

Coaching Today

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BACP House

15 St John's Business Park
Lutterworth LE17 4HB
T 01455 883300
F 01455 550243

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Editor

Diane Parker

editorial@bacpcoaching.co.uk

BACP Coaching Executive contacts

Chair: Jo Birch

jo@jobirch.co.uk

Barry White

thecounsellor@btinternet.com

Gill Fennings-Monkman

gill@counsellingforachange.com

Dr Kate Anthony

kate@onlinetherapyinstitute.com

Graham Wilson

gw@grahamwilson.org

Kirsten Leslie

kaleslie1@gmail.com

Visit the BACP Coaching website at

www.bacpcoaching.co.uk

Contributions

Contributions are welcomed.

Please contact the editor.

Advertising

For rates, contact **Jinny Hughes**

T 01455 883314

jinny.hughes@bacp.co.uk or visit

www.bacp.co.uk/advertising

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Editorial



Diane Parker

Editor, *Coaching Today*

What place do spiritual beliefs – either our own or those of our clients – have in our practice as coach-therapists? Is there ever a place for something so personal or is it inevitable that our own spirituality or religious beliefs will colour our relationships with our clients? Can, in fact, our ability to work with the fundamental existential questions such as ‘Who am I?’, ‘Why am I here?’ and ‘What is my purpose?’ give our work an added richness and depth?

As Nick Wright explains in our cover feature in this edition, the questions that emerge in coaching conversations can reveal deeper struggles of a philosophical or existential nature, and it is in our willingness to enter into this struggle with our clients and wrestle with these essential questions that our work can prove to be profoundly transformational. Though Nick is transparent in his piece about his specific

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religious beliefs as a Christian, the approach he describes is a universal one, regardless of any particular faith or spiritual belief.

Also in this edition, Nick Bolton explores the subject of existentialism and its practical application in coaching. Like Nick Wright, he argues that many of the questions that our clients grapple with relate to the core issues of our existence and he clearly demonstrates how an existential approach to coaching can support people in finding a way to live their lives with joy, meaning and purpose.

The question 'Who am I?' is one that our Chair Jo Birch also raises in relation to our existence as a division. As we go through a period of growth and change, which she details in her regular column on page 4, the question 'Who am I?' or, more specifically, 'Who are we?' is of increasing pertinence. And, as the two authors of our key feature articles each describe in their own ways, a spiritual or existential approach to coaching that deals with such questions can engender a transformational change that enables people to alter the way they relate to the very fact of their existence. To paraphrase Nick Bolton, existential conditions can burst through the surface of everyday life like a volcanic eruption and, in asking the deep, philosophical questions such as 'What is the point of all this?', 'How can that have happened?' and 'What kind of person do I want to be?', in the same way that a volcano reshapes the earth's crust, the results can be life-changing.

As we continue asking the questions as they relate to our own lives, to those of our clients and to our identity as a group of professionals, we not only embrace but *create* change from within.

You, our readers, are part of this change. Come join the conversation, contribute your ideas - and co-create our changing profession from the inside out.

Diane Parker
editorial@bacpcoaching.co.uk

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Message from the Chair

Ebbing and flowing...
part of the cycle of
life. Change.

So often we are working with change with our clients - and in our own lives. Sometimes it is change that I wish for, desire, long for - and at other times events leave me feeling shocked, disappointed, hopeless. Sometimes, like an expert contortionist, I allow myself to move into the new shape - willingly, embracingly... or reluctantly, stubbornly! However and whatever... just like the ebb and flow of the tide, change is inevitable.

We're so delighted with the growth we are seeing in BACP Coaching. We now have around 700 members, which is quite an achievement, and one that demonstrates how our work is changing. From my conversations with members, it seems increasingly common for us to have complex and diverse portfolios: counselling/psychotherapy, coaching, integrated practice, facilitation, mediation, organisational development... Our profession is changing, growing into a new shape.

We are going to drive forward some key areas of work to support this growth and change.

We will be exploring the standards and competencies that might describe us - coaches who are also counsellors/psychotherapists - and we'll continue our work with the Coaching Bodies Roundtable. We are also going to explore the ethical dilemmas showing up in our coaching and integrated practice - we will be looking at how well the BACP *Ethical Framework* covers the emerging scenarios and gives us a structure on which to base our thinking and exploration around protecting the public. We'll also be looking at new technologies and how they support our work, starting with a new 'virtual' network group to join our thriving terrestrial groups.

We also want to ask ourselves the question 'Who are we?' to better understand ourselves as an aligned group of professionals. This will ensure that our journal, CPD opportunities and other member services are focused directly on our needs.

Our list of aspirations also includes a searchable database of coach training organisations/opportunities, improving communications with members and updating our website.

All this work is driven by your volunteer Executive and BACP staff, although sometimes we are joined by other 'specialists' who work alongside us and contribute. For example,



recently I've been delighted to have an immensely fruitful and fascinating conversation with Professor Tim Bond about ethics.

Our Executive group is changing. Trish Turner steps down as our Executive Specialist for Networks. 'Trish has been a positive, insightful, supportive, enthusiastic, realistic and dynamic leader for the network groups... [she has] helped us clarify our roles and connect around a common purpose,' said Carolyn Mumby, our Network Group Organiser for London Central. Trish has put a huge amount of energy into her role and now needs to regain balance in her working life. Our Lead Advisor Laura Bennett has also, sadly, had to resume full-time work with her other employer and has made the very difficult decision to leave BACP. Laura moved effortlessly across BACP, helping to integrate coaching into the fabric of the organisation. I will miss them both very much.

I also look forward to the shape of our new team. I am thrilled to announce that our colleague Barry White will step forward as Deputy Chair. Barry has a passion for defining standards. He's a great colleague to work with, very different to me and just as committed to BACP Coaching. We'll create a good balance together.

We also welcome Dr Graham Wilson as our new Executive Specialist for Research. I have long hoped that Graham would join the Executive and am delighted this time is right for him. He will begin by leading some of the work I mentioned above. You will learn more about him in the next issue of *Coaching Today*.

BACP is looking at how best to meet members' needs through the divisions and is currently exploring the divisional structure. While this review is under way, we have decided to appoint Deputy and Chair roles directly from the Executive. This may change in the future. We are extremely keen that members know

that the Executive welcomes new members and therefore the roles of Chair and Deputy are open to any member, following a period of commitment on the Executive. This helps with cohesion and continuity.

We advertise in *Therapy Today*, on our LinkedIn group and through the local network groups for key specialists to join us and we are also open to ideas from members keen to lead on an area that calls out for attention.

This is our organisation, we make it happen, our energy brings others into the space, connecting through our passion. Do join the conversation. Contribute to our journal, review a book, join the Executive, attend a network group, run a workshop session... create BACP Coaching!

Jo Birch
Chair of BACP Coaching

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Just like the ebb
and flow of the
tide, change is
inevitable
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'Who am why am spirituality in coac

The questions that surface in conversations with our clients can often reveal struggles of a deep philosophical, psychological or spiritual nature. **Nick Wright** introduces an approach to coaching that embraces an explicit spiritual dimension.



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Coaches in organisations often focus on practical issues or tasks in order to change a person's way of thinking or behaving – perhaps, for example, in order to improve his or her performance and potential at work.¹ In doing so, coaching can be successful in motivating and achieving valuable change and results. Nevertheless, coaching can also prove to be deeply transformational if used to enable a client or client group to explore and wrestle with underlying psychological, spiritual and existential issues that influence their experience, aspirations and stance in the world.

'Who am I? What does my life mean? Why am I here? What is real? What is true? How can I know?' These are some of the deep questions that sometimes surface in coaching conversations and relationships. The language and framing may offer a disguise, with such concerns more likely to be presented as something like, 'I don't know what to do about my job' or 'I lack self-confidence at work'. Nevertheless, the underlying issues may reveal profound psychological, philosophical and spiritual questions, struggles, fears and desires.²

Spiritual language creates its own questions, with a diverse range of definitions available to us.³ As a Christian, I'm using it to mean something like 'the outworking of a relationship with God'. This may feel inadequate, bearing in mind the richness of faith beliefs and experiences throughout the world. Nevertheless, I want to be authentic about where I'm coming from and, if it will help, I invite you to substitute my definitions and constructs with your own.

Digging deep

Some coaches use a method known as the '7-whys' or 'laddering technique', drawn from personal construct psychology and qualitative research.⁴ The technique involves asking a client to describe an issue of interest or concern and then to ask, 'Why is that important to you?' Each time the client responds, the coach repeats the question until the person's core constructs, beliefs and values are revealed. It's a way of helping the client grow in awareness of how he or she perceives, creates and experiences the world and of what may influence his or her behaviour.

One of the psychodynamic challenges of using such a method is that it can provoke anxiety and defensive routines in the client, especially if handled insensitively by the coach.⁵ It may cause the client to face issues they had never been aware of or considered before and, in some situations, this can leave them feeling unsettled, disorientated or distressed. In light of this, any such coaching technique is best used in the context of a trusting, supportive relationship, with the client understanding and agreeing beforehand to what it could entail.⁶

Lydia came for coaching because, as an experienced manager, she felt under-confident and nervous when presenting to senior leaders. It felt irrational to her because, at a head level, she knew they appreciated her work and considered her to be highly competent. We discussed how she would like to approach this issue together and agreed to use the 7-whys technique.

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She was able to identify core psychological and spiritual issues and to work through them to find a different way of being, feeling and acting at work and in the world

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Coach: What do you hope for from this time together?

Lydia: I feel really scared every time I have to present to the senior leadership team. It feels like going to the dentist. I get tense inside and I want to be able to handle it differently, more confidently.

Coach: So you want to handle presenting to senior leaders differently, more confidently. Why is that important to you?

Lydia: Because if I could handle it differently, come across as more confident, I would come across as more competent, more professional.

Coach: You want to come across as more confident, more professional. Why is that important to you?

Lydia: I want them to be impressed by my work and the way I can handle myself. I don't want to look or feel foolish in front of them.

Coach: It sounds important to you that they should be impressed by you. Why is that important to you?

Lydia: Because they are my bosses... and because I'm worried that if they aren't impressed, they will think less of me as a manager.

Coach: You feel worried that they will think less of you. Why is that important to you?

Lydia: Because I don't want to come across as a failure. I don't want to let them down, to be a failure.

Coach: You feel concerned about being a failure and letting them down. Why is that important to you?

Lydia: (Looking tearful) Because if I let them down, I would also be letting God down. I believe that God led me into this job and I'm worried that I will fail Him.

Coach: You are worried about letting God down. Why is that important to you?

Lydia: (In tears) When I was growing up, I felt like I had to get everything right or my parents wouldn't love me. I feel a bit like that with God too. If I don't get this right, maybe He won't love me either.

It became apparent that Lydia was carrying deep psychological hurt and fear that she had buried

or suppressed in order to avoid the anxiety it evoked. We could have approached her confidence issues at a surface level, perhaps coaching her using cognitive or behavioural techniques to improve her self-confidence or presentation skills. By probing deeper, she was able to identify core psychological and spiritual issues and to work through them to find a different way of being, feeling and acting at work and in the world. She commented afterwards that it felt like a profound release.

An alternative approach to posing questions in this way could be to invite a client to depict an issue or scenario they are dealing with by acting it out physically: for example, by adopting a posture that represents the issue for them and how they are experiencing it, to configure it using objects or to depict it graphically on paper using pens or crayons. This kind of physical and creative approach can help bypass rational filters and defences.⁷ The role of the coach is to help the client explore and experience what he or she is depicting so as to reveal what is most important to them.

Spiritual dimensions

You may have noticed that little I've described so far requires a distinctive spiritual outlook or faith. Psychological and existential issues are not confined to clients or coaches operating in a spiritual domain. In fact, there isn't a single, uniform spiritual outlook within the coaching field; rather, there is a spectrum of beliefs and approaches. We don't have space to cover them all here; instead, as an example, I will explain how a Christian belief system may influence a coach's thinking and practice.

