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- Assignment title: Foundations for effective coaching practice
- Submission date: 12th Nov 2018

Introduction:

This paper has been divided into three parts. The first part deals with describing and analyzing two principles of coaching which are indirectness and the belief about strengths in positive psychology coaching. The second part is mainly about the journey of the writer as a newcomer to the world of the coaching so far, his transformation from a therapeutic approach to coaching methodology, his strengths and weaknesses in this switching and the struggles that he encountered in choosing executive or life coaching as a main direction, finally, there is a section about the actual road-map of his career as a coach for next two years

Describe and analyse two principles that will underpin your coaching practice within a specific application, for example, life coaching or executive coaching;

Coaching practices are based on many principles and coaching itself has many definitions, however, what is clear is that coaching has been used in many settings to achieve and raise self-awareness and encourage a client to take more responsibility for their action. The quote below which the definition of coaching given by Whitmore clearly shows that the person needs to maximise their own performance through learning rather than being taught:

"Coaching is unlocking a person's potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them learn rather than teaching them" (Whitmore, 2002)

One such principle is that the coach can take a non-directive approach to conversations and questioning style. A non-directive coaching style in personal coaching asks questions to raise self-awareness then listens to understand and uses reflection this will ultimately help the person find their own solutions rather than pushing them towards a solution (Thomson, 2009). The advantages of this style of coaching are that coachee will feel like they are being listened to and that the coach is actively listening to them. The coach does not claim to have all the answers or need to be the expert in the topic or issue being explored; this may give a sense of equality which can help build trust and openness between the coach and coachee.

Taking responsibility for an action which came about as a result of the coachee's own insights and ideas, this also means the solution may be much more of relevant and effective (Starr, 2016). There are disadvantages to using non-direct method in certain situations as pointed out by Starr (2016) that adopting this style demands higher levels of skills on the part of the coach, Thomson(2009) refers to developing as a coach and over time choosing how directive or non-directive you need to be in your coaching style as the questioning style and statements are there to influence the coachee rather than control the direction of conversation or resolution.

In this style of coaching, the coach whilst being no-directive has to keep the discussion focused on a productive resolution, however, to be careful not to stifle the coachee's exploration of their inner thoughts and views. Depending on the relationship between the coach and coachee, the coachee

may become frustrated with the lack of the direction from the coach towards specific topics or answers they expect to get, and it will take longer to reach a goal as the coach will go by how comfortable the coachee feels to talk openly. Finally, the coach will lack control over the process as it is non-directed and this will mean less control and less secure about where the conversations may be heading.

This method is seen to be as one of the most deeply rooted principles of person-centred learning; this is because the person-centred view assumes that the person is best placed to solve their issues and they have the answers. It is assumed that the coachee is best placed to solve their own problems and the coach is merely there to ask the right questions and empower the coachee to take their own action. In challenging coaching, however, to expect the coach who is an expert in coaching to be completely non-directive in a situation where the outcomes were pre-determined by the coachee and organization is almost impossible and nonsensical (Blakey and Day, 2012). Often the coachee may have ideas but be afraid to voice them or not trust themselves to think deeply therefore enough in this instance the coach will need to provide some direction to allow a breakthrough which may ultimately help the coachee's chain of thought flow and give positive encouragement to continue with the process.

To an organization with an outcome in mind ultimately, it matters whether the approach was directive or non-directive. Downy (2003) suggests that it is impossible to be completely non-directive and when a client becomes stuck then the best thing the coach can do is provide assistance at the directive end.

In conclusion, it is impossible and impractical to adopt a wholly non-directional method in personal or challenging coaching, and a mixture will need to be taken depending on the client, duration of the relationship and the skill and experience of the coach.

The second principle refers to the strength-based coaching; This method suggests that to develop a person further, we need to build on existing strengths rather than concentrating on improving the weaknesses. This approach was used mainly in executive settings, but it is now widely used in all aspects of coaching including personal coaching (Driver, 2001).

