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Narrative collaborative group coaching

First results of an intervention study

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Short presentation

- PhD in psychology. Further education in psychotherapy, counseling and coaching. Accred. coaching psychologist
- Head of research group & head of the Coaching Psychology Unit at the Department of Exercise and Sport Sciences, Univ. of Copenhagen
- Visiting professor at Copenhagen Business School
- Research interest in coaching, self & identity, learning, body-mind
- Currently conducting research in group coaching (RCT + qualitative studies) based on a narrative-collaborative approach
- Honorary Vice President of Society for Coaching Psychology and former board member of EMCC - DK
- Member of the Scientific Advisory Council – The Coaching Institute, Harvard Medical School
- Member of the Advisory Board, lecturer and coach at Copenhagen Coaching Center

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The research design

The randomized control study includes:

1. **Group coaching** (8 x 1½ hr sessions over 12 weeks) (N=32)
 2. **Control group** (N=45).
- Pre, intermediate and post assessment (Questionnaire measuring stress/anxiety, motivation and action control)
 - Qualitative studies based on 2 interviews/per selected coachee (N=6) (intermediate/post)
 - Further qual. studies, a video analysis of a whole series of group coaching and follow-up studies (both qual. & quant.) are on the way

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The intervention

- **Participants:**
 - Young talents in sport at a specialized upper secondary school in Copenhagen, Denmark
 - Age 17 +/- 1 year
- **Aim of the intervention:**
 - The intervention focuses on career development, self-reflection and personal growth of young sports talents, who intend to integrate their sports career, educational demands and private life.
 - Possible impact of the intervention on specific psychological measurements (motivation, stress, action control)

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The intervention - a case situation

- 6 participant. Dialogue with Maria & Patrick
- Maria talks about her wish to her swimming trainer: "It is really essential for me that my trainer recognizes me as a *talent* – otherwise it won't work for me!"
- Patrick: "No! You have to trust yourself! I cannot understand that you are willing to be depended on what your trainer thinks. The most important is: You should trust yourself that you can make it!"
- Coach psychologist: "Patrick, I notice that you are very engaged in Marias story. What does this engagement tell about yourself and what is important for you?"
- Patrick starts to tell a story from the time when he was young – a fourth grader: "I was stuttering, I was fat, and nobody really believed in me"

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Coaching – a reflective space

Narrative-collaborative practice – some central assumptions:

- Both coach and coachee(s) are experts. Every participant contributes to the joint process of meaning-making and knowledge production (Anderson, 2007).
- All participants stay in floating and changeable positions, where mutual development is possible and are able to redefine their own perspective and position.
- All participants value the knowledge that unfolds co-creatively, but at the same time value possible and remaining differences.
- "Generous listening" is central for mutual inquiry, where interested and sometime naïve wondering helps to develop generative conversations.
- Being a *fellow human* for others (Stelter & Law, 2010)

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Coaching – a reflective space

Narrative-collaborative practice – some central assumptions:

- Coaching in a multiverse perspective → developing "landscapes of consciousness", both in individuals and groups (Michael White, 2007)
 - Seeing the *landscapes of consciousness* by reflecting on one's **identity and personal and social values**
 - Connecting *landscapes of consciousness* to *landscapes of action* and vice versa
 - **Coupling one's own position to positions of others**
- **Outsider witnessing**: resonating with the stories and events the coachee has put forward

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Central focus in the coaching dialogue is on meaning making

1. Meaning is shaped through **concrete experiences** the coachee has in specific life contexts and situations.
This form of *experience-based meaning making* can be connected to theories of *aesthetic learning* (Stelter, 2008) *witness-thinking* (Shotter, 2006).
2. Meaning is shaped through **social negotiation** and by **telling stories** in relation to different life contexts
This form of relational meaning making can be connected to *social learning theory* (Wenger, 1998) *narrative thinking*, where people co-create their reality in a community of practice.