First, it is likely to influence the coach's beliefs about him or herself, including their sense of 'calling'. Coaches may see their coaching insights, abilities and opportunities as a gift from God to be used for the benefit of others. They will seek to act personally and professionally in the best interests of others, whether that be the client, client group or others on whom the client's behaviour impacts.

Second, it is likely to influence the coach's belief in the potential and limits of his or her abilities. God's intervention in, through and between the client and coach can achieve a

deeper change than the coach is capable of achieving on his or her own. In light of this, the coach may pray before, during and after coaching sessions, acknowledging dependence on God and staying hopeful.

Third, it is likely to influence the coach's attitude and approach towards the client and the wider systems of which the client is a part. This will include demonstrating love, value and respect, listening, hearing, suspending judgment and working hard. It will also mean taking risks, challenging if necessary and keeping a wider ethical perspective in view, especially where others are affected.

This latter aspect can sometimes feel difficult if the client subscribes to a radically different ethical system to that of the coach.

Johannes was an unemployed teenager in Germany. He came for coaching because he was struggling with family relationships and he had joined a neo-Nazi group. I had spent years as a human rights activist and Johannes' affiliation with neo-Nazis left me feeling deeply uncomfortable. Fortunately, I had a perceptive supervisor who helped me process how I felt so that I could stay focused on the client and the underlying issues influencing his perspective and behaviour:

Supervisor: What's on your mind and heart?

Coach: To be honest, I'm struggling in my work with Johannes because of his enthusiasm for neo-Nazi ideology. I don't want to impose my own values on him but I find his attitude and behaviour towards the local immigrant population upsetting and alarming.

Supervisor: You sound quite antagonistic towards Johannes' beliefs and behaviour. It's as if his feelings of hostility towards those whom he perceives are different to him are somehow resonating with your own feelings?

Coach: I hadn't thought of it that way but you have a point. I do feel antagonistic and I'm at risk of modelling the same attitude and behaviour towards Johannes that he is acting out in his behaviour towards local Turkish people.

Supervisor: What need do you believe Johannes' affiliation with the neo-Nazis is fulfilling for him?

Coach: He's feeling insecure at home and the neo-Nazi group is providing him with a sense of belonging. Perhaps he's acting out what the neo-Nazis expect of him in order to be accepted by them. He's worried about being rejected by them as well as by his family.

Supervisor: So he's insecure, fearful of rejection. How do you believe Jesus would respond to him in this situation?

Coach: I believe Jesus would reach out, touch him at his point of insecurity, show him acceptance and love. I see now how I need to be... and how not to reinforce his insecurity further by inadvertently mirroring his behaviour.

The supervisor's approach helped me stay in professional mode and facilitated a shift in my perspective, attitude and behaviour by drawing on psychological and spiritual principles.

Fourth, it is likely to influence the coach's beliefs about the client and wider organisational and social structures. He or she will try to see and approach the client as a child of God, with precious innate potential and a uniquely valuable purpose in the world. Depending on the contract, the coach may help the client discover or create his or her own identity, meaning and purpose within a wider social, spiritual or cultural narrative/framework.

Theological reflection

The coach may do this by enabling the client to reflect on a current issue or experience in light of biblical or other spiritual material or, conversely, on biblical material in light of an issue or experience.⁹ The coach's role is not to teach or instruct the client but, rather, to help him or her reflect more deeply in order to develop his or her own understanding, relationship with and stance in relation to God, other people and the world.

One method, known as the 'Swedish model', starts with a passage from the Bible and the coach poses questions to the client. Some refer to this as applied theology – inquiring into and applying biblical principles to real-life situations: eg 'What things in the passage illuminate or inspire you; what things don't you understand; what things in the passage surprise you; what

things do you agree with and approve of; what are you turned off by, reject or question; can you name something like it from your own life and experience; what are you now prompted to do?'.⁹

An alternative method entails starting with the client's experience and posing questions: eg 'Where is God's activity to be found in this situation; is there a link between the client's experience and some biblical character or situation; how is the client handling a particularly painful or baffling situation; can the client face and deal with ambiguity and complexity; how has an event or encounter affected the client's level or pattern of prayer life; what theological material demands further study as a result of this reflection on practice?'.¹⁰

Hearing voices

In approaching any coaching relationship and situation, I listen for four voices. One is the voice of the client – for example, his or her interests, hopes or concerns. One is my own inner voice: for example, what I'm noticing or what feelings the client's story is evoking for me. One is the voice of the client's environment speaking through the client: for example, the pressures, values and concerns or his or her organisation, family or community. One is the voice of God: for example, discerning a sense of 'calling' or an ethical principle from the Bible.

Depending on the client's own beliefs and worldview, I may encourage and support them to listen for different voices too. It's about raising awareness, focus and attention: eg 'What are you noticing?' or, paradoxically, 'What are you *not* noticing?' This may include helping the client to become more aware of what's happening in his or her body, listen to his or her environment, tune into his or her own intuition, raise thought patterns and beliefs into consciousness, observe his or her own behaviours and feelings, discern spiritual prompts or hear afresh what other people are saying.

One of the challenges is, of course, how to discern God's 'voice' in the midst of all kinds of other psychological and environmental voices. It's a difficult one. After all, the client and coach could be deluded in this venture or confused by the range of possibilities that emerge. There is no simple formula or magic solution so I find it

important to approach this prayerfully while paying attention to my own relationship with God.

If a client or client group/organisation is facing an important decision, for instance, and again depending on their beliefs, I may invite them to create space for prayer and reflection, consider the issue and weigh up the decision from a range of different perspectives: eg mission, values, impact, identity and intention.

Mission: Which course of action is most consistent with what God has already been doing in and through the client's life or work?

Values: Which course of action is most consistent with biblical ethical principles?

Impact: Who will be affected by the client's decision and how?

Identity: How would this decision affect the client's sense of identity and relationship as a child/agency of God?

Intention: What's the client's intention in taking this course of action?

Critical reflection

I hope this article will stimulate critical reflection in the context of spirituality in coaching practice. I have sought to show how a spiritual dimension can influence the kinds of issues and questions the coach and client may focus on and address, the coach's own outlook and approach and some of the methods the coach may use. I welcome feedback from readers' insights, ideas and experiences.

Nick Wright is a psychological coach and consultant specialising in leadership, organisation development and reflective practice in the charity and international NGO sectors. He has a particular interest in psychology, philosophy and spirituality.
www.nick-wright.com

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Further reading

For a helpful collection of articles aimed at developing theological reflection in the midst of pastoral practice, see Willows D, Swinton J. Spiritual dimensions of pastoral care. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers; 2000.

For a range of theological reflection methods including theology-in-action or praxis, see Graham E, Walton H, Ward F. Theological reflection - methods. London: SCM; 2005.

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The coach's role is not to teach or instruct the client but, rather, to help him or her reflect more deeply in order to develop his or her own understanding, relationship with and stance in relation to God, other people and the world

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Practical yet profound a third way for existential coaching

What does it mean to be human? And how does existential thinking relate to coaching? **Nick Bolton** examines the two key strands of existential coaching and presents a compelling case for a 'third way' to help our clients live joyfully and authentically.



As an advocate of existential thinking and its application in coaching, I'm often asked, 'Nick, what on earth are you talking about!'

Existentialism is a subject that has defied any single explanation, not least because its origins lie in the works of a diverse range of thinkers who have disagreed with each other across centuries, languages, borders and professions more than they have agreed!

Yet existentialism remains a tantalising topic for those who encounter it. It teases with its hint at something important and it lures the curious with its continental mystery. All around us, we see its glinting reflections in the mirror of modern culture: *Fight Club*, *The Matrix*, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, *Blade Runner*, even *The Dark Knight*.

There's something about it that makes people say, 'There's something there I need to understand; I'm just not sure what!'

So what on earth *am* I talking about? What does it have to do with coaching? And why do we already need a third way?

Well, I'll start by saying how delighted I am to see that existential coaching is finally beginning to be recognised, with the first book on the subject, Van Deurzen and Hanaway's *Existential Perspectives on Coaching*, published in 2012.¹ Having previously made fleeting appearances in books that scan the horizon of coaching psychology, it now has voice and, like Hamlet (perhaps the ultimate existentialist), it can eloquently make its case – 'To be or not to be, that is the question'. Does this approach to coaching need to exist? Does it offer us something new?

Yet, despite it being a relatively new approach, I believe existential coaching is at a critical stage in its development. It seems to me that it is currently being pulled in opposing directions by two camps, which has left it misunderstood and seldom adopted by mainstream coaches. Van Deurzen and Hanaway's progressive book, however, offers great hope.

What is existential coaching?

But, before we explore these two approaches, we first need to ask: what is existential coaching?

My description of existential work here owes much to Irvin Yalom and his identification of the four core conditions that challenge our sense of wellbeing: death, meaninglessness, freedom, isolation. Other writers identify more but Yalom's contention is that all concerns emerge from these four basic conditions of existence.²

At its heart, existential coaching is an exploration of how an individual's experience of the *human condition* affects their day-to-day living and, where needed, how they can confront these conditions in a more authentic, courageous way, in order to be happier, more fulfilled and more effective.

But what is the human condition? Existentialism concerns itself with what we actually experience rather than what we can *conceive*. In other words, we may be able to conceive of an *afterlife* but we don't experience it in this life so it is of no concern. We may be able to conceive of fate but we have no proof that there is a preordained plan, only an *interpretation* of what we see. Existentialism, then, is concerned not with what might be but what we experience as living beings and how we respond to it in the here and now.

The human condition that existentialism refers to is not particularly surprising (we experience the world through our senses, we are situated temporally and physically, we are born and die, we experience emotions, we have a sense of self, and so on). Rather, it is in exploring the consequences of these conditions, the awareness of which leads to our human struggle, that we find its importance to coaching.

Given the constraints of this article, we can't explore all of the things that make us human but it's fair to say that each has its role to play in how we respond to the world. However, there are some core existential conditions that could be described as *key drivers*, and which are extremely useful to explore in the context of someone's behaviours, thinking and emotional response. Let's take a look at these.

Death – we all die. And we all become conscious of death and our own future death. Death both gives and takes away. With one hand, it gives our time alive a sense of significance, as highlighted by Steve Jobs in his famous Stanford University speech.³ Yet it also seems to make a

mockery of the actions we take in life by always being the final destination, no matter how much success, love, creativity or anything else a person has.

Meaning and meaninglessness – it quickly becomes apparent in life that there is a lack of fixed meaning to anything. As humans, we have the ability to create and change the meaning of any given experience. As Hamlet said, 'Nothing is either good or bad but thinking makes it so'. There is a sense that meaning is in flux and we pin things down in our mind only in the most transitory fashion. At a more existential level, most people have questioned their life in general and wondered what it's for.

Isolation – nobody can ever be us for us. No matter how much you connect with someone, they can never wholly understand you, or think your thoughts, feel your feelings or take your actions. Nobody can die your death for you. As the old saying goes, 'You're born alone, you die alone' and Tom Cruise's breathy plea of 'You complete me!' in *Jerry Maguire* is the ultimate deluded cry of the impossible aim to overcome existential isolation.

Freedom, choice and responsibility – we feel free to act and, despite evidence that much of our behaviour is governed by what Robert Cialdini calls '*click whirr*' responses,⁴ we experience ourselves as being free to choose. But with that freedom come responsibility, decision and the anxiety of *getting it wrong*. As Jean Paul Sartre said, 'Man is condemned to be free'. More joyfully and playfully, Susan Jeffers' classic book *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway* is an existential response to the condition of choice and freedom.