There are key figures in strength-based coaching. Martin Seligman was the pioneer behind developing a universally usable method to analyse strength which is based on values which would be deemed to be held important by most world cultures. This became very important as a tool to use by coaches worldwide. The questionnaire is called Values In Action (VIA) and Alex Linley and the Centre for Applied Positive Psychology have come up with their own inventory and questionnaires. Strength is capacities people have powers in, and when practised it energizes them. Equally, we are seen to have an inbuilt negativity bias, and this can be changed by a coach using the coachees positive emotions and resourcefulness to overturn this bias. There is significant research which shows that coaching focused on strength will have better outcomes than an approach focusing on weakness. A coach also is seen to work better with a client beginning from a positive strength-based mindset than start with the negative weaknesses (Driver, 2011).

In conclusion, due to the research was done mainly by Seligman and Linley, there is enough and significant amounts of evidence to suggest coaches need to concentrate on the natural strengths

clients have rather than the weakness and help manage the weaknesses, so they do not become major fatal flaws (Driver, 2001). The coaches job is to make the clients aware of the negative behavior and stop the pattern of behaviour but also have a realistic reaction to certain situations by staying in a positive mindset (Driver, 2011).

provide a reflective and analytical personal coaching development commentary including a critical review of your personal strengths and weaknesses;

In this section, I point out to my coaching journey from zero to my current state. It covers the big challenges that I encountered meanwhile in three parts:

- From therapy to coaching
- Leadership and executive coaching or life coaching
- My strengths and weaknesses

From therapy to coaching

My coaching journey presumably started at the beginning of 2018 at Tavistock Institute where I participated in a leadership coaching course and learned about some models and disciplines of coaching but did not actually plan to pursue coaching as a career. I was confused when I joined the Cambridge undergraduate coaching program, but I realized what coaching is and how seriously academic it is during my time in Cambridge. I learned how coaching differs from mentoring and particularly from counselling and therapy. That was my first shock when finding out how much coaching can help clients to change their mindsets and behaviours without necessarily deep digging into their childhood and without using psychoanalytical techniques that I had to employ.

At first, I learned some differences between the two disciplines (Bernham, Fielding and Stevence, 2018) mainly:

- Coaching focuses on present and future while therapy concentrates on past mostly.
- Coaching is more an active process while therapy and counselling are reflective and passive. In other words, coaching is about achieving goals while therapy is more about developing insight (Grodzki, 2018).
- Regarding time and place, coaching does not necessarily need to be held in a formal office with a fixed schedule and could be done more informally, even in the client's office or a restaurant and in a shorter period of time while therapy sessions are more official and rigid with long-term involvement (maybe years).

I have fifteen years' experience in the therapeutic field; and so, it seems hard for me to complete switching from the therapeutic role to a coaching role. I also found coaching very impressive, precisely because it deals with healthy people who seek development in their life. Returning from the last unit in Cambridge, I found a recently published book, "therapy with a coaching edge" (Grodzki, 2018) which surprisingly raises questions about the black & white approach to the therapy and coaching differences. It seems that there is some grey area's which need more concern. There are two points that make me think more clearly about the

question who I want to become finally; first, I found out that there are many psychotherapists and counsellors who have shifted their job to life coaches.

Secondly, there are powerful psychologic resources specified for coaching, and most of the therapeutic models have coaching models too! I have separate books about cognitive-behavioural therapy and coaching, gestalt therapy and gestalt coaching, existential counselling and existential coaching and so on; at the beginning, I had assumed that most of these books are similar which was not wrong, but there is a significant point that distinguishes between them, Style (Grodski, 2018). She explains that with four categories we can find out the main differences between a coach and a therapist;

1. Who (therapist are more licensed professionals than coaches)
2. Where (therapy sessions take place in clinics and offices where coaching sessions are more informal)
3. What (indicates that therapy deals mostly with destructive patterns and bringing people from negative toward zero and coaching help them to go toward positive goals and achievements)
4. How Style is the landmark of the differences. In coaching, we emphasize on partnership (non-hierarchical position and more interactive, more collaborative), Action (goal-oriented) and Possibility (more optimistic, future-oriented, less pathologizing of the problems) (Grodzki, 2018, pp.21-22)

So, as one of my tutors advised me on the final day of the first unit at the Cambridge course, end of the day, I am the one who will decide to be a therapist or a coach for my client. I feel I can be a coach who uses psychologic theories with coaching style and boundaries or a therapist who employs coaching approach if it helps in addition to the therapeutic approach. This is the way that I can keep my experience alongside my new role as a coach by being aware of the distinctions and differences and making sure I do not overlap them in practice.

