i·coachacademy

coaching**matters**

Dear Friends

I'd like to welcome you to a special edition of Coaching Matters.

As you know, one of the most important elements of our approach to coach development is the passionate belief that developing professional coaching practice is far more than simple learning the conceptual views and models of others. True professional development comes from creating your own approach through rigorous application, experimentation and critical reflection on both yourself and your approach as well as testing this against established bodies of knowledge and practice.

That is why at i-coach academy, we put great emphasis on experiential learning. Theory is just the start. That is no more evident than in the work of i-coach academy Mastery students, who all undertake a rigorous research project as part of their qualification pathway to receive an MA in Professional Coaching with the Institute of Work Based Learning at Middlesex University, UK. This is their opportunity not only to apply their learning to a major study, but also their chance to enhance their own professional coaching practice and ultimately influence the wider profession so we all can learn and benefit from their learning.

This newsletter looks at the work of 10 graduates (nine studies), and proves to be a fascinating read. From the power of reflection and creativity, to coaching's impact on transitions in employment, how clients can sustain change, and the importance of emotions in coaching, the studies give real insight into some of the biggest issues in coaching today.

Whatever your specialist area of interest, there is something here that will give you new insight, and hopefully inspire you to enhance your coaching practice.

As ever we are always keen to hear your news, and your contributions are welcome.

Wishing you well,

Caroline

In this issue

An Investigation of the Impact of Coaching on Women Returning to Work

Lara-Jane Hamer-Peet   Research: New Zealand

This research project investigates the impact of coaching on women from disadvantaged backgrounds who have recently returned to work.

Are one-to-one coaching sessions and workshops an effective way of helping participants build assertiveness, self-confidence and self-efficacy specific to their latest employment position? What specific coaching skills are most valuable when supporting women from disadvantaged backgrounds? Can coachees develop a practical understanding of coaching so they are ultimately able to coach each other and create a sustainable group support mechanism?

My findings revealed that the benefits of coaching women at this particular point in their working life depended on their understanding of the differences between a directive and non-directive approach, their willingness to look inside themselves for answers, and require a trusting connection with the coach within a supportive environment. With all these elements in place, coaching can be very empowering for women returning to work.

AIMS

The project's overall aim was to discover if learning and practising basic coaching and mentoring skills – to support oneself and others as part of a development peer group – could be integrated into DfS Northland.

DfS Northland is a non-profit organisation that supports women making the transition from unemployment to work. DfS clients who have successfully gained employment are eligible to join a support group (PWG) and I wanted to investigate the impact of coaching and exposing them to the tools of open questioning, effective listening and reflection.

I wanted to find out:

- What are the key issues that come up for the clients?

- What is the impact of coaching on the client in resolving their issues?

- How would the clients describe coaching having experienced it?

- To what extent, if any, does experience of coaching develop an individual's ability to peer coach another member in PWG?

METHODOLOGY

I initially designed and facilitated a coaching workshop for PWG members, specifically to introduce coaching concepts, a coaching model and facilitate coaching skills practice.

I then interviewed five members of the support group after they each received two to three coaching meetings lasting between sixty and ninety minutes. This resulted in a qualitative case study approach from a subjectivist standpoint.

The interviews were semi-structured, based around questions including:

- How did the coaching help you to achieve your goal?

- What do you think the impact has been for you, your team, your work/organisation?

- How do you feel as a result of the coaching?

- What, if anything, have you learnt about yourself as a result of the coaching?

- How might you be able to support your peers in the PWG now you have had some experience of coaching?

- In an ideal world would you like to see coaching support provided in the future for women in PWG? If so why and how?

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The interviews revealed that a trusting relationship and a non-directive and flexible approach were key ingredients for coaching in this context. The interviewees brought a number of goals to the sessions – from developing their career and increasing assertiveness, to enhancing self-confidence and self-efficacy – and said the coaching helped them gain clarity on these challenges. Clients felt they would benefit from future one-to-one coaching support, and wanted to develop their own skills to support each other.

Coaching versus directive mentoring

A key factor on the efficacy of coaching was the client's understanding of the process before taking part in the study. Many related it more closely to directive mentoring, so a vital part of the sessions was introducing them to a non-directive approach. Those comfortable with 'finding the answers within themselves' were seen to benefit them most, as compared to those who were instead seeking 'specific ideas and strategies'.

Those who were most open to non-directive support described feeling 'empowered' and encouraged to 'think deeply for solutions', and it appeared that the use of basic interpersonal skills such as listening, reflecting and challenging were fundamental to the sustainability of the coaching outcome.

Coaching can be very empowering for women returning to work

Women in leadership

Interestingly, there was a clear correlation between the goals of the interviewees and the aims of women in leadership positions. This supported my own belief that the challenges women in the workplace face are similar regardless of position, and that the difference is the context and environment they work in and the tools that they have to tackle their challenges. For this reason, coaching research and publications related to women leaders will be applicable to disadvantaged women, and I believe this should be noted when designing coaching and mentoring initiatives for all groups of women.

Specific recommendations for DfS Northland

I believe one-to-one coaching should be included in an integrated coaching and mentoring programme, because it allows the individual a space to self-reflect, become more self-aware and have greater self-efficacy towards achievement of one's goals.

It is recommended that peer coaching workshops are included in the programme as a regular form of experiential learning. This is because my research highlights that a workshop can quickly develop the individual's understanding of coaching, mentoring, and peer support. This will ultimately develop group members' ability to coach each other, creating a sustainable group support mechanism.

These recommendations could also have a wider impact if seen in the context of government funding. Funding that is available to similar organisations will also benefit from incorporating coaching workshops together with one-to-one coaching. This learning experience will support people returning to the working environment, which will ultimately positively impact society as a whole.

Conducting successful Organisational Coaching:
What will transform a series of individual coaching interventions into a successful organisational change process?

A research project by Anne Fuller-Good and Richard Teagle.   🇿🇦 Research: South Africa

This research investigates one of the most pressing coaching debates in the current economic climate regarding the value of Organisational Coaching (OC). As many senior executives regularly ask: Can coaching lead to a tangible boost in productivity and increase profit?

We wanted to find out what would happen when executive coaching was reframed to become 'Organisational Coaching', when the client was no longer the individual participant coachee but the entire sponsoring organisation. Our Organisational Coaching would differ from other kinds of organisational coaching or executive coaching by aligning multiple interventions and using an Action Research approach. Is genuine transformational change possible? Importantly, what were the inevitable 'contradictions' or barriers to the transformational change of the organisation and how could these be handled?

