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Welcome

Welcome to the Summer issue of the *AC Bulletin*. We have a full offering for your summer reading, and some further suggestions too.

Features

In our first feature in this edition, David Bonham-Carter outlines Prochaska and DiClemente's *Transtheoretical Model of Change* and how it can be used to great effect by the coach. The application of this model in a coaching context first came to my attention in Tony Grant's work – and that could be recommendation enough for people to take a closer look! David has added his own recommendations for how the model can act as a guide and support to practice.

We have more practical advice from Colin Selby in our second feature, which is about psychometrics. Dr Selby not only outlines the field, but also answers some of the most immediate questions that arise when people first encounter psychometrics.

Business

In terms of keeping the business going, Ann Sherrington is on hand to provide us with both the information and the confidence to sell our professional services effectively. I have seen first hand the effects of Ann's positive approach to selling skills and I am delighted that she has shared her expertise in this issue.

Reviews

In the Reviews section, Gill Dickers reviews Alison Hardingham's, *The Coach's Coach*; and M.L. Petty reviews Colin Beard and John Wilson's *Experiential Learning: A Best Practice Handbook for Educators and Trainers*.

As ever, I am grateful to all the authors for their contributions which all reflect a great

deal of thought and care in their preparation. I hope you get as much out of reading them as I have.

Best wishes to all.

Peter Jackson
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Submissions

The editor welcomes submissions from members for inclusion in all sections of the *Bulletin*. Articles may deal with the whole range of practice, theory, wider professional and business issues, or topics of general interest to coaches. They may be presented in any appropriate format, including case studies, research reports, interviews and discussion articles.

Articles should generally be between 800 and 1500 words in length and there should be a clear benefit to the reader. Sources should be fully referenced using the Harvard (name, date) referencing system. See previous articles for examples. Full guides on Harvard referencing are readily available on the websites of many university libraries.

Articles for submission should be sent to acbulletin@associationforcoaching.com
Reviews should be sent to reviews@associationforcoaching.com
The submission deadline for Issue 13 (Autumn) is September 15, 2007; the deadline for Issue 14 (New Year) is December 15 2007; the deadline for Issue 15 (Spring) is March 15 2008.

Life Coaching for Problem Habits: Using Prochaska and DiClemente's Model of Change - David Bonham-Carter



This article looks at the model of how people make changes proposed by the psychologists James Prochaska and Carlo DiClemente and considers how it can be used by life coaches as a framework for structuring coaching intervention. The model is particularly helpful in situations where a client is seeking to break away from a habitual form of behaviour which is creating repeated problems for them. It has been applied to working with a range of habitual problems (not all of which will necessarily be considered relevant issues for coaching, depending on your orientation), including smoking or misuse of alcohol, repeating patterns within relationships, lack of assertiveness and procrastination.

Prochaska and Di Clemente's Model

Prochaska and Di Clemente's model has been set out in a number of different ways to illustrate the stages that a person often goes through on the path to change. One possible way of listing these stages is as follows:

Pre-Contemplation: This sits in a sense before the model proper. The client is not yet thinking at all about changing their behaviour.

Stage 1 – Contemplation: Here the client is in ambivalence – i.e. they can see some benefits in changing but also are aware of or experiencing the benefits of not changing, so as yet they haven't started to change.

Stage 2 – Decision: The client makes a decision to change. Usually this occurs after some specific triggering event, which increases

their motivation to change – for example, if smoking cigarettes is the problem behaviour, then an event such as a relative or friend experiencing serious health problems from smoking might trigger the client to decide to cut down their own smoking.

Stage 3 – Action: The client now begins to act. This may be by stopping the problem behaviour altogether (e.g. by giving up smoking altogether) or at least by controlling it (perhaps just cutting down to some degree).

Stage 4 – Maintenance: If things are going well, then the client maintains their progress in stopping or reducing the problem behaviour.

Permanent Exit – If the client is able to avoid returning to the problem behaviour then they can be said to have completed the change. Remember that they may in fact be controlling the problem rather than having extinguished it altogether – as in the smoking example – but so long as they changed the actual behaviour, then the process is complete.

However, in most cases before this happens, the client will experience Stage 5:

Stage 5: Lapse: The client slips back temporarily into the problem behaviour.

