MERCY PAPERS

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Coaching, Not Clinical Care

A professional boundary for safe and credible nutrition practice

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MERCY PAPER 10 / PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

What nutrition coaching can responsibly do, when referral is required and why clarity strengthens a premium service.

Educational content only. This paper is not medical advice and does not replace individual assessment by a doctor or registered dietitian.

A valuable but defined role

Nutrition coaching can help people clarify goals, understand general healthy-eating principles, design routines, strengthen confidence and follow through on chosen actions. It is especially useful when the challenge is consistency across work, travel and household life. It is not diagnosis or treatment and should not replace a doctor or registered dietitian.

Referral is part of the service

Referral should be expected for suspected eating disorders, pregnancy complications, paediatric growth concerns, rapid unexplained weight change, severe gastrointestinal symptoms, complex allergy, kidney disease, diabetes medication issues or abnormal tests. The coach need not determine a diagnosis before referring. Emergency symptoms require emergency services, not a coaching appointment.

Collaborate without title inflation

A premium coach may work alongside clinicians, fitness professionals, chefs and family-office staff. Collaboration does not confer another professional's licence. Biographies and client documents should use accurate titles. Mercy Udom is presented precisely as an Integrative Nutrition Health Coach; her future dietetics pathway is separate and incomplete.

Evidence and uncertainty

General recommendations should be anchored in authoritative guidance and described with appropriate uncertainty. Testimonials must not imply guaranteed clinical outcomes. Supplements, restrictive diets and diagnostic-style testing require particular caution. Where evidence is limited, the limitation should be stated.

The premium proposition

Boundary clarity does not diminish the offer. High-net-worth clients often need coordination more than another source of conflicting instruction. A coach can create the operating system that helps sound advice survive diaries, kitchens, travel and family life. Work deeply within competence, protect confidentiality and refer early.

Selected references

1. NICE. Overweight and obesity management NG246. 2025.
https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng246

2. World Health Organization. Healthy diet.
https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/healthy-diet

3. NHS. Eating a balanced diet.
https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/how-to-eat-a-balanced-diet/eating-a-balanced-diet/

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