➤ Executive coaching or life coaching

I started my journey with a very distinct vision to be a leadership and an executive coach. So, most of my focus was on how to get contracts with organizations, how to build my brand in the new market. After getting involved in learning positive psychology coaching and strength based coaching, I was impressed with my own capabilities, which in turn made me re-think about life coaching. The reason is most of my clients ask me about life coaching, but for the executive coaching clients, I have to start as a fresh coach! I was wondering which of them is more appropriate when one of my tutors helped me out. She suggested to start with both of them for a while, and after gaining some experiences, I would be able to decide more realistically.

➤ My strengths and weaknesses

During the third unit of my study at the Cambridge coaching program, I learnt about positive psychology and strengths-based coaching which emphasizes on the “underlying qualities that energize us, and we are great at or have the potential to become great at” (Brook and Brewerton,

2018). My interest in this area developed while my tutors introduced some tools to enrich the coaching sessions and amongst all of them, I picked Strengthscope as the tool to explore further. This ultimately led me to participate in the workshop to be accredited.

In summary, Strengthscope is a BPS approved questionnaire with 175 scored items which are rated on 5-point Likert-scale. Each item contributes to one of the 24 strengths which are organized according to four clusters (Ptc.bps.org.uk, 2018). The four clusters are Emotional, Relational, Execution and thinking. My strengths profile shows that my significant seven strengths of twenty-four are:

Creativity, critical thinking, Developing others, Enthusiasm, Optimism, Self-confidence and Strategic mindedness

Regarding coaching competencies and principles, some of these seven could contribute to being more effective in the coaching. For instance, it states that one of the points that energize me is quickly recognizing other's strengths and potential and help them optimize these. By creativity as one of my main strengths, I am energized to encourage others to explore new and creative perspectives when problem-solving. I need to be aware of that there is a potential risk to be overdriven in all of this strength (Brook and Brewerton, 2018).

The strengthscope® profile does not indicate just the strengths; it also shows the area in the personality that an individual may be less energized. In my profile, there is a remarkably low score in the Execution cluster which includes self-improvement, result-focus, initiative, flexibility, efficiency and decisiveness. To reduce the risk of having low-scores in the execution cluster, it is recommended to develop new habits and drawing on others' strengths (Strengthscope® workbook, 2017)

The strengthscope® is designed primarily for work talents (Brook and Brewerton, 2018). Because of the dominant nature of the questions about work and team working and working style, it may be not very helpful for personal growth and particularly life coaching.

I still need to be aware of my directedness approach to some clients which I mentioned in my coaching log. To correct this, I use more indirect questioning which takes more time to establish in my coaching style (Starr, 2016, pp.18-20)

➤ Key learning moments

There have been many learning moments and opportunities during this journey so far, some have happened during the seminars, lectures and activities, some, during our co-coaching activities. To pinpoint them out,

- There was an outdoor activity in the first unit that where we were required to go to the garden to try Golf. That was my first time in my life I held a golf club, and our tutor helped me to find my own way to do it after several unsuccessful attempts. That was a very stressful experience, but my coach passionately and indirectly enabled me to overcome my limitations and to mute the constant negative sound in my head.

