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Special Group in Coaching Psychology

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# The Coaching Psychologist

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# The Coaching Psychologist

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# Chair's Report

Siobhain O'Riordan

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IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO write my first report as SGCP Chair. This is an exciting time for Coaching Psychology at both a national and international level and whilst there are a number of challenges ahead there is also a wealth of opportunities. The first few months of 2007 have already been busy and we have been working on existing and new areas both within the Society and externally. We have also welcomed new members to the SGCP committee this year as well as those nominated or co-opted to continue their SGCP committee work for a further term.

This is now the third year of the SGCP and during this time there has been some significant achievements. So firstly I would like to thank everyone who has been involved and contributed to these successes to date. The rapid growth of the SGCP over such a short period of time now provides us with an opportunity to adopt a 'future focus' and spend time this year on a period of consolidation to ensure both our sustainability for the future and that we continue to respond to members' needs and the developing area of coaching psychology both at a national and international level.

One of the main focuses of activity in the early part of 2007 has included a restructure of our sub-committees. This change has meant that two of the existing sub-committees have been replaced and a structure has been introduced with discrete working parties that will form and finish as issues emerge, event teams with specific responsibility for delivering particular events and the created roles of Standards Officer, Research Officer and Event Convenors.

This change in structure has a number of benefits in terms of a 'future focus' and it will also provide greater opportunity for interested members to get involved in the

key activities of SGCP by joining working parties in areas of emerging professional practice and professional development issues. These issues are particularly important at this time as we look at moving forward to an accreditation process for Coaching Psychologists. I would like to encourage you to get in touch if you would be interested in becoming more involved in an area of SGCP work. Please e-mail Helen Barnett at the BPS subsystems office for an expression of interest form ([Helen.Barnett@bps.org.uk](mailto:Helen.Barnett@bps.org.uk)).

As a busy subsystem it is important to ensure that our activities and focus continues to fit with our strategic aims. Committee work is currently focusing upon developing ways in which we can more effectively monitor delivery against our strategic aims as well as setting new actions for the coming year. You would have read previously in Pauline Willis' Chair's Report (*TCP*, Vol. 2, No. 2, September, 2006) that there are changes ahead within the Society that may impact upon some of our work areas. We have been asked to produce a business plan for 2007–2008 to map out planned and ongoing activities and we will be focussing on this at a number of strategic levels over the coming months.

Since the last edition of *TCP* we have hosted the hugely successful 1st International Coaching Psychology Conference at City University, London. The planning is now already underway for our 3rd Annual National Conference, which will be held in December, 2007. We are already delighted to announce that Dr Tony Grant and Prof. Carol Kauffman are confirmed as keynote speakers. Following activities undertaken by the SGCP Professional Development, Training and Event Management sub-committee in 2006 work has also begun to confirm upon the details of the 2007 event

programme. Further details and registration information will soon be available on the 'News Page' of the SGCP website.

Developments in other areas of SGCP activity include there being a third issue of the *International Coaching Psychology Review* in 2007. The website team is currently focusing upon developing the SGCP website and we now have a new website address [www.sgcp.org.uk](http://www.sgcp.org.uk). A period of consultation has been undertaken on the Subject Benchmarks for Coaching Psychology and Supervision for Coaching Psychology discussion papers. This has included a member's survey and sessions run by the Professional Practice and Research sub-committee at the conference.

The SGCP currently participates in the Coaching Roundtable, which is an informal meeting of representatives of various not-for-profit coaching bodies in the UK which is organised and equally led by the participant

organisations. I would like to clarify, therefore, following a news article titled 'Coaching Roundtable Officially Launches' (*Coaching at Work*, Vol. 2, Issue 1) that the Coaching Roundtable has not been launched as a formal group and there has been no formal agreement or decisions on behalf of the organisations who participate in the Coaching Roundtable to formalise at this stage. Should the Coaching Roundtable develop into a formal body at a later stage then the SGCP would not join because it is only one part of the Society.

Finally, I would welcome you getting in touch with me if you have any thoughts, comments or feedback about the SGCP or would like any information about areas of SGCP work you might be interested in getting involved in during 2007.

**Siobhain O'Riordan**

E-mail: [sgcpchair@bps.org.uk](mailto:sgcpchair@bps.org.uk)



## THE SPECIAL GROUP IN COACHING PSYCHOLOGY

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*The 2007 membership fee to join SGCP is £3.50. SGCP membership benefits include membership rates at our events and free copies of the 'International Coaching Psychology Review' and 'The Coaching Psychologist'. BPS members can join now and obtain the discounted conference fee.*

# Editorial

Kasia Szymanska

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**I**N THIS THE FIRST ISSUE OF 2007, we focus to a greater extent on our December 2006 London conference. A lot of the presenters at the conference have submitted their presentations as papers to *TCP* or *ICPR*. We hope to publish as many as possible over the coming year. In the first paper, Jo Maddocks one of the conference presenters writes about the need for emotional learning in order make behavioural changes, while in another, Paul Ellis describes his experience of attending the conference as a 'non-psychologist. Also for those of you who weren't able to attend Jennifer Liston-Smith has written a comprehensive report about the conference, we hope it will encourage you to book early for the conference this year.

In addition Susie Linder-Pelz and Michael Hall write about the theoretical roots of Neuro-linguistic Programming and its application to coaching psychology practice. Then Jeanette Senior takes a detailed look at life coaching from its inception to its current status as a popular form of coaching and argues for the need for further research in this arena. Next, Sarah Talbot-London, Stephen Palmer and Paul Flaxman review the current research on stress in the prison service and outline proposals for further research in this field.

We have also introduced a new 'International News' section, with the aim of encouraging readers from all over the globe to share their perspectives on news/developments in coaching and coaching psychology. Our first paper in this section is from Paul O. Olson, who shares a personal view on the development of coaching standards in Norway.

Please don't forget to keep sending in your high quality submissions to:  
[kasia.s@tinyonline.co.uk](mailto:kasia.s@tinyonline.co.uk)

**Kasia Szymanska**



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## THE SPECIAL GROUP IN COACHING PSYCHOLOGY

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For more details of current and forthcoming opportunities within the SGCP, please contact our Honorary Secretary, Philippa Hain in the first instance at [sgcpsecretary@bps.org.uk](mailto:sgcpsecretary@bps.org.uk) or visit the 'committee' page of our website: [www.sgcp.org.uk](http://www.sgcp.org.uk) where you can also download a statement of interest form

# Sustaining change through Emotional Intelligence

Jo Maddocks

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*In this article I discuss seven recommendations for making personal development sustainable through the application of emotional intelligence (EI). Our definition of EI focuses on the importance of attitudes for long-term change, therefore distinguishing EI from other approaches such as personality, IQ and competencies. The seven recommendations are based on the view that attitudes are formed and developed in the limbic brain (LeDoux, 2003), which unlike the neocortex, learns mainly through emotional experience. In summary then, to make behaviour change enduring we must change attitudes, which requires emotional learning and is best achieved through focusing on the present, being bodily aware, group interaction, linking behaviour to attitudes, habit change, focused rehearsal, varied forms of feedback and committing sufficient time.*

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, limbic brain, attitudes, change, development.

**A** USEFUL ACRONYM FOR HUMAN performance is KASH which differentiates four crucial factors: Knowledge, Attitude, Skills and Habits. When organisations are asked which aspects they invest most in training and development the answer is usually skills and knowledge, but when asked which of these are more long-term predictors of performance and make a most sustained difference the answer is typically attitudes and habits. These are the province of emotional intelligence (EI), and the answer to sustainable change. Skills and knowledge on the other hand are usually learnt quite quickly by people who hold complimentary attitudes and habits.

Many of the predominant psychological approaches to personal development today (personality, cognitive intelligence, IQ and competencies) have failed to deliver sustainable change for the same reason; they do not address underlying attitudes and habits. In brief, the problem with each of these is; personality is relatively fixed and therefore non developable (according to type and trait theories) and is not related to performance (predicting a maximum of nine per cent variance) (Hunter, 1984). IQ is also relatively fixed so is also not developable, and our ability to think is more dependent on our

emotional state than on a theoretical construct of IQ. Competencies are short lived in that they focus on behaviour more than attitudes and people tend to behave in a way that is consistent with their attitudes.

Adopting constructive attitudes and learning complimentary habits is more usefully applied by developing Emotional Intelligence. EI is about how we manage our personality and cognitive abilities to be personally and interpersonally effective. For example, managing my emotional state to think more clearly through a problem (as opposed to IQ), focusing my energy outwardly on relationships despite being an introvert (as opposed to personality), and learning to be assertive by increasing self esteem rather than just applying skills (as opposed to competencies).

EI provides a framework for explaining how to make change sustainable. We define EI as 'the practice of using thinking about feeling and feeling about thinking to guide what we do, which is largely determined by our attitudes'. The following seven suggestions are about applying the principles of EI to make change sustainable.