Following a comprehensive study of one company's coaching journey, the findings revealed that OC can have a significant impact on the performance of an organisation and enable sustainable change.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The project's overall aim was to investigate a hitherto unanswered question: "Is there a link between short-term behavioural changes and the longer-term financial returns of the business? Or to frame it from a company executive's point of view: "Is it worth it?"

This is particularly relevant in this era of recession. Organisations are being forced to tighten budgets and need to feel convinced that all expenditure provides value for money. Can OC be shown to improve capacity?

The objectives therefore were to run an OC programme that significantly increases an organisation's productivity, evaluate its efficacy, identify and manage contradictions to success, then use this learning to develop a model for implementation.

METHODOLOGY

The overall approach was Action Research split into three cycles: a case study analysing the impact of a year-long OC intervention, an investigation of emerging contradictions, and work to embed the transformation and create sustainable change. This report focuses on the first two stages.

The project was conducted at F/ZA[1], a medium-sized arm of an international technical sales organisation, and data was gathered through the achievement of a year-long organisational goal, 10 questionnaires, coaching review interviews, an external semi-structured interview, and participants' reflective essays.

- More than 135 participants contributed to the eight questionnaires distributed at the start and end of the research project

- 11 managers were selected to participate in the internal and external coaching component of this study

- 12 managers participated in a Fundamentals of Coaching training workshop

- 25 managers participated in team coaching

To find out if the coaching had led to transformational change, we measured qualitative criteria and the financial performance of F/ZA. The aim was to achieve a 17 per cent growth in sales without increasing costs – a target all acknowledged could be described as a "big hairy audacious goal", to quote authors James Collins and Jerry Porras.

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The headline finding was that the company surpassed the 17 per cent growth target at the end of the year's programme. But that does not tell the whole story.

---

1 We have used a pseudonym to refer to this organisation, as they have not yet agreed that the results of the research be in the public domain. F/ZA denotes the local South African company.

Following the 24 coaching sessions for each participant and the workshop for all managers, concluding questionnaires revealed clear behavioural change on an individual basis. Coupling this with the fact that sales were up and making progress towards the growth target suggested that the coaching had a powerful impact on increasing productivity.

This certainly suggested that the first phase of Organisational Coaching was successful but, as anticipated, gave rise to some 'push back', or resistance, from the organisation, which we termed 'contradictions'. The second phase was designed to address these.

These contradictions could be summarised as:

- conservatism in budget setting: participants hadn't bought into the idea of an audacious goal, despite claiming they had

- character: some staff didn't believe they could make an impact and became difficult to hold to account

- team coaching: this had been allowed to let slide in favour of the more individual development approach, meaning some teams weren't clear about objectives, measurement and leadership

- complacency: with three months to go, most participants felt that poor economic conditions meant the goal was impossible, admitting they had become complacent after earlier success

- peer-to-peer coaching: branch managers admitted they hadn't been coaching their sales people as previously agreed

It became clear that these contradictions had to be addressed if organisational transformation was to be achieved. However, once this was done via a range of coaching interventions, we found that the very act of identifying then resolving these issues was a vital boost towards reaching the

Is there a link between short-term behavioural changes and the longer-term financial returns of the business?

sales target. So much so that in the final month, the pressure to achieve the 17 per cent goal was so powerful that no further coaching was needed and the momentum was enough to surpass the target by the end of the financial year. The organisation achieved sales growth over double the market growth for the period.

The key questions remained: was the goal achieved through coaching, and had it created transformational change?

Comparison of results from pre- and post-coaching questionnaires based around seven indicators of organisational development showed consistent improvement, particularly in 'purpose', 'precision' and 'productivity'. This was particularly relevant because even those who

didn't receive coaching showed improvements. Furthermore, analysis showed a correlation between the improvement in these indicators and the growth in sales across the different geographical regions of the company. This indicated that OC had led to measurable transformational change, and that the extent of change determined the financial gains in each region.

Additionally, both the coaching programmes and the workshops appear to have contributed to the goal, with the vast majority of participants reporting empowerment, changes in attitude, efficacy and focus.

As stated above, the final push toward the target clearly aligned the whole company to participate in transformative change. By tackling the five contradictions, a more focused workforce was nurtured. A focus on objectives – daily rather than quarterly measurements – and keeping the clearly set goal at the forefront of approaches and activities led to motivated performance. Also, because a significant number of people participated in the programme, this appeared to create internal reinforcement that added to the impact of the change. And finally, the pressure of time and the stretch level of the goal inevitably created urgency that encouraged more efficient time management and focused energy.

All this meant that by the final month, very little external input was needed. It was at this point that we felt the coaching programme took on a systems perspective: the change had moved from being an individual, localised development process, to become generative, transformative and apparent at all levels of the organisation. It now had a life far beyond the initial reach of the coaching programme.

To conclude, at F/ZA, Organisational Coaching led to both increased productivity and transformational change, so much so that it was a very different organisation by the end of the year. This is particularly relevant in a time of recession when companies are justifiably expecting quantifiable returns on investment in coaching services.

We discovered that the 'contradiction phase' of the project was the most significant, and that coaching is a good tool to resolve these potential barriers. Unless an Action Research approach is taken to explore the underlying contradictions and the unconscious individual, team and cultural counter-postulates, not enough will transform. It is not enough to just manage emerging resistances to change; each one represents a contradiction that has to be dealt with and transformed.

Finally, a key reflection of the OC programme was a reinforcement of the belief that working with the individual is working with the team/wider organisation. But crucially, this is successful only when each is aligned towards the same organisational goal. We would recommend that any Organisational Coaching programme needs to be scoped to include the transformation of the entire organisation. Individual executive coaching needs to become part of a bigger OC programme because of the greater quantifiable return on investment this will offer the organisational sponsor and the individual client.

We believe that the transformational change offered by the full Organisational Coaching approach elevates this coaching programme to the role of organisational change tool and offers opportunities to achieve the cultural transformation so desired in the broader organisation.

An exploratory case study: Can strengths-based coaching improve communication and interpersonal skills?

Rosemary McArthur   Research: South Africa

This research explores strengths-based coaching and how it can improve communication and interpersonal skills. Can it empower employees to change their working environment, improve wellbeing and ultimately make the company more profitable?

I looked specifically at a division of an organisation that was typified by fraught psychological and emotional issues and high stress levels, and investigated whether strengths-based coaching could resolve serious interpersonal conflict.

The findings revealed that although it was difficult to establish a direct cause and effect relationship between strengths use and improved communication and interpersonal skills, just recognising and identifying strengths improved confidence and wellbeing.

