

Live and Learn: transpersonal coaching

4 exercises from Sir John Whitmore author of 'Coaching for Performance'

Getting started:

- ❖ Find a peaceful location
- ❖ Create some quiet time
- ❖ Paper and something to write with
- ❖ The wish to discover more about your purpose, to manifest it, to stretch yourself in all aspects of your being

The 4 exercises are:

- ✓ Talent Spotting
- ✓ Life Line
- ✓ Inner Voices
- ✓ Imaginary Journey up a Mountain

Exercise 1: Talent Spotting

- Take a moment to recall an experience you had in the past when you did something you felt very passionate about at the time.
- It could be a big thing that took weeks. Or a really small thing. It would have been something that you felt really good about. Doing what you did was important to you and very fulfilling.
- Now write down which of your qualities you called upon eg: compassion, courage or ????

Take a moment's breather

- Next make a list of all the things that you are good at. Anything from making a great cup of tea ... to flying a helicopter ... to creating world peace! Don't be shy: if you feel that you are good at something, yes even sex, add it to your list. Remember it is what you think you are good at so don't let what you think other people think intrude in this making of the list.
- Next what is the commonality between the skills needed to do each of these things? What part of yourself do you bring to bear with good effect? Write that down [eg. Attention to detail, creativity etc etc
- Next write down
 1. all the things you truly value [eg. relationships, beauty, generosity]
 2. who you really admire now or in history, in fact or in fiction
 3. note what values, abilities, qualities they have?
- Then observe what pattern is emerging from the combination of talents that is important to you? How could you bring more of them into your work or home life? If you could imagine ... what sort of job would enable you to make best / most use of those qualities you already have and really care about. Capitalise on the 'yes we can' effect.
- Next write a few sentences about this to yourself; reflect on and digest your thought. It could lead you towards a greater understanding of what your real purpose is in life. As you begin to discover it, let it manifest easily and effortlessly in alignment with your values Give yourself permission to enjoy the richness of the experience

Now take a break ...

Exercise 2: Life Line

Take an A4 sheet of paper or larger, draw on it 2 axes of a graph ... use up the whole sheet.

Label the vertical axis VALUES – qualitative / spiritual

Label the horizontal axis ACHIEVEMENT – quantitative / psychological

Draw dotted line at a 45 degree angle to represent a midway or balance between the two

Now starting at the junction point representing either your birth or when you left school going upwards for values & horizontal for achievement

What incidents caused your life to change direction [a great job / birth of child / death of loved one / global incident?] How much did your life change & for how long?

Notice where you have ended up in relation to the balance line

Ask yourself the following questions:

Where do you want to go from here with your line?

What would you have to change to do that?

When would you want to make the change OR do you want to make a change at all? There is no should implied.

Keep your graph & have a look at it in a couple of weeks, what does it reveal to you now?

Now take a break ...

Exercise 3: Inner Voices

You wake up early to a crisp sunny morning. You think of going out for a brisk walk BUT almost immediately a contradictory voice suggests that it's easier to stay at home rationalising that you deserve the rest!

Why does the latter voice usually get its way? Because 2 different personalities reside in the same person which have opposing ideas. This internal dialogue occurs between different parts of us that each have their own needs, strengths, characteristics. It's useful to identify these parts. Also, when & how they are most likely to appear.

One of the most universal sub-personalities = the victim [a bit like Eeyore in the Winnie the Pooh books]. Playing victim is a strategy for getting sympathy / attention / help that we developed in our early years when we learned how to manipulate our parents.

That was fine then but often we retain the same games in later life when there are many more mature ways of getting our needs met.

From these illustrations it should not be difficult for you to identify some of your own more obvious personalities.

Write down a list of at least 5 of them. Give them a suitable name eg. victim, controller, hero and so on. Then add what each one wants. What strengths it has. The gifts that it brings. The learnings that it offers.

Ask yourself the following:

- ✚ When & under what circumstances do you adopt each one?
- ✚ What does doing this give you?
- ✚ What's the payoff?
- ✚ How does it limit you?
- ✚ What might be some alternate ways to get those needs met?

Take time to get to know your sub-personalities; don't try to kill them off as they are part of you. When there is a conflict encourage a conversation between them, encourage / imagine a negotiation which leads to a win win situation. [eg. go for a walk 3 mornings a week & have a lie in for 3 guiltfree mornings and create a surprise on the 7th.

Becoming aware of, and coming to terms with, these different parts of ourselves enables us to be more integrated and consistent. It also helps dissolve battles! It enables us to stand back, observe & manage them so therefore ourselves better. Then we are no longer victims to circumstances but masters of our own behaviour & our lives.

This self-coaching exercise can be usefully repeated at ever greater depths of insight and awareness thus providing even greater levels of insight & self-understanding.

If we are not those sub-personalities that we adopt for self-serving reasons – the important question arises as to who we really are.

We can regard these parts of us as members of an orchestra comprised of different players instruments. Ideally we become the conductor of our orchestra, able to draw on the qualities of each at will. Roberto Assagioli described the conductor of the orchestra as the 'I' which is composed of pure consciousness + pure will.

These two words equate with and reveal the true source of coaching. That the true significance of awareness and responsibility form the essential core principles of good coaching.

As a coach helps a client become more aware of, and responsible for, even a minor issue at work s/he is at the same time quietly bit by bit helping the client to build the qualities of their 'I' & their capacity for self-mastery.

Now take a break ...

Exercise 4: Imaginary Journey up a mountain

Go at your own pace & notice all that you meet on the way – birds, flowers, animals, rocks that challenge & rivers to be crossed.

Store them in your mind so you can recall them later

Consider what they represent to you as parts of your journey of life. Have a dialogue with one of the things you came across. What did you learn from it? Eg. How did you cross the river? Negotiate the uneven terrain.

- Near the top of the mountain, you meet a wise old person who grants you 3 questions.
 - What do you ask?
 - What do they answer?

When you are ready retrace your steps gently to the bottom.

Then record what you have experienced in the subconscious realms of yourself that you have just glimpsed.

The animal could be another part of you, the rock and the river may represent two of life's challenges & the wise old person is of course a higher part of yourself and now is one you now know how to access.

Was it worth it?

To address issues such as personal identity, meaning and purpose increasingly will be needed more in-depth coaching skills and working from a coaching approach.

Solving business problems + making actions plans = great BUT are symptomatic level of a greater reality which we are unwise to ignore.

That greater reality is the storehouse of our higher qualities, creativity etc. In the world that is emerging we will all need such qualities

The transpersona is the inevitable evolution in John Whitmore's eyes of the psychological basis of coaching, moving beyond humanistic and positive psychology.

The transpersonal embraces, he says, the spiritual long denied in western psychology due to the dominance of reductionism in science.

In eastern cultures the psychological and spiritual have no false division but simply are a continuum he asserts.