“The Evidence for Coaching”

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What are the public (and or academia’s) perceptions of a “coach”?
... Coaching Needs Critical Thinking ...

... We Need Rigorous Empirical Evidence

“To me, the single most important thing for coaching (and positive psychology) to keep in mind is the necessity of collecting rigorous empirical evidence. This may be the only this that separates the field from earlier humanistic psychology and from current non-validated self-help books, while also dealing with difficult scientific issues concerning demand effects, placebo effects and just plain wishful thinking.

Coaching ... is especially vulnerable to these problems because of the commercial and money-making possibilities it presents.”

Ken Sheldon, 2007

What is the evidence-base?
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Types of Outcome Study 1980-May 2009 (N = 156)

- Case Study (n = 104)
- Within Subjects (n = 36)
- Between Subjects (n = 16)
Is this good? How to compare?

Coaching Studies (1980-2009)
• 36 Within-Subject studies
• 16 Between-Subject studies (RTC/quasi: U.Syd = 6)

Solution-focused Therapy
SFBT Outcome Studies (1985-2006)
• 22 Between-Subject studies (RTC or quasi, inc unpublished work: Kim, 2008)
• 10 Between-Subject studies (RTC or quasi, only used published work; Corcoran & Palillai, 2009)
Aims of the U.Syd Coaching Research Program since 2000

- Further develop evidence-based approaches
- Study the development of the coaching industry
- Examine effectiveness of coaching
  - Range of populations (adult, workplace, schools)
- Use coaching as real-life experimental methodology: “psycho-mechanics of change”
- Develop more sophisticated coaching frameworks
  - Integrate coaching and PP, use of mindfulness, adult developmental frameworks, etc
U.Syd Coaching Research Program

• Eight Outcome Studies:
  – 6 Randomised; 2 Between-subject

• Four Coaching Industry Studies
  – Large scale international survey (ICF) (N =2,500)
  – Australian Life and Executive coaching industry surveys

• Range of Theoretical Papers
  – Coaching Models; Mental Health and Goal Attainment; Commentary papers

• Additional Coaching-related Empirical Work
  – Self-reflection and Insight; Stages of Change; Solution-focused vs. Problem Focused Coaching; Mindfulness and Perspective-taking in Leaders; Over 100 articles and book chapters, reports and > 100 conference presentations
Ask-Tell Matrix

Ask

Why?

How?

Tell
Generic Model of Self-regulation

1. Identify Issue
2. Set a Goal
3. Develop Action Plan
4. Act
   - Modify (if needed)
   - Monitor (requires Self-Reflection)
5. Evaluate (associated with Insight)
6. Success
The Solution-focused Cognitive-Behavioural Model

Goal

Environment ——> Behaviour

Positive Attentional Focus

Thoughts ——> Emotions
Goal Striving and Mental Health

- Acquiescent
- 'Normal' Functioning
- Languishing
- Distressed but functional
- High Level of Intentional Goal Striving
- High Mental Illness
- Low Level of Intentional Goal Striving
- Flourishing

High Mental Health
Measuring Coaching Outcomes

• **Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS)**
  – Simple scaling; Levels of attainment

• **Presence/Absence of Mental Distress**
  – DASS: Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale

• **Presence/Absence of Well-being**
  – QOLI; PWB; SWB; PANAS; Hope; Cognitive Hardiness; Workplace Well-being Index

• **Metacognitive Processes**
  – Self-reflection and Insight Scale
Question:
Does Coaching Really Work?
Coaching as Applied Positive Psychology

• **First Study: Solution-focused, coaching group program**

• **Q: Does Coaching “work”, and how does it impact on self-reflection and insight?**
  
  – Within subjects; N = 20 (Adults 35.6yrs)
  – 13 wks, 50 min weekly, group-based “GROW” sessions

• **DV$s$: Self-Reflection & Insight Scale; Quality of Life; Mental Health; Goal Attainment

(Grant, 2003)
Depression, Anxiety & Stress

![Graph showing changes in Depression, Anxiety, and Stress before and after treatment.](Image)
Goals and Quality of Life

- Quality of Life
- Goals

Pre vs. Post
Self-Reflection & Insight

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>( p )</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Ref</td>
<td>56.05</td>
<td>49.05</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insight</td>
<td>35.65</td>
<td>38.60</td>
<td>.02</td>
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## Correlational Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Goal Attainment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Reflection</td>
<td>$r = -0.36$ $(p = 0.01)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insight</td>
<td>$r = 0.28$ $(p = 0.04)$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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As participants moved through self-regulation cycle towards goals, they became less self-reflective & had greater insight.
Key Points

• Positive psychological benefits even though focus of program was on goal attainment

• Self-reflection may not facilitate goal attainment

• Insight is important factor in change

• Coaching should be solution-focused & generate insights & goal-oriented actions, rather than self-focused reflection
Coaching as Applied Positive Psychology

• Solution-focused, Cognitive-behavioural coaching individual program (RCT)

• Q: Does coaching work when screening/excluding participants for mental health issues?
  