AIMS

The project's overall aim is to develop a model of strengths-based coaching that will help improve communication and interpersonal skills within an organisation. In my experience, many organisations undervalue good communication practices and interpersonal relationships as a means of improving employee satisfaction, wellbeing and productivity. Yet I believe focusing on employees' and managers' strengths can be a very effective way of affecting 'the bottom line'.

METHODOLOGY

I was asked to develop a coaching intervention for an organisation because the directors had become aware of serious interpersonal conflict between the managers and the staff.

I conducted an initial semi-structured interview with all 25 employees that gave me an understanding of the behaviour of individuals, relationships and formation of coalitions (as perceived by the interviewees), some fraught psychological and emotional issues and high stress levels.

The objectives of a coaching intervention were then devised according to the results of these initial interviews. What became clear was the fact that a lack of productive interpersonal skills exacerbated by inadequate communication skills had created poor relationships between the managers and their co-workers.

Three research participants were chosen and had bi-monthly coaching sessions lasting between one and two hours for a period of four months. Each participant filled in a DiSC (dominance, influence, steadiness, conscientiousness) profile assessment to ascertain strengths and weaknesses specific to the work environment, and did a strengths and weaknesses self-assessment during the first coaching session. The coaching sessions then focused on recognition, identification and understanding of strengths and weaknesses.

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of the case studies revealed two main external factors that caused problems within the department. Employees were unhappy with both a lack of feedback and a lack of respect from managers, while a struggle with their own lack of conflict management and assertiveness also compounded the issues.

Lack of feedback

Participant 1 (a young team leader who has been with the company for nearly three years) said she was frustrated because when she asked for help, her managers told her it was coming, but never did anything. A sense of 'not being listened to' increased her level of frustration and feelings of helplessness. She also felt staff were never told what was happening in the company, a feeling echoed by Participant 2 (a mature and experienced manager in her first few months with the company).

To tackle this issue through strengths-based coaching, I suggested that Participant 1 should capitalise on her strengths of taking actions to achieve desired results, being goal-oriented and decisive, and not taking 'no' for an answer. This should give her the confidence she needed to organise a formal meeting with the managers to ask for support. For participant 2, we looked at her strengths of perfectionism, predictability, being a team person and analytic thinking. Could she diplomatically explain to managers that lack of feedback creates stress because she was a perfectionist and needed a stable environment?

Although neither participant succeeded in getting what then needed from management, their strength-based strategies made them feel less stressed and more confident. Participant 1 was more enthusiastic about her ability to be assertive and happier that something would be done about her situation. Reflecting on this gave me a sense of how empowering it can be to be aware of ones strengths and to understand appropriate and most effective use of them in a specific context. What was interesting for me was that although the participant received a similar response to her requests for help as she had done previously she seemed more satisfied with the outcome than before. When I asked her about this she said that just being aware of her strengths made her feel more confident and competent.

Participant 2 also felt that focusing on her strengths was reassuring. However, I felt that low self-esteem could have slowed down her progress, because many of our coaching sessions needed to focus on deep personal issues before she was ready to invest in the strengths-based coaching approach. This highlighted the fact that everyone enters the coaching relationship at a different developmental level and therefore pace themselves according to their personal needs at any given time.

Lack of respect

Participant 1 described a culture of focusing on mistakes along with little or no recognition for good work, while she felt one particular manager was patronising, offensive and humiliating. Participant 2 also described

Awareness of strengths had a positive impact on behaviour, confidence, self-esteem and stress-levels

one manager's approach as humiliating, unnecessary and personally disturbing, and reported that some managers whispered to each other about their staff in a highly unprofessional and disrespectful way. Participant 3 (a young team leader into his fourth year at the company) said he had been on the receiving end of demeaning criticism, but accepted it as a necessary part of his work.

Using strengths-based coaching, Participant 1 was encouraged to focus on her ability to be self-disciplined, diplomatic and courteous, but also direct and completely focused on her goals. Instead of getting angry during a confrontation, she would stay calm, give a respectful opinion and not argue back. Participant 2 didn't feel able to ask the manager to be respectful to her staff, but agreed that she could capitalise on her strengths of supporting others and acting in a consistent and predictable manner. She could do this by leading by example, and also encourage more confident colleagues to approach the manager with their concerns. Participant 3 was encouraged to develop his assertiveness so his strengths of diplomacy and courtesy could be used to respectfully challenge his manager's unfair treatment.

Following the coaching, Participant 1 said she was able to keep calm when faced with intimidating behaviour, felt less stressed about the interaction and had more confidence in her ability to manage those situations. Participant 2 felt less stressed about not confronting the manager because she knew she was taking alternative positive steps by treating her own staff well and leading by example, while Participant 3 was now more confident about his strengths and how they could help him during conflict.

What I found particularly interesting was that in all three cases, just the awareness of strengths had a positive impact on behaviour, confidence, self-esteem and stress-levels. What is also evident is that the organisational culture is a major factor in how and when people are able to use their strengths, but that even if external factors cannot be controlled, there is benefit in using strengths to manage negative emotions.

To conclude, it is clear that the success of strengths coaching depends both on the organisational culture and on how comfortable participants are with dissention, particularly when the specific issues require people to challenge authority. Also, organisational change should ideally originate at the higher levels (executive) of the organisation to improve the prospects of culture change throughout. A strengths-based coaching intervention at lower levels of the organisation may benefit the individual but may have little or no effect on the 'bottom-line' of the organisation. It has to be an integrative process to achieve measurable results for the organisation.

What are coaches' experiences of reflection?

An exploratory study by Jo Cheesman   Research: UK

What is reflection and what does it mean to people? How do coaches reflect, how valuable is it, and how can a clearer understanding help coaches to enhance their reflective practice for the benefit of themselves, their organisations and their clients? This study is designed to address these questions.

The study unearthed an apparent contradiction - that while some believe reflection is concerned with evaluating, thinking about and mulling over their experience; for others, it is an absence of cognition that allows access to deeper insights. The key findings revealed that reflection can mean different things to different people, it is generally dialogic in nature, and is easier, more effective and energising when coaches disconnect from their cognitions and access their unconscious and emotions.

The project also found that, while some may not find it easy or enjoyable, once employed, it can bring significant learnings.

AIMS

The overall aim of the project is to understand and articulate the meaning and value reflection holds for coaches, the place for it in their coaching practice, and how they reflect. While many agree that the point of reflection is to enhance capability, I have been struck by clients' and peers' complaints that they have difficulty reflecting. I myself struggle to articulate what I do when I reflect, or what process I follow and why.