## **1. Focus on changing attitudes**

It has long been known that we are drawn to behave in ways that are consistent with our attitudes otherwise we experience anxiety (cognitive dissonance) compelling us to behave differently. Attitudes create our emotional responses which in turn fuel our thinking and lead to our behaviour through a pattern matching process in the limbic brain. So in order to change behaviour in the long term we must also shift our attitudes. For example teaching a person to say no assertively will not last for long if underneath they still feel inadequate. Or introducing a set of consumer service competencies is unlikely to achieve the desired outcome if the person concerned does not want to be of service to others. A recent study using the 'ie' measure found that prison officers who had low regard for inmates (attitude) but were required within their job to show them respect (behaviour) were far more likely to suffer job burnout (Jenkins, 2005).

To change attitudes does not require deep psychological therapy; rather we only need create doubt in them. This is because attitudes operate categorically, sending out crude emotional responses of like/dislike, good/bad, etc. Another aspect to changing attitudes is becoming aware of them. Attitudes are intended to help simplify life in order that we do not need to consciously process and chose every action we make. Once we become aware of our attitudes by noticing (thinking about) our feelings that stem from the attitude, they cease to be unconscious and automatic and become open to doubt, deliberation and change. The remaining points of this article explain how we create doubt in attitudes

## **2. Make learning experiential**

We defined EI as '*The practice of thinking about feeling ...*', i.e. EI is a verb, not a noun, it is something that happens in the moment, not a theoretical idea, and, therefore, people can chose to be emotionally intelligent right now even if in the past they have not been. All too often people know what they should

do but don't do it in practice. The reason is that what we learn as knowledge happens in a different part of the brain from experiential learning. Learning from experience involves the whole body and engages our emotions, which is processed in the limbic brain where we create new attitudinal patterns. Learning information or knowledge happens in the neo-cortex which unless this engages us at an emotional level is unlikely to have any enduring impact on how we behave. For example, there is the case of the amnesic patient who had to be reintroduced to his doctor each time they met. On one occasion the doctor placed a pin in his hand which caused the patient some pain when they shook hands. The following time they met, the patient did not want to shake the doctor's hand but did not know why. In this case the patient's unconscious emotional memory was still working but their cognitive memory was not.

One of the best ways to make something experiential and non-threatening is to include a role play. If the person is not ready for this, then having them imagine doing the action can also be effective. Imagination activates the limbic (emotional) brain and acts as a reality generator firing off the same neurons as if they were actually doing the action. A step on from imagination is role play and rehearsal followed up by real life experience with 'L' plates (treated as a learning event). Depending on a person's preferred style of learning some people will be more inclined to taking action while others will prefer reflection. The trick of the coach is to encourage the client to apply all parts of the learning cycle; experiencing, reflecting, preparing and so on (Kolb, 1984).

## **3. Be interactive and work in groups**

One form of experiential learning is to make it interactive. Interaction is one half of the EI framework (interpersonal intelligence) so it would be very difficult to develop awareness of others for example without being able to check out your assumptions with the other person. Working in groups also provides a

wonderful source of feedback from others and the opportunity to try out new techniques with people. People are innately social and are fundamentally drawn to interact, so it would be hard to justify how real change can happen without it involving interaction. In my experience, changes that take place are far more dramatic and powerful when done collectively than individually as other people provide a sense of context and reality to the change process.

One aspect of interaction that is particularly powerful is 360 degree feedback (surprisingly organisations invest heavily in trying to avoid face-to-face feedback which largely undermine the benefits). I would suggest that a key milestone in self development being able to give and receive open feedback without being defensive. When working with groups it can take a long time to create a conducive atmosphere of trust and openness where individuals become more truthful with themselves and others, but once this is attained change in individuals and teams can be remarkably rapid and sustained.

#### **4. Focus on feelings and the self**

There is a tendency in using psychometric tools to engage in a sort of intellectual discussion about the product or personality, often using words like *'one does'* or *'you do'*. This helps people feel in control but also avoids them being in touch with their feelings and retains a distance from themselves. The coach must be aware of this and avoid colluding by encouraging the client to discuss how they feel, getting them to notice their feelings at that moment in time and owning their experience by using the word 'I'. Also being aware of clients who say they feel x, but are in fact expressing a thought, *'I feel that is a good idea'*, for example, is a thought. Feelings are experienced within the body so require people to 'go' inside themselves physically. Personality questionnaires, for example, measure how we think we behave in the general rather than how a person is feeling at the time of completing the questionnaire. This helps us raise our

self-knowledge but not our self-awareness. The difference being that knowledge is processed in the thinking brain while feelings are processed in the emotional limbic brain. A useful technique is to discuss how the person is feeling right now in the discussion, e.g. if they feel uncomfortable talking about themselves. Also notice the depth of the conversation, it is all too easy to discuss other people, the past, the future or task issues and avoid talking about current feelings about oneself. Invariably task-related problems can be drawn back to relationship issues which in turn can be drawn back to the self, e.g. there are several incidents of aircraft crashes (task issue) because the co pilot did not question the captains decisions (relationship issue), because the captain felt this would be doubting their competence (self-issue).

One other benefit of focusing attention on our feelings is they provide us with feedback about our attitudes. Feelings are the emotional response to a pattern match with our attitudes, for example, if I feel angry when people ignore me this may indicate that I have a strong need for attention. People sometimes chose to ignore their feelings particularly when they are painful, such as feeling humiliated, ashamed or upset. Feelings do not just disappear but will manifest in other ways such as becoming stressed and unwell, rigidly defensive or in sudden outbursts. The need is, therefore, to accept all feelings as messages from the body and try to understand their origins. It is rather like managers (the brain) ignoring the concerns of the workforce (the body) which will sooner or later lead to strike action (becoming ill). If the feelings are unpalatable then we should look deeper into their cause and change the attitudes we hold, not ignore the feeling messages.

#### **5. Change habits**

Most of what we do is unconscious, automatic and habitual behaviour. If change is to be sustainable it must, therefore, become habitual. Making a change is one thing but maintaining the change is far more difficult,

all too often people will revert back to old behaviours when under pressure or the initial motivation for change has gone. One reason for this is that the person does not really want to change. Being in touch with our feelings will help us know what we really want, rather than pretending to ourselves, following other people's expectations of us, doing the 'right' thing or keeping others happy. Motivation to change is largely unconscious, so once we stop consciously trying we will revert back to what our unconscious emotional brain really wants us to do.

Another reason we fail to achieve our goals is that we aim to change too much. A New Year's resolution such as *'I will be nice to everyone from now on'* is unlikely to succeed. It is tempting during the enthusiasm of a coaching session to set ambitious goals, but after a day or two back in the daily demands of life the motivation wanes and we slip back into our automatic habits. The trick of habit change is to make sure it is focused on something highly specific that will be easily completed and is repeated over a period of time so as the new habit is stronger than the old one. It is often more important to demonstrate to ourselves that sustained change can be achieved than to make the particular change in itself. For example, getting a client to experience improved relationships through the habit of remembering people's names may have a significant effect on improving their relationships and self esteem. It may also kick start improvement of other interpersonal behaviours as success breeds success.

Habit change may sound at odds with the emphasis of this article on changing attitudes, yet the two go hand in hand. It is important, however, that the specific behaviour being changed has been linked with the underlying attitude. This may be done by identifying the attitude first such as *'I want to be more open with people'* which can be chunked down (linked) to a specific behaviour such as to remember people's names. Changing that behaviour will then link in the new attitude and destabilise their existing attitude.

As explained earlier, attitudes tend to be categorical, so once an incompatible behaviour is introduced this creates doubt which is the enemy of an attitude.

## **6. Allow sufficient time**

Changing attitudes and habits can take time, but the pay off is worthwhile. It may be more difficult to sell to budget holders, who are drawn to the quicker fix options, but it is inevitably a false economy if the old behaviour or problem soon returns. Perhaps one fear is about going deeper into attitudes where clients experience years of therapy gaining considerable insight but little improvement. EI interventions focus the person more on their present state and the future than on analysing the past. In my experience, following these seven recommendations and avoiding the temptation to offer a quick fix skills course, will result in far more enduring results (Maddocks, 2007).

Another aspect of allowing sufficient time is keeping the client in the moment for longer rather than focusing them on interpretation and analysis. This requires slowing down physically and emotionally through internal relaxation. Although this does not fit so well with western business practices it is a critical component to embedding and integrating experiences at an emotional as well as cognitive level. By embodying our experiences they are more likely to be retained and applied in the future.

