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## **Beyond Grow: In search of acronyms and coaching models**

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### **Introduction**

There are coaches for every conceivable situation. Examples include fitness coaches, life coaches, relationship coaches, dream coaches, executive coaches, career coaches, parenting coaches to name but a few. What unites effective coaches are the models they use to elicit the best results for their clients. Coaching models exist to provide coaches with a valid and effective framework for coaching. In order for coaches to determine which model best fits with their personality and coaching style, in order to coach effectively, there needs to be more models in the public domain.

In the last edition of this journal Dembkowski and Eldridge reported that effective coaches are those who foster trust and are transparent in the processes they use. Such processes or models are indeed the essential tools for the building of a successful coaching relationship. What is apparent, however, is along with the growth of coaching domains has come the growth of coaching models, seeking to best define and optimise the coaching relationship.

The purpose of this paper is to add to the critique and debate between practitioner readers started by Dembkowski and Eldridge on the subject of coaching models. The paper introduces a new model designed to provide a framework for coaching which incorporates some psychological perspectives such as the inclusion of social support and positive reinforcement.

### **Present Coaching Models**

There are several coaching models a coach may choose to adopt.

Perhaps the most widely known model or framework for coaching is the GROW model. The GROW model is an acronym developed by Sir John Whitmore which is defined as:

**G**oal

**R**eality

**O**ptions

**W**hat next or **W**ay forward or **W**rap up

It can be observed that there are variations of the GROW theme with several translations associated with the letter **W**.

The next coaching model is known as the coaching **ARROW** as discussed by Matt Somers. The coaching **ARROW** is defined as:

**A**ims

**R**eality

**R**eflection

**O**ptions'

**W**ay forward

It can be observed that the coaching **ARROW** is quite similar to the GROW model, and also extends the GROW model by making reflection an explicit part of the coaching process. The reflection aspect ensures that the coachee is indeed sure about their aims, the reality of the situation, and also questions the veracity of any assumptions the coachee has made.

The most recent model to be presented to us is the **ACHIEVE** model of Dembkowski and Eldridge. The **ACHIEVE** model is defined as;

**A**ssess current situation

**C**reative brainstorming of alternatives to current situation

**H**one goals

**I**nitiate options

**E**valuate options

**V**alid action program design

**E**ncourage momentum

Dembkowski and Eldridge extend both the GROW and ARROW model by making the initiation and evaluation of options explicit; including program design as an overt feature of coaching, as well as making encouragement a clear aspect of the coaching relationship. In other words a good coach is one who maintains contact with the coachee, between coaching sessions, in order to support and encourage their progress.

## **A new coaching model**

The POSITIVE coaching model™ is a model developed from the models discussed above as well as being influenced by the contributions psychology can make in producing an optimum coaching relationship. The model is defined as:

**Purpose**

**Observations**

**Strategy**

**Insight**

**Team**

**Initiate**

**Value**

**Encourage**

The remainder of this paper will be devoted to discussing each aspect of the model followed by a discussion of the model in reference to the aforementioned coaching frameworks.

### **Purpose**

It is often assumed that when a coach is sought, the client is aware of what they want to achieve. In most cases this is true. There are times, however, when the client or coachee is not entirely sure what they want to achieve but do have some notion of the direction they wish to go in, whilst others again, are quite vague about what their aims are.

The first step, therefore, is for the coach to encourage the client to have some clarity about what they want to achieve from a coaching relationship – what their overall aims are, as well as what they want to get out of each coaching session.

For a sound coaching relationship to flourish, the coach must build rapport with the client. Good counselling skills allow the coach to actively listen to the client's story and attend to the client's verbal speed and tone, as well as the client's body language and match the client in all such aspects. The coach should also strategically use open and closed questions, observation skills and encouragement, paraphrasing and summarisation in order to get a complete story from the client. This phase of the coaching relationship is primarily concerned with rapport, in order to establish trust and empathy within such a relationship. However, the coach must also elicit the purposes for coaching and determine if indeed coaching is warranted. This point must be emphasised. There are times when an individual may seek coaching because they are not performing well, but such performance declines may not be due to overt problems, but instead the client may be suffering from a psychological issue such as depression, thus hindering the client's ability to engage in goal directed behaviour. Consequently, such an issue goes beyond the scope of coaching and the individual should be referred to an appropriate mental health provider.

Examples of key questions in this phase are:

- Ī What is it that you want to achieve?
- Ī What is the desired outcome for this session?
- Ī What do you wish to accomplish through coaching?
- Ī How do you believe coaching will help with your aims?
- Ī Have you thought about other solutions besides coaching?

## **Observations**

The second phase of the coaching model is to encourage the client to think about what is happening around them. In other words, this phase is focussed on getting a sense of the client's reality and their experiences. The client's problem does not exist solely in one domain. For example the client may have a work issue, but such an issue may cause difficulties in areas besides work, such as the client's health or family life. Therefore the coach must be able to help the client formulate a coherent view of their present environment. Also, the client may focus on the negative aspects of their reality without considering what is actually going well for them. The coach's role in this phase is to help the client see their position with greater clarity, in a balanced, rational and functional manner.

Examples of key questions in this phase are:

- İ What have you tried so far?
- İ What has worked for you in the past?
- İ Who else is involved or knows about this?
- İ How can you start to resolve this issue?
- İ What is happening right now?