Prochaska and DiClemente themselves represent the stages 1-5 as a wheel or cycle which people generally go round several times

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before they are able to exit permanently. The model is therefore sometimes referred to as *The Wheel of Change* (but should not be confused with the 'Wheel of Life', with which many coaches are familiar as a common tool for the initial assessment/agenda setting stage of the relationship).

The *Lapse* stage in Prochaska and DiClemente's model is sometimes called *Relapse*. I prefer to call it 'lapse' and to define 'relapse' as being a situation where a temporary slip or error (i.e. a lapse) becomes something more longstanding or permanent. This distinction can therefore be used to highlight to the client that if they have a slip-up or lapse, they have a *choice* – they can either:

- a. Get back on track, recognise their progress and try to learn from the experience of lapsing as to what they might do differently the next time to avoid lapsing again in a similar situation OR
- b. Lose heart and see the lapse as a sign that they will never achieve change in which case the lapse may become a permanent relapse.

If the client does lapse, then the coach can help them to see the lapse as a natural stage in the process of change, and to encourage them to make a positive choice about whether to get back on track.

How can a coach use Prochaska and DiClemente's model?

A coach can use the model either by overtly sharing it with the client or else holding it as a framework for their own thinking. In my experience it is often very helpful to share the model overtly, because it helps the client to achieve a greater understanding of what they are going through and gives

them a process within which they can locate their progress.

Often, seeing the model of change and the stages involved, enables a client to feel that their perceived problem is not so extraordinary or unnatural as they may initially think and that they are actually following quite normal stages in working through their problem. Explaining to a client that a lapse is normal and doesn't have to lead to a relapse, can assist the client in dealing with potential feelings of guilt, shame or inadequacy at not progressing faster. It can also help them to feel that the situation is not hopeless or beyond their control. Rather, a situation where they can progress if they are patient, set realistic achievable goals and try to adopt a mentality of learning from experience without panicking or judging themselves.

The model also takes the pressure off the coach to solve all the client's problems immediately. Instead they have a clear framework within which they can encourage the client to locate their problem behaviour and select strategies. At any stage in the coaching process where the client appears to be blocked or faltering in progress, the coach can go back to the model and reassess with the client what stage they are at and what may be appropriate strategies for them to adopt. Different strategies are appropriate for different stages of the model and some are set out in the table on page 4.

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Appropriate Strategies

Pre-Contemplation:

Client not considering trying to achieve change

For someone at this stage, appropriate information as to why change may be helpful, provided in a non-authoritarian manner by way of simple information, may be of use.

Stage 1 - Contemplation

1. Look at the arguments for and against change
2. Reflect on different options for change and the likely effect of them.
3. Consider whether there are any very small ways they could begin to make changes in the direction of change, which seem reasonable and achievable to them.

Stage 2 - Deciding to try to achieve change

1. Plan change carefully rather than make a decision as a knee-jerk reaction.
2. Break the plan down into achievable goals.
3. Write down commitment to change.
4. Think about where they can get support for following their plans.

Stage 3 - Acting to achieve change

1. Follow their plan, monitor and review progress.
2. Reward and congratulate themselves on successes (even small successes).
3. Remind themselves of the benefits that will ensue if they achieve goals and acknowledge & identify those benefits as they happen (even if only partially achieved)
4. Pace themselves at a level where they will be able to sustain motivation & if possible allow themselves some time to relax when they are not focusing on their plan – Recognise they have a life outside the plan.
5. Learn from things that don't turn out as they expect.
6. Make use of appropriate support.

Stage 4 - Maintaining change

1. Recognise that development is an ongoing process.
2. Maintain and review plans until absolutely sure they are no longer required.
3. If they lapse, try not to return back to where they started from but instead recognise the progress they have made and implement a new plan, learning from the lapse.
4. Think about whether there is a way they can help others to make positive changes in the light of their experience.

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To view a flowchart depicting the different stages of the change model go to www.davidbonham-carter.com/changeprocessmodel.html .

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Coaching and Psychometrics: Comfortable Companions?