## **7. Apply multiple sources of feedback**

Feedback is the source to self-awareness and knowledge and allows us to make informed and realistic choices on our behaviour. There are many forms by which we can gain feedback, all of which are valuable. Some will work better for some people than others, so it is usually more effective to include several approaches. Each approach may provide something additional and may confirm or contradict our existing self-perception. Approaches include self-report questionnaires, feedback from others, completing experiential activities, our own general self-

perception, visualisation/imagery and so on. There can be a tendency to overvalue one form of feedback such as psychometric measures at the expense of more qualitative experiential forms such as noticing how people respond to us and how we feel in other peoples' presence.

As a general guide emotional intelligence is developed by being aware of our emotional experiences as feedback on our attitudes, in order that we can shift our attitudes to make long term changes in our behaviour.

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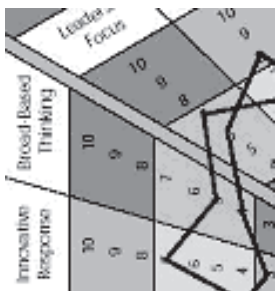
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# The theoretical roots of NLP-based coaching

Susie Linder-Pelz & L. Michael Hall

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*NLP (Neuro-linguistic programming) is a communication model; it is about the internal representation of experience and how people communicate with themselves as well as others. In recent years NLP has informed much coaching practice (McDermott & Jago, 2001; Dilts, 2003; McLeod, 2004). Yet 'the relationship between NLP and academe has been tenuous and somewhat strained, influenced in part by the apparently atheoretical stance of the founders' (Tosey, Mathison & Michelli, 2005).*

*This paper details the theoretical origins of the NLP model and its roots in established psychological theories. Our intent is to offer an informed view of NLP as well as to contribute to the development and validation of professional coaching practices that are grounded in established psychological theory and research (Grant, 2001; Stober, Wildflower & Drake, 2006).*

**Keywords:** Neurology, linguistics, neuroscience, NLP, meta-states, cognitive behaviour, solution focused, self-reflexivity, coaching, self-actualisation.

**N**LP (NEURO-LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING) is a communication model; it is about the internal representation of experience and how people communicate with themselves as well as others. It focuses on peoples' subjective experience and constructed reality (Tosey, Mathison & Michelli, 2005). The 'neuro' refers to the way humans experience the world through their senses and translate sensory experiences into thought processes, both conscious and unconscious, which in turn activate the neurological system; 'linguistic' refers to the way we use language to make sense of the world, capture and conceptualise experience and then communicate that experience to others; and 'programming' addresses the way people code (mentally represent) their experience and adopt regular and systematic patterns of response. (Hall & Belnap, 1999; Corsetty & Pearson, 2000).

In the field of general semantics Korzybski (1933/94) articulated an explanatory model of the human mind-body system comprising many interactive parts: mind (meaning, semantics), body (neurology), emotions, and beliefs. That was the beginning of the NLP model.

Korzybski also explained how humans create their unique cognitive 'maps' of the external world they encounter. His map/territory distinction explains 'emotion' as the registering somatically of the difference between our maps of the world and our experience of it. People construct meanings in their mind and package them in symbols (words), share them and embody them. Words work in their neurology to create emotional states and induce them into various mind-body-emotion experiences (O'Connor & Seymour, 1990; Bolstad, 2004).

An even more substantial source of NLP was the Human Potential Movement of which Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers were the leading pioneers. The connection for this goes back to the key figures in NLP and in the Human Potential Movement (Anderson, 1983; Bolstad, 2005). At Esalen in southern California, Fritz Perls was the first 'scholar in residence' and Gregory Bateson was the last. The first person in charge of Research and Development at Esalen was Virginia Satir. These key leaders of the Human Potential Movement were also the key people modelled by Bandler and Grinder in 1972–1975 (Bandler & Grinder, 1975, 1976).

The Human Potential Movement was launched from Maslow's modelling study of psychologically healthy people or 'self-actualisers' (Maslow, 1968, 1970). His work created a paradigm-shift, away from building a model of human nature based on sick or neurotic people towards one that explained healthy or self-actualising people. From this came the premises of NLP (the 'NLP presuppositions') such as 'people have all the resources for their full development', 'resistance indicates the lack of rapport' and 'there is a structure to all experiences'. The NLP Presuppositions (Bandler & Grinder, 1975, 1976) were derived almost entirely from the work of Virginia Satir and Fritz Perls, which in turn was based on the premises of the Human Potential movement of Maslow and Rogers (Hall, 2006).

Based on his scientific and psychometric research, Rogers (1955, 1961) concluded that people have a basically positive direction, are self-directing and autonomous; he talked of self-regulatory activities. Change was about 'loosening cognitive maps'. He also linked thoughts, feelings, experiences and physiology to the change process. Rogers' idea that helpful therapeutic relationships required reflective listening, empathy and separateness of self underlie NLP practitioner skills (such as state management and rapport-building through calibration of representational systems, matching and mirroring language predicates, pacing and leading) as well as traditional approaches to helping skills that emphasise qualities such as congruence, empathy and positive regard (Egan, 1975).

Glasser's Reality Therapy (1965) talks of the therapist not accepting excuses or blaming, of the need for client to take responsibility and of emphasising behaviour change rather than search for roots of problematic behaviour. These, too, are principles underlying the NLP approach to coaching.

So NLP is partly based on the same cognitive behavioural approaches that have informed the solution-focused approach over the past 20 years (de Shazar, 1988,

1994). Both approaches emphasise the clarification of goals; harnessing strengths and resources; focusing on meanings, possibilities and solutions (not 'problems'); talking about feedback not 'failure'; amplifying what works; suggesting that if something doesn't work it is useful to try something different. NLP, in addition, focuses on assisting clients to change and manage their physiological, neurological and emotional states directly; it utilises all sensory representation systems thereby reducing the bias towards verbal processing bias inherent in the solution-focused approach.

Cognitive theory – first as RET (Ellis, 1962) focused on 'thoughts' as primary in driving human experience. Later, REBT (Ellis & Harper, 1975) suggested that 'thoughts' are revealed primarily as words, self-talk statement, and beliefs. How we think affects how we feel which in turn affects how we behave (Ellis & Harper, 1975; Beck, Rush, Shaw & Emery, 1979). Cognitive reframing and challenging self-talk are used in RET and REBT. NLP also draws from reality theory and learning theory the need for positive and negative reinforcement, setting goals, contract negotiation and not 'failing' people.

NLP and cognitive behaviour counselling both draw on self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1986) and his cognitive learning theory regarding the quadratic reciprocity of four domains of human experience: thoughts, feelings, behaviour and situation (Bandura, 1977). The motivational power of goal-setting (Latham & Locke, 1991; Locke, 1996; Hesketh, 1997) is a central assumption in NLP as in other cognitive behaviour approaches (Grant, 2001; Grant & Greene, 2001).

Like narrative therapy and solution-focused brief therapy, NLP belongs philosophically to the discipline of constructivism (Korzybski, 1933/1994; Miller, 1956; Bateson, 1972; Walsh, Craik & Price, 1992; Watzlawick, 1974; Weakland, Fisch, Jackson & Watzlawick, 1974). A key NLP pre-supposition is that people invent or construct their maps and models of the world because we do

not deal with 'reality' or 'the territory' directly (Bandler & Grinder, 1975).

Tosey, Mathison and Michelli (2005) suggest that although NLP has been influenced by many fields and disciplines 'perhaps the most important [influence on NLP is] the cybernetic epistemology of Gregory Bateson ... The cybernetic aspect is reflected, for example, in NLP's adoption of the TOTE (test-operate-test-exit) mode of functioning (Miller, Galanter & Pribram, 1960), which depends on the dynamics of calibration and feedback (Bateson, 1973; Wiener, 1965).'

The TOTE (test-operate-test-exit) model of self-regulation (Miller, Gallanter & Pribram, 1960) informed the work of Bandler and Grinder that lead to the Strategy Model in NLP (Dilts, 1980; Hall & Bodenhamer, 1999), just as it informed the work of others studying the regulation of learning and behaviour (Carver & Scheier, 1998).

Like the solution-focused approach, NLP was informed by cognitive therapy (Beck, 1976) and by Erickson's Strategic Therapy (Zeig, 1994; Battino & South, 1999). Erickson worked with clients on the problems to be solved rather than on the causes of the problem. He showed how rapidly perceptions, behaviours and states can be changed when the conscious mind is bypassed, especially with the highly skilled use of language.

To some observers Erickson and Bateson are originators of NLP just as they are of other brief, solution focused approaches (Norman, McKergow & Clarke, date unknown). Both NLP and solution-focused approaches are constructivist and humanistic, sharing a focus collaboration, feedback, finding out what works and what doesn't, focus on solutions and resources, precision questioning, visualising a preferred future, step back and notice the problem is the problem.

