon the coachee's strengths. It's integrated nicely together—the type of HRA that it is, along with the Intrinsic Coaching™ approach. Then the coach asks the coachee to focus on some goals, make a commitment to what she wants and a time frame in which he or she wants to accomplish it. It is all guided by the coachee so you can see how Intrinsic Coaching™ fits into Achieva's coaching interventions.

Achieva just recently began integrating Intrinsic Coaching™ into its work and has already seen some interesting and positive results. As a result of integrating this approach into the coaching conversation, it takes a lot less time for the coachee to make a goal. It seems that the style of working with the coachee, eliciting his or her best thinking, has allowed for the development of more precise goals in terms of what the coachee wants and has led to much greater ownership and progress towards those goals. We're already seeing some productive changes! There was even a quote by one of the coachees the other day who said, "Wow! I thought this was going to be a lecture!" Some coaches have been surprised where the sessions have taken them. It's been expressed that it was such a different and more meaningful experience for the coachee. So, again, there have definitely been some positive results in a short amount of time.

Taking an Intrinsic Coaching™ approach with the coachee, eliciting his or her best thinking, has allowed for the development of more precise goals in terms of what the coachee wants and has led to much greater ownership and progress towards those goals.

**Q** Surprise is always a good thing because it shows the coachee is experiencing new learning. It's interesting that Achieva has that relationship with the University of Michigan and the HRA. With Intrinsic Coaching™ we talk about having the intrinsic inform the extrinsic inform the systemic—we need all of that in place, but we want to put the proper hierarchy in place. That's exactly what Achieva is doing. The HRA is a great awareness tool, which is an extrinsic tool, but because Achieva takes an Intrinsic Coaching™ approach and asks individuals what is most important to them based off of this—now you're leading with the intrinsic and you have that correct hierarchy. I would imagine that the results you are already seeing are happening because of this.

**A** Definitely. I really didn't think about it in that manner before. Yes, Achieva puts the person's goals first, while working within that framework you just described.

**Q** I understand that Achieva has designed its own software for the coaching interventions. Can you talk a little more about this?

**A** Yes, Achieva has developed a core set of programs (nutrition/weight management, physical activity, stress management and coping) that provide the tools to help our coachees accomplish goals. Programs vary in length and allow for small steps to success for maximum achievement and sustainability. The health coach is actively engaged in the software delivery of these core programs and he/she has the ability to tailor the programs as needed for each and every coachee. The coach and coachee can interact over the web or telephone an unlimited number of times as we believe building the coach/coachee relationship may require many points of contact. The ease in attaining weekly goals within our programs, having multiple touch point opportunities, and promoting a business model that encourages engagement through unlimited contacts, we believe will give us positive outcomes for our coachees above and beyond the industry average!

At Achieva we believe building the coach/coachee relationship may require many points of contact...the coach and coachee can interact an unlimited number of times.

**Q** I understand that Achieva has committed to only using the Intrinsic Coaching™ methodology and that all coaches who work for Achieva must be a trained Intrinsic Coach™. Could you tell us more about that?

**A** The owners of Achieva Lifetime Health have seen and done their research on the results of Intrinsic Coaching™ and they feel committed to take that direction. The coaches at Achieva are highly competent and fully trained behavioral health and medical professionals. Besides using materials and programs that Achieva has developed for our own professional development, they also are committed to certifying their coaches through Totally Coached, Inc. They are convinced that the Intrinsic Coaching™ methodology is the best approach to ensure success. It makes the most sense. We're all very enthused about what Intrinsic Coaching™ does and we are committed to that.

Achieva Lifetime Health is convinced the Intrinsic Coaching™ methodology is the best approach to ensure success.

**Q** That's saying a lot. We appreciate that. Now that you are an Intrinsic Coach™, when someone you are coaching says, "Just tell me what to do," how do you respond?

**A** I would put the focus back on the coachee in a gentle way by saying, "The best way for me to help you is for you to tell me what's most important to you." Or maybe take a different route with a question like, "If you were to change something in your life for the better, what would that be? Or what would it look like if you were to make a change somewhere in your life?" I wouldn't stop and say hey, "That's the type of relationship this is going to be," and be frustrated with it. I would do everything I could to come up with questions that help that person be more in touch with his or her thoughts; questions that help people be more in touch with where they want to go and what they see for themselves. I might even start with something that is not health related by asking a question, "What do you value in your life?" Maybe get a conversation going that isn't totally focused on health risk factors. From there I

would hope there would be some note of enthusiasm in the conversation brought out that we could key into and bring out a different path of thinking from there.

"If you were to change something in your life for the better, what would that be?"

**Q** Is this different from what you would have done before you became an Intrinsic Coach™?

**A** Yes. When I first began thinking about coaching, I thought, "Well, I know quite a bit about exercise, quite a bit about running and quite a bit about goal setting and motivating people." Coaching may be a little about that, but it's much more about establishing a trusting relationship where the coachees' agenda is of the utmost importance. With Intrinsic Coaching™ I go wherever the coachee needs to go instead of directing them. Again, it's a method of discovery.

**Q** The Intrinsic Coaching™ approach really puts that person first and the information we can share second. Has Intrinsic Coaching™ expanded your vision of what is possible for people?

**A** Definitely. To me, learning about myself is very exciting, which is what I think Intrinsic Coaching™ does—it's a method of self discovery for both the coach and the coachee. It can bring out more self-knowledge in the coachee and more possibilities than either the coach or coachee are aware of. It's discovering what's within and creates that excitement and enthusiasm. When you touch on those things that make someone enthused or excited, they become more aware of where the action can take place. I think discovering those things—what you want, the possibilities, being listened to—all of that combined makes people want to take some action.

