Coaching and Mental Health: A Reflection on the Boundaries
by Maddalena Fumagalli
- iCN Journalist (Switzerland)

Holistic Coaching – The Journey Within
by Boris Pavlov
(Canada)

What Can Coaching Learn from Anna Grechishkina?
by Malcolm Nicholson
- iCN Journalist (UK)

To Be a Great Wellness Coach, Learn How to Change a Client’s Paradigm
by Keith Merron
(USA)
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Welcome to another exciting edition of the International Coaching News (iCN) online magazine!

Our 33rd edition, is themed Wellness & Holistic Coaching, inspired by coaches to guide others forge their own unique path toward greater well-being, a holistic view of the importance of growth and the power of self.

This is filled with interesting power tools toward greater well-being. It focuses on enabling you as the coach to assist your clients to mastermind life transitions, manifesting anything (and everything) they desire. Look out for Quarterly Column from Keith Merron 'To Be a Great Wellness Coach, Learn How to Change a Client’s Paradigm'. Keith discusses Personal Paradigm, understanding one's personal paradigms and adopt new practices. In this sense, the process of transformational coaching is not an event – it's a journey. Another noteworthy article 'Coaching and Mental Health: A Reflection on the Boundaries' by our very own iCN Journalist Maddalena Fumagalli from Switzerland. In this article, Madda shares how coaching can be of value in the prevention, treatment and recovery from mental distress and illness, and in the promotion of wellbeing. 'What Can Coaching Learn from Anna Grechishkina?', this interview from our iCN Journalist Malcolm Nicholson gives a wonderful insight of Anna’s journey around the world and her journey becoming a coach. 'Holistic Coaching – The Journey Within' by Boris Pavlov from Canada. In this article, Boris encourages using holistic coaching element as a tool to create a balance life to build inner sanctum of bliss and see the bigger picture of life – that life isn’t fundamentally about achieving and having, life is about being.

Each of our columnists, too numerous to mention individually, has taken some really interesting perspectives, and I would encourage a thorough read-through of this edition.

As we have mentioned in our previous edition, we are doing a series of video interviews with well known leaders, executives, entrepreneurs, CEO’s and people within the world of coaching. Our International Journalists are doing a wonderful job in their interviews. They have wonderful discussions on how to improve your coaching business and tips on how to cope with struggles during this pandemic. You can view the video interviews HERE.

Just like all our other editions, this is not just an interesting read, but it provides you with helpful personal development ideas and professional development techniques to grow your business and improve your lifestyle. I hope you enjoy this issue and do let us know if there are any topics you’d like to see covered in the future.
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Coaching and Mental Health: A Reflection on the Boundaries
by Maddalena Fumagalli, iCN Journalist (Switzerland)

There is little doubt that 2020 has been one chaotic, difficult, draining year for most, if not all of us. This 2021 is already underway and, despite new hopes and opportunities, we still cannot see the end of the tunnel. For this reason, we might expect that more and more people will turn to coaching as a way to improve their lives and wellbeing in this challenging 2021. This brings renewed emphasis and attention to the theme of coaching, mental health and wellbeing.

The debate on the ethical, personal, and professional boundaries that need to be set when coaching someone suffering from stress, mental distress or illness is ongoing, and the dialogue between coaching and mental health professionals is being established. I believe that, especially in this situation, it is even more important that each of us takes a moment to reflect on these boundaries.

In my opinion, the first needed step is the acquisition of a basic, minimum knowledge and awareness of what mental health is, what behaviors are most effective, and how coaching can become a suitable intervention. This would allow us to understand what type of support does the coachee require, if they are in a suitable state to fully engage with, and benefit from the coaching process, and what type of coaching relationship would be most effective. Respect for the coachee and honesty are then required to identify and communicate the best course of action for the coachee: do we feel comfortable and have the competences to best serve them, or we would better refer them to other professionals and interventions?