To these shared assumptions, philosophy and techniques, NLP added the focus on internal representation systems and the language processes that help clients change those internal representations and physi-

ology in order to change emotional states and behaviours. By the 1990s neuroscientists were providing detailed evidence of the complex neural and biochemical feedback and feed-forward loops that explain the interactions among perception, neural/mental patterns, sensory representations, emotion, feeling, changes in body state, thought, language, consciousness, sense of self, decision-making and other behaviours. (Pert, 1997; Damasio, 1994/2006; Damasio, 2000). They attest, for example, to 'the partnership between so-called cognitive processes and processes usually called "emotional" (Damasio, 2006, p.175). Their findings support the mind-body-emotion system that was described by Korzybski (1933/1994) and the many ways NLP practitioners assist clients' communication with and through their nervous system (Bolstad, 2004).

During its first years, NLP focused on the level of primary states and responses. In 1994, Hall developed the Meta-States model supported by evidence obtained by modeling neuro-linguistically the way in which people think and feel about primary states and thus experience 'states about states' (Hall, 1994)/2002). The Meta-States model integrated more of Korzybski's seminal work, *Science and Sanity* (Korzybski, 1933/1994) with NLP. Whereas NLP was launched with Korzybski's cognitive-behavioural distinction ('the map is not the territory'), the Meta-States model brought in Korzybski's 'structural differential' (or level-of-abstraction) model relating to the effect of one state upon another ('first order effects' vs. 'second order effects' such as, pitying pity). The Meta-States model also incorporated the insights of Bateson and his associates, especially Paul Watzlawick, in describing the paradoxes that arise in communication and thought (Bateson, 1972; Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson, 1967; Watzlawick, 1976; Watzlawick, 1978; Watzlawick, 1984). It also brought in more of Bateson's work on logical levels and types (Bateson, 1972), as well as current work in meta-cognition (Metacalfe & Shimamura, 1995).



By modelling self-reflexive consciousness and the way it creates layers of thoughts-and-feelings and embeds unconscious belief frames which, in turn, affect our actions, reactions, and behaviours, the Meta-States model has brought a much more systemic approach to NLP. It has more fully introduced neuro-linguistic feedback and feed-forward loops of information and communication. The primary states and meta-states distinction in NLP parallels the distinction in neuroscience between primary and secondary emotions (Damasio, 1994/2006).

Tosey, Mathison and Michelli (2005) have demonstrated how NLP is a structured and systematic means of mapping the subjective experience and constructed reality of people experiencing transformative learning or coaching. In other words, NLP enables coaches to codify and respond to their own and their clients' experience. As NLP is useful for describing the intra-personal and interpersonal processes, as well as outcomes, of transformative learning/change, we believe it is worthwhile for coaches to understand it and learn to use it skilfully. As the founders of NLP 25 years ago (Dilts, Grinder, Bandler *et al.*, 1980) said: 'Your ultimate success at helping people achieve their desired outcomes – including managing change – will depend on your ability to observe, identify and utilise the multitude of patterns that will constantly be offered to you in your sensory experience by clients.'

## **Conclusion**

John Martin (2005) notes that 'NLP originally developed as a form of psychotherapy in the 1970s. NLP authors tend to quote one another rather than linking with the wider worlds of psychotherapy, communication training etc and their methods have often been experience-based rather than research based, so it can be difficult to evaluate them in an independent and broadly informed way.'

This paper has taken a step towards evaluating NLP in an informed way. It also offers a response to the challenge articulated by Stober, Wildflower and Drake (2006) who called for coaches to 'begin integrating evidence from both coaching-specific research and related disciplines, their own expertise, and an understanding of the uniqueness of each client ... [Coaching has] roots in a number of fields. Therefore, one of the significant tasks before us is the integration and application of this disparate knowledge base into a coherent body of knowledge that applies to and guides coaching.'

NLP-based coaching is an example of such an approach, integrating as it does a disparate but significant body of established knowledge and theory. We have argued that the NLP model of communication integrates evidence from various disciplines and is a useful model for coaches because it allows them to codify and respond appropriately to their own and their clients' experience (Tosey, Mathison & Michelli, 2005).

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# Life coaching: Origins, direction and potential risk – why the contribution of psychologists is needed more than ever

Jeanette Senior

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*A review of life coaching was conducted using counselling and counselling psychology as a comparison to highlight potential risk of unethical practice due to inadequate research and a lack of industry regulation. The origins of life coaching and executive coaching are explored; along with current media interest which is argued may be influencing the image of life coaching. The stigma of seeking therapy is one potential driver of the current upsurge in interest in this under regulated growth industry.*

**Keywords:** life coach, life coaching, executive coaching, ethical practice, industry regulation, therapy, counselling, counselling psychology.

**L**IFE COACHING, AND THE WORK OF the life coach, is relatively unknown, despite rapid growth in the sector. It appears to be grounded in some of the traditional therapeutic approaches already established in counselling and psychology professions (Summerfield, 2002). Consequently, it is still searching for uniqueness in a seemingly oversubscribed therapeutic arena. However, with recent publications such as *Excellence in Coaching* (Passmore, 2006), coaching is revealing itself as a unique system of communication that aims to facilitate excellence in performance and enhance quality of life across work and home domains.

The aim of this paper is to explore what life coaching is, speculate upon its origins, consider the media's influence on public perceptions and review the limited evidence base. The paper concludes with a brief discussion of how psychologists can contribute to its further development.

There have been many attempts to conceptualise coaching. Coaching, in the executive sense, has been described as '... a solution-focused, result-orientated systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of work performance and the self-directed learning and personal growth of the coachee' (Grant, 2001a, p.8). It is described as neither training, nor

mentoring, nor counselling, though it shares similarities with each (Zeus & Skiffington, 2000). Applicable to both *life* and *executive* coaching, coaching psychology is for enhancing well-being and performance in personal life and work domains with normal, non-clinical populations, underpinned by models of coaching grounded in established adult learning or psychological approaches (Grant & Palmer, 2002).

The exact origins of life coaching are unclear. Life coaching appears to have grown out of executive coaching; a form of coaching used at senior management level within organisations. Likely, it grew originally from the popularity in the 1950s of humanistic psychology. From this platform such entities as the human potential movement (HPM) were founded – Anthony Robbins being the movement's most popular guru. Howard (1970) described HPM as an amorphous collection of practitioners typified by an 'anything goes' eclecticism. HPM practitioners argued that, under proper conditions, it is possible to facilitate an individual's movement towards self-actualisation. However, Sipe (1987) criticised the HPM for being based on self-actualisation from within, as if humans exist in a social vacuum unaffected by daily life in a modern capitalistic society. It seems that the life coaching move-

ment goes some way towards bridging the gap between these two schools of thought.

Presently, life coaching is experiencing metamorphosis. It has grown substantially since 1998 (Grant, 2003), and when an industry grows so rapidly, often a clear evidence base follows sometime later. Coaching practice outstrips its evidence base (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006). One of the reasons for the lack of research activity may be because we hardly know who the 'life coach' is, since the term has been used to describe a host of different professional helpers, some with specific qualifications; others none. Indeed, life coaching is seldom fully understood by the general public and professionals alike; this despite widespread attention in the popular Western press (Hall, Otazo & Hollenbeck, 1999).

In 2005, a magazine was launched called *Psychologies* ([www.psychologies.co.uk](http://www.psychologies.co.uk)). In it were articles/columns on life coaching. Also featured were articles on therapy, mental health and lifestyle. It attempted to make self-improvement and mental health an 'OK' concept. Furthermore, commonplace on our television screens, programmes that utilise a coaching philosophy have become widely popular. For example 'Supernanny' (Channel 4), in which an ex-nanny helps parents coach their children to better behaviour, and also 'What not to wear' (BBC Television) where individual's self-esteem is bolstered by an image overhaul.

Life coaching suffers from a limited evidence base. Spence and Grant (2005) agree that the field of life coaching has been slow to attract intellectual inquiry and when it has, it has shown little empirical evidence to its effectiveness. However, Green, Oades and Grant (2003) found that a peer-coaching programme elicited significant increases in self-reported positive affect, maintained at three- and six-month periods. Hearsay feedback from life coaching practitioners supports this, which may suggest that the range of life coaching activity is so diverse that research neither fully captures, nor effectively measures and reports a

substantial effect. This may call for more standardised delivery of life coaching services that are firmly grounded within a psychological framework. To achieve this, there should be some degree of standardisation in coach education as has been suggested by Grant (2003).

Despite the empirical shortfall and the fact that there is relatively little known about the public's perception of life coaching, there are lots of people offering life coaching. In an Association for Coaching survey (September to October, 2004), 91 per cent of 326 participants were coaches and of those, 62 per cent offered life coaching services. In another survey by the Association of Coaching in March, 2006, of 85 participants who were coachees, 98 per cent said that coaching met or totally met their needs. They rated the value of coaching, on average, at 7.8, where 10 represented excellent. It seems that the public like coaching, but do they know what it is?