— Colin Selby

At a recent seminar in Aberdeen organised by *AC Scotland* an audience of 60 people participated in what was expected to be a relatively controversial session. I was the presenter on that occasion, and had been briefed to expect considerable resistance and even some hostility to the topic: *The use of psychometrics in the coaching relationship*. In the event, there proved to be very substantial interest in how psychometrics can be incorporated into the coaching relationship in such a way that it adds to, rather than detracts from, the transparency of the process and the self-evaluation and insight achieved by the client.

Prior to the event attendees were offered the opportunity (without charge) to complete an online questionnaire before the session and to receive a personal narrative report at the event. The report was computer generated. This appeared to have the effect of giving people at the session more to say about psychometrics, rather than provoking any confrontation.

Tools for the coaching toolkit

It is perfectly feasible, following completion of a psychometric questionnaire, to produce a readable and transparent narrative report, without jargon or numbers, which the candidate can evaluate and then discuss with the coach. The areas of assessment covered by conventional psychometrics include preferred lifestyle, relationship style, motivations, emotionality, teamwork styles and interests.

I can hear some readers in some cases objecting that this insight can be achieved through coaching. I wouldn't dispute this. However, there are coaching clients for whom time is

of the essence and psychometrics can offer a very succinct method for accelerating the experience.

There are different methods for completion of personality questionnaires, which are the focus here. These range from paper and pencil completion in exam-type conditions (not recommended) through to online completion where the client completes the assessment in the privacy of their own home or office at some convenient and comfortable time (highly recommended). The benefits of the latter approach are that the questionnaire completion occurs about one-third faster than on paper, the candidate answers more candidly and, finally, the process is rather more pleasant. It does not involve any time on the coach's part. (Several publishers provide this facility and a list of these publishers can be obtained from the British Psychological Society website at www.bps.org.uk.)

The training requirements to use individual questionnaires vary substantially. The key decision for anyone considering using a psychometric questionnaire in the coaching context is to decide whether they want to invest in the use of one particular questionnaire or learn generically about the use of questionnaires and be able to use a range. Whilst the latter is intrinsically more attractive than the rather limited approach suggested by the former, in practice people use one or a couple of questionnaires for many years and rarely switch between them. The most widely used questionnaires, so far as the author can determine, are the following:

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- **16 PF** (Oxford Psychologists Press)
- **Assessor** (Selby & Mills Ltd)
- **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator** (Oxford Psychologists Press)
- **OPQ** (SHL Group Ltd)

All these questionnaires are available for online completion and details of the publishers can be obtained from the BPS website. The training for each of these individual questionnaires is typically between three and five days, depending on previous experience and qualifications.

The coach-client relationship: will it cope with psychometrics?

If the coach agrees with the client that they will complete a questionnaire and receives a readable narrative report *before* they meet to discuss the implications of the findings, it follows that the client will come to the discussion with a lot to say. In some circumstances the fact that the assessor has all the information and therefore all the power in the relationship can create a barrier between assessor and assessee. By providing the assessee with the information in advance this issue is avoided (Toscano, 2006): the power and motivation to understand and to take action is in the hands of the client and the coaching dynamic is radically changed. This sharing of responsibility is also much more consistent with the coaching relationship. (However, if the reader's motivation for being coach is to be expert and to hold the power in the helping relationship, then please read no further!)

Do psychometrics 'pigeonhole' the client?

A lot of people express concern when they first come across psychometrics that the client can feel pigeonholed. This will not be

the case as long as the coach is working effectively and with a thorough understanding of the tools they are using. The idea of pigeonholing suggests a 'once and for all' identity which is bestowed by the output from the psychometric questionnaire. In my experience this is a completely erroneous assumption. It's perfectly reasonable for someone to have a strong preference for a particular lifestyle. This does not mean that this is the only lifestyle within which they may be comfortable nor that they may not choose a different lifestyle at various times and in various contexts. For example, someone who is extremely private and self-contained may be the 'life and soul' of the party when it's their party. Therefore the use of questionnaires needs to be carefully balanced with an understanding of the extent to which people flex and change according to different stimuli and in different situations. The effective use of psychometrics does not result in pigeonholing; it does result in the identification of preferences in order to help someone make judgments about the lifestyle and relationships they currently prefer. This is discussed in more depth in Shelley & Cohen (2006).

What does psychometric validity and reliability really mean?