The aims of the study are to:

- understand the nature of reflection and its closely-associated concepts

- explore coaches' experience of reflection, particularly in relation to their coaching practice

- begin to assist coaches to enhance their reflective capacity for their personal and professional development.

METHODOLOGY

The literature review revealed a bewildering range of definitions and terminology for this topic which points to its subjective nature. For the purposes of this study, 'reflection' is defined as a way of focusing awareness on an experience (before, during and after), processing it cognitively and/or emotionally, resulting in emergent learning. The processing usually involves an inner dialogue, and is also useful in a reflective dialogue with another.

'Reflective practice' is reflecting to improve practice, while 'reflexivity' is a term rarely used by academics and the coaches interviewed and difficult to pin down. Here it is defined as using knowledge and awareness of self and one's own thinking and learning processes to improve practice, including in the moment.

Reflection can be interpreted as a process, a tool, or a dialogue

During the study I conducted semi-structured interviews with a small sample of five coaches (including the pilot), interviewing a coach supervisor, client, peer, co-coach and colleague. My questions focused on the following:

Q1: What does 'reflection' mean for you? What is your experience of it?

Q2: What place does reflection have in your coaching practice?

Q3: What happens when you reflect? What form does your reflection take?

Q4: What value do you place on reflection?

I also reviewed extracts from three participants' journals as part of the study.

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Some of the key findings from the literature review are:

- The most common definitions of reflection are characterised by cognitive post-event analysis. Greater focus and research is required on the emotional and somatic nature of reflection.

- There are many reflective models and tools for practitioners, but these are largely cognitive and not underpinned by empirical studies.

- There is surprisingly very little literature allying reflection and coaching, and addressing the various aspects of this relationship, such as its utility in self-coaching and supervision.

The interview findings can be grouped into four themes:

Definitions

All participants defined and experienced reflection differently, and because of its subjective, intangible nature, they found it hard to articulate exactly what it is. For some, it was a 'process of exploration', a 'tool to get in contact with your inner compass and sort out your experiences', and a 'dialogue with yourself'. Others felt it was 'absolutely not thinking about coaching [but is instead] looking without judgment'. This shows that reflection can be interpreted as a process, a tool, or a dialogue. Additionally, two participants described reflection as their way of being. This suggests to me that for them it is infinitely more than a process or exercise; it cannot be decoupled from being. This took the definitions of reflection far further than those I researched in my literature review.

Value

Everyone felt it was valuable, describing how reflection gave them 'clarity', 'an opportunity to learn about self and practice' or 'a means to sharpen up [my thinking]'.

Interestingly, some of the participants spoke of a need to conduct genuine, honest enquiry, not reinforce previously held positions. As one participant said, it can lead to 'your own individual version of group think [...] It's an evil practice, this reflection!' This strong language seemed to advocate that the best learning from reflection comes about when we open ourselves to the possibility of new positions and meanings.

Approaches/process

All participants engaged in some form of pre-coaching activity, although not all of them thought of this as 'reflection'. Most took time before a session to empty their minds by employing mindfulness or relaxation techniques, then bring to mind the client's personality and issues, and think positively about them. Four of the five participants used some form of governance and self-management during coaching sessions, checking their behaviour and questions, and ensuring they were neither too judgmental nor directive. One participant called this a 'parallel process' or 'monitor', giving the view that it could sometimes be slightly calculating and not always helpful if attuned to his own agenda.

However, none of the coaches interviewed assigned the word 'reflection' or 'reflexivity' to anything they do during a session. In fact, one didn't feel 'reflexive' was a genuine term. All participants said that thinking had a detrimental effect on either how they were in the session, or on the interaction between coach and client. As one commented: "If I'm too much in my thoughts, I lose my presence."

After coaching, the majority of participants used writing to reflect. They rarely used specific tools or techniques. They referred to journals and post-coaching forms, though some had misgivings about both, either saying they weren't useful, or confessing to not using them often enough. Distance and taking a third-person perspective was also deemed to be important, with two participants saying reflection was like being a third person watching the session, or standing a little apart and observing.

Conducive conditions

Some participants felt reflection was most effective when they were engaged in other tasks, such as going for a walk or run, as it can happen spontaneously. Mindfulness was also seen as conducive. Participants seemed to be describing a way of accessing their unconscious or somatic awareness, either with or without intention, shutting off their cognitions, with its attendant judgements, and enabling insights.

I found it fascinating that participants felt that one of the things that gets in the way of reflecting and learning is the very act of evaluating and judging our performance, which causes a loss of connection with our way of being. This makes the case for being able to be genuinely honest with ourselves when reflecting, and when in discussion with a trusted co-reflector and supervisor.

Conclusions

In summary, I believe the study leads to a number of recommendations, including:

- Given the subjective nature of reflection, coaches may find it useful to work out what reflection means to them personally, and find their own best way to reflect

- Practice a tool, model or technique occasionally to give reflections a defined purpose

- Engage in reflective practice on your own as well as with others

- Give yourself time, distance and space to reflect

- Consciously prompt reflections and employ mindfulness techniques to allow access to the unconscious and for insights to emerge

- Focus on both cognitions and emotions, holistically, engaging with somatic awareness, metaphor and writing

- Allow reflections to emerge and try to refrain from too often censoring and evaluating reflections and performance.

An exploration of change in the context of one to one business coaching of individuals in transition

Jo Miles   🇬🇧 Research: UK

What is change? How does it manifest in coaching? And how can a better understanding improve one-to-one business coaching?

This research explores change in the context of business coaching of individuals in transition, specifically when the client is being promoted in their company or moving to a new organisation. The qualitative enquiry studied change theory, drawing on the principle of triangulation to get multiples perspectives on how Gestalt, Existential and Somatic theories suggest change manifests in coaching. Most importantly, I looked at how a better understanding of the concept could enhance coaching in the business world context.

Change is the offer and aim of most business coaching, yet what does the term actually mean? Do coaches have a strong grasp of what change is, and are they able to communicate this understanding to clients? If not, how can coaches promise to deliver something they don't understand themselves?

My methodology comprised three key elements, again drawing on triangulation principles: a literature review, four semi-structured interviews with executive coaches, and one interview with a business executive following a post-promotion coaching case study.

The findings revealed that change is constant, hard to define, and manifests in coaching in different ways, leading to recommendations that coaches should examine their own assumptions on change, and help the client understand theirs.

AIMS

The project's overall aim was to deeply explore change, its essence and the influences that help or inhibit change in the context of business transition. The definition of 'change' is very fluid – described as a 'process' by some theorists, or alternatively as an 'event' or an 'outcome' by others – so I wanted to see how the three psychological theories of Gestalt, Existentialism and Somatics treated the phenomenon, and how this relates to wider change theory.