### **Influence of executive coaching**

Tobias (1996) stated that the term 'executive coaching' came into the business world in the late 1980s and was used because 'coaching' sounded less threatening than other types of interventions. Developmental counselling conducted since the 1940s, by RHR International (one of the largest business psychology corporations), seems to support this observation (Flory, 1965). Like life coaching, executive coaching also suffers from a limited research base to support the validity and reliability of coaching interventions (Kilburg, 2004), yet it is widely used, in part due to its social acceptability (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001). Executive Coaches are still struggling to properly define Executive Coaching (International Coach Federation Summit, 1993).

### **Similarities and differences to therapy**

Those who work in the fields of psychotherapy and counselling psychology claim that coaching is a different name for what they have been doing for a long time (Carroll, 2003). Berglas (2002) suggested

that executive coaching is an acceptable form of psychotherapy. However, Garvey (2004) argued that they are not the same, although they are in some ways complementary. Gyllensten, Palmer and Farrants (2005) found that people held negative and stereotypical attitudes towards counselling resulting in their avoiding seeking help, believing that counselling is only appropriate for serious mental health problems. Perhaps the public are seeking coaching as a more socially acceptable 'therapy'.

It seems that much of the confusion over whether coaching is a standalone process or is connected to counselling, comes down to a question of what is appropriate, 'safe' and ethical (Summerfield 2002), but it seems clear that the two are intertwined. This may be due to the centrality of the client-therapist (or client-coach) relationship (Woolfe, 1990) or the fact that Rogers' (1957) core conditions are as applicable to coaching as they are to counselling and counselling psychology. It seems that similarities exist, but the differences are less straight forward to identify, calling for clearer ethical guidelines and reliable research.

Ethical principles are usually embedded in professional bodies in the form of self-regulation (Law, 2005) and since life coaching is not yet regulated, the risk to the public is omnipresent. Spence, Cavanagh and Grant (2006) argued that acting on the need for standards of competence becomes difficult whilst the characteristics of the industry remain hidden. Furthermore, life coaching practice is not thoroughly described yet. Consequently, it is unlikely that we can fully appraise the differences between life coaching and counselling, nor effectively regulate. However, without regulation, life coaches can do what they want, perhaps practicing beyond their level of expertise. In a study of 148 Australian coaches, Spence, Cavanagh and Grant (2006) noted that few respondents had a counselling or psychology background.

Training is improving though. Accreditation of courses is becoming more widespread. However, some accrediting bodies,

such as the International Coaching Federation (ICF), are self-accrediting with membership voluntary. Therefore, complaints against members would, in worst cases, perhaps only result in a loss of accreditation status. Complaints necessitate thorough investigation, leading to members being unable to practice if deemed to be acting unethically. Organisations, such as the British Psychological Society, and specifically the relatively newly-founded Special Group in Coaching Psychology, could make a difference by offering course/coach accreditation that is grounded in long established ethical principles of best professional practice: a priority as new courses are developed.

In conclusion, research into life coaching is limited to say the least. It is argued that the market for life coaching exists *without* the public fully understanding what it is, perhaps in part influenced by an increase in media attention. Furthermore, stigma may be driving individuals to choose life coaching over therapy. Life coaches may *unknowingly* be 'counselling' clients, opening up a debate about ethical practice. Both client and coach may be unaware of the similarities and differences between life coaching and counselling, calling for the coach to be properly trained and accredited, hence protecting the client.

If coaching falls under the domain of psychology, these are valid concerns for us all, necessitating immediate action. Research should concentrate on gaining better understanding of the public's perceptions of life coaching; the reasons for seeking it out and whether or not coaches are offering life coaching or counselling re-packaged. This should provide a sound base for further research that leads to development of clear ethical practice that meets with public demand.

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- To learn a model of ethical decision making in coaching supervision based on an ethics of trust and relationship rather than simply duty
- To consider the organisational context in which coaching takes place and review how best to understand and work with organisations
- To introduce Wilbur's Integral model as a holistic overview of coaching supervision
- To practice the skills of being a coaching supervisor



Centre for Supervision Training

# The development of an effective staff coaching programme for stress prevention and reduction in the Prison Service

Sarah Talbot-Landon, Stephen Palmer & Paul Flaxman

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*Stress is a well known issue within many organisations and indeed many walks of life. The work of the Prison Service can conceivably be envisaged as a stressful job and this was highlighted by Cooper (1997) when being a Prison Officer was found to be the most stressful occupation. Ten years after Cooper's research, we plan to investigate the presence and sources of stress within the prison service and to examine how an individual's locus of control and the balance of work and family may interact in the stress process. Having examined these factors, we will evaluate the effectiveness of coaching for reducing self-reported distress amongst prison officers. This paper seeks to review the available existing research and to outline the proposed methodology for this study.*

**Keywords:** stress, stress prevention, coaching, locus of control, work-life balance, Prison Service.

## The cost of stress

**I**N A SURVEY OF SELF-REPORTED work-related stress (Health and Safety Executive, 2006) it was indicated that around half-a-million (420,000) individuals in Britain believed that they were suffering stress at a level that was affecting their health. The findings suggested that one-in-six of all working individuals thought that their job was very or extremely stressful in 2005/2006. According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE, 2006) a reported 10.5 million working days were lost per year in Britain for stress related illnesses. This represents an estimated average of 30.1 working days lost per year per individual suffering from stress, anxiety or depression, making it one of the largest contributors to the overall estimated annual days lost from work-related ill-health (HSE, 2006). Stress is costing Britain money and effective prevention and intervention is needed. In the absence of a panacea, effective research-based intervention is sought through coaching.

## Stress defined

Stress has been defined by the Latin term 'stringere' meaning to 'draw tight' which was

used in the 17th century to define hardship and affliction. In today's world stress is referred to by Evans (1999) as the greatest modern disease. The HSE (2001) define stress as 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed upon them'. Whilst it is accepted that stress and demands are related, many researchers adopt an appraisal/coping view of stress, which suggests that stress occurs 'when the perceived pressure exceeds an individual's perceived ability to cope' (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Palmer, Cooper & Thomas, 2003). In taking this view of stress, it has been hypothesised that individuals can enhance their coping ability through coaching interventions.

## What makes the Prison Service feel stressed?

The occupation of Prison Officer has been formerly identified by previous research to be the most stressful occupation (Cooper, 1997). As these findings are now somewhat outdated, more research is needed to investigate the presence and sources of self reported stress within HM Prison Service today. More recent HSE studies (THOR

datasets SOSMI and OPRA 2005/2006) have suggested that the Prison Service remains a highly stressful occupation.

In 2006, the Director of Personnel for Her Majesty's Prison Service noted that in 1998 approximately 15.9 days were lost due to sickness (not only stress-related illness), which was equivalent to over 3000 staff members. In 2005/2006 it was estimated that 23.8 per cent of the Prison Service sickness was due to mental and behavioural disorders, which is nearly one-quarter of all sickness. In an industry like the Prison Service, the cost of sickness is not merely in business terms or even individual terms but also in the cost to safety of those held in custody and colleagues working in that environment. Since 1998 the *'HMPS Well-Being Journey'* has begun to drive a reduction in sickness, and various support measures have been introduced into the service. Improvement has been seen in 2005/2006 as sickness within the Prison Service was down to 12.2 days lost per person due to sickness. Future targets have been set at nine days per person to be achieved by 2010. A challenging task lies ahead. Currently, counselling is used to reduce sickness that results from mental and behavioural disorders, and has shown a marked reduction in the number of days lost per person from 4.2 days in January, 2003, to 2.0 days in January, 2003 (Hadley, 2006). However, counselling is usually considered a tertiary level intervention which is reactive rather than proactive and preventative.

The prison service is accounted by the Queen to hold in custody persons that the courts have deemed to be unsafe to be at large in society. As such, the profession involves a range of tensions not least in balancing daily experiences with employees' coping styles, personality preferences and work-life balance. Recent research within the prison service has highlighted that stress was the greatest trigger for seeking the support of the 'in-house' support services (such as the Staff Care and Welfare team). This has highlighted the need for care and support to be encouraged for prison staff who may have

witnessed self-harm and suicide, have been assaulted, or who have been faced with concerted indiscipline as part of their job role (Franks, 2006). Currently, the Prison Service offers counselling to employees reporting sickness due to stress. However, further research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of 'Coaching' for the reduction, prevention, and effective management of stress within an organisation of this type; coaching could potentially be useful, not only for the more severe examples as given above, but also for the daily effective management of the lives of employees and prisoners alike.

### **Why use coaching to reduce stress?**

Many different approaches to managing stress in the workplace have been instigated. Notably, stress or pressure management training, counselling, work space design and flexible work schedules (Allinson, Cooper & Reynolds, 1989; Cooper & Cartwright, 1997; Firth-Cozens & Hardy, 1992; Palmer, 2003). However, coaching is as yet in its infancy as a potential worksite stress management intervention.