Intrinsic Coaching™—it's a method self discovery for both the coach and the coachee.

I first became interested in running later in my life. I had some life challenges back in my early thirties, so I started running to fulfill the need to do something that made me feel good. I started out as a very slow runner, just sort of trudging along. As I started slowly improving, I began feeling better about my running; it gave me a sense of greater self-esteem, a sense of accomplishment. Any time during a run, when I experienced fatigue or that sense of not being able to continue, I began playing

some mental “games” with myself. I made the difficult phase a symbol of what challenging thing was really happening in my life. For instance, I would tell myself that this next ½ mile will be symbolizing how difficult it is to raise my teens right now, so I would run harder through that. Or, I would pick another time in my run when I wasn’t feeling well and say, “I can get through this. This next mile is going to represent that loneliness I’ve been feeling lately.” My self talk would kick in and I would pick up the pace. I slowly developed into a better runner by “playing around” with this new found method of coping! Running became a passion, and with that, came a more competitive spirit. The culmination of that hard work and mental visualization came back in 2002 when I ran in the Boston Marathon.

So why do I mention that right now? Because you don’t even realize what is possible until you start something and bring out an internal fire of what’s possible into your life and I think Intrinsic Coaching™ can definitely help people get in touch with those possibilities.

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Q

I’m glad you shared that with us. The Boston Marathon---congratulations!

A

Thank you! It really has been a journey. The running has become a valuable part of who I am. The self-esteem that goes along with feeling better, feeling more energetic, feeling like you’re somebody again when you’re going through a difficult time is incredible. In spite of some life challenges, I still had my running. I still had that part of me that made me feel good. And to see that improvement was like spiraling upward for me. As a result I became better as runner, as well as better in all other areas. This is what can happen with Intrinsic Coaching™. When someone gets in touch with who they are and what they want and start applying it, I believe it can affect all aspects of their life positively. Also, I believe that there was some valuable learning that took place during the time I just described, which I hope to be able to draw upon when I talk to someone who might be experiencing a life challenge or who might just want to improve their quality of life!

Q

It sounds like running is very therapeutic for you and it goes back to what you mentioned earlier about the physical, emotional and spiritual connection. It’s very powerful. I appreciate you sharing that. What is most rewarding for you being an Intrinsic Coach™?

A

I remember one of the first things that hit me about Intrinsic Coaching™ that was very rewarding for me. It was during one of the coaching scenarios in the ICDS where there was a definite shift from being problem and symptomatic focused to working with what was really going on within the person’s psyche. As a coach, you can sense many changes within that person at that point when he or she is getting in touch with deeper issues, with what’s really important and getting underneath of what he or she sees as the problem. So many things change at that point...the tone of voice changes, the word choice changes, and the pace of speech changes. It’s very rewarding when arriving at a point when you know that something real is happening within that person. It’s also great to hear that enthusiasm or hear a hint of optimism and excitement about what is going on. Again, there’s that sense that a change is taking place. Finally, a third thing I find rewarding with Intrinsic Coaching™ is the newness of every coaching experience and every conversation. Each is unique and takes the flow of what the coachee wants. It is so unpredictable.

With Intrinsic Coaching™ every coaching experience and every conversation is unique and takes the flow of what the coachee wants. It is so unpredictable.

Q

I like that word that you used, ‘real’. When people can truly be themselves and find that intrinsic piece, it’s real. Susan, what do you want for people?

A

What I really want for people is a deep sense of contentment in their lives through a balance of emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual elements. And throughout all of those things I want for people to have a pervasive feeling of love.

Q

Could you imagine what this world would be like if everybody had that? I’ve heard you talk about balance and discovery many times as a common theme of Intrinsic Coaching™. Is there anything else about Intrinsic Coaching™ that you would like to share?

**A** Intrinsic Coaching™ confirms the fact that we have so many answers within ourselves and these answers make a difference in our lives. Intrinsic Coaching™ is an approach we can take to help others discover things and help them be excited about their lives. The core element of the methodology—seeing all human beings as capable, creative and complete—can be applied not just to coaching scenarios but to all interactions and relationships in our lives. I see Intrinsic Coaching™ as an exciting way of relating to other human beings.

Intrinsic Coaching™ confirms the fact that we all have so many answers within ourselves and these answers make a difference in our lives.

Achieva Lifetime Health is a health coaching company providing personalized health coaching services to employers that are interested in improving the health and productivity of their employees. Achieva's coaches utilize the principles of Intrinsic Coaching™ with decision tree support of specialized health risk assessment algorithms provided by the University of Michigan Health Management Research Center.

Achieva's models and tools enhance the coach's ability to develop an effective relationship with their coachees to support and direct decisions leading toward healthy and productive lifestyles. As Achieva coaches find satisfaction in utilizing a whole person approach so do their coachees benefit as they find their experiences unique and rewarding.

Please visit the Achieva Lifetime Health website to learn more about who they are and how you may want to get involved! [www.achievalifetimehealth.com](http://www.achievalifetimehealth.com).

# Who is Totally Coached, Inc.?

Totally Coached, Inc. is a Scottsdale, AZ based company that founded the proprietary and uniquely effective Intrinsic Coaching™ methodology. Reaching internationally, the Intrinsic Coaching™ methodology enables “Thinking better. Together.™” for benefits that extend across the workplace and beyond the organization's walls to create healthier lives, healthier organizations, and a healthier world.

To be an Intrinsic Coach™ like Susan Dirr, contact 480-515-5220  
or [totallycoached@totallycoached.com](mailto:totallycoached@totallycoached.com).

Make a better life.  
Live a better world.™