Chance – often called 'the Absurd' in existential thought, blind chance confronts our expectations of order on a daily basis. Chance can make our plans seem futile at any time or puts in our path opportunity that we neither *deserve* nor know what to do with. The need for things to make sense is demonstrated time and again by the stories we tell in novels and films. When was the last time you watched a film in which the plot was brought to an abrupt and unresolved end by an entirely unrelated incident? We feel cheated, and we expect life to be the same.

Although not limited to these five, as I have

already mentioned, these core existential conditions become fertile ground for exploration in coaching and often offer a new way to explore a client's concerns.

Existential coaching in practice

So how has this shown up in coaching literature to date? To quote once more our Danish hero, 'Ay, there's the rub!'

I believe it is useful to describe what I perceive to be two strands of thinking that have pulled existential coaching in opposite directions, with each missing the real strength and uniqueness that it offers practising coaches.

The first approach - let's call it the *academic strand*⁵ - has emerged from the practice of existential psychotherapy and brings with it a strong focus on theory, with particular reference to the phenomenological method of Edmund Husserl and the works of Martin Heidegger. To my mind, this strand has led to an overly theoretical approach to existential coaching, steeping it in the obtuse language of existential philosophy, alongside exhortations to consider Martin Buber's concepts of *I-It* and *I-Thou* in the coaching relationship,⁶ and descriptions of the coaching approach with labels such as *bracketing* and *horizontalisation* for things that most coaches do naturally: namely, suspending judgment and avoiding leading the client with one's own assumptions of priority.

As useful as this approach has been in offering a technical language to discuss existential theory among peers, it has done little to make it an approach that lends itself to coaches outside the academic world. What does it mean in practical terms, for instance, to assume an *I-Thou* relationship in coaching and why burden it with such quasi-religious language?

It is in this somewhat slavish adherence to the language of past existential thinkers and practitioners that this school of thought has allowed its predilection for intellectual heritage to outweigh its responsibility to communicate how existentialism can inform coaching at a practical level.

And, as interesting to me as they are, you do not need to have read all of Nietzsche's works or ploughed through Heidegger's *Being and Time* in

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To explore a coaching issue existentially is to understand the relationship that the presenting problem has to the human condition

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order to practise existential coaching. For existential coaching to be truly accessible, this rather literary and intellectual obsession has to come to an end in favour of an understanding of the underlying principles that really matter and how they show up in real life.

And so the second approach – let’s call it the *pragmatic* strand – is refreshing at first. It is most powerfully explained by Bruce Peltier, in his overview of coaching psychology.⁷ Peltier has been unfairly criticised for his treatment of individuality in existentialism; a fair reading of his work demonstrates that he understands very well the core issues and that he is trying to make them practicable.

The pragmatic approach communicates the essentials of existentialism but is unconcerned with the dogma, the obscurantist language, the wordy descriptions of the phenomenological process and the endless names of writers long dead. Instead, it strips existentialism down to its bare bones and turns it into a series of simple principles to guide both the coach and the client.

Now, you might think that, given my earlier statement that we should focus on principles, I’d be singing its praises. But the problem is that, rather than focusing on the core principles that make existentialism important in understanding our responses, it simply creates a series of exhortations on how to be and so has created a caricature of existentialism. The profound depth of this approach to exploring the human psyche is lost to soundbites.

Of course, it’s understandable that, in the face of the *academic* strand, there was a counter approach that sought to boil existential coaching down to something we can *do*. But I believe this misses the point. Existential coaching is not about offering a 10-step manifesto for how to *be*, as we see in Peltier.⁷ It’s about something much more.

At this point, let me just say that I understand that both strands are important, necessary and insightful. This is not a rip-roaring, barnstorming attack on both sides of the debate to show that a revolutionary idea can be found right here! Rather, I believe that we are all of us working together to explore a new, more profound approach to coaching that looks beyond the traditional performance model that, even now, is still prevalent.

And I think that’s where Van Deurzen and Hanaway, along with their contributors, got it right with their book. In putting together this book, they made a very real attempt to bring together the theoretical underpinning with the practical day-to-day experience of coaching.

This brings us to the third way – a genuine coming together of the richness of existential exploration with the simple, self-reflective power of coaching. For existential coaching to make the impact it is capable of in the world of coaching, it needs to shake off the yoke of its intellectual history and communicate the humane and very real issues with which it



contends. But it must avoid becoming merely a series of pithy statements, remembering always that it is the client's experience that matters, not the rule book of existential living.

To explore a coaching issue existentially is to understand the relationship that the presenting problem has to the human condition to which it is a response, and to remain focused on enabling a change of perspective that allows the client to move past their current challenge.

For instance, how is a client's procrastination around something that seems to matter to her a failure to remember that life comes to an end? How is a client's need to be unconditionally loved by his partner an attempt to deal with existential rather than interpersonal isolation? (And the solutions are very different things.) How is someone's lethargy simply a part of their fear of taking responsibility for their life?

In most cases, existential issues will be disguised by a behaviour that might be encountered in any given coaching session. Often, the issue might appear to be simple, and yet the client remains stuck or unable to choose, fearful of acting or trapped in an interpretation of who they are as a person. And the seemingly simple issue that just needed space for consideration becomes a sign that something bigger is at stake: something that at some level speaks to the client of their essential humanness - their frailty, their impermanence, their need to define themselves for themselves.

Unlike much coaching, which remains focused almost exclusively on the solution or on tasks to move from the current state to the outcome, existential coaching begins to create a shift in the perception the client holds of their life overall. In other words, it offers a transformational change that enables a person to alter the way they relate to the very act of being alive, to the fact of their existence.

Sometimes these moments are not disguised at all and, like a volcanic eruption, the existential conditions burst through the surface of everyday life. The client may find themselves uninterested in their mundane issues and instead they become preoccupied by questions such as 'What is the point of all this?', 'How can that have happened?', 'What kind of person do I want to be?'. And, just as a volcano reshapes the

Earth's crust for good, so the client's world will never be the same again.

Traditionally this has been the stomping ground of the psychotherapist but there is no obvious reason for this. It is possible to be functioning perfectly well, effective and emotionally healthy, yet still be confronting the core issues of existence and desirous of finding a new way to relate to your life. I believe that, as coaching spreads further into all aspects of life and reshapes the landscape of personal change, it will become ever more accepted that it offers a new way for people to explore their deeper desires to be happy, more purposeful and more authentic. And I believe that existential coaching offers a new way to achieve this.

Nick Bolton is the founder and director of Animas Institute, an organisation dedicated to training, advancing and promoting coaching through all levels of society.

www.animasinstitute.org



How is a client's procrastination around something that seems to matter a failure to remember that life comes to an end? How is a client's need to be unconditionally loved an attempt to deal with existential rather than interpersonal isolation? How is someone's lethargy simply a part of their fear of taking responsibility for their life?



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A day in the

Relationship coach and family therapist **Sue Sutcliffe** on attachments, 'unfinished business' and exploring new territory.

Yesterday was hard. The last session of the day was with a family enmeshed in the destructive dynamic of hurt, blame and resentment. They are struggling with the powerlessness of the victim, persecutor, rescuer cycle, as described so vividly in *The Drama Triangle*,¹ and so often it seems to be the child or adolescent who is presented as the problem (victim) and blamed (persecuted) for a regressive behaviour, while his/her parents play the role of rescuer and/or persecutor. Here I see the role of the coach as helping the family to see the bigger

picture: that the child's behaviour is not isolated and cannot be separated from the family dynamic but often may be illustrating what is not being expressed in the interaction between the other family members.

But today is different. Today the first session is with a young couple who still have so much of their lives ahead of them. They are both successful, independent graduates in their early 30s who want to make sure that they are as informed in their expectations of their future together as they would be if they were taking on a new job or moving home. The financial pre-nuptial contract is now accepted (where finances are deemed important enough) but emotional and behavioural negotiations are less commonly discussed. Yet, with people marrying later, when they will often both have careers and financial independence, reaching some sort of agreement in these areas would seem to be a logical way forward. The traditional roles of the past are no longer applicable when the woman is an equal earner, sometimes even the prime earner, and so expectations of who does what in the partnership may need to be revised.

Coaching here provides a forum for the exploration of these expectations and assumptions that can give each party the space to identify what is important to them today as opposed to what they may have been accustomed to in their families of origin. Discussions in this area can be particularly relevant in the case of same-sex partnerships or where the partners are from different countries, cultures, age groups and other variances, which occur more and more frequently in our diverse society. I feel this coaching facility needs to be offered to as wide a client base as possible as we are exploring new territory for which there is no tried and tested blueprint and the model offered by our parents is not always appropriate or constructive.

I am often saddened that, by the time some clients arrive in the counselling room, they have already tried all other approaches and are near their personal rock bottom. It would be so much less damaging if people could see therapy and coaching as preventative measures that increase awareness and self-reflection in order to avoid difficulties like those described above,

rather than as treatments or 'cures' after the damage has been done.

I am reminded of this with my next client: the wife in a longstanding partnership, who has 40 years of marriage under her belt but whose children have left the nest and now have their own families and for whom issues that have lain dormant for many of those 40 years are now coming to the surface. Here, our increased life expectancy plays a significant role, as there is still a future ahead for these two people that is not necessarily predicated on childcare, homemaking or, in some more fortunate cases, breadwinning – or even being together. Now people in their late 50s and early 60s find themselves with choices that were not readily available even a couple of generations ago. It is interesting to note that this is the only age range where divorces are on the increase – and, more often than not, the separation is instigated by the woman. We can deduce from this that women are looking for a change from the role of 'caretaker-in-chief' and feel they have the potential and wherewithal to adopt different lifestyles for themselves. But, again, we are venturing into unknown waters and it will be fascinating to see what is made of this extended chapter of our lives in years to come, and whether marriage for such a long life will continue to be seen as a viable option.

So how did I get into all this? As a child of liberal parents, I was taught from an early age to think openly and be accepting of difference. I was also sent to theatre/dance school to overcome intense shyness, and learned there the power of co-ordinating the mind and the body and our ability to regulate and manage our fears and anxieties through controlled breathing and somatic exercise. This was way before the development of 'mindfulness' but many of the lessons I learned at school resonate with the beliefs and practices of this now popular approach, and throughout my working life I have tried to incorporate the wellness of body and mind in a holistic and integrated way. During my married life I have spent over 15 years abroad, neither of my children were born in this country, and I have enjoyed the privilege of learning about different cultures with their different languages and customs and finding



life

ways of communicating that can surmount these differences and serve to demonstrate our common humanity.

These experiences have inspired and informed my interest in the human condition and, in particular, in the fact that so many of our feelings and responses are shared, whatever our race, culture or creed, whether on the level of the collective unconscious, as described by Jung,² or the transpersonal, which is so richly explored by Petruska Clarkson.³ (Children play the same, or very similar games, in playgrounds all over the world.)

I am, therefore, convinced that the manner of our early attachments in our family of origin largely prescribes how we relate in later life to family, friends, partners, colleagues and those who in any way differ from our personal 'norms'. From early family responses we learn our expectations of the external world and, if we felt an outsider or not good enough at home, this script will stay with us into adulthood unless we make a conscious effort to re-write it. One of the places where we can explore how to make different choices from those we may have learned in our families of origin is, I believe, in group therapy, where we can experience relating to people in different ways in a safe and contained environment and thereby give ourselves the opportunity to repair any damage that might have occurred in early childhood.

Yalom refers to group therapy as 'the corrective recapitulation of the primary family group; working through problems with a therapist and group members is dealing with unfinished business from long ago'.⁴ Part of my career as a therapist has been to teach in seminars and courses on group as well as individual therapy and, although students can often find the group work the most challenging aspect of training, it can often also be the most enlightening and constructive element of the process: 'It is the group that is the agent of change'.⁴

So, on to the last client of the day: this time a man who has just turned 40, who 'came out' as homosexual in his mid-20s but whose relationships have always been with men who have been unavailable to him in one way or another. Together we are exploring his need to

avoid intimacy, which is manifest in the choices he is making and the way in which he is perhaps setting himself up for the rejection he feared from his parents when they learned about his sexuality. Once again, responses learned in childhood may be affecting his ability to make free and independent choices as an adult and may, indeed, make it difficult for him to trust the intimacy of the therapeutic relationship.