Here, I put together a condensed ABC on what I consider to be paramount when reflecting on coaching and mental health. It is based on the knowledge, tools and resources I acquired over the past months through my Practitioner Coach Diploma and a Mental Health First Aid course. This is by no means an exhaustive compendium, but rather a gentle introduction to the theme of mental health and its implications in the coaching process.

**A**

**Awareness**

Q. What is mental health, and what is mental illness?

Mental health and illness are not two sides of a coin, but rather the extremes of a continuum ranging from good mental health, to distress and illness. During the course of our lives, each of us normally and constantly moves along this spectrum, in either direction.

The World Health Organisation defines **mental health** as “a state of wellbeing in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”.

**Mental distress** involves episodic events of poor mental health that can affect behaviours and thinking processes, whose symptoms and signs do not meet the thresholds for classification as mental illness.

A **mental disorder or mental illness** is a diagnosable illness affecting thoughts, emotions and behaviours, and eventually the ability to maintain a state of mental health. Illnesses include depression, anxiety disorders, burnout, psychosis, eating disorders and substance abuse, among others, each of which can have chronic, long-term manifestations, as well as acute crises (e.g. suicidal thoughts, panic attacks, psychotic episodes).

I added emphasis on the word diagnosable for two reasons. The first is purely linguistic: we tend to use terms describing mental illness in the common everyday language, but there is a difference between “feeling depressed” and “being (clinically) depressed”, between “feeling anxious” and “suffering from an anxiety disorder”. The second is to gain prospective on the statistics on the prevalence of mental health. According to recent data, 1 in 4 Europeans has been diagnosed with a mental illness (anxiety and depression being the most common). Since the majority of people likely does not seek and receive a diagnosis or treatment, these statistics are an underestimation of the true magnitude of the mental health pandemic.

**Q. What brings this coachee to us?**

A number of reasons could have brought a coachee experiencing poor mental health or mental illness to us. A coachee willing to address a problem is a suitable support for recovery, has good chances to be in the right place.

**Courses** such as the Mental Health First Aid are a great way to get essential knowledge on prevalent mental health illnesses. Websites such as [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk), [www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org) and [www.together-uk.org](http://www.together-uk.org), among others, offer information and resources in English. Surely more exist in your country and your language.

**Q. What are the signs of mental illness?**

Our coachee might spontaneously disclose their diagnosis, or do it when asked, but they can also be unaware of their illness, or intentionally keeping it from us. Therefore, it is important that we are aware of risk factors, recognise signs of deteriorating mental health and, in particular, catch the red flags of illness.

They might, however, be sitting in front of us for less suitable reasons, including, but not limited to the following:

- Dissatisfaction with traditional treatment: other types of professional support have left them unsatisfied, and are looking for anything as long as it is different from traditional treatment;
- Stigma on mental illness and treatment: they acknowledge the struggle, but consider psychiatric or therapeutical support to have an aura of seriousness, difficulty, secrecy and be associated with stigmatised illnesses and people (crazy, weird, lazy...), whereas coaching is seen as an emerging, cool, upbeat process associated with performance, leadership and success;
- Availability of support services: they are not able to access other professional services due to costs, waiting times, location, language, etc;
- Well intended, but inadequate referral: a trusted friend has suggested them to contact a coach, possibly not understanding the depth of the coachee’s issue;
- Type of relationship: the coachee might be wary of unbalanced and prescriptive top-down, doctor-patient hierarchies typically associated with clinical mental health support, and look for options promoting a peer-to-peer, co-active, collaborative relationship.

Q. When should we refrain from coaching?

The answer is not straightforward. In general terms, coaching might be a viable and valuable path for someone willing to prevent, or recover from mental distress and illness. This needs to be decided on a case-by-case basis.