Coaching can be defined as 'the art of facilitating the performance, learning and development of another' (Downey, 1999). Coaching can be tailored to an individual's needs and based upon different models. One favoured method in the UK is based upon cognitive-behavioural approaches (Beck, 1976; Ellis, 1994; Neenan & Palmer, 2001; Neenan & Dryden, 2002). These approaches are generally based on the premise that how we think influences the way we feel and act; and, the related intervention procedures typically focus on: (1) helping individuals to re-frame their threat appraisals; and (2) increasing people's coping skills, in order to improve mental health and enhance performance. Other approaches, such as multimodal therapy (Palmer, Cooper & Thomas, 2003) and solution-focused therapy (Greene & Grant, 2003), have also been adapted to the field of coaching.

The practice of coaching has generally increased during the last decade (Palmer & Whybrow, 2005). However, very little research has investigated the effects of coaching interventions on stress-related outcomes. Predominantly, coaching research has focused on increasing confidence, although numerous researchers have suggested that coaching can reduce stress (e.g. Bush & Steinmetz, 2002; Hearn, 2001, Jones, 1996; Meyer, 2003). Qualitative research by Wales (2003) suggested that one of the benefits of coaching is a reduction in stress. Similarly, research by Grant (2003) reported that life coaching significantly reduces depression, anxiety and stress. Further, Compasspoint Non-profit Services (2003) identified that executive coaching with company directors had encouraged a reduction in stress and a more relaxed ability to cope with pressures at work. Recently, research by Gyllensten and Palmer (2005a) indicated that coaching can have a positive indirect effect upon stress, when measured using a qualitative methodology. However, the quantitative findings of the study produced a non-significant result (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2005b). A recent randomised controlled trial (Grbic & Palmer, 2006) found that a self-coaching manual based upon cognitive-behavioural methods could significantly reduce symptoms of stress in middle managers. The limited published research indicates that the solution-focused and cognitive-behavioural coaching approaches are more effective at reducing stress than other approaches commonly used within the field. Although research into the field of coaching and its impact upon stress is developing overtime, clearly further empirical work is needed.

### **Further research**

In order to further the field of knowledge, the aim of this research is to explore the causes of workplace stress and to examine if stress is reduced through stress management training and individual coaching. Any links between stress and work-family conflict and

locus of control (personality factor) will also be examined, to broaden our existing knowledge of stress inducing factors within the Prison Service.

The variables to be explored include occupational factors: sources of pressure, work-family conflict; and individual factors: self-reported stress (DASS-21), age, gender, job-role, hours worked and establishment type; and coaching factors: stages of change (SOC) and locus of control (LOC). A three-stage research design is to be used. Stage 1 will examine the occupational and individual factors that influence employee well-being within Her Majesty's Prison Service; Stage 2 will focus on examining the coaching factors within one prison, by conducting stress management training and one-to-one coaching sessions with 15 employees at all three levels of the establishment's hierarchy (five x senior managers, five x middle managers, and five x staff members). Stage 3 will analyse the effectiveness of the intervention work. It is intended that the results of the research will be published in relevant journals within the next two years.

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Chartered Psychologist

# The 2006 BPS SGCP Conference – a non-psychologist's personal view.

Paul Ellis

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*An informal view of key points arising from the 2006 SGCP Conference from the perspective of a non-psychologist.*

**Keywords:** conference, psychology, psychologist, coaching and research.

**S**ITTING IN DIANE STOBER'S (2006) Masterclass brought it home to me how much the British Psychological Society's SGCP conference differed from the other coaching conferences I have attended. Usually presenters at coaching conferences ask 'Who is actively coaching' or some such variation thereof; and on average about 70 per cent of the hands go up. Diane Stober asked 'Who here is a psychologist' and mine was the only hand not to go up. The idea of this short article is to offer an informal view from a non-psychologist of the SGCP conference in December, 2006. While I may not be a psychologist, for several years now I have been extensively involved with the coaching industry from a number of perspectives, including: providing coaching, procuring coaching for senior executives, commissioning of coach training, and research on coach-related issues.

Over 300 people attended the SGCP conference – this was a significant number – but what struck me was the absence of many of the 'big names' that you often see at other conferences, with the exception of Sir John Whitmore. No doubt people had other commitments, but it also raises an interesting point, which is just how much cross-over is there between the distinct groups within the coaching industry. Pauline Willis (2006) raised related issues in her keynote address about the need to make an effort to be inclusive of all parties in the coaching industry. Therefore, perhaps the key challenge for all coaching industry groups whether the Society, the International Coach

Federation, the Association of Coaching, and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council is to remain appreciative of each others viewpoints. The Society is different in that it represents an established profession, while the other coaching bodies represent, to varying degrees, the emerging commercial industry perspective; while this might seem like semantics, it might have an impact on how the regulatory authorities view coaching in the future. Witness the trend in America in some states where coaches are required to be psychologists and coaches who are not are called non-licensed therapists – hardly a marketing plus. Maintaining an industry-wide dialogue is going to become more challenging in the next few years with the impending regulation of the psychology profession, and the question of what impact this will have on the broader coaching industry. Arguably one of the strengths of coaching as a discipline is that it draws upon many areas of study: regulation is designed to control, govern and in theory protect consumers of a product by regulating quality, but it can also impact on innovation.

This leads me into my second point – the lecture by Michael Cavanagh (2006), and his challenge, that given the statistics for the incidence of mental health in the adult population at any one time, how good should the diagnostic skills of a coach be? As he mentioned coaching is seen by some people as the acceptable name for therapy. For me this raises the question: what does it take to be a competent coach, and related to that,

how much knowledge of psychology is required? I find it hard to comprehend of a coaching situation where knowledge of psychology would not be required in some shape or form at some time in the coaching conversation. At the same time, just because you are a psychologist doesn't make you a competent coach – or to use Cavangh's more colourful analogy, he may have a good set of tools but would you want him mending your car? Maybe the fundamental question is what level of knowledge is required from the coach so that they won't do damage to the client? As well as talking about what coaches can do, perhaps the industry needs a discussion about what coaches won't do? I would also ask whether paradoxically we focus too much on the client. What about those who procure coaching? Is an ill informed HR department who buy in inappropriate coaching fulfilling its duty of care to its employees? For coaching to be a continued success, conferences like the December event are crucial for developing understanding across the coaching industry. Indeed, a better informed user population will hopefully ensure that coaching is used appropriately and not as a tactic to avoid therapy or a clinical psychological intervention.

To enable coaching to steer its course between therapy, clinical psychology, consulting, and counselling; good research is fundamental. Yet as, Jonathan Passmore (2006) commented, most of the coaching research is dominated by the field of management literature. Attending the conference I was struck by the rigour of the research approaches. The scale of papers presented during the conference show that a research base is forming in coaching psychology. Of course, this is not to say rigorous research is not done elsewhere, rather my point is that the principles of research and how to conduct it scientifically, are at the core of psychology. If coaching is to move away from the anecdotal Stephen Palmer (2006), pointed out just how few coaching books have any references in them

to the evidence-based approach, then the research which is starting to emerge has the opportunity to play a central role. However, it is also worth thinking about how to make a difference with coaching research. As Jonathan Passmore (2006) pointed out, there is a possibility that we could still be asking the same questions in 10 years time; using the example of psychotherapy with its long-established research base, but no definitive answers. Therefore, perhaps the challenge for future research grounded in the psychology, is how to retain and maintain a wider perspective, to ensure that insights from other areas are not overlooked.

The role of a coach looks deceptively simple, arguably one of the reasons individuals have entered the field in recent years. Yet appearances can be deceptive, and one of the key lessons which was reinforced at the conference for me, is just how challenging it is to provide good coaching and just how much effort is required to become skilled in this role. Psychology has a deep well of knowledge applicable to coaching from which it can draw learning. In the long term this should surely benefit the development of coaching overall, the challenge is to remain inclusive and appreciative of what all parties bring to the table. If the coaching industry is not to split into factions, all parties need to show some humility, and ensure academic snobbery is kept in check. To that end it is important that the inclusive attitude of the SGCP is maintained and people with a non-psychologist background are encouraged to attend and learn as part of the wider coaching community. Personally this non-psychologist looks forward to another fascinating event in 2007.

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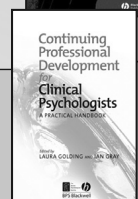
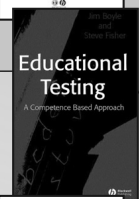
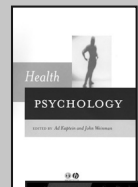
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# SGCP Conference Report: 1st International Coaching Psychology Conference, 18–19 December, 2006\*

Jennifer Liston-Smith

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**T**HIS EVENT, RICH IN ITS NEW questions as well as its underpinning theories and evidence, showed the increasing maturity of the field of coaching psychology.