The experience of practising individual, couple and family therapy in the counselling room and teaching and presenting externally has led me to combine the two roles under the umbrella of 'coaching'. While there are still times where the purely therapeutic approach is more appropriate and others where a pedagogic format is required, I feel that the coaching model is compatible with the needs of the majority of my clients. To meet these needs, whether as a coach or a therapist, I endeavour to encourage those I work with to adopt a way of relating to others that minimises avoidance and defensiveness and is based on a trust in a common humanity and the hope that we can learn to embrace the challenges of a world of diversity and change.

As John Donne wrote: 'No man is an Island - entire of itself: every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main.'⁵

Sue Sutcliffe is an integrative psychotherapist and relationship coach specialising in family and couple therapy as well as individual and group work.
sue.sutcliffe@96harleypsychotherapy.co.uk

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The **Thinking Global** series is drawing together a diverse collection of contributions to build a body of knowledge describing international coaching in all its facets and from multiple perspectives.

In the first phase of the series we explored 'global mindedness', creativity in China and embodied leadership in South Africa. Our second phase begins with organisational development on an international scale - not in a multinational corporate culture but in international development.

Jennifer McCanna is somewhere near the beginning of her inspiring journey to see coaching embedded throughout every level in VSO, the international development organisation: stretching across continents to over 33 countries, reaching staff from every part of the globe and making 'less talking, more listening and asking questions' a culture that is shared across everyone in the organisation.

What would our world be like if people listened more, were committed to clarifying without judgment, and generated work in partnership based on a shared intention for prosperity for all?

Jo Birch is series editor for Thinking Global.

Thinking global



Power through the people

coaching and international development at VSO

Jennifer McCanna, leadership coach with VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas), describes the organisation's approach to international development - the 'theory of change' - and explores how this can be applied to developing its own workforce through coaching.

In my role as a learning and development practitioner at VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas), there are many opportunities during my day to be inspired by the impact VSO volunteers can have on the lives of poor and marginalised communities. But it's not only the work of our volunteers that inspires me: for the last 18 months I have been acting as a leadership coach for a range of equally inspirational VSO employees.

What's particularly interesting is how using coaching with staff mirrors the approach that VSO takes to development. VSO is the world's leading international development organisation, working to fight poverty through volunteers in 33 of the world's poorest countries. Those volunteers are working with local organisations on the ground - hospitals, teacher training colleges, government ministries and grassroots non-government organisations (NGOs) - in response to in-country demand.

The more my own coaching practice deepens, the more I am convinced that the work I do as a coach, helping individuals learn, develop, grow and change their behaviour without finding solutions for them, reflects what VSO volunteers do every day on the ground. They take a 'coaching approach', facilitating change by working in partnership with local communities, enabling those communities to learn, develop and ultimately provide a better life for their people. At VSO we call this approach to international development our 'theory of change' and we know it works. So how can we take this successful approach to international development and use it as a way of developing our own employees?



What people want to have happen

VSO was set up in 1958 when Alec and Mora Dickson recruited and sent 16 volunteers in response to a letter from the Bishop of Portsmouth asking for people to teach English overseas. Much has changed since then: we are now an international organisation recruiting volunteers from seven countries around the globe. In the last 55 years we've sent over 40,000 volunteers overseas, who have worked to improve lives through better education, raising standards of health care and building the skills that individuals need to earn a living.

We recruit professionals with experience in a number of areas: not just teachers and health professionals but also engineers, IT specialists, people involved in business development and organisational development, and even town planners or social workers when they're needed. When you look more closely at what they all do on a day-to-day basis, you see this 'coaching approach' coming through, regardless of which profession they come from or which partner they work with.

VSO volunteer Patricia Gilhooley spent a year in Western Ethiopia working as a continuous professional development adviser, encouraging the use of active learning methods in several primary schools and a teacher training college. More than half of the world's out-of-school children live in just 15 countries, and nearly three million of them are in Ethiopia.

Says Patricia: 'Children in Ethiopia struggle to take a pen to school and lots of children don't have the set textbook that they need for a subject. So there is a lack of resources on so many levels; everything from having water and electricity in the classroom to having a book that you can look at.

'Students are used to being quite passive in the classroom and lectured to, which doesn't encourage creative thinking. I think the active learning methods I am encouraging are actually making people think and question, which is very useful for future generations in fostering creativity. It will stimulate innovation and contribute to the networking and connecting of ideas, which will make the future quite a different place from the Ethiopia that we see today.'

The 13 primary schools with which Patricia worked are linked to a teacher training college, so her role was to support and build relationships between the college and the primary schools to help improve the quality of teaching in both.

As Patricia says: 'A big part of VSO is not to come and inflict things on people, but to come and listen to what people want to have happen here. And therefore VSO volunteers work closely with Ethiopia's Ministry of Education. I'm much happier that we're trying to support what people want to have happen in this country.

'The big impact is seeing the difference in how teachers teach in the school. Not everybody has changed, but I feel there are enough teachers in

each of the schools I've been to now that there will be sustained change, because they believe in the changes they've seen and I think they will be enthusiastic enough to spread that. I also think, at the college, the teacher educators have a different view of how to train future teachers. Their work will have a long-term impact on the students of the future.'

Over nine months, Patricia worked with over 300 teachers, who worked with more than 12,000 students to improve the quality of teaching by spreading the innovative use of low-resource materials and active learning methods. Whether it's at ground level, 'encouraging people to think and question', or at organisational level, working with partners to instigate sustained change, the work that Patricia does as a volunteer and the work coaches do with clients share many characteristics.

VSO's theory of change

Every volunteer's experience will be unique, depending on the community they live in, the partner organisation they work with and the people they meet. But volunteer placements have something very important in common: the work that each volunteer does should be a catalyst for sustainable change. In a similar way, in our role as a coach, we may work with a client for as little as six sessions but we aim to see behavioural change that will improve the

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Coaching is about working in partnership to facilitate learning and behavioural change that will be long-lasting... and this is something that we have 55 years' experience of doing in some of the world's poorest countries

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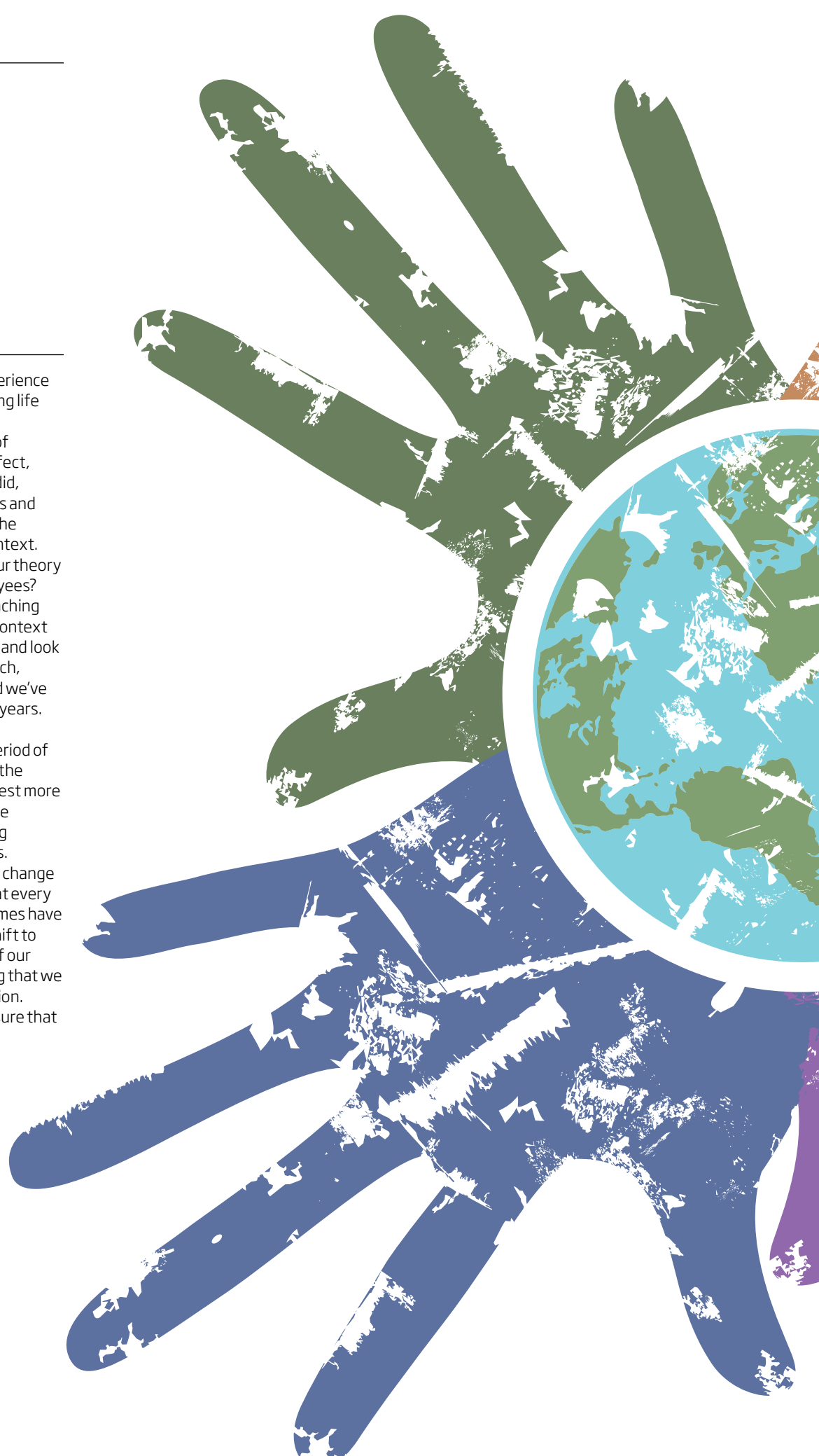
effectiveness of that client and the experience they have in their working or non-working life long after our relationship has ended.

So, although we call this our 'theory of change', the work that VSO does is, in effect, taking a 'coaching approach' as Patricia did, working alongside partner organisations and local communities to help them deliver the change that is right for them, in their context.

How can we apply the principles of our theory of change to developing our own employees? There have been successful one-off coaching initiatives in the past. But the external context demands that we now change up a gear and look again at a more holistic coaching approach, reflecting this capacity-building method we've advocated in our development work for years.

Like most public and third sector organisations, VSO is going through a period of change. As many charities are finding in the current financial climate, we need to invest more in fundraising and, with that, support the comprehensive evaluation and reporting requirements of a wider range of donors.

We are mid-way through three major change programmes that will affect the way that every one of us at VSO works. These programmes have many outcomes, and one of these is a shift to place our country offices at the centre of our work, as our core business unit, ensuring that we are operating as a truly global organisation. Investing in change on this scale will ensure that



our people, systems and processes are organised to maximise our impact.

At such times in organisations, employees can feel overwhelmed, over-stretched and demotivated. We are asking employees across VSO to change the way they work, adopt new systems, processes and roles, work within new organisational structures, reach increasingly ambitious targets and generally 'do more with less'. This presents a high risk of disengagement, just when we need our employees to be more engaged than ever. So how can coaching help?

Coaching's contributions

There are several definitions of coaching. The International Coaching Federation describes it as 'partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximise their personal and professional potential'.

Coaching is not simply an exercise in employee wellbeing that has no impact on the bottom line; nor is it a remedial intervention reserved for under-performing staff. In fact, one of the biggest impacts will come from focusing on the high performers, in order to maximise their potential, and the potential of the people they manage and work with.