The research is particularly relevant to today's business world, as recent CEO surveys revealed that the vast majority of organisational change efforts do not yield results. This casts doubt on the idea that change can be predicted and managed, and re-enforces the need to explore this area. As mentioned above, a clear grasp of the concept of change is vital if coaches are going to be able to deliver on their promise, so I wanted to examine if practitioners had this level of understanding.

METHODOLOGY

I decided to design a qualitative enquiry primarily informed by Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), using a combination of three semi-structured interviews with leading business coaches informed by Existential, Gestalt and Somatic theory respectively, and one interview with a coach and peer informed by a mixture of these approaches. This was followed by a case study of an individual recently promoted within his finance organisation. I held a contract meeting, three 90-minute coaching meetings, and asked for reflections after each. I felt it was important to adopt the principle of 'triangulation' to facilitate exploration of change from multiple perspectives by bringing in the voice of the client.

Change is present in the stance of the coach, the complexion and content of the conversation

My interviews with all participants were loosely structured around the following key questions:

- What is change? How can change be defined?

- How is change manifest in coaching?

- What is the client's experience of change in coaching?

- What can help or hinder change in the context of one to one business coaching?

- What can this exploration offer my coaching practice and the coaching community?

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Three key themes emerged from my findings:

- Change is constant

- Change is hard to define, and reflects the world view of the individual

- Change manifests in coaching in different ways

Based on the structure of the five interview questions set out in the previous section, my findings were drawn from the following insights, each referring to the particular specialisms of the coaches:

What is change?

As one participant stated, change is a word you "use lightly but is actually totally enormous", it's an unfathomable mystery full of uncertainty and risk. From a Somatic point of view, this research suggests it's a complex interaction of neurons, while in Gestalt terms, it's a shift of identity. Participants also echoed recent change theory by stating that it's a non-linear process, while at the same time acknowledging the centuries-old Heraclitus notion that change is a constant. So what is it? I feel it is an ever-present element of being, something we take for granted and struggle to bring to life in language; it's tantamount to 'being'.

How does change manifest in coaching?

The interviews revealed that change can manifest in context, purpose, process and being. In the words of one participant, change is "the unrecognised foundation of life", implying it is ever-present, yet it is brought into sharper focus because of a change in circumstances.

From the Existentialist participant's viewpoint, change is about uncertainty and anxiety. It is not the 'magical place' that others may strive for, but instead is more likely to create feelings of chaos and unpredictability, potentially even manifesting as a mini-breakdown,

In contrast, the view of the Somatics specialist was that they felt coaching was "literally re-training our psychobiology so we can take different actions", while the Gestalt informed coach "rejects the role of the 'changer'". Gestalts' paradoxical theory sees change occurring when an individual becomes what they are, not when they try to become what they are not. That is to say, change does not come through coercion, but through stillness.

Change also manifests in the coaching process, whether it is by the Somatic interpretation of helping people become aware of the wisdom that goes on in their bodies; the Gestalt view of understanding where you are in order to know what is possible and appropriate to change; or the Existentialist view that change happens when a person chooses to take a risk into the unknown.

It is my assertion that change is present in the stance of the coach, the

complexion and content of the conversation, as well as in the underlying assumptions and beliefs present in the worldview of those in the inter-relational encounter. The idea of it being 'uncaptureable' when it happens resonates strongly with me, as offered in the metaphor of one participant who described it as being "unfilmable".

What helps or inhibits change?

I found that factors supporting change were focused on the quality of the coaching relationship and space, a non-directive stance, and the client's willingness to be coached and openness to risk the uncertainty of change. Trust was described as "huge", and I consider this particularly important when working with individuals experiencing transition due to the uncertainty that is inherent in the systemic context.

However, at the same time, the Existentialist specialist states that "you cannot force someone to change". Furthermore, one participant said that there is the potential for coaching to hinder change "as it can put people in a place of great uncertainty […] and deconstruction". Similarly, a short time frame for coaching can hinder change, as can the client's attitude and how they deal with transition, based on their personal history.

The coach whose practice is informed by Existentialism said that, although many coaches construct change as a 'magical place' of total positivity, they felt that "there is no change that is just positive change [so] it is important as a coach to address the question of what the cost of change is as well as what the desired possibilities of change may be". For some clients, I believe the choices thrown up by change, and the inability to influence all of it, can be overwhelming and undermining. Others clients though, experience change as exciting, fuelled by the sense of working towards a "magical place of change" perhaps helping the process of transition.

What is the client's experience of change in coaching?

My findings here focused on the coachee involved in the research, who felt that the coach was "putting a mirror up" to challenge him to think in different ways.

He considered change to be a slow and subtle process, not sudden or abrupt. He talked about experiencing "eureka moments" or realisations during his coaching, but emphasised this was not the same as behaviour change. This suggests that change for him was about behaving and being different, which is more than gaining new awareness. "A new way of thinking is not change […] you don't know it until you have faced a situation […] I don't think you change straight away". He added that: "whilst I do not think that I am able to change who I am at heart, I think that through recognising my tendencies, I will have more chance of reducing and harnessing [uncertainty] in a positive sense where possible."

What can this exploration offer my coaching practice and the community?

I would recommend that there is a need for the coach to explore their own unique view of change; what it is, what it means to them, how they construct and hold it in their world view, and what this means for their coaching stance. It would be powerful for this to be included as a key element of any coaching training programme. I would also say that in the context of coaching during a time of transition, it is valuable for the coach to support the client to understand how they construct change. This can be achieved by exploring the lived experience of change, and typical responses to change and their assumptions about their assumptions of change.

To conclude, this project has made me identify with the idea that change is tantamount to life itself. As has been noted by Amagoh, Spinelli, Bridges and Mueller, theories of change that describe it as a predictable linear process feel to me wide of reality, and mask its complex and multi-faceted nature. Change appears to awaken the Existential concerns of uncertainty, anxiety, a sense of vulnerability and a loss in sense of self. As Mueller stated, change it seems raises "deeply human questions about identity, relationship, belonging, meaning, purpose and worth". I consider times of transition bring these questions of change to the forefront of people's minds.

Most importantly though, it appears to be absolutely vital that coaches fully understand what coaching means to them, and as a result, what it means to their clients. Particularly in the business world, the coaching 'offer' is founded on the principle of delivering change to people and organisations, so it follows that coaching can only be relevant and effective if the coach has a firm understanding of this hugely important concept.