In light of plans to publish several of the conference papers in *The Coaching Psychologist*, this general report has been pitched as an overview of some emerging themes of the conference on 18 December, rather than an attempt to cover all contributions. However, for completeness, a list of contributors follows.

## Keynotes

**Dr Diane Stober:** Evidence-based Practice in Coaching Psychology: Another Medical Model ... Not!

**Dr Michael Cavanagh:** What makes for a professional coach? Or, What every good coach needs to know?

**Dr P. Alex Linley:** Coaching Psychology and positive Psychology: Points of convergence and New Perspectives.

**Prof. David Lane:** Coaching Psychology – What will it take to build a profession?

**Prof. Stephen Palmer:** When ‘Coaching’ isn’t enough!

**Pauline Willis:** Bringing it all together: What does the future hold for Coaching Psychology?

## Invited Speakers

**S. Grbic & S. Palmer, Essex University:** A cognitive-behavioural manualised self-coaching approach to stress management and prevention at work: A randomised controlled trial.

**K. Gyllensten, Coaching Psychology Unit, City University, London, and Centre for Cognitive Psychotherapy and Education, Copenhagen:** The challenge of using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies in coaching psychology research on a DPsych programme

**Otto Laske, Director of Education, Interdevelopmental Institute (IDM), Boston, USA:** Insights into Coaching from developmental theory.

**A. Whybrow, University of Manchester & S. Palmer, Coaching Psychology Unit, City University, London:** Shifting Perspectives: One year into the development of the Special Group in Coaching Psychology in the UK. Brief Report.

## Skills-based Sessions

**Dr Tatiana Bachkirova:** Working with self-concept in developmental coaching

**Prof. Michael Carroll:** Facilitating Learning in Coaching Psychology.

**Angela Hetherington & Jonathan Coe:** The absence of sex? Setting and keeping boundaries in coaching.

**Dr Ho Law:** Ethics and Diversity within Coaching Psychology Practice.

**Dr Almuth McDowall & Dr Rainer Kurtz:** Making the most of psychometric profiles – effective integration into the coaching process.

## Submitted Focussed Papers

**Fiona Beddoes-Jones, The Cognitive Fitness Consultancy:** Short-term cognitive coaching interventions: Worth the effort or a waste of time?

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\* A second report, covering themes from the Masterclasses of 19 December is planned for a future issue of *The Coaching Psychologist*.

**Dr P. Furey, Performance Enhancement Consulting Ltd:** Listening in Coaching; a route, not a step.

**K. Gørtz, Learning Lab Denmark, The University of Education, Copenhagen:** Coaching, lean and the Concept of Flow.

**J. Maddocks, JCA (Occupational Psychologists) Ltd:** Can emotional intelligence be developed?

**A. Mansi, Westminster Business School, University of Westminster:** Executive Coaching and Psychometrics: A case study evaluating the use of the HPI and the HDS in senior management coaching.

**N. Murtagh, E. Lyons & P.N. Lopes, University of Surrey:** What barriers/Women's experience in changing careers.

**A. O'Broin & S. Palmer, Coaching Psychology Unit, City University:** Same debate, different focus: A case for revisiting the parallels and distinctions between coaching and therapy.

**Dr S. O'Riordan, Private Practice:** Retirement Coaching: What does psychology actually contribute?

**S. Panchal, Happiness First Ltd and E. Jackson, potential Psychology Services:** 'Turning 30' Transitions: Research to Application.

**J. Passmore, OPM and University of East London:** Giving voice to the coachee: Executives' experiences in the coaching room.

**G. Scrase, J. Patrick, A. Ahmed & P. Morgan, Cardiff University:** Coaching and Leadership Behaviours of Instructors in Military Training: A Critical Incident Study.

**M. J. Smith & L. Hardy, University of Wales, Bangor:** Relationships between transformational leadership behaviours and team climate factors.

**A. Tarry:** A Unified Theory of Coaching and The Unified Coaching Model.

There was also a series of Professional Practice Forums and an array of posters.

## Emerging themes of the Conference

### *Sorting out our psychological science*

According to **Pauline Willis**, Chair of the Special Group in Coaching Psychology at the time of this event, Coaching Psychology is 'a cross disciplinary approach to personal and professional development' in that it is derived from across the discipline of Psychology. As a domain of psychological practice it 'draws upon both the art and science of Psychology.'

Of course, the 'science' has long had its critics: 'The science of psychology has been far more successful on the negative than on the positive side. It has revealed to us much about man's shortcomings, his illness, his sins, but little about his potentialities, his virtues, his achievable aspirations, or his full psychological height. It is as if psychology has voluntarily restricted itself to only half its rightful jurisdiction, and that, the darker, meaner half (Maslow, 1954, p.354).

So, we turn to positive psychology. **Alex Linley**, wryly noting that this approach is founded on Seligman's inauspicious beginnings in depression and learned helplessness defines positive psychology as 'the scientific study of optimal human functioning, which aims to redress the imbalance in psychological research and practice by calling attention to the positive aspects of human functioning and experience, and integrating them with our understanding of the negative aspects of human functioning and experience.'

So, with the traditional empiricist endeavour of psychology at least expanded to look on the bright side, we still face the thorny question of quantitative and qualitative approaches. **Kristina Gyllensten** and **Stephen Palmer** (2006a, 2006b) point out that both approaches, put to use in research on coaching and workplace stress, have their advantages and limitations and also that in any such research, there is currently a 'lack of control over the qualifications and skills of the coach and the theories they use'.

Developing the coaching psychology literature base needs an evidence-based coaching

psychology approach, suggest **Alanna O’Broin** and **Stephen Palmer** (2006). Where better to start than a review of the literature bases for coaching and coaching psychology, and counseling and psychotherapy outcomes? This review is particularly heartening as it builds, incrementally on these authors’ previous study of the relevance of research from allied disciplines on the quality of the helping relationship in coaching.

Still, while we get our research base in order, we could also return to broader questions of science itself. The nature of scientific enquiry is itself changing; a theme introduced in the second SGCP national conference of 2005 by both Michael Cavanagh and David Lane. **Adina Tarry’s** Unified Theory of Coaching (and Unified Coaching Model) (2006), reflecting physicists’ longing for a grand unified theory may present a rather sweeping vision yet it does attempt to recognise that a coaching session must be seen as a temporary complex evolving system arising through the coach, coachee, organisation and the bigger picture. For Tarry, ‘emergence, risk and uncertainty are reflections of the realities of human individual and collective systems as complex evolving systems.’

Meanwhile, **David Lane** (2006), as well as reminding us what it means to be a scientist, enquires on what mode of knowledge do we build our professional practice? Is it:

- Disciplinary – scientific, value free, setting free;
- Technical rational – beyond setting, evidence based;
- Dispositional – practice as deliberative action concerned with specific context and reflection; or
- Critical – to challenge existing discursive structures?

Chaos and epistemology aside, we must as a minimum, urges **Dianne Stober** (2006), grasp the window of opportunity to adopt appropriate frameworks or meta-models for guiding how we think about coaching psychology and the processes used. Dr Stober proposes a contextual model utilising seven thematic factors;

1. An explicit outcome or goal.
2. A rationale for using coaching psychology.
3. A procedure consistent with the rationale.
4. A meaningful relationship.
5. A collaborative working alliance.
6. The client’s ability and readiness to change.
7. The coach’s ability and readiness to help the client create change.

*The consummate skill – and the being – of the coaching psychologist*

**Stephen Palmer** (2006) paints a compelling picture of the damage that may ensue when the purveyor of ‘behavioural goal-obsessed coaching’ strides into an encounter with a suicidal or personality disordered client. Clearly some level of skill in diagnosis is needed as a client who presents for coaching may well bring unidentified clinically based problems. Indeed, **Michael Cavanagh**, heartily endorsing Prof. Palmer’s approach, ponders whether a coach may need better diagnostic skills than a clinical psychologist since the client will probably be more honest about their problems with the latter. He reflects on a client who said he wanted to be the best real estate agent. Actually, this client was clinically depressed but thought he had better come with a goal.

A potential tool in this area may be the Hogan Development Survey (HDS), presented by **Angela Mansi** (2006) in the context of a case study of coaching with a senior executive using psychometric assessment, Egan person-centred counselling skills and cognitive behavioural techniques. The HDS is based on the DSM Axis II Personality Disorders, measuring ‘dark side’ traits devised specifically for use in selection, development and coaching. However, given **Stephen Palmer’s** concerns about how well-equipped coaches are to spot the signs, it would also be important to ensure such diagnostics are only used in a context in which feedback can be handled appropriately!

**Michael Cavanagh** (2004) agrees that the coaching psychologist needs high quality clinical skills, including that of case concep-

tualisation. In coaching, this must be solution-focused. 'Knowing how someone broke their leg doesn't tell you how to fix it.'