  – Randomised controlled study; N= 67 (Adults 38.5yrs)
  – Screened for mental health problems – 22 excluded (25%)
  – Intro. evening, 10 wks 45 min weekly individual coaching

• DVs: Goal Attainment; Psychological Well-being, Mental Health, Subjective Well-being; Emotional Intelligence

(Spence & Grant, 2005)
Goal Attainment

- Coaching Group
- Control Group

Pre vs. Post comparison of Goal Attainment.
Psychological Well-being

![Graph showing Psychological Well-being (PWB: Environmental Mastery) comparison between Coaching Group and Control Group before (Pre) and after (Post) intervention. The Coaching Group shows a significant increase in PWB, while the Control Group remains relatively stable or shows a slight decrease.](image-url)
Life Satisfaction

The graph shows the comparison of Life Satisfaction scores between the Coaching Group and the Control Group before (Pre) and after (Post) the intervention. The Coaching Group shows a significant increase in Life Satisfaction from Pre to Post, while the Control Group remains relatively stable.
Key Points from Study

• Individual coaching can be effective

• Coaching not an “infallible” panacea

• Not all outcomes measures significant

• Mental Health screening may reduce chance of significant outcome on well-being measures

• Related problems with measuring “wellness” in non-clinical populations – ceiling effects?
Coaching as Applied Positive Psychology

• **Executive coaching during organisation change (RCT)**

• **Q: Is executive coaching effective at enhancing workplace well-being?**

• Solution-focused, cognitive-behavioural executive coaching with 360 feedback

• 45 executive and senior managers from large public health service

• Quantitative and qualitative measures used

(Grant, Curtayne, & Burton, in press)
Executive Coaching & Well-being

- Half-day leadership development w/shop
- Organisation in major change process
  - 360 feedback (HS-LSI)
  - Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS)
  - Cognitive Hardiness Scale
  - Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale
  - Workplace Well-being Index

- Four coaching sessions over 8 to 10 wks.
Goal Selection Process

- **Problem:** How to ensure coachee’s goals meet both individual and organisational needs

- **Solution:** Following consultation with organisational sponsors and coachee, seven broad goals drafted

- Coachees select two of seven broad goals to focus on in coaching
## Executive Coaching & Well-being

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Time 1</th>
<th>Time 2</th>
<th>Time 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>10 weeks</td>
<td>20 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group 1</strong></td>
<td>Training workshop</td>
<td>Complete coaching</td>
<td>No measures taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Begin coaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group 2</strong></td>
<td>Training workshop</td>
<td>Begin coaching</td>
<td>Complete coaching</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Begin waitlist</td>
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Goal Attainment
Resilience

![Graph showing resilience over time for two groups: Group 1 and Group 2. The graph indicates an increase in resilience from Time 1 to Time 3 for both groups.](image-url)
Depression

![Graph showing depression levels over time for Group 1 and Group 2.](image)
Workplace Well-being

![Graph showing workplace well-being over time for Group 1 and Group 2.](image)
Key Points of Study

• Short-term executive coaching can be effective
  – 4 sessions over 8 to 10 weeks

• SF-CB executive coaching can help deal with pain of organisational change
  – Open-ended qualitative comments indicated coaching helped participants deal with change stress

• Workplace well-being enhanced through coaching – good potential tool for change
Other U.Syd coaching outcome studies

• **Solution-focused, cognitive-behavioural coaching group program (RTC)**
  - Group coaching effective & effects of coaching maintain over 30 weeks (Green, Oades & Grant, 2006)

• **Peer vs. professional coaches (RTC)**
  - Professional coaches more effective than peer (Spence & Grant, 2007)

• **Mindfulness and Health Coaching (RTC)**
  - Mindfulness pre or post coaching vs health education only
  - Both coaching programs better than education only
  - Mindfulness before coaching can increase impact of coaching (Spence, Cavanagh & Grant, 2008)
Other U.Syd coaching outcome studies

• **High school students (RTC)**
  - Life coaching enhanced resilience and hope (Green, Grant, Rynsaardt. 2007)

• **High school teachers (RTC)**
  - Workplace coaching enhanced well-being, goal attainment and hope (Grant, Green, Rynsaardt, 2007)

• **Personal Life Coaching for Coaches-in-training (WS)**
  - Life coaching enhanced goal attainment, resilience, insight and deepened learning (Grant, 2008)
Future: Coaching is an Applied Positive Psychology!

• We need
  – More Randomised Controlled Studies
  – Longitudinal studies
  – Better outcome measures
  – Sophisticated theoretical frameworks
  – Models that integrate P.P. with SF-CB
  – Solid scholar-practitioner training
  – More well-written research papers!!
Coaching is now decidedly mainstream
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Download Annotated Coaching Bibliography
on Evidence-based Coaching at

http://tiny.cc/12Uxn

www.psych.usyd.edu.au/coach
For an updated version of these overheads please visit

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