How can coaching for career development facilitate career fulfillment: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of coaches' perceptions and experiences

Nikki Streatfield   🇬🇧 Research: UK

This research looks at self-mastery and how coaches think it can contribute to clients' continued career development. Equally importantly, it looks at how coaching might facilitate elements of self-mastery in an effort to create an environment where clients have few – or ideally no – regrets about their working life.

The findings suggest that capabilities such as emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment, self-confidence, self-control and trustworthiness, along with innovation, achievement drive, commitment, initiative and optimism, could contribute to continued career development across a person's lifespan.

The inquiry also suggests that coaching for career development can facilitate greater career fulfillment. Self-mastery empowers individuals to formulate a meaning of career fulfillment that is authentic to them. Coaching can bring about a shift in a person's perception of career fulfilment, because in this sense, career fulfillment is not something only to be achieved at the end of one's career by continuously proving one's worth, but rather it can be part of each step of a person's career.

AIMS

The impetus for this paper was informed by positive psychology research on wellbeing and specifically a book discussing the top five

regrets of the dying, by author Bronnie Ware.

I wanted to look at wellbeing in the context of career development to find out which elements (such as positive emotion, engagement, meaning, achievement and positive relationships) coaches think contribute most. How might coaching facilitate those elements to contribute to continued career development?

I felt it would add further depth to inform this inquiry by also looking at the noted regrets of the terminally ill as they were counselled when close to death. The most common regrets as noted by Ware were that people wished that they had:

- lived a life true to themselves
- worked less hard
- had the courage to express their feelings
- stayed in touch with friends
- let themselves be happier.

I argue that a relationship can be found between each of these five regrets and a person's career. Therefore, is it possible that career development coaching could potentially mitigate these regrets, leading to a more fulfilling career? How can career development coaching facilitate career fulfillment?

METHODOLOGY

The seven participants were practicing coaches, and although some might not explicitly refer to themselves as career development coaches, or even career coaches, in some way or another each has worked with individuals to further the development of their careers. I used a qualitative research approach, gathering data using semi-structured interviews. Interview transcripts were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis methodology.

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Findings revealed that coaching for career development is helpful at any stage of a person's career, however its most significant long-term impact might be as a proactive intervention before the start of a person's working life. Most often though coaching for career development is usually sought later in life, often when the individual is experiencing:

- a specific challenge or obstacle in their career path
- a sense of stuckness or boredom in their current role
- a sense of not being valued or lack of authority in their position
- a desire for progression to the next level in their career
- a desire for growth within a certain job or field
- a crisis around the purpose and meaning of their career path to date, and what this might look like going forward
- career change due to redundancy or other factors.

How does coaching for career development enhance these capabilities?

Approaches to career development coaching vary from short-term, goal-oriented and more directive, to longer–term exploration, dependent on the client's needs. It seems that an existential approach to exploration combined with solutions-focused techniques, serve the purpose of career development coaching well. However working with embodiment and Gestalt principles can also be useful.

Often coaches are reluctant to label or promote themselves as career development coaches. They find this label is too restrictive, as the distinction between work and life is becoming less obvious. Furthermore, development and growth due to coaching in one area of a person's life (such as relationship building), is likely to have a positive influence on another area of one's life (such interaction with team members and leaders). This inter-relatedness could explain why career development coaching as an offering seems much less defined for instance than executive coaching.

Coaching for career development facilitates long term career growth, by enabling self–mastery. Self–mastery as conceptualised by psychologists like Daniel Goleman is an aspect of emotional intelligence that includes self-awareness, self-regulation, flexibility, resilience, decision-making and more.

According to Goleman in his book Working with Emotional Intelligence, self-mastery comprises the following emotional proficiencies:

- Emotional awareness – recognising one's emotions and their effects
- Accurate self-assessment – knowing one's inner resources, abilities and limits
- Self-confidence – a strong sense of one's worth and capabilities
- Self-control – keeping disruptive emotions and impulses in check
- Trustworthiness and conscientiousness – maintaining integrity and taking responsibility for personal performance
- Innovation and adaptability – being open to novel ideas and approaches, and being flexible in responding to change

Coaching can bring about a shift in a person's perception of career fulfillment

- Achievement drive – striving to improve or meet a standard of excellence
- Commitment – aligning with the goals of a group or organisation
- Initiative and optimism – displaying proactivity and persistence

Coaching for career development can bring awareness, build and strengthen the capabilities comprising self–mastery, and greater self-mastery could promote continued career development across a person's lifespan.

How does coaching for career development enhance these capabilities? Firstly, through a process of in–depth exploration, and detailed description of 'what is' and of 'the unknown'. As mentioned earlier, with 'what is', participants mostly referred to the here and now, the individual's current circumstance or inner experience. The unknown referred to anything regarding the individual's internal or external world, which was unclear to them. This rigorous process involves movement beyond the obvious, below the surface of what is presented, opening up and unpacking of current experience or any uncertainties.

Detailed description of what is uncovered during exploration facilitates greater clarity, making vague or ambiguous concepts more concrete and easier to deal with. This process often involves existential questioning and requires skill and ethical boundary management from the coach.

Secondly, once the person has sound awareness and insight into most relevant internal and external dynamics, they are better equipped to make decisions and formulate strategies, in service of the achievement of their career development goal. Often coaches will assist clients with the formulation and prioritisation of strategies, but this is seen as secondary to the process of exploration and description.

To conclude, I feel that the most important insight is that the process of self-mastery through coaching empowers individuals to formulate a meaning of career fulfillment that is authentic to them. So, instead of trying to live up to the expectations of others – the first and most common regret of the dying according to Ware – individuals are able to pursue a fulfilling career in congruence with their values, strengths and aspirations.

Coaching can also bring about a shift in a person's perception of career fulfillment, in that it enables a holistic view of a career as a journey, rather than just a pursuit of the next promotion or job. In this sense, career fulfillment is not something only to be achieved at the end of one's career by continuously proving one's worth, but rather fulfillment can be part of each step of a person's career. Lastly, the process of exploration and description enables greater resourcefulness in developing strategies not only for career development, but also in achieving career fulfillment.

An inquiry into the impact of creative coaching techniques on clients' creativity

Hamid Tavassoly   Research: UK

This research project attempts to examine primarily whether creative–coaching techniques can support development of clients' creativity. It also examines how creativity can be measured, and finally what enabling beliefs can support creativity.

I used a combination of interviews with coaches and my own experiences as the recipient of creative coaching. I explored the impact of creative coaching techniques, and what some of the key ingredients to develop and support individual creativity could be.