However, Coaching Psychology is also moving beyond tools to meta skill sets, according to Dr Cavanagh. 'I've got a great set of spanners', he enthuses: 'who'd like me to fix their car?' Something else is needed. The meta skill set of the coaching psychologist includes the ability to take a complex perspective and also to recognise that the quality of conversation determines the quality of relationship which in turn determines the quality of the system or organisation. The determinants of quality conversations are:

1. The ability to build an expansive emotional space.
2. The ability to build a vision that assists us to see the way forward.

The essential meta skill set also embraces mindfulness: 'not to be *had* by the stream of consciousness but to see it', says Michael Cavanagh. This venture into the *being*, rather than the *doing*, of the practitioner finds favour with **Otto Laske** (2006). 'Coaching is about coaches' self-insight first, and insight into clients second ... What is not in the coach can never be in the client, so focus on the coach first ... If you coach someone more mature than you, you are doing damage' Arguing that coaches should stand on the shoulders of Freud, Piaget and Jaques, in bringing a thorough understanding (and personal, lived experience) of developmental psychology to their practice, he asks, 'What is 'coaching psychology' without insight into adult development?'

Just as **Pauline Willis** described, coaching psychology appears to be a cross-disciplinary approach. By the time each theoretical school has come forward and had their say, the coaching psychologist will surely have vaulted far beyond the current media image of the coach to become quite a polymath.

### Jennifer Liston-Smith

*SGCP Conference & Events Correspondent*

Please note: the themes drawn out in this report represent the experience of the author during this event. Sincere thanks are due to several people who responded most helpfully to my request for notes on the various concurrent sessions. In particular, I would like to thank Dr Tatiana Bachkirova, Adina Tarry and Dav Devalle.

Much other valuable learning and contribution took place; not reported here for reasons of space. Specific conference papers appear in this issue of *TCP* and in future issues. If there are contributors to this conference who do not currently have plans to offer a paper to *TCP*, they are invited to contact the Editor.

Feedback on this report would also be welcome to: [SGCPEvents@pip.co.uk](mailto:SGCPEvents@pip.co.uk).

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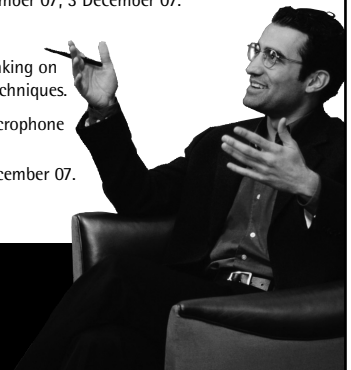
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# The 'war' that may have ended before it begun. The Norwegian coaching standards. A personal perspective from Norway

Paul O. Olson

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**L**AST YEAR, THERE WAS A BLOG IN A major Norwegian newsweekly: 'The war between psychologists and coaches.' It appears that coaches had decided that psychologists should not be helping the mentally healthy. Our methods only apply to the sick. It became the longest and one of the most intense blogging events that year. Actually, I didn't know that there was a war on, but the firing line was fun.

To me it had an unexpected effect as it lead to my becoming an advisor to both a psychologist and committee convenor for the Norwegian Standard for Coaching, a new project initiated by a group of about 20 coaches. Since then I have discussed examples from my own practice and other cases about when coaching and therapy have gone wrong. An infamous lawsuit in Denmark involving gestalt therapists escalated all the way to the National Assembly. Therefore, I have reasoned that coaches have done harm in the past and will continue to do so, unless they realise that in real life there is no clear line between health and pathology.

I have also raised the ethical concern that some coaching methods are potentially covert, invasive and manipulative. I have argued that when a sub-committee meeting in large coaching organisations discusses specific mental health issues, such as ADHD and adolescent identity problems, it is not the right forum. This level of competence may be available in some countries, but not yet in Norway. Currently if coaches want to

get involved with mental disorders, they need to qualify as therapists first.

## **Do we need a Norwegian coaching standard?**

In Norway it seems that many coaches believe that 120 hours of training is the minimum needed for coaching perfectly healthy people. The Norwegian authorities agreed that a minimum should be set, but are more concerned about quality than quantity.

One of the real issues, from a legal point of view, is that coaches (in particular life coaches) may be seeing coachees with clinical problems that they do not reveal. Or they may be helping a psychopath or narcissist to get even better at manipulating others. The coach can also be subject to the Norwegian Law for what is known as 'alternative treatment' (2004 revision), acting as an 'alternative' to public health care. The principle applied is then what the coach 'should know' and that a therapist is only allowed to act, 'within your specific area of competence'. A signed statement from the coachee that confirms that he or she has no mental disorders may be immaterial in a court of law.

Other equally difficult issues have been raised by the Norwegian Health Directorate. 'NLP Master Therapists' are definitely involved in 'alternative' treatment. Some of the practitioner's claim that NLP is the best therapy for depression (sic) and such claims are unlawful in Norway. Also any reference



to hypnotherapy will need to be removed from as many as 20 coaching websites and their coaching school curricula. In Norway hypnosis is the exclusive domain of medical doctors, psychologists and dentists, the latter only for pain/anxiety control. The health authorities are currently looking into this matter, and if any hypnotherapy has actually taken place within coaching, criminal charges may be commenced. Understandably, some of the coaches were reported to be angry that they cannot freely practice what they had learnt. By practising they risk a custodial sentence of up to two years in prison.

Equally frustrating to the coaches, is that Norwegian psychologists are legally allowed to coach anybody, irrespective of any mental disorders a client may have, as all psychologists in Norway get clinical training, although interestingly, not enough therapy practice to become a Chartered Psychologist in the UK. Only about five per cent work outside of the clinical field of practice.

In Norway four universities have MSc or PhD programmes, but even when students complete one of these programmes, they can still not call themselves a psychologist. University level coaching courses have also become available at the largest Norwegian business school.

### **The way ahead**

In line with public policy, the coaching standards committee convenor has been very interested in the views of the psychology community, although the Norwegian Psychological Association turned down an invitation to join the work. However, with the upsurge of interest in positive psychology, they could be changing their mind.

With the new standards, coaches will need to co-operate with clinical psychologists as their only possible emergency backup, and the standards committee convenor has urged for co-operation rather than 'war'. Due to the legal restrictions in Norway, they will have no choice. In this respect, the so-called 'war' is over before it begun.

The upcoming hearing will outline a standard that does not certify individual practitioners, but rather calls for training providers to state compliance with the standards. These providers will in turn be responsible for standards of training and certification at well defined levels of competence. Most coaches will need to attend clinical workshops and non-clinical practitioners will need to ensure they have backup resources for emergencies and referrals, and probably supervision.

A Norwegian standard for coaching is probably not a bad thing, but if it were a marketing ploy, the coaches have lost the 'war' for market protection before it even begun.

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# Book Review

## **Excellence in Coaching: The Industry Guide**

*Jonathan Passmore (Ed.)*

London: Kogan Page, 2006.

216 pages. Paperback. £22.46.

ISBN: 978-0-7494-4637-4



Reviewed by Kasia Szymanska

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*Excellence in Coaching* is the first book from the Association of Coaching; it is an accessible and comprehensive text with many of the chapters written by leading international figures in the coaching arena.

It is divided into three sections. The first three chapters focus on the business of coaching and the reader learns about what coaching involves, the application of the Organisational Coaching Framework (OCF) and how to set up and run your own private practice.

The second section in the main, is devoted to coaching models, such as NLP, transpersonal coaching and solution focused coaching. Also included are two chapters on intercultural coaching and stress and coaching, unquestionably these chapters need to be included, but they don't sit very comfortably in a section focusing on paradigms.

The final section includes two valuable and important chapters on ethics and supervision. I think a minor short coming here is the lack of a chapter on training and professional development and maybe a final chapter on how the authors see coaching developing in the next 10 years or so. I for one would be interested in their views.

Overall this book is a welcome addition to the coaching literature, at a reasonable price. It is suitable both for coaches in training and experienced coaches/coaching psychologists who want to learn more about different coaching approaches and interventions.

**Kasia Szymanska**

*The Centre for Coaching*

## Notes for Contributors

# The Coaching Psychologist

Contributions on all aspects of research, theory, practice and case studies in the arena of coaching psychology are welcome. Manuscripts of approximately 3000 words excluding references, which may be extended with the permission of the Editor, should be typewritten and include the author's name, address and contact details. All submissions must include an abstract and keywords. Included should be a statement stipulating that the paper is not under consideration elsewhere. All submissions, including book reviews should be e-mailed to the Editor, [Kasia.s@tinyonline.co.uk](mailto:Kasia.s@tinyonline.co.uk) or to The Centre for Coaching, Broadway House, 3 High Street, Bromley BR1 1LF.

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