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Qualitative analysis – central results

1. The participants have developed strategies to handle specific challenges which they meet in their daily life, in school and in their sports carrier
2. The participants have become better in focussing /concentrating – not only in sport but also in school:
 - They speak about being in the "here and now" – the present moment
 - This ability has also a positive effect on handling stressful situations
3. The participants are better able to make decisions about their training based on their new understanding of being focussed

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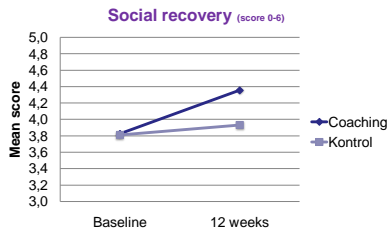
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Statistical analysis – central results

- **Significant difference in specific dimensions of stress scale** (social recovery, general well-being)
- **Positive changes in regard to action control** (borderline significance in one dimension)
- **No significant differences in regard to motivational factors** between group coaching group and control group

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Independent change in Social recovery 0-12 weeks	Coaching group (n=31)	Control group (n=47)
	13.9% (0.53 points) p=0.001	3.2% (0.12 points) p=0.771

Adjusted for baseline scores
Coaching group had 0.381 higher Social recovery score after 12 weeks compared to control group
Effect size was medium (r=0.24) and significant (p=0.038)
14% (0.53 points) increase in social recovery from baseline to 12 weeks for coaching group (p=0.001)

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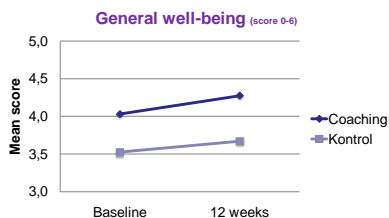
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Social recovery (Cronbach alpha: 0.79)

- I laughed
- I had a good time with my friends
- I visited some close friends
- I had fun

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Independent change in General well-being	Coaching group (n=31)	Control group (n=47)
Baseline-12 weeks	6.1% (0.24 points) p=0.041	4.1% (0.15 points) p=0.287

Adjusted for baseline scores
 Coaching group had 0.311 higher general well-being score after 12 weeks compared to control group.
 Effect size was small (r=0.22) and borderline significant (p=0.059)
 A 6% (0.24 points) increase in General well-being from week 0-12 for coaching group (p=0.041)

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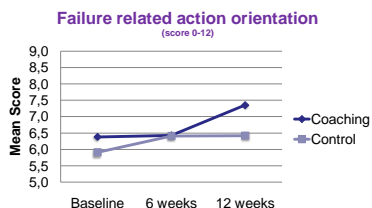
General well-being

(Cronbach alpha: 0.86)

- I was in good spirits
- I was in a good mood
- I felt happy
- I felt content

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Independent change in Failure related action orientation	Coaching group (n=26)	Control group (n=45)
0-6 weeks	0.7% (0.05 points) p=0.356	8.5% (0.50 points) p=0.155
6-12 weeks	14.3% (0.92 points) p=0.112	0.1% (0.01 points) p=0.721
0-12 weeks	15.1% (0.97 points) p=0.110	8.6% (0.51 points) p=0.104

No significant effect from baseline to 12 weeks.
 However from week 6 to 12 a small (r=0.22) and borderline significant (p=0.100) effect can be observed
 i.e. adjusted for scores at week 6 coaching group had 0.959 higher score for failure related action orientation after 12 weeks

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Failure - related action orientation

- Individuals that have a high score on this scale (action oriented) can easily let go of failures and can quickly focus on new tasks after a failure.
- Individuals with a low score (state oriented) ruminate about failures. This can negatively influence subsequent actions.

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Discussion – failure related action orientation

- Being able to **let go of failures** and can quickly focus on new tasks after a failure can be connected to the qualitative results where the participants talked about **focusing on the “here and now”**
- A focus on the here and now hinders ruminating about failures

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Discussion – social recovery

1. There is a clear association between the increase in “**social recovery**” and the **overall intention** with narrative-collaborative group coaching.
2. Social recovery can be connected **general well-being**
3. A further theoretical association: **Social recovery** is leads to building **social capital** – a central concept that helps to understand how people in society can function in a better way

The French sociologist P. Bourdieu (1985) defines **social capital** as:

The aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition (s. 248).

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Discussion – social recovery /social capital

4. A narratively based coaching group is a kind of **durable network** and **community of practice** – and it helps to develop social capital – internally through the group and externally by appreciating social relationships to others
5. Building social capital through narrative-collaborative group coaching means:
The stories of others can be a bearing compass for the others, which can help them form and revise own narratives, and through that, make their own way of living (more) intelligible.

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Conclusion

- **Narrative-collaborative group coaching can be understood as a community psychological intervention that helps to**
 - **support social recovery**
 - **build up social capital**
- **On the basis of these results narrative-collaborative group coaching should be introduced in other contexts, e.g.:**
 - **Collegial groups**
 - **Leadership teams**
 - **In educational settings**
 - **Health coaching**

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