The findings indicated that, unsurprisingly, self-belief is a key ingredient of creativity and can be nurtured through the process of coaching that supports the client to attempt new thinking, feeling and skills successfully. In addition to the impact of coaching, the very act of noticing one's creativity positively impacted one's creativity. This meant it was impossible to differentiate between the impact of coaching and the impact of noticing, which complicated the analysis of the research outcomes.

Further findings included the view that attempting to measure 'creativity' could be counter-productive, as by definition, that would be an attempt to make an analytical assessment of a very subjective phenomenon. A better approach would be to try to gain an understanding of how an entity is creative and how that creativity can be enhanced. I feel that the mere act of measurement can be an impediment to development of creativity, as the analytical left-brain functions become dominant again.

AIMS

The research aimed to explore the impact of creative coaching on clients' creativity. It has used a qualitative methodology using data from three separate sources: the author's reflections as a coaching client, semi-structured interviews with peers and line manager, and semi-structured interviews with three coaches who use creative techniques.

The collected data has been analysed to identify emergent themes and the thematic analysis focused on the following questions:

- What is creativity?

- What are creative coaching techniques?

- What are the impacts of creative coaching techniques?

- What are the criteria for measuring creativity?

- What are the enabling beliefs that support creativity?

There were a number of reasons for undertaking this study. There is a general agreement that creativity can lead to innovation which impacts on everyone's lives and is a key factor for both enriching lives through creative arts and triggering economic growth. For this reason, coaching that develops clients' creativity can be seen as worthwhile for both the individual and society as a whole.

METHODOLOGY

As already mentioned, studying such a subjective issue is complicated, and it was felt that the most effective method would be a first-person account of the experience of being coached by two coaches who use creative coaching techniques. This was combined with interviews with a number of other coaches, some of whom were artists as well as using creative techniques in their coaching role. The study included:

- a total of six 90-minute sessions with two coaches over a period of three months

- interviews with three coaches on their experiences in the field

- interviews with the author's colleagues to assess third-party observations of any changes in behaviour

- intensive reflective practice including regular journaling and writing 'morning pages'

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

All those interviewed and studied, including coaches, musicians and song writers, agreed on one thing: creativity is an extremely difficult phenomenon to define or measure. However, what was more relevant was how creative a coached client feels and how much belief they have in their own potential.

 Interviews with coaches revealed that while creative techniques such as 'noticing', 'being playful', story-telling, mind-mapping, imagery and metaphor can be very effective, they must be done in collaboration with the client, rather than just for creativity's sake. While some define creativity as not necessarily needing to produce anything, it was clear that in terms of coaching, it had to be delivered in the service of client's agenda.

A further observation was that in order to be creative, both coach and client need to be prepared to be wrong, be willing to experiment and be prepared to move outside their comfort zone. Moreover, greater depth and breadth of self-awareness, and gaining an experience of themselves from different perspective, may help them to deal with life's demands in more creative ways. Additionally, the clients' creative journey can be inward and the impact might not be evident to the outside initially.

My own experiences both as the subject of coaching and during self-study revealed a number of factors that can develop and nurture creativity. These included:

- widening the scope of what is 'creativity' to everything in life

- noticing both the internal 'judge' and self-censorship is crucial to controlling them

- trusting the process and enjoying staying on the plateau – breakthrough will happen

The research also concluded that a successful creative coaching outcome relies on both the quality of input by the coach and the receptiveness of the coachee. Creative techniques can lead to unexpected breakthroughs, though this requires both parties to trust the process and have faith in a client's inner resources.

And while it is impossible to separate the impacts of creative coaching techniques from the impacts of acts of noticing, they are both fundamental parts of the process.

Conversely, attempts to over-analyse these factors and measure creativity has the potential to impede the process. To do so would be to fall back on left-brain functions that the author feels are already given too much emphasis by conventional education and employment requirements. It is this left-brain focus on cultural norms and the world around us that can impede creativity, but this barrier can gradually be broken down by increased self-belief in one's own creativity and a willingness to take risks and be creative.

An inquiry into coaches' experiences of how clients who have been coached are able to sustain newly developed practices

Stuart Whalley   🇬🇧 Research: UK

How can the clients sustain changes for themselves? How can they make changes to the way they work, make those changes stick, and ensure they sustain practices in their lives as a whole?

Inspired by research on the short-term benefits of coaching and a growing curiosity in previous studies on both the neuroplasticity of the brain when learning new actions, and into how stroke victims sustain new behaviours, I wanted to investigate these questions and offer my findings to benefit leaders and individuals in a work context.

The findings highlighted some key factors that may help or hinder the sustainability of practice, from motivation and support, to belief and ownership of the process.

AIMS

The project's overall aim was to investigate how coached clients are able to sustain newly developed practices. By asking coaches about their experiences, I wanted to find out what common patterns they saw in clients who are able to create and then sustain changes, compared to those who don't. What helps or hinders clients in this process, what elements of the coaching process help, and how might coaches support clients to develop and maintain practices?

METHODOLOGY

I interviewed four coaches – two male and two female aged between 40 and 60 – and selected those who were Post-Graduate Certificate level or above, and who had over 100 hours of executive coaching experience. I used an exploratory phenomenological method to delve into coaches' perspectives of human experience using semi-structured interviews.

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The results of the interviews could be grouped into four key themes, along with discussion on the definition of the terms 'practice' and 'sustaining'. Interviewees defined the former as a 'new way of doing things' or 'something the client creates and does for themselves', while the latter was described as when something 'becomes part of who they are' or when an action becomes 'unconscious competence'.

The four themes were:

Motivation

It emerged that clients' motivation to change needs to outweigh the constraints that hold them back from making and staying with a change. Do they have ownership of their own change process, and are they seriously driven? As one participant said: "…a real commitment to change on the part of the client is without question the biggest single factor which determines whether people make full use of the potential." It was also described as a dogged determination to get there, which has to come from the client, not the coach.

Another motivating factor could be down to feeling that the emotional benefits of sustaining practice are felt to be greater than clients' perceived barriers, while a belief that they can change both themselves and their environment was also important. At an even more basic level, clients' need to realise they have options. As one coach said: "Choice only comes from recognising that you've got it first of all."

Actions

The act of 'taking the first step' appears to be critical, as it can have the power to help people find the belief that they can change, because it confirms they have genuine choices. On the other hand, the lure of returning to old actions – old habits or patterns – can be an inhibiting factor, re-enforcing beliefs that they are stuck. The findings suggest that clients who hold boundaries and set benchmarks may be better able to sustain their practices, while being clear to themselves and to their support network about the patterns they want to retain also emerged as helpful.