## **Strategy**

Once it has been agreed that coaching is a viable option and the client has developed a sound understanding of their present conditions and environment, an end-state or goal can be considered. Goals are very important and essentially translate dreams and visions into clear, concrete, specific and realistic aims. Specifically a good coach will use SMART goal setting. SMART is an acronym for;

Specific

Measurable

Attractive

Realistic

Time bound

SMART goals provide a clear picture of the aims and what is to be achieved, and act as a goal plan for the client to follow. What is of most importance is the ownership of the goal. A coach does not provide the client's goal. Instead the coach guides the client in formulating their own goal. Goal acceptance occurs when the goal is challenging but not beyond the client's knowledge and skills, when the goal is indeed attractive and the outcome favourable, and when the client plays a major role in designing the goal for themselves. It is the coach's responsibility to ensure that all these factors are present when guiding the client in goal setting. Further motivation can be added to goals by the coach asking the client to name their goal. For example, if a client wishes to change career they may call their goal 'project advance' and attach a symbol to the goal such as a picture or pen that they carry with them or put in their office or home, serving as a constant reminder of their goal.

Examples of key questions in this phase are:

ĪHow clear are you on what you want to achieve?

ĪWhat does success look like for you?

ĪHow long have you got to achieve this?

ĪHow will you know when you have succeeded?

ĪDoes this accurately summarise what your aims are?

## **Insight**

The insight phase is essentially the reflection phase of the model. Here the coach encourages the client to consider their goal and what emotions their goal brings. If for example the client gets a sense of hope and excitement from reading their goal, then this is a good sign. If, on the other hand, the client reads the goal and feels overwhelmed, fearful or discouraged, then it is more than likely that the goal is not realistic and too challenging.

This phase is to determine if the goal is indeed what the client wants and if it is an accurate depiction of the client's present and future aims. The coach, through carefully worded questions, allows the client to reflect about their aims and encourages them to refine their goals until they are totally committed to achieving them.

Examples of key questions in this phase are:

ĪHow committed are you in achieving this goal on a scale of 1 - 10?

ĪHow confident are you in achieving this goal on a scale of 1 - 10?

ĪHow attractive is this goal for you?

ĪHow challenging is this goal for you?

ĪAre there potential obstacles you have not considered?

## **Team**

An important feature of achievement and goal success is having social support. Social support or social networks refers to the amount of emotional and material support one receives from others. Both the number of social relationships an individual has and the depth of those relationships can assist in performance enhancement. The coach is a key member of the client's support team, but the client may have other people whom they may seek support from. Examples include parents,

partners, siblings, children, friends, work colleagues, sporting associates and so on. The psychological literature within the health arena has shown that the greater the social support, the better the adjustment and coping of the individual. In the same way if a client can be made to feel that they have a support network that they can turn to when experiencing difficulty, the more likely they are to continue on their goal path.

Examples of key questions in this phase are:

- İ Who will you share your goal with?
- İ Is there someone who you can ask to sponsor you in your goal pursuit?
- İ What support will you need to reach your goal?
- İ Who has supported you in the past?
- İ Who or what inspires you when things get tough?

## **Initiate**

At this point the client is ready to execute the goal plan and move towards achieving their goal. This is the action phase, the culmination of the planning and strategising phases. Here the coach encourages the client to start to initiate the goal by taking positive steps towards it.

Examples of key questions in this phase are:

- İ When will you start to act on this?
- İ Are you sure you want this?
- İ How will you begin?
- İ Who will you tell when you have started?
- İ What will you do if you run into difficulty?

## **Value**

Often goals are long term. Therefore, there may be a considerable time-lag in the client receiving performance feedback, and without feedback the client may not be sure that they are headed in the right direction, or may lose motivation along the way.

The coach during this phase will help the client set weekly or short term

tasks which will lead them to their long term or end-state goal. By doing so the client receives regular feedback on their progress and is able to value and celebrate their advancement. Such positive reinforcement increases both performance and commitment. Also, by having weekly short term tasks allows for immediate response and adaptation by both the coach and client if motivation declines or unexpected obstacles appear.

Examples of key questions in this phase are:

- İ How will you celebrate your success?
- İ Who will you celebrate with?
- İ How valuable is this progress to you?
- İ How will you feel having achieved this step?
- İ Are you keen to continue?

## **Encourage**

The final phase of the model is encouragement on behalf of the coach. Whilst the coach has helped the client build a social support network, the coach is the first port of call for the client. The coach must help the client remain motivated, positive and on-track, not only during coaching sessions but between coaching sessions. The coach can call, send an email, a facsimile or a greeting card, the actual medium is not as important as it is that contact occurs. It shows that the coach believes in the client and is there to support the client as their goal partner and confidant.

Examples of key questions in this phase are:

- İ How are you going with your goals?
- İ What have you done so far?
- İ Do you need any help with that?
- İ How are you sticking with your plan?
- İ Have you experienced any difficulties?

## **Final Thoughts**

There are many coaching models and they all provide frameworks for coaching. The new coaching model presented is a framework that



allows a coach to assimilate their personality and coaching style within the model. It is a flexible framework and is not meant to serve as a script of a list of questions that a coach can simply ask one after the other, but rather it is designed for the client to be the sole priority at all times during the coaching relationship, and is transparent in the sense that the client is acutely aware of what they can expect from coaching and their coach.

The model does not and can not replace an effective coach who treats their client with respect and empathy. In the words of Canadian physician Sir William Osler, "The secret for caring for a patient is caring for a patient." The same can be said for coaching.

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