- Using cards, specifically the traffic signs as a metaphor to increase the client`s self-awareness resonated with me a lot.
- At the beginning of the course, I wrongly assumed that a co-coaching activity is just time-consuming, but I gradually found out that those activities the reflections and feedback sessions gave me the real essence of being a coach, being aware of my own weaknesses and blind spots, helped me to assess how good I was as a coach in giving and receiving feedback. Regarding the Jo-Hari window, every person has four planes: The open arena, blind spot, the façade and unknown (Bates, 2015). I find co-coaching activities a powerful tool in terms of being aware of my judgmental and directive coaching. I practised a lot to be more indirective and less judgmental by admitting new clients for life coaching.
- I had a session with a client about his midlife crisis and his confusion about reframing the life meaning and when he talked about “his husband”, I suddenly realized that he was a gay man/client which I had not encountered previously. Based on the Gibbs Reflective Cycle (cited in Mulder, 2018) I explained all six steps:
 - 1- Description: He mentioned his excellent relationship with his husband,
 - 2- Feeling: I was surprised as to how I was not aware of his sexual orientation during the period we knew each other before the coaching session, but nothing really changed in my facial expression, voice tone or my body language.
 - 3- Evaluation: I controlled my mind not to deviate from the goal of the session, and I kept referring back to the GROW model which consists of goal, reality, option and action plan (Whitmore, 2017)
 - 4- Analysis: I learned about the importance of cultural differences and how to be more aware of the diversity
 - 5- Conclusion: during the session, I gave him advice regarding the midlife crisis which was far away from the coaching approach; I have to try to be not-judgmental
 - 6- Action plan: I need to work with more a diverse clientele so as to learn to deal better with clients from a very different culture, backgrounds and lifestyles.

create a plan for your personal and professional development as a coach.

- 1- The format that I want to explore further is the strength-based coaching. I have to study a lot about coaching psychology and different theories to find out how exactly a therapeutic approach contributes to the coaching environment. The reason is that I want to be able to write an academic paper about the contribution of Jungian psychology in life coaching and executive coaching which is lacking from my experience after reviewing the literature and the coaching psychology books. In order to build this project correctly, I recently finished my post-graduation study in “management and organizational dynamics with Jungian approach” at the University of Essex which allowed me to study a lot of material about Jungian and organizational discipline and it also gave me a particular opportunity to get approval about this subject by Professor Andrew Samuel as an internationally- known Jungian analyst, speaker, author and psychotherapist. In addition to a Jungian supervisor, I need an academic supervisor to support me in coaching

environment to build a robust theory (I have spoken with my tutor, Sally Bernham in unit 2 and I hope she agrees to help me through this project.)

- 2- I moved to the UK in Sep 2017, in order to work in this country as a coach, besides qualifications and being skilful; I need to improve my English language and culture to be confident to work with English people and organizations. Meanwhile, I can serve the 400,000 Iranian community of the UK.
- 3- As aforementioned in the second part of this paper, I have not decided yet as to whether to practice as a life coach or an executive coach, I have less than 20 hours' life coaching, and the feedbacks are strongly satisfying so far and I also have many more potential clients in life coaching, regarding the executive coaching I need more skills to be developed like contracting, pre-session and post-session assessment tools to show my progression to the organization,
- 4- To develop my coaching practice, I am going to participate in a 4 sessions webinar program by the association of coaching, "coaching in three dimensions" by Paul Lawrence
- 5- I will also continue the Strengthscope® team and leaders workshop to learn about the more profound and broader usage of the tool (Feb 2019).
- 6- I think that getting supervision from my tutors will be the most effective way to develop my skills, so, I am going to negotiate with my tutor to find out when and how this process can be continued.
- 7- I, unfortunately, missed the Diploma for coaching program in 2018; I hope to be accepted for 2019 because its enriched psychological content is really tempting for me as I am keen to learn more.
- 8- For 2020, I will hopefully establish a centre for coaching training program in Iran because unfortunately there is no distinct academic centre in the country to take responsibility for this important program yet.

Conclusion

There are some coaching principles and beliefs that are underlying in any coaching mindset that should be followed. Becoming a successful coach is more difficult than what is shown at the beginning, it needs constant self-development and study and a distinct way to be supervised with more expert fellows to keep going. In order to reach this goal, any coach has to be aware of his strengths and weaknesses to improve himself.

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