Just as VSO's international development work aims to have a sustainable impact on communities around the globe, as coaches we know that effective coaching engenders sustainable behavioural change in individuals: in how we manage people, build relationships, solve problems, make decisions, communicate with our stakeholders or organise our life. Really effective coaching achieves this by increasing emotional intelligence and supporting the development of self-knowledge around our strengths and areas where we can develop. By improving the impact that individuals and teams can have through behavioural change, we improve the impact of the organisation's performance.

Internally, VSO is already seeing the impact of coaching on behaviour change. Peter Bradley,

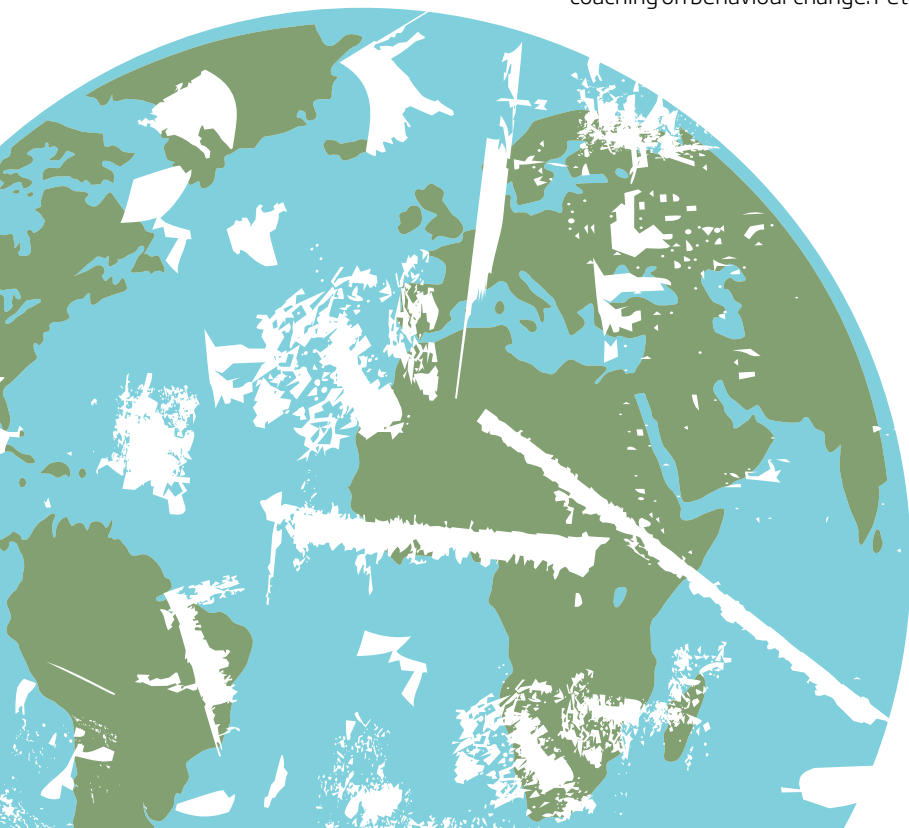
Placement and Partnerships Manager at VSO UK, says: 'As well as having a manager who takes a coaching approach, I have an external coach who has helped me manage stress better and work on leadership skills and understanding. I am definitely more decisive, more strategic and better at managing people than I would have been without working with my external coach, and my manager, in this way. Feedback about me has improved, and hopefully I'm delivering more as a result.'

And if a manager feels they are being supported and developed to deliver more, they are more likely to stick around. A study by Cedar of 280 employees from the private, public and third sectors found that employees likely to be leaving in the next 12 months were twice as likely to rate their manager a weak coach. In addition, 61 per cent of staff in the study who were likely to leave in the next 12 months rated their manager as not providing any career development support - support which often would form part of a coaching conversation.¹

As our people are developed and stretched through coaching, VSO is forming a pipeline of future leaders, contributing cost effectively to the future of the organisation. By increasing the capacity of our staff we are again mirroring VSO's approach to development, where capacity-building in local partner organisations is often a core objective.

The effect of coaching on our current leaders is easily seen by anyone who has experienced the challenges of being at the top of an organisation. Coaching provides a space to reflect, to aid decision-making and to be challenged. Being coached as a leader also ensures that the culture is set right from the top of the organisation, for organisational culture shifts can only occur if there is role modelling from the top: 'Being coached myself has helped me remember the value of coaching to motivate my own team to make their own decisions and be a really effective senior management team,' as Chea Vantha, VSO Country Director, Cambodia, says.

But perhaps most persuasively for any organisation, coaching will have an impact on the bottom line. There are numerous studies to corroborate this: the International Coaching Federation's 2009 *Global Coaching Client Study*



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The more my own coaching practice deepens, the more I am convinced that the work I do as a coach, helping individuals learn, develop, grow and change their behaviour, without finding solutions for them, is a reflection of what VSO volunteers do every day on the ground

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reported a median return of seven times the initial investment. Nineteen per cent of organisations in the study indicated a measured ROI of at least 5,000 per cent.²

Theory of change in practice

So what will VSO's holistic coaching approach look like? How does it differ from simply hiring a cadre of external coaches? For me it means an approach to coaching that is demonstrated, and has impact, at all levels of the organisation. It means introducing a wide range of coaching interventions that will help employees support each other in their personal development, problem-solving and overall effectiveness.

At VSO we are talking about four main strands: a manager-as-coach training programme; an executive coaching programme for our global leadership team; coaching for other leaders and managers provided by me, the internal coach, and a pool of willing coaches able to offer occasional pro-bono coaching work; and something we're loosely calling 'peer coaching.' This might include action learning sets, such as the groups we've set up as part of our development programme for new managers, or it might be the implementation of peer coaching tools within existing groups and regular meetings.

The formal aspects of our coaching programme, manager-as-coach training and coaching support for our global leaders will form the bedrock of our coaching journey. But what will, arguably, be the most impactful are the informal ways in which we use a coaching approach, for which these other aspects will pave the way. That fourth strand, 'peer coaching', seems inauspicious, but it is here that we will cover the daily interactions between colleagues, both formal and informal and at all levels of the organisation. The balance of advocacy and enquiry is one of the three pillars of Meta Learning devised by Marcial Losada, who suggests that an even balance of advocacy and enquiry is present in the most high performing teams.³ We can translate this aspirational ratio into 'less talking, more listening and asking questions' – which sounds familiar to us as coaches. So coaching is not just about formal interventions but is an approach that can be used by colleagues in all their interactions to help create better functioning teams.

As we embark on this exciting journey, we will encounter the same challenges faced by other organisations similar to VSO: delivering effective learning to a globally dispersed workforce on a limited budget; how best to embed and sustain the learning, and the thorny issue of evaluating the impact of hiring external coaches. But, by working in partnership with talented external coaches, I trust we will come up with the right answers for VSO.

After all, coaching is about trusting that the person you're working with knows the answer. It's about working in partnership to facilitate learning and behavioural change that will be long-lasting. And this is something that we have 55 years' experience of doing in some of the world's poorest countries. VSO's development work, as Patricia says, is also about 'listening to what people want to happen', trusting that the communities in which we work know what approach is best for them. It's about working alongside people to facilitate change that lives on for many years.

Implementing a holistic coaching approach at VSO will not be straightforward, with perhaps the greatest challenge being the shift in mindset needed. But at VSO we understand a challenge: last year our international volunteers contributed around 443,000 days' work in our programmes around the world. In order to best support poor and marginalised communities across the globe, we need to support our own people, volunteers and employees, to be the best that they can be. And what better approach to help us do that than coaching?

To find out more about volunteering opportunities with VSO, go to www.vso.org.uk/volunteer. For more information about VSO's coaching programme or to get involved, email Jennifer. mccanna@vso.org.uk

Jennifer McCanna works at international development charity VSO both as a learning and development practitioner and as an internal leadership coach. Jennifer has 13 years' experience of working in charities, initially as a fundraiser and manager of fundraising teams, and is a member of the ICF (International Coaching Federation).

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On the coa



Edna Murdoch,
Director of the
Coaching Supervision
Academy, in
conversation with
Linda Aspey

LA *What drew you to coaching and how did your journey start?*

EM My professional background is in education, psychotherapy (gestalt, transpersonal), stress management and clinical supervision. When I came upon coaching in the late 90s I realised that this was a profession in which I would be able to use many of the skills I already had. I was also very attracted to the energy of coaching, without knowing much about it. Nevertheless, it took some time for me to make the transition into a coaching mindset and not to go seeking for problems. In my first coaching sessions I referred to Laura Whitworth's book *Co-active Coaching*¹ – in particular, the key coaching questions at the back, which I would refer to frequently during sessions to make sure I was on track. I don't suppose I was very present, but I made sure that I was not falling back on a therapeutic style.

I trained initially with CoachU for a few years and have subsequently trained in Constellations work. I have worked with Judith Hemmings on Family Constellations.² This remains one of the most powerful therapeutic approaches I know – it's a systemic healing approach used in families and in organisations. Constellations works with a whole picture of the individual as part of a larger set of systems such as family, community or ethnic group. Using members of a group, the facilitator creates a moving map of the issue at hand and resolution follows as clarity emerges and the 'orders of love', as defined by Bert Hellinger,³ are restored. It's a bit like creating a living sculpture, with each part of the system being restored to its true place and feeling as resolution emerges. If I wanted yet another career, this is the one I would choose!

Fundamentally, my professional life has centred on working with people and supporting their growth and development. Everyone who works in those fields realises quite quickly that learning about oneself, developing oneself,

learning how we impact on the conversations that we have are a key part of our skill. So all the personal development work I had done previously – and still do – was very useful indeed as I edged into a new profession.

LA *How did your career evolve from that point?*

EM I had been self-employed from 1983, running my own business, working as a psychotherapist, a trainer for the London Borough of Bexley, doing stress management for Channel 4, Sussex Police and the PSNI – the Police Service of Northern Ireland. This latter assignment was an eye-opener: standard stress management work did not touch the levels of pain and distress we encountered in the Northern Ireland police force.

I remember being surprised at how nervous I felt with my first few coaching clients, even though I had been working one-on-one for many years. But the new emphasis on moving forwards, on working on change and development, required quite a different mind-set.

As I worked my way up in coaching I began to see that my key area of expertise was working with people in midlife, particularly executive women for whom the desire to regain a sense of the feminine and of balance is often acute. I became an associate of the Full Potential Group and, over a number of years, honed my skills as a coach, working within organisations and delivering coaching training to managers.

LA *What influenced your decision to work in your current role?*

EM Currently, I am a coach supervisor and I run the Coaching Supervision Academy (CSA), which trains professionals in supervision worldwide. As a new coach in 1999, I automatically looked around for a supervisor and, to my surprise, there were none. At least, I was unable to find one. No doubt there were people like me, already

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qualified, experienced supervisors who were working with coaches, but I was unaware of them. At the same time, in conversation with my colleagues, I noticed that I was often drawn to supervising them. It was obvious to me that not only did I need a coach supervisor but that everyone around me would benefit from having a space for reflection on their work. And so I deliberately set out on the path to becoming a coach supervisor - not that the profession of coach supervisor existed yet! So for about a year I supervised some of the top coaches in the UK and I worked for free. My only request of them was that they give me feedback along the way and a reference at the end of our work together. That year of supervising was a considerable learning experience as I began to build a practice that truly served coaches. The Coaching Supervision Academy grew from these beginnings; it was one of the first organisations to train executive coaches in supervision. We now have an international graduate community of over 250 accredited coach supervisors.

LA *What do you most enjoy about the work and what are the challenges for you personally?*

EM There is much to enjoy when working in conversation with one's fellow professionals where each person has a commitment to learning and to increasing skills and resourcefulness. The fundamental nature of supervisory enquiry means that the work itself encourages opportunity and possibility and can open both parties - the supervisor and the supervisee - into a space of deep learning and connection. There is an element of joy in the best learning environments and I am always pleased when supervisees say to me, 'I had no idea this could be such fun!' In supervision we think together, co-create and use the imagination to increase insight and allow the emergence of deep learning. It is always a pleasure to

accompany fellow professionals in these explorations.