Support and challenge

Positive support such as enrolling, sharing and practicing with other people inside and outside of work appears to be beneficial. Enrolling a support network, having a supportive boss or extended family, or even simply a supporting culture at work can make a difference, but how a client uses this support is also important. Support should include positive affirmation while maintaining a degree of challenge and feedback, though clients may be 'knocked off' their practices by negative support.

Self-awareness

Awareness might help clients discover what they want to change, what practices specific to them might be sustainable, and what they might be learning about themselves through their change. Findings suggested that clients' perceptions may hinder them being who they want to be, and stop them appreciating what they already have. As one participant said: "Eighty or ninety per cent of what people are doing already is great. What they need to do is to do it more, and the way they do it more and sustain it, is practice."

It may be important that a clients' awareness of his or her perceptions may aid in creating and maintaining practices, as highlighted by the comment: "Realising that the only person, really the only person who was making her do it was herself."

A further theme was that clients who see the change as impacting themselves and their whole life may have greater success in sustaining practices. As one coach said: "There's got to be some sense of a journey for them [it is helpful when] people realise this can benefit them in all areas of their lives."

To conclude, I believe my inquiry revealed that the key factors for sustaining new practices are when clients:

- are motivated and take ownership their changes
- are clear about what they are changing to
- take action and then reflect on their actions
- enrol support to reinforce their change
- learn about how they change
- understand that they are on a long-term path.

Following on from this, I have a number of recommendations for internal and external coaches, and Business Partners. These include:

- **Business Partners and Coaches** might also want to help clients develop their belief in change and choice which could enable clients to construct a change they want to make and then follow it through. To help clients overcome barriers to change coaches may seek to engage with clients on the emotional benefits of new practice.

- When clients are trying something new for the first time, **coaches and Business Partners** may help them to frame their experience as a learning experience that can provide further learning. If a client doesn't experience a practice as positive then they might return to their old patterns and may associate the new practice with being negative.

- **Coaches and Business Partners** may need to remain open that clients might need any type of support that motivates them to sustaining a change. Along with helping clients work out who might support them, coaches and Business Partners could also help clients work on how to ask for support.

- **Coaches and Business Partners** may consider with clients their past achievements that are similar to the change clients are seeking. This may present opportunities to consider the differences and similarities for clients between past and current circumstances, opening up the possibilities for clients to view their perceptions about their own capabilities.

Emotions in coaching practice: An inquiry

Helen Willetts   🇬🇧 Research: UK

This research analyses whether coaches work with emotions in their practice, how emotions impact on a coach's framework, and what, if any, developments in coaching practice they would like to be able to access to support their ability to work with emotions.

I carried out in-depth interviews with six coaches, and the findings revealed that the coaches felt that working with emotions was integral to their practice. They were conscious of the impact of clients' emotions on their practice and expressed a desire to explore their own emotional world to be in better service of the client, including utilising therapeutic interventions.

AIMS

The project's overall aim was to understand how coaches engage with emotions within their practice. The study used the following research questions:

- Do coaches work with emotions within their practice?

- Do coaches recognise the impact of emotions on their practice?

- How do coaches believe that coaching should develop to support their practice when working with emotions?

- Do coaches find clients' emotions both an anxiety and often a point of breakthrough in the clients' self-awareness that can take significant insight and awareness on the part of the coach? If so, how do coaches recognise these dynamics within their practice and what might this mean for practice?

METHODOLOGY

A pilot study was carried out to ensure the interview approach and questions would get the most out of the subjects, and this revealed an essential point: participants may not use the word 'emotions' at all, possibly preferring 'relationships' instead.

This was backed up by advice from a coach who had carried out research in a similar area, who suggested a useful opening question could be: "When I mention emotions in coaching what are your immediate reactions, what comes to your mind?"

As a result, this question was selected, followed by four more:

- Where, if at all, do emotions come into your coaching framework?

- If they do, is this important and why/ If they don't, is this important any why?

- How do you think this impacts on your practice?

- How would you like to develop coaching practice (yours and wider) to be able to work with/not work with emotions?

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The analysis led to four emergent themes.

Firstly, coaches do and should work with clients' emotions. Participants felt it was essential, as set out in one comment: "Emotions are fundamental, I think that if there are blockages at an emotional level there is no action without emotional resolve."

This was particularly relevant when participants described working on the blurred boundary between coaching and therapy. One interviewee said: "I am always working on the boundary with therapy, I do sometimes say we are straying into therapy but doesn't feel right to avoid the emotion at the same time."

The need for development in this area was also voiced, as one comment showed: "I am not sure of the difference between good coaching and therapy but coaches working at the sticky end need sticky end development." The majority of participants felt that coaching training and development should be available which supports the coach's ability to work with emotions.

The second theme could be summed up as 'the coaching relationship is important and plays a part in how emotions are utilised'. The participants generally supported the view that the relationship has significant importance both in the work they did with clients and in examining the dynamics of the coaching work being completed.

As one commented: "The relationship is crucial, the relationship sets the tone, emotions are an exchange of data." Similarly, another added: "I notice that I also feel the emotions of the client, this can be a catalyst."

Participants appear to hold the view that the coaching relationship impacts on coaches in the moment and then afterwards in their future work.

The third theme was that coaches should work on – and with – their own emotions in service of self and of the client. They felt it was a requirement to look at self, at therapeutic levels, in order to be an authentic coach who is able to recognise and pay attention to their emotional awareness and health. Comments included: "If I hadn't had therapy I couldn't have been a coach," and "… if you haven't what impact would that have? Having coaching and therapy has helped me massively in dealing with emotions."

This raised the obvious question of whether or not coaches should be required to have therapeutic work for themselves in order to practice. The opinion was that while it was not necessary for all, coaching development needs to develop to incorporate greater awareness of the aspects of self.

More clear-cut was the belief that participants would like to be able to access coaching development that supports their ability to look at self and work with their own emotions. They felt coaches need to be able to take to supervision their work on self and how this impacts on their practice. Four participants wanted to take self into the supervisory relationship to perhaps reflect on particular client situations and relationships, perhaps supporting the view that coaching supervision is about keeping the coach healthy so they are not taking the last client into the next session. This was an anxiety voiced by a number of participants.

In conclusion, this research suggests that coaches are working with emotions on a continual basis and want to do so to the best of their ability. As a result, it recommends that consideration is given to how coaching practice can develop to make explicit space to explore working with emotions (the clients' and the coaches') at an appropriate therapeutic level in academic and formal professional development, and in supervision.