Test publishers are keen to show the validity and reliability of their instruments, but many coaches may not be clear exactly what these terms mean. In everyday terms, validity means 'Does the tool do what it says it does?' Reliability can be interpreted as 'Is the questionnaire repeatable over time? Are the items appropriate and is it the minimum necessary length?' All the tools which will be offered through the publishers listed by the BPS will probably be technically valid and reliable for use with a general population, but you should check that you are satisfied with this before use. In addition, no decision should be

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made based solely upon that information. The questionnaire should produce a text-based report which can be understood by the client and used in conversation with the coach. The most effective way to evaluate this in the coaching context is to identify the value which the client derives from their use. For more discussion see Kline (2000a, 2000b).

The client relationship and psychometrics

Psychometrics are only a tool to clarify, simplify and sometimes short-cut the coaching relationship as well as increase its effectiveness. In order for this to happen the coach must be able to review the results of the psychometric assessment and to move the client onto the stage of asking, 'so what do I do with this information?' In order to do that it's useful to have a plan. For example, once the text of the report has been reviewed with the client it might be appropriate to say, 'let's draw up a list of the strengths and weaknesses or the priorities that you displayed in your responses, which we might want to take into account when looking at future actions?'. The piece of paper is divided into two columns, one for 'Priorities' and one for 'Unimportant', and the client then lists the things arising from the assessment report and discussion under those two headings. These items then go into the 'Action' pot for consideration.

The use of psychometrics can provide the client with their own private 'consultant' in the form of the report. This can be reviewed by the coach and the client critically and the client may choose to ignore some bits and discuss further or act upon others. In this way psychometrics can help the client to turn 'walls into windows' in order to enhance their understanding of themselves and their motivations. It often reduces the power relationship (or status distance) between the

coach and the client and evens things up in a beneficial way, so that the two people are working together to clarify and develop areas of benefit for the client. Using competency reports can also help to clarify career, non-work activity and lifestyle direction.

While the use of psychometrics in the coaching relationship will not suit the style of every coach, or be appropriate for every client, it is unwise to pigeon-hole psychometric tools on the basis of a passing acquaintance, coupled with conventional assumptions. The latest generation of online tools, which provide highly personal and non-prescriptive reports, are designed to offer significant benefits to the coaching relationship.

A longer version of this article is available at: www.selbymills.co.uk/Direct/articles.htm

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Coaching your prospects: Selling professional services – Ann Sherrington



If you are one of the many coaches who have problems selling their services, then this article is for you.

I have worked for many years with people who describe how uncomfortable they feel with selling their services. They sometimes tell me they can't do it, don't like doing it or wish someone else could do it for them. Any of that sound familiar?

As coaches we all know how focusing on self-belief and visualizing success can help achieve our goals. If we don't think we have the skills, how does this affect our view of the outcome when we go into a selling situation? And in turn what effect does this have on our confidence, competence and ability to enjoy succeeding in the selling part of our jobs?

How would things change for you if you really felt you had the selling skills, that you knew how to apply them effectively and could feel confident in your ability to enjoy using, adapting and succeeding with them?

Guess what. I think you probably do, and I'm going to explain why.

The art of selling

There are lots of different selling models that you probably already know and are no doubt using – either consciously or unconsciously. What does fabulous selling look like?

Let's look at the basic Steps in a generic selling model useful selling professional services (this one's from www.businessballs.com/salestraining.htm)

1. Planning and/or preparation
2. Introduction or opening
3. Questioning
4. Presentation
5. Overcoming objections
6. Close
7. After-sales follow up.

If we consider the skills being used at each step we can see straight away that a number of these are skills that coaches already have and use effectively in their work.

Consider which of these you already have in abundance as you use them successfully all the time already in your coaching? What do you notice? Do you agree with me or are there some places where we differ?

I've noticed that whatever coaching model you take and whatever sales model, so many of the skills are the same. When you look closer you find that there's not only a general similarity, but that the *key skills* are exactly the same.

In fact, research has shown time and time again that the hallmark of successful sales conversations is that they focus time and effort on Steps Three and Five (identifying needs and overcoming objections). Unsuccessful sales conversations pass through these steps more quickly or even miss them out altogether. The successful conversations also take place with a very high level of rapport.

