

Relational coaching

Relational coaching focuses on how coaches and clients think about the nature of identity, the self, change and learning, and individual and organisational development. "It focuses on unlocking and unfolding human potential underpinned by a solid understanding of human experience, adult learning, change theories and system perspectives. It seeks to promote dialogue between psychological understanding and evolving coaching theory and practice... (Cavacchia and Gilbert 2019:202). They discuss self-image, shame and intersubjectivity, taking practical and theoretical aspects from therapy.

"Coaches with the appropriate training and disposition also work successfully at greater psychological depth than simply effecting behavioural change in performance through encouraging clients to generate new options for themselves." They go on to say that "complexity and human subjectivity mean that clients do encounter uncertainty and vulnerability in the face of complex challenges. This in turn can evoke resistance and patterns of reactivity rooted in early developmental experiences and upbringing" (Cavacchia, S & Gilbert, M (2019:8)).

Core components of a relational coaching

A relational orientation:

- With its emphasis on intersubjectivity reveals the complex and interactive nature of human systems.
- Is concerned with the self-experience of coachees in their context, how they are impacted by it, make meaning from experience, take up their roles, how they interact with others, and how they are both shaped by and contribute to shaping their environments via the medium of conversations and interactions
- Is equally concerned with the self-experience of coaches in their professional settings, the different contexts of client organisations and the coaching dyad, how they are at once shaped by and stand to impact clients and their systems.
- Is focused on enabling coachees to respond creatively to ever increasing complexity and uncertainty in themselves and in their context.
- Achieves this by enabling coachees to contain anxiety and integrate more and more aspects of themselves, thereby increasing their repertoires for reflection and action all the while acknowledging the relationship between individual and context Makes overt use of subtle and powerful relationship dynamics in the service of meaning making, learning and development. Sees the coach's 'use of self' as a central component in facilitating change.

Drawing on research, de Haan (2008) focuses on the interpersonal relations and talks about the "ten commandments" of relational coaching including: "commit yourself heart and soul to your approach, even if you know that it doesn't matter which professional approach you use."

See also Charlotte Sills' chapter, 'Understanding the coaching relationship' in Passmore's handbook (Passmore 2020:68-76).