It has been very challenging for those of us in coaching supervision to get to the stage where there is now almost universal acceptance of this practice - at least in Europe. For those of us who pioneered coaching supervision, it took much education before coaches and sponsors really began to understand the value of this work and to accept it as an essential part of their ongoing development and support. It is only last year, for example, that the International Coach Federation finally acknowledged that coaching supervision is a specific practice, distinct from mentoring and worthy of support. Over the last two years at CSA, we have noticed that internationally many more professionals are looking for supervisors or want to be trained in supervision. More companies are now insisting that their coaches are supervised, even to the extent of training their own coach supervisors.

I think that one of the main challenges that a coach or supervisor faces is essentially the challenge with oneself. I say this because in both professions we are the key instrument of our work. So how I prepare for a session, how I show up in that session, who I am in every moment of that session have a lot to do with the quality of conversation that we will be having together. At CSA our mantra is, 'Who you are is how you coach'. We can also say, 'Who you are is how you supervise'. We can extend that of course to say 'Who you are is how we do anything at all!' Coaching is very successful in creating models and tools; however, I do think that, in our attraction to the 'new', we can forget the importance of the relational qualities in our professional conversations and that self-understanding is essential to that. I would love to see more personal development focus in coaching training.

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At CSA our mantra is, ‘Who you are is how you coach’. We can also say, ‘Who you are is how you supervise’ ”

LA *Coaching supervision has become popular over the last 10 years or so. Do you have a view as to why?*

EM It works! It develops and supports coaches hugely. Many of those who employ coaches are now asking for supervision for their people, as they know its value. Coaching has evolved significantly from its early beginnings as a simple process for enabling people to get from A to B. As the profession has developed and deepened, so coaches have wanted and needed the space to look at their increasingly complex work. Many of us are working in environments that are immensely pressurised and demanding, with complex contracts and swiftly changing workforces. Having space and time to reflect with a supervisor is a great resource. To work without this level of developmental support is simply not healthy any more.

LA *Do you have a particular philosophy that is present in your work?*

EM Much of my attention in supervisory work, whether with individuals or with groups, is on what is going on inside me, between us and in the system in which we are working. For me, this requires that we create a quality of presence, of awareness and engagement so that the work is as clean and effective as possible. It may sound a little soft but the words I would use most in terms of my philosophy for this work are ‘professional love’. I think of Martin Buber and his tremendous insights into the ‘I-Thou’ connection.⁴ He was both profound and poetic in his understanding of what made our conversations work. Today, neuroscience and interpersonal neurobiology are confirming what Buber understood all those years ago – that who and how we are in our professional conversations greatly affects outcomes. So, as a professional, I know that to use the intelligence of the heart, to understand how the heart and the brain work together, ensures that I come to

my work with other people with a fair degree of alertness, openness, enthusiasm, positive intent – and a calm amygdala! Those qualities seem to me to be fundamental ingredients for any coach or coach supervisor, so that all the marvellous tools and technologies of our work can be released to their fullest potential in the service of the individual or group in front of us.

LA *Who/what is the biggest influence in your professional life and what has been your most memorable learning experience?*

EM My first memorable learning experience was a somewhat shattering one. My first essay in theology was returned to me with the comment, ‘This is nothing but a bloody harvest sermon; go away and use your mind’. Fortunately, I heard that I had a mind as much as that I had written a poor essay. My tutor got no marks for feedback skills, but I heard the challenge in his words. Professional training has provided me with some wonderful teachers – among them Barbara Somers and Ian Gordon Brown at the Centre for Transpersonal Psychology. Remarkable people, highly skilled, wise, mature and full of naughty fun! I spent three years in their good company, absorbing all that I could from these ‘giants’. After that, I trained with Noel Cobb at The London Convivium for Archetypal Studies and that was perhaps the most memorable learning experience my life – so far. Noel broke all the rules about learning and teaching. We sat at his feet for 10 precious weekends a year, in a small library in Hampstead, and Noel simply talked all day. He would occasionally bring in some kind of visual aid or a piece of music that would illustrate what he spoke about but, other than that, he simply talked to us. As the days wore on, many of the group found themselves lying on the floor as a relief from the hard seats in the library. And still we didn’t care! I had never before in my life been in such a learning

environment where everything in my being just tingled with excitement – new ideas, new understanding, new awareness. Everything I had ever learned was connecting and coming together in an exciting intellectual/metaphysical brew.

LA *How do you take care of yourself in the work and how do you switch off each day?*

EM To take care of myself in the work, I have supervision and conversations with peers where I can both exchange ideas and get excited about new ones. I switch off by having fun with people I love, walking on the South Downs, listening to jazz and playing with our animals.

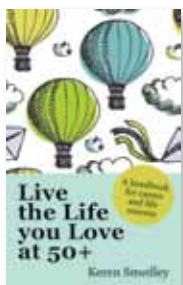
LA *What are you currently reading?*

EM *Neuropsychology for Coaches* by Brown and Brown; *More Time to Think* by Nancy Kline, and *Ensouled Language* by Harrod Buhner.

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On the bookshelf: What you're reading



Live the life you love at 50+: a handbook for career and life success

Keren Smedley

McGraw Hill 2013

ISBN: 978-0077145972

Pb: £11.99 (also available as an e-book)

The 50+ generation, Keren Smedley points out, has no blueprints. This generation hasn't done things the way their parents did, and is now faced with challenges for which there's no precedent (life expectancy into their 90s, ageing parents, changing attitudes to male and female roles, more divorce and step-parenting, no fixed retirement age and inadequate pension arrangements, to name a few). This book targets the self-help market, and also hopes to appeal to coaching professionals.

It is an activity book: the text is peppered with tasks, 'ask yourself' lists and exercises. Smedley uses case studies of six workshop participants in their 50s and 60s to demonstrate different responses and bring to life some of the exercises.

The book is divided into four main parts. Part one ('The Big Question'), invites you to look at how you'd really like your life to be, before moving into parts two ('Career'), three ('Lifestyle') and four ('Health and Wellbeing'). I liked the visioning ideas described, and the useful emphasis on releasing expectations that come from a different era (your childhood). I was

disappointed, however, that the 'big questions' with which many in this age group grapple - existential questions of meaning and purpose, coming to terms with loss and mortality, what Jung described as 'the developmental tasks of the second half of life' - receive barely a nod.

To be fair, this isn't what the book sets out to do. As the full title suggests, the focus is firmly on getting your career and life how you want it; it's for action, not philosophy or poetry.

Within each topic, Smedley highlights the changes that have taken place since her workshop participants were children and the challenges they face now. From this platform she introduces activities to address those challenges.

The range of exercises is bold and eclectic, drawn from many sources. For example it includes some 'know your style' type questionnaires; a step-by-step guide to working with your inner child to release old blocks; confidence-building using NLP 'magic circles', and an exercise for releasing unhealthy guilt feelings by writing them down and setting them on fire. There is even a five-point guide in the Money chapter to using Emotional Freedom Technique to create positive feelings. Some might feel this is stretching self-help to its limits, and it is reassuring that the reader is encouraged to try working with an EFT-trained professional.

While the scope is ambitious, it is hard to avoid the sense of skimming the surface of some potentially deep waters, and the coach will rely on his/her own experience and training to make best use of the exercises. Self-helpers are invited to give the exercises a try and find what works for them: 'if you find it helps do it again, if not move on to something else.' However, it is sometimes unclear why a particular exercise is being used, which may make it confusing for the self-help audience.

If you are a coach looking for techniques to help clients develop a positive attitude,

challenge common stereotypes about ageing and revise outdated, limiting beliefs, this book could be a useful resource to trigger ideas. Would I recommend it as a self-help book? For those who like a positive approach, enjoy trying new ideas and are not burdened by the deeper questions of life, there are gems inside this book to be mined.

Cathy Warren is a BACP member, counsellor, coach and trainer.

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As the title suggests, the focus is firmly on getting your career and life how you want it; it's for action, not philosophy or poetry

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Gifted people's highly positive potentials are emphasised, and the authors demonstrate that they value and support gifted people developing and heeding their own inner guidance rather than being controlled by anyone else



Gifted workers: hitting the target

Noks Nauta and Sieuwke Ronner

Shaker Media 2013

Pb: €18.50

ISBN: 978-9048900978

The higher a person's intelligence, the more benefit to their career, right? Not necessarily, explain Dutch authors Noks Nauta and Sieuwke Ronner. And to what extent are coaches aware of, and able to identify and work appropriately with, the kinds of issues that can manifest between a person with top two per cent intelligence - who can be termed 'gifted' - and his/her working environment?

This fairly short book (168 pages) begins with a preface (essential reading) that contains a wonderful opening quotation that introduces you to the kind of cases you will meet in the book, and a well-written and well-informed summary of what 'gifted' means. The book's main body comprises 11 chapter-long studies of challenging cases whose outcomes range from successful to inconclusive. This is followed by a summary and discussion chapter and, finally, a chapter containing brief background information on topics featured and references for relevant literature, websites and international organisations. All of the case material derives from the authors' own work in occupational medicine, work and organisational psychology and coaching but, to protect anonymity, the

studies were compiled as composites. Each case study chapter has a title that pithily encapsulates that case's dominant issue, and each includes case history, analysis of and reflection on the situation (usually with focus on specific cognitive and emotional elements, and always showing links between the individual's personal life and professional life), and action-oriented material. All except one conclude with a (slightly repetitive) 'recap' section. The opinions of several multi-disciplinary professionals and examples of their actual work with the cases are presented. Very brief demonstrations are given of working with various useful ideas, theories and approaches.

The title of the book relates to a metaphor that is given prominence in the book, in which gifted workers who lose their direction are likened to 'unguided missiles', for which the positive opposite offered is 'hitting the target'. What is meant is that giftedness entails powerful abilities that, if not suitably channelled, can have destructive consequences. However, I find this central metaphor significantly problematic. It confuses 'unguided missiles' (ie ballistic missiles, which are fully capable of hitting the target) with missiles that are 'off course' (not heading for the intended target). Also, the trouble with missiles is that they are inherently dangerous and cause destruction, even when they do 'hit the target', and even guided missiles are not self-directed but are controlled remotely. It is clear from the book, though, that these implications are not what the authors intend to associate with gifted people. Gifted people's highly positive potentials are emphasised, and the authors demonstrate that they value and support gifted people developing and heeding their own inner guidance rather than being controlled by anyone else. The cover artwork - portraying a falling parachutist - suggests a different, but un-referred-to, metaphor, and I find this confusion somewhat

compromises the effectiveness of the book's image and message.

This confusion aside (which might have resulted from the translation from a different language and culture), the book is overall very accessible. Its strengths and its importance lie in its raising the profile of a minority population that is very little recognised or understood; its model of multi-disciplinary collaboration; its attention to the overlap between presenting issues and possible psychiatric diagnoses, and its showing of how a coach's work might interact with other areas of knowledge and practice, such as employment and benefits law. There is much here that should be thought-provoking for the UK coach on the knowledge base and professional network required for competent practice and how systems and professional roles in the UK relate to those in the Netherlands and other countries.

Sonja Esterhuysen Falck is a psychotherapist, executive coach and trainer who specialises in working with high ability/gifted/high IQ adults.
www.eckquipped.co.uk
sonja@eckquipped.co.uk

If you would like to contribute a book review in a future issue of *Coaching Today*, please contact the editor at editorial@bacpcoaching.co.uk



New coach: reflections from a learning journal

Lis Paice
Open University Press 2013
Pb: £19.99
ISBN: 978-0335246885

Whether you are a coach just starting out, a more experienced coach or a trainer of coaches, I would highly recommend *New Coach*.