So: identifying needs, overcoming objections and great rapport. Interestingly all things that

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Steps	Skills	As a coach, which of these skills do you use?
1. Planning and/or preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization • Time management 	Yes Yes
2. Introduction or opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating rapport • Agreeing the agenda 	Yes Yes
3. Identifying needs	Focusing on and identifying the needs by asking great questions.	Yes
4. Presenting the solution	Proposing a solution based on the seller's expert knowledge and understanding of the prospect's needs.	Not in coaching – yes in mentoring
5. Overcoming objections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking questions to raise awareness. • Uncover/identify obstacles. • Challenging limiting beliefs and/or assumptions. 	Yes Yes Yes
6. Close	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess level of commitment. • Gain commitment. 	Yes Yes
7. After-sales follow up.		Yes

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coaches are so well equipped to do so successfully!

When I first did this exercise in a workshop with a group of coaches where we explored the parallels between coaching and selling, I was struck by the fact that so many of the skills are the same. On reflection this shouldn't have been surprising. After all, coaching and selling both involve a conversation that, among other things, enables a person to understand and express their own needs, to weigh up possible solutions, to consider implications and work through any obstacles before committing to a decision that they feel is the right one for them at that time. Both require a good level of rapport to be in place and I believe, a focus by the coach and the seller on finishing up with a solution that is the right one for that coachee and prospective buyer.

Let me make it clear again: *you're already doing it and you're already really good at it!*

Sometimes there may be a difference between the selling and coaching processes in Step Four where the 'seller' needs to suggest and present a solution. As coaches we may prefer to let the coachee develop his or her own solution. However even this 'difference' is not so different for many coaches who act as adviser/mentor at times as well. In selling professional services we are usually in a position of being asked our advice based on the experience and knowledge we have. We may not be an expert in the client's problem but we are experts in coaching and in how coaching can be applied to solve the problem they believe we can solve. In asking us for a proposal they want us to explain how we will do this and to set out the practical arrangements such as

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price, schedules, numbers, locations etc. The prospective buyer is often relying on us to understand their needs accurately and then to apply our expertise and practical experience to proposing the 'best' solution or approach based on that particular set of needs.

If you like, one way to make it easier for many coaches (who are used to being non-directive) to move into 'problem solving' mode is to reframe selling expert advice as 'problem solving with a price tag attached' rather than thinking of it as selling. The coach's role is to use their own expertise to ask great questions in order to fully understand the prospective buyer's unique needs. Then, just like an architect or interior designer, to apply their own expertise and experience again to come up with the best solution which quite reasonably comes with a price tag.

Research has shown time and time again that the hallmark of successful sales conversations is that they focus time and effort on identifying needs, overcoming objections and building rapport. All things that coaches are so well equipped to do so successfully!

At this stage I'd really like to hear and understand your objections, but an article doesn't allow me to do that. **So just get out there, notice the skills you already have, enjoy using them and keep building on them too!**

Putting it into practice

OK – I don't know what will help you most to take that next step but here are some of the things other professionals selling business services have told me they found useful:

- Consider using the steps in the selling model as a checklist when you have sales conversations – ensuring you spend time at

each step. The most common pitfall is to miss out or spend insufficient time on Steps Three and Five (identify needs and uncover/handle objections and reservations).

- Prepare generic questions/statements beforehand. For *Step Three* you might ask the following: What do you want the coaching to change? Who will be doing what differently when it is finished? Which of those is the most important to you? And how will you measure success? For *Step Five* you might ask questions like these: Does that seem clear/make sense? Do you have any questions? Are there any aspects you'd

like me to clarify or go over? Does that fit with what you wanted? Does that meet your needs?

Give yourself permission to be directive in this instance so you can enjoy proposing solutions. See and feel yourself as an invaluable expert problem solver in this instance, like an architect or a

designer whose advice someone has sought.

I know that just talking about it doesn't change anything – you really do need to get out and do it. What I do know is that I work every day with people who think they can't and then find that they can. Why not join them?

Ann is an experienced sales professional, qualified business coach, executive coach and certified NLP practitioner. She specialises in enabling individuals and their organisations to sell. You can contact Ann on 01453 731909, 07747 873886 or via her web site www.annsherrington.co.uk.

