Narrative coaching – theoretical foundations and applications

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Aims - Enable you to

• gain knowledge & skills in narrative coaching.
• understand its theoretical foundations.
• be aware of its diverse applications.
• apply it into practice.
Why?

Benefits:

• Re-invigorate hopes & dreams.
• Mobilize skills & knowledge.
• Clarify one’s vision.
• Generate plans & actions.
• Put into practice.
Definitions

What is Coaching Psychology?

Coaching Psychology is for enhancing well-being and performance in personal life and work domains, underpinned by models of coaching grounded in established psychological approaches. (adopted from BPS SGCP, 2006)
What is Narrative Coaching?

Narrative coaching is for enhancing well-being and performance of individuals or groups within organisations or communities through *story-telling*. (Law, 2007)

Theoretical foundations – the story of narrative practice...
Theoretical foundations:

- Psychology of learning, Vygotsky’s (1926) proximal development.
- Cultural anthropology (Turner, 1967)
- The use of metaphors (Myerhoff, 1982)

Metaphors:

- Don’t put all your eggs in one basket.
- A rolling stone gathers no moss.
- Do you know any of your own?
Metaphors:

When eating a fruit, think of the person who planted the tree.
- Vietnamese saying

Metaphors:

When elephants fight, it's the grass that suffers.
- Kikuyu Proverb
Metaphors:

• **Life as a story/script** (Barbara Myerhoff, 1982).
• **Life as the performance of the story** (Myerhoff, 1986).

*No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent.*

- John Donne
The journey –
the rite of passage...
Integration
Luminal space
Margin/Transition
Separation
Intensification

Conclusion
Many possible Plots/themes
Time line

Future is REAL
Here is Now
Vygotsky's (1926) zone of proximal development

NEW Future

PAST experience

Many possible Plots/themes

Conclusion

Time line

NEW Future

Coaching/Mentoring/Learning condition

PAST experience

End-game
Middle
Many options
Start

Concrete experience

Reflection

Abstract Conception

Internal transformation: consciousness emerges

External transformation: toward behaviour

PAST experience

Coaching/Mentoring/Learning condition

NEW Future

Action

Concrete experience

Abstract Conception

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NEW Future

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Concrete experience

Reflection

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Internal transformation: consciousness emerges

External transformation: toward behaviour

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Action

NEW Future

Meaning

Story lines:
Meaning shapes our lives

Concrete experience

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24 Oct 2008
Concrete experience

Reflection

Abstract Conception

Internal transformation: consciousness emerges

External transformation: toward behaviour

Meaning

PAST experience

Concrete experience

NEW Future

Action

Coaching/Mentoring/Learning condition

Implementation:
New engagement

1. Separation

2. Luminal space
Margin/Transition

3. Integration
Re-aggregation

4. Intensification
Giving Feedback: The Johari window

<table>
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<th>Feedback to Self</th>
<th>Known</th>
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<tr>
<th>I. Public Knowledge</th>
<th>II. Blind Spot</th>
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<td>III. Hidden</td>
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Applications

Narrative techniques:

- Externalising Conversations (1:1)
- Re-membering/Re-Authoring (1:1)
- Outsider Witness Re-telling (1:1:n)
- Definitional ceremony (Community) - Retellings of retellings.
Applications:

(1:1) **Personal & Business development**
- Personal – psychotherapy, life coaching.
- Business – executive coaching.

(1:1:n) **Group, organisation & Community**
- Group – team building.
- Organisation - coaching & leadership programmes
- Community - coaching programmes, social inclusion.
A typical exercise
(working in pairs or groups of 3)
Tasks of the Coachee

1. List all your aspirations (hopes & dreams) that you have for the future.
2. Select one that you want to focus to achieve.
3. Identify significant events that happened or persons in your life that influenced the above.
4. Tell a story about this e.g. describe an event, image, a person, etc.

Tasks of the Coach

Listen & question as appropriate…
1. Identify relevant expressions of perceived barriers and hidden strengths.
2. Embody responses – ensure expressions resonate with coachee's own experience.
3. Discover the coachee's self identity – their beliefs, commitments, intentions, purposes, values, visions, hopes and dreams.
4. Identify possible alternative themes – that empowers coachee's self identity.
5. Acknowledge Transport – “in what way have you become…”.
6. Help establish and agree with the coachee a plan of action, “What next?”
Active listener/observer (outsider witnesses)

1. Listen.
2. Re-tell the story - Talk about what was heard.
   - Embody responses – ensure your expressions resonate with coachee’s own experience (rather than yours).
   - Acknowledge Transport – tell in what way you have been moved by the story.”
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