The book is written more in the style of a reflective journal rather than offering hardcore advice on what to do and how to do it. The author takes us through her own reflections on being a coach with a real sense of warmth and connection. She opens by explaining to the reader that she has used the concept of a 'traveller's tale', which really enabled me to immerse myself in the experiences that were being shared. As the author is sharing her own experience, the result is that the narrative comes across as honest and authentic.

The book is also very useful for trainers; it will give students an insightful account into the many aspects of setting up as coach and the pitfalls and learning that lie before the individual embarking on their first coaching steps.

I also liked the way the book progresses, moving from the initial learning stage of being a coach through to key topics and areas that are pertinent to coaching. The contents make this clear, with titles of sections ranging from 'Who

needs training' and 'Beginners luck' through to 'Coming out of the comfort zone' and 'Skills for life'.

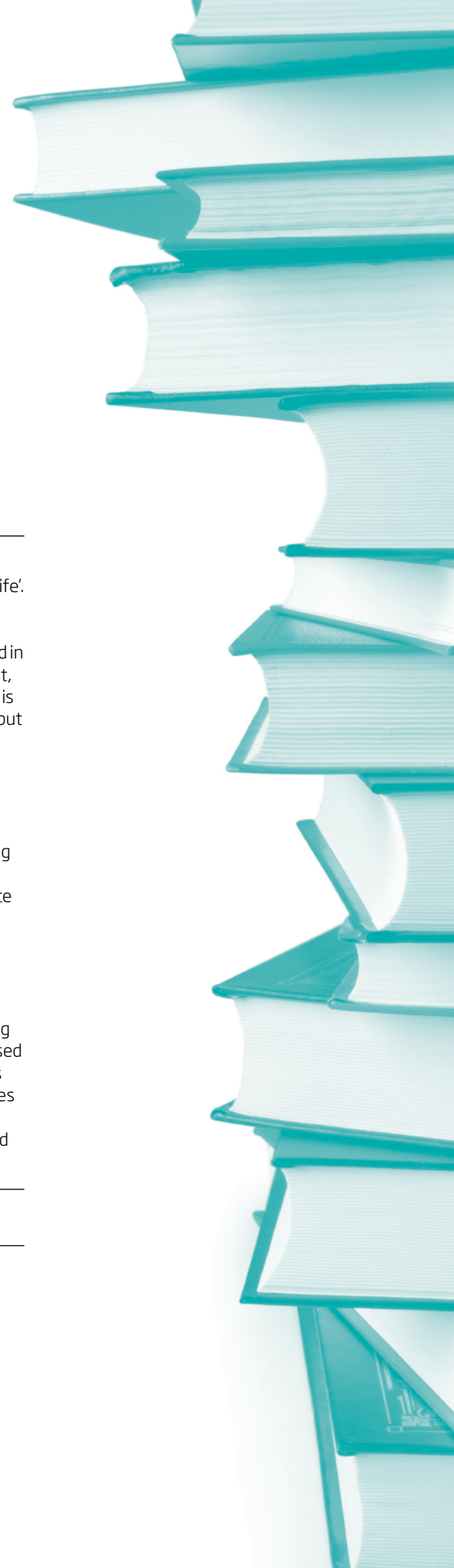
The simplicity of this book also appealed to me. Many books on coaching seem to deliver messages with complex analogies and steeped in theory. I found *New Coach* very simple to digest, with clear, descriptive language throughout. It is a pleasure to read and does not feel academic but warm, engaging and easy to manage in one sitting.

There are also some very useful light bulb symbols throughout the book, which highlight key points from that section and deliver key messages in a simple way. It was also refreshing to see that there are some very useful times when giving advice is permissible or appropriate and there is a section of the book dedicated to this.

The book is also edited by Jenny Rogers and this has given it credibility and status among other coaching publications.

Reading *New Coach* did not feel like studying in any way; it was much more like being immersed in a shared experience. I can easily imagine this book being on the bookshelves of many coaches and, importantly, not gathering dust but being used and shared among friends, colleagues and peers.

Paul Kensett is Director of Education at the Animas Institute.



Research



Our regular
update from
research columnist
Barry McInnes

Defining coach maturity

In the process of scouting for potential items for inclusion for this column, I came across an interesting proposition from Professors David Clutterbuck and Dave Megginson regarding the concept of what they term 'coach maturity'.¹ Given that it was originally posted on the EMCC website in December 2010, and appears to be an archived item, it seems entirely appropriate that the topic should itself have had some time to mature.

The professorial pair suggest that the traditional notions of what may constitute quality in coaches are far too simplistic, potentially divisive and do not relate to the actual difference that coaches can make in people's lives. These include the possession of certificates or diplomas, holding accreditation, client satisfaction and fee scales.

They propose instead a model for exploring the idea of coach maturity that very much resonated with me, and I imagine will with many of you. The model proposes a developing depth of maturity that spans four levels:

- 1 models-based
- 2 process-based
- 3 philosophy or discipline-based
- 4 systemic eclectic.

The models-based coach is one who is likely to be new to the field and to welcome the sense of safety offered by a closely defined approach. As Clutterbuck and Megginson put it: 'This type of coaching is characterised by mechanistic conversations, where following the model is more important than exploring the client's world.'

Process-based approaches allow for more flexibility, and may be thought of as 'a structured linking of related techniques and models'. The coach may have a number of specific tools in their possession to assist the client, but their toolbag is likely to be relatively limited.

The philosophy or discipline-based coach will offer a wider range of responses to client needs, operating within a broad set of assumptions about helping and human development. These may still be applied mechanistically, however, and what mitigates against this 'is the coach's ability to reflect on his or her practice, both while coaching and after each coaching session'.

The fourth approach is what the authors term systemic eclectic. Coaches working within this framework will be flexible and broad-ranging in their ways of working, will have many tools at their disposal, and will use them in a very conscious way to adapt their way of being to the needs of each client. Despite their bulging toolkit, Clutterbuck and Megginson suggest: '... they hardly ever use tools. When they do, it is subtly and integrated almost seamlessly into the conversation. Indeed, they allow the conversation to happen, holding the client in the development of insight and steering with only the lightest, almost imperceptible of touches.'

In terms of my therapy practice, I have a huge problem with the notion that my qualifications, my BACP accreditation, my inclusion on the Register or, indeed, my fees have any bearing on whether I offer a safe and effective service to my clients. Clutterbuck and Megginson offer a vision of a mature coach that resonates far more with what I aspire to be as a practitioner, whether that's as therapist, coach or hybrid. What would it take to develop?

That flash of inspiration

William Stukely, the man who penned Sir Isaac Newton's memoirs, recounts the story of how Newton told him of perhaps the most famous 'Aha' moment in history, which led to the formulation of the law of gravitational attraction.²

'After dinner, the weather being warm, we went into the garden and drank tea [sic], under the shade of some apple trees... he told me, he

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It's hard to escape the creeping tendrils of neuroscience into the areas of therapy and coaching, and I admit to being both fascinated and deflated by the way in which science seems to be reducing our conscious minds to little more than a bunch of neurons firing off

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was just in the same situation, as when formerly, the notion of gravitation came into his mind. It was occasion'd by the fall of an apple, as he sat in contemplative mood. Why should that apple always descend perpendicularly to the ground, thought he to himself...'

'As he sat in contemplative mood...' This is also known as gazing into the middle distance or staring out of the window rather than paying attention in maths class. If only I had known then what I know now about the way that creativity and inspiration occur, I could have developed an impressive array of responses to justify my inattention. I have my doubts, however, about how well 'I am awaiting the arrival of a gamma spike that will fire the neural pathway to cement my understanding of this concept' would have been received.

It's hard to escape the creeping tendrils of neuroscience into the areas of therapy and coaching, and I have to admit to being at once completely fascinated and rather deflated by the way in which science seems to be reducing our conscious minds to little more than a bunch of neurons firing off. But it is the fascinated part of me that responds to the insights provided by neuroscience when it comes to inspiration, insight and related phenomena.

In a recent LinkedIn post,³ Daniel Goleman outlined how the mapping of activity in the brain is helping us to understand what happens during moments of insight. It appears that: 'If you measure EEG brain waves during a creative moment, it turns out there is very high gamma activity that spikes 300 milliseconds before the answer comes to us. Gamma activity indicates the binding together of neurons, as far-flung brain cells connect in a new neural network - as when a new association emerges. Immediately after that gamma spike, the new idea enters our consciousness.'

A recent BBC Horizon programme broadcast on 19 March⁴ reinforced this and other messages

about our creative brain and how insight works and how we can develop our capacity for it. The answer, according to Goleman, is to immerse yourself deeply in the area to which you need a solution or insight; then, either literally or metaphorically, to gaze out of the window into the middle distance. It seems I had the right idea all along!

Has your chewing gum lost its flavour?

Finally, for those moments when you require linear thinking, focus and concentration (ie when

you've stopped gazing out of the window), I offer a simple and inexpensive solution to boost your capacity to maintain focus. It requires that you put on your shoes, take a walk to your corner shop, and equip yourself with a simple confectionery item.

In research recently published in the *British Journal of Health Psychology*,⁵ researchers from Cardiff University outline the discovery that chewing gum can help you stay focused for longer on tasks that require continuous monitoring.



The study involved 38 participants who were split into two groups. Both completed a 30-minute audio task that involved listening to a list of numbers from one to nine being read out in a random manner. Participants were required to detect sequences of odd-even-odd numbers, such as 7-2-1, and were scored on how accurately and quickly they were able to do this. They also completed questionnaires on their mood both before and after the task.

The results showed that participants who chewed gum had quicker reaction times and more accurate results than those who did not. This pattern became more marked towards the latter parts of the task. As the researchers explain: 'Interestingly, participants who didn't chew gum performed slightly better at the beginning of the task but were overtaken by the end. This suggests that chewing gum helps us focus on tasks that require continuous monitoring over a longer amount of time.'

So if you've ever been mesmerised, as I have, by Sir Alex Ferguson's energetic touchline mastication and wondered whether it was simply to dissipate nervous energy, now you know. He's known intuitively what research is now discovering, that chewing gum helps him stay focused for the full 90 minutes.

The title of the journal article, in case you're interested, is 'Chewing gum moderates the vigilance decrement'. I couldn't have put it better myself.

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Clutterbuck and Megginson offer a vision of a mature coach that resonates far more with what I aspire to be as a practitioner

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Professional development days

The third series of BACP Professional Development Days (PDDs) are well under way, with a total of 10 different workshop subjects available to choose from through to September 2013. A number of these practice-based workshops, including those outlined here, are suitable for all therapeutically trained coaches.

PDDs are one-day specialist workshops offering a variety of very practical learning opportunities. The days provide participants with the opportunity to gain valuable CPD, with clearly defined learning outcomes helping you develop practitioner skills in the specified areas. The days are designed to be interactive, enabling every delegate to gain maximum individual benefit from attending. To achieve this, an expert tutor has been selected to deliver each course and numbers are limited to 25 people. BACP will be rolling out further PDD titles from October 2013 as part of an ongoing programme of PDDs.

If you are interested in attending the two PDDs listed here or would like more information on the other topics available, please visit www.bacp.co.uk/events or call BACP Customer Services on 01455 883300.

Rebecca Gibson
CPD Officer

How to ethically set up, market and develop a successful private practice

Martin Hogg

13 September, Belfast

Therapists often lack confidence in marketing themselves, and the addition of coaching services can often make this even more daunting and confusing.

This PDD is designed especially to help those therapists who offer, or are considering offering, coaching services, to gain practical insights and skills in marketing their service. You will learn skills in four key areas: identifying coaching capabilities and distinctions; learning the key differences between marketing counselling and coaching; discovering eight coaching blueprints for setting up and marketing coaching services; and developing an action plan for creating coaching products and services.