Title: The Coach's Coach: Personal development for personal developers
Author Alison Hardingham
Publisher CIPD
Published 2004
Price £26.99
ISBN 84398 075 4

With the growth of quick-fix coach training Hardingham and her co-authors offer timely reminders of the need for professionalism in coaching practice. Written in conversational style, the reader is drawn into a dialogue about the values, theories and skills required to be a good coach, being offered examples from the worlds of business, psychoanalysis and sport. The structure of the book reflects the authors' priorities. Parts One, Two and Three consider, respectively, the coachee, the coach, and the coaching relationship. Part Four outlines some tools and techniques. Part Five explores the contexts in which coaching can be practised. Unlike some texts in this field, it is well referenced and an excellent resource for coaches, whether they are involved in personal, life, business, or sports coaching. It will also help prospective coaching clients.

The book lives through the experiences of the authors: Mike Brearley, once sports coach, now psychoanalyst; Adrian Moorhouse, olympic record holder and now MD of a performance consultancy, and Brendan Venter, once player and coach, now G.P., give powerful examples from the world of sports coaching. Alison Hardingham, business psychologist and the lead author, provides many illustrations from individual and organisational coaching.

By beginning with the coachee, Hardingham establishes her central tenet: the needs of the coachee must be central to coaching. She reminds us that coachees are far from being open books. Their world is 'up and running' and they will always be ambivalent about entering the coaching relationship. The mes-

sage is to be respectful, ask permission to explore difficult areas, and to 'kindle hope'.

A coach, by being aware of their beliefs and values and by being self aware, can help people articulate and achieve their goals and 'be the best they can be'. Coaches must be committed to the coachee, believe in change, be optimistic, motivated and have curiosity. Despite the fact that skills can be learned, they are 'not independent of values, beliefs and motives'. We cannot be good listeners if we are not interested in what someone is saying, or if our prime concern is the fee we will receive. We cannot ask good questions if we are fundamentally not curious about the reply. Reframing and confronting will not be effective if we do not respect the coachee.

A short chapter on 'habits' (such as storytelling, the use of metaphor and humour, wondering, ordering and consequences) presents ways of behaving that, if used within the context of the relationship, may be helpful to the coach and to the coachee. Here Hardingham, with reference to her practice, wisdom and experience, is particularly refreshing.

Part Two concludes with discussion about the actions a coach can take to make a difference in the coaching relationship. How do we build reliability, credibility, intimacy? And, more to the point, do we know what the coachee wants?

Part Three offers understandings about the dynamics of helping relationships. Referring to Schutz (1994), Hardingham outlines what goes on when two people try to form a relationship. The coach needs to observe what the client needs and make decisions on how to use this information. A coach also will need to be flexible and, as the relationship and work progresses, change roles. Danger

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points or threats to the coaching relationship are the focus for the final chapter in this section. The authors consider three human pre-occupations, namely, am I competent? am I a good person? am I worthy of love? We are encouraged to consider the coaching relationship in the light of these questions.

The intention of the authors is that the tools and techniques outlined in Part Four, should be understood and used in the context of the earlier chapters. Within the coaching relationship, techniques can be a source of creativity, clarity and, ultimately a catalyst for change. Over-reliance on them detracts from the coachee who must be the central focus. For coaches who have a therapeutic background, there is an interesting discussion on the nature of 'telling the story'. Therapists use the story, and how it is told, to help healing, coaches use the story as a source of information.

Part 5 considers the context of coaching, and the roles of the player-coach, and coach-manager are explored. Team coaching and corridor coaching are considered as legitimate methods of introducing coaching to the work place. The structure of these final chapters is helpful as each of the authors consider where coaching can happen, the key challenges and how to meet them, key opportunities, examples, and practical tips.

One of the strengths of this book is that it will appeal to both coaches and coached. Since reading it on my initial training course, I have consistently returned for guidance, reassurance, ideas, and information.

If I were to change anything in the book, I would prefer not to be asked to learn the techniques and then to 'forget' them. I understand why this suggestion is made but consider a novice may well need rely on a few prompts to carry them forward. I was also

puzzled why TGROW or the GROW model (Whitmore, 2004) were omitted.