This PDD is particularly suitable for therapists who are interested in determining if coaching is something they could integrate into their practice and what additional training and support they may need to ensure they work ethically and within their capability.

Martin Hogg is a counsellor, speaker and founder of CitizenCoaching.com, a Birmingham-based social enterprise concerned with enabling people to have better relationships at home and work.

An introduction to building a coaching approach

Carolyn Mumby

16 September, London

Are you intrigued by the development of a coaching division in BACP and wondering how what is described as coaching relates to what you offer as a counsellor? Perhaps you already use some coaching tools in your current therapeutic practice and would like to identify your next steps towards making coaching a more formal part of your offer?

I am delighted to offer a BACP professional development day that provides an opportunity to consider where you might currently place yourself on a continuum from counsellor to coach, identify your transferable skills and take away coaching tools to use in your current practice. You will also gain information about coaching competencies and support structures.

Carolyn Mumby is a qualified and experienced coach-therapist and trainer. She is the volunteer BACP Coaching Network Group Organiser for central London and can be contacted on c.mumby@ntlworld.com.

Network ro

The first quarter of 2013 saw the start of two brand new BACP Coaching network groups, in Birmingham and in the South West. So welcome to Alison Baker and Alan Chatting respectively, who have volunteered to be the Network Group Organisers for these new groups. We hope you will make contact with them and offer your support and do look out on the website, on the LinkedIn group and in newsletters for up-to-date details of forthcoming meetings. The new network groups were born out of the survey of members that we concluded last autumn, in which you gave us such helpful feedback about what you want from a network group and how important they are to you all, whether you attend or not. We know that you would prefer to travel no more than 30 minutes to an hour to attend a network group so, if there isn't a group near you and you might be interested in setting one up, please contact me for an informal chat; I'd love to hear from you.

In the meantime, here's a flavour of what has been going on in the network groups since the last issue of *Coaching Today*. Thank you to all the lovely volunteers who run these dynamic and valuable meetings.

Dr Trish Turner

BACP Coaching Executive Specialist for Networks
Email: dr.trish.turner@gmail.com
Tel: 07729 332174

London/University of East London (UEL)

This group is making brilliant progress. We have a keen cohort from across all coaching courses and an increasing number of counsellors now registering to attend.

Our academic year has now ended and we are putting together a vibrant programme for next year, which will begin in October. Watch this space for news. Do contact me if you know anyone who would like to present here and we will consider suggestions.

Over the past few months we have had Elspeth Campbell making a real impact with her 'Conversations which spark spontaneous and scintillating change', and Katherine Long on 'Coaching and spirituality', raising questions for us to consider. David Love (OPM) and Jane Harding (Portfolio) complete our inspiring programme.

Gill Fennings-Monkman MBE, a BACP Coaching Executive member, will co-ordinate this vibrant collaborative network group from the autumn, with support from Carolyn Mumby, the London Network Group Organiser, together with a keen group of volunteers.

Jo Birch

jo@jobirch.co.uk

Scotland

We are not planning any further networking groups in Scotland until a re-launch later in the year. Something new - possibly combined with other divisions - will appear around October 2013. We are in the process of making magic! We'll let you know when we have more news.

Meanwhile, do connect with me and give me your ideas on what kind of connecting space you would like in Scotland. I'm particularly keen to hear from anyone who would like to co-ordinate the Scotland network.

Jo Birch

jo@jobirch.co.uk

Birmingham

My name is Alison Baker and I have just taken on the role of Network Group Organiser for Birmingham, with a view to getting together with other coaches in my area, in order to give and get support. I live about six miles from Birmingham, with my husband, two sons and a cat called Monty. My training as a leadership coach began in 2007 and I have since trained as a coach trainer. More recently I have completed a Level 5 diploma in therapeutic counselling and am now in the process of setting up my own counselling and coaching practice. I have worked with people from a wide range of backgrounds and ages, although much of my work has been with women.

I am currently arranging the first networking group for Birmingham and hope to have a date and venue soon. Some possible ideas for meetings are sessions on 'The art of not knowing', 'Time to think', based on Nancy Kline's best-selling book, and 'What makes a good leader?'. However, any ideas for venues, presentations and talks etc for the group would be greatly appreciated. So, watch this space for more news.

Alison Baker

alisonatallium@gmail.com

undup

North West

As a member of the BACP Coaching North West Network Group I am in awe of the skills that I see being presented. Sally Potter (MBACP Accred), executive coach, demonstrated the Pessio Boyden approach to coaching and I was lucky enough to volunteer material. I managed to work through a tricky issue and was amazed at the impact my session had on me and other group members. This was immensely powerful to witness. Enthused, we shelved the programme for our next network meeting and instead had a facilitated discussion to elaborate on how this theoretical orientation might enhance our own ways of working, sharing knowledge and skills.

What I really appreciate is not just the sharing of skills but also the fact that there are other professionals who offer their perspectives on coaching.

Our September meeting will include a demonstration of how to work with a client addicted to pornography. As this form of addiction is increasing on an epidemic scale, most coaches will encounter this problem at some point in the future.

My hope for future meetings is that the numbers will grow as people reap the benefits of being with like-minded professionals. As our job is often quite isolating, meetings such as these are important opportunities to network with others. They will be an arena for discussing topics such as boundaries, ethical dilemmas, supervision, accreditation and other coaching-specific themes.

[Written by Figen Murray MBACP (Accred), UKRCP Reg Ind Counsellor/Psychotherapist, Member of ICF, Member of BACP Coaching]

Joy Wanless

joywanless@hotmail.co.uk

Brighton

Our network meeting in March began with a de-brief on our Online Coaching workshop, which was delivered by Dr Kate Anthony, co-founder of the Online Therapy Institute. This was followed by a discussion about the various coaching training courses available and how appropriate they might be for trained counsellors.

We also had an interesting conversation about the 12-step model, its relationship to counselling/coaching and its application to eating disorders.

There was a general concern at the meeting about the lack of new clients and current clients having to end sessions for financial reasons and we debated the ethics of sending out newsletters to attract more clients.

Barry McInnes kindly updated us on the developments and the up-to-date thinking of the BACP Coaching Executive. We looked at the BACP Coaching position statements and Barry spoke about the joint standard setting with the five national coaching bodies (for more information see www.coachingbodies.org.uk).

Topics for future meetings include hypnotherapy and coaching, NLP and understanding more about the 12-step model.

We welcome new members. Please contact kccrescentpractice@gmail.com

Kim Crewe

kimcrewe@hotmail.com

South West

I'd like to introduce myself as the new Network Group Organiser (NGO) for the South West. I am Alan Chatting and have been a BACP member for many years. Now a senior accredited psychotherapist, I have been coaching for six years and I am currently studying for an MA in management and leadership. I am based in Plymouth and have a practice made up of counselling, coaching and training coaches.

I have only recently agreed to be the NGO for my area, and I will soon be arranging our group debut at our local university. I hope to have some more news to report in the next edition.

Alan Chatting

alan@cspcoaching.com

Oxford

We had a very exciting start to the year, with Oxford BACP Connections in January, where we had many enquires about BACP Coaching, including coaching courses for counsellors, the difference between counselling and coaching and how to get a coaching business started.

The Oxford region BACP Coaching Network Group continues to grow and in March we welcomed four new members, as well as a baby boy, Luca, to Laura Gold, who helps run the meetings! We are experienced counsellors, coaches and supervisors, with some people joining us considering growing their business through coaching. We work in business, privately for both coaching and therapy as well as on employee assistance programmes (EAPs) and university coaching programmes. We welcome new members, so please do get in touch.

Anne Calleja

anne@link-fortune.co.uk

London

In the first quarter of 2013 we followed up on a previous session focusing on 'Coaching in organisations'. We had four excellent panel members (Gill Fennings-Monkman, Holly Crane, Sadia Nujhat and Christine Stephenson), who have a range of experience in coaching in organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors. This helped to shape a fascinating discussion, which included: focusing on the internal manager as coach/mentor, supporting the 'squeezed middle' managers, coaching individuals for development and performance, employee assistance programmes (EAPs) and the link with coaching, how coaching is commissioned and organised in organisations, and the opportunities for coaching in small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

We raised a number of questions for further exploration, including how can we help coach-therapists to form consortia, how can we define our offer in terms of added value in a way that fits the corporate context, and how can therapist coaches work in schools supporting young people through transitions? A small group has formed to help me coordinate and further develop the London meetings (Gill Fennings, Cathy Warren, Keeley Taverner and Mary Pelham) and we have some exciting ideas about how to grow the London network group. Please contact me if you would like to join the mailing list.

Carolyn Mumby

c.mumby@ntlworld.com

Cambridge

Jan Mclean-Smith gave a short presentation on the skills and principles involved in giving effective feedback to coaching clients. The emphasis was on business clients in the corporate sector and this created a lively debate among all attendees, including those from the public sector. Some good guidance was offered and consensus evolved around the need to have a values-based approach.

Margaret Walsh made a brief presentation on the sensitive relationship between the 'eternal triangle' of coach, client and paymaster. There was a lively discussion on how confidentiality might be ethically handled in an organisation where the client's employing organisation is paying for the counselling/coaching service. The only ethical way we felt that this arrangement could be managed would be to contract at the start with the paying organisation to say that confidentiality was at the heart of the relationship with the client and that this would be safeguarded. We felt that it was important to acknowledge, however, that there might be instances when the client says things that the organisation could benefit from hearing (eg bullying) and in those instances we would seek to get the client's agreement to share this information with the organisation.

We acknowledged that the coach has a responsibility, as part of their work with the client, to understand the context within which the client works and to also understand the goals of the organisation in order to provide a framework for the counselling/coaching. This is where coaching within organisations differs from traditional one-to-one personal counselling/coaching.

Phillip Cooke

pac@darcyinspired.com

National coaching network meetings

Network group meeting dates: summer-autumn 2013

For more information on forthcoming meetings, visit the BACP Coaching website at <http://www.bacpcoaching.co.uk/Localgroups.php>

September		Contact
Thursday 12th <i>Manchester & NW</i>	How to work with a client addicted to pornography As this form of addiction is increasing on an epidemic scale, most coaches will encounter this problem at some point in the future. <i>Marriage Care, Clitheroe House, Lower Chatham Street Manchester M15 6BY, 6.30-8pm</i>	Joy Wanless joywanless@hotmail.co.uk
Tuesday 17th <i>Cambridgeshire</i>	Topic - tbc <i>Cambridge Golf & Conference Centre, 6.45-8.45pm</i>	Phillip Cooke pac@darcyinspired.com
Tuesday 24th <i>Central London</i>	Topic - tbc To be arranged in consultation with the network group nearer the date. Please email Carolyn if you would like to be put on the mailing list and kept updated on topics as they are arranged. There will be time for networking at the beginning of the meeting. Members from BACP Workplace will also be invited to attend. <i>Atos Healthcare, 4 Triton Square, Regent's Place, London NW1 3HG, 6-7.30pm</i>	Carolyn Mumby c.mumby@ntlworld.com
October		
Tuesday 1st <i>Oxford</i>	We are continuing our discussions on the boundaries between coaching and counselling - with updates from Sarah Baker, who is writing her PhD on this subject. Future meetings will include 'Ethics and standards in coaching'. <i>Clarendon Business Centre, Prama House, 267 Banbury Road, Summertown, Oxford OX2 7HT, 6.30-9pm</i>	Anne Calleja anne@link-fortune.co.uk
Thursday 10th <i>Brighton</i>	Topic - tbc <i>The Dialogue Centre, 24 Windlesham Road, Brighton BN1 3AG, 6.15pm</i>	Kim Crewe kccrescentpractice@gmail.com



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Psychological Coaching†* (15 Credits, Level 6)	14-18 Oct
Coaching Psychology†* (20 Credits, Level 7)	14-18 Oct
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Stress Management and Health Coaching*	Modular

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