This is a supportive and challenging book, packed with nourishment. Simply put, being a good coach means we want to help others and this carries responsibilities. Training courses which concentrate on skills development, spending little or no time considering the coachee's needs, the values and beliefs of the coach and the delicate dance of the coaching relationship, do a disservice to the profession. Hardingham and her co-authors remind us that there are techniques galore, but there is fundamentally an art to coaching. To practice this art demands theoretical knowledge, practice wisdom, self awareness, reflection, humility about the human condition, and, most importantly, a belief that people can change.

Gill Dickers

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Title: Experiential Learning: A Best Practice Handbook for Educators and Trainers
Author Colin Beard and John P. Wilson
Publisher Kogan Page
Published 2006
Price £24.95 (pbk)
ISBN 0749444894

Experiential Learning: A Best Practice Handbook for Educators and Trainers, by Colin Beard and John P. Wilson, critically underscores the

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importance of “learning by doing.” The 2006 second edition updates the first edition and introduces a new diagnostic tool: *The Learning Combination Lock*. Beard and Wilson argue that the depth of learning occurs best when accompanied by action. In the Introduction they write, “a much more effective and long-lasting form of learning is to involve the learner by creating a meaningful learning experience” (p1). They define experiential learning as “the sense-making process of active engagement between the inner world of the person and the outer world of the environment” (p2).

As a counsellor, my first introduction to experiential learning was through psychotherapist and humanist, Carl Rogers. Rogers, in his theory of learning, posited that the learner must initiate and be personally committed to the learning experience. It was in the experience that the learner made decisions to change behavior, actions or thoughts. Similarly, Beard and Wilson write that “active engagement is one of the basic tenets of experiential learning: experiential learning undoubtedly involves the ‘whole person’, through thoughts, feelings and physical activity. The recognition of this ‘whole environment’, both internally and externally is important. Experiential learning can take on many appearances in life, such as recreational or leisure activities, exhilarating journeys or adventures, experimentation, or play. It can also be in the form of painful events” (p2). It would seem most appropriate to say that exceptional coaching and/or therapy must have an orientation of experiential learning in the delivery model.

Beard and Wilson have created a handbook that posits both the theory and practice of experiential learning. They have included in this updated edition diverse case material, sig-

nificant resources, additional disciplines and fields of study that embed experiential learning in theory and practice. The book is comprehensive, providing educators and trainers tools in which they can assist learners in understanding the connections between experience and the ability to adapt or change behavior. The balance that Beard and Wilson strike is important: they have written a book that enables both practitioners and lay people alike to examine the ability to learn from experience.

The book is divided into 12 chapters, including an extensive reference section and list of further readings and a helpful index. The book is designed to be read according to interest. It is one of the most comprehensive works on learning and change, learning activities and learning environments.

The Learning Combination Lock is both conceptual framework and diagnostic tool. I found the authors’ initial representation is somewhat difficult to read and conceptually disjointed, using a number of different metaphors (waves, circles, combination lock), though this becomes much clearer in Chapter Two. They explain that, “the learning combination lock in its elementary sense is based on the notion that the person interacts with the external environment through the senses. It is presented as a visual metaphor of six tumblers that represent the complexity of the many possible experiential choices” (p5). The six tumblers cover: the learning environment (where); learning activities (what); the senses (how); the emotions (hearts); intelligence (minds); learning and change.

Chapter 2 goes on to present a very thorough discussion of learning theories. Interestingly, although Wilson is critical of Kolb’s learning style theory they readily acknowledge that despite its limitations it “remains the

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strongest and most enduring of the learning theories" (p44).

In a total of 314 pages the authors provide impressive content on facilitation, good practice and ethics; learning environments and the pedagogy of space; experiential learning activities; the use of the senses; emotions and learning; multiple intelligences and experiential learning; learning theories (Chapter 11 is a must for all leadership coaches, educators and trainers); and finally, "the importance of using the concept of experiential learning as a means of drawing together theory and practice. It is probably the single unifying feature that integrates the neurological processes of the brain with the various theories and strategies for encouraging learning. It involves

action learning and reflective practice; it involves the emotional aspects of learning and incorporates the various environmental factors that add to the learning experience" (p285).

Beard and Wilson have here provided trainers, educators, leadership coaches with an extraordinary resource. The 'best practices handbook' has achieved their goal for presenting clear and thorough research on both theory and practice. The authors continually remind the reader about the importance of action and reflection in the learning experience. No lesson could be more important given the fragility of our current social and political climate.

ML Petty

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