According to the resources I consulted so far, I found mention of at least three situations in which coaching should give way to other types of support:

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<td>- The coachee is in the acute and active phases of the illness or the traumatic situation;</td>
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<td>- The coachee is in particularly vulnerable and dangerous situations (e.g., victims that are about to leave an abusive relationship due to risk of assault and injury; coachees with mental illness that have been recently discharged from an hospital or institute after a period of treatment);</td>
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<td>- The coachee faces deep-rooted, intrinsant difficulties stemming from the past.</td>
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<td>If conditions are deemed suitable, and the coach feels confident and competent, embarking in a coaching relationship can provide the coachee with beneficial psychological and physical outcomes (e.g., symptoms reductions, improved self-management, acquisition of new skills, increase self-esteem and confidence) that are valuable in the prevention of mental distress and illness, or in the recovery from it.</td>
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One of my key learnings with regards to coaching and mental health came from engaging with the Coaches for Healthcare Heroes, a Swiss initiative offering pro bono coaching to health professionals during the Covid-19 pandemic [More on this initiative in my video interview with Afsheen Ismail-Wey, ICF board member and spokesperson for the initiative, on the iCN website].

As pressure grows from low to optimal, coaches move from feeling unmotivated to comfortable, to reach full potential. Passed the potential, however, excessive pressure generate stress that can lead to mental distress and illness.

A critical distinction has to be made between those in the first half of the curve (unmotivated <-> potential, or the ‘healthy’ population), and those in the second (potential <-> mental illness). While we usually coach the former to grow their motivation and performance to reach their potential, when coaching the latter it is fundamental that we do the opposite, and coach from stress back to potential. The difference is substantial, and requires organising the coaching practice in this new direction. Instructors recommended, for instance, to

- Use solution and goal-orientated models;
- Coach on small and short-term goals, and incremental achievements;
In conclusion, these reflections cover just a minute fraction of the tip of a gigantic iceberg. There is so much more to learn and to understand on how coaching can be of value in the prevention, treatment and recovery from mental distress and illness, and in the promotion of wellbeing. Luckily for us, more and more resources for research and education around this topic are being mobilised and made available.

I encourage fellow students and coaches to keep learning and developing.

If available in your area, I warmly encourage everyone to take a Mental Health First Aid course (see https://mhfainternational.org), or a similar programme, to have a basic knowledge of mental illnesses, and how to best respond to them.

Most importantly, I emphasise that, when a coachee experience mental distress or illness, they might not be able to judge what is in their best interest. If they confide in us, and we have won their respect and trust, we can have a real influence on them; they confide in us, and we have won their respect and trust.

In a no-options way of thinking. Within such a mental box, we make choices and live out our lives. While constricting, the box becomes familiar and comfortable over time. We know its contours and its boundaries.

Although the potential for a splendid, freedom-filled life exists outside the box of our paradigms, dangers lurk as well – or so we fear.

We worry about losing our sense of certainty and stability, our very identities, and that others might ridicule or reject us. We worry about becoming failures. Our inner abductors “protect” us from these possibilities and simultaneously block us from identifying a more expansive set of choices.

Everyone is in a box of some kind. Living a fuller, more satisfying life requires that we expand beyond the narrow confines of that box. When someone comes to you and asks for help, they desire and at the same time fear real change. Helpers often prescribe a solution, without thinking too deeply about it, based on their personal experience. And yet this person’s current situation is likely to be a confluence of individual factors, multi-faceted by definition and bordering on the intractable. Quick and easy solutions to problems are unlikely to stick, no matter how sensible they seem. A deeper understanding of the person and their personal experience is required. And yet this person’s current situation is likely to be a confluence of individual factors, multi-faceted by definition and bordering on the intractable. Quick and easy solutions to problems are unlikely to stick, no matter how sensible they seem. A deeper understanding of the person and their personal experience is required.

The man struggled with his thoughts. Was what he remembered true? Was the threat real, or was his mind playing a trick on him? Was he destined to live trapped in the box for the rest of his life? Did the mere possibility of living a free, fulfilling life make escape worth the tremendous risk he sat in gut-wrenching fear, unable to make a decision on what to do.

Too often, our personal paradigms bind us in a no-options way of thinking. Within such a mental box, we make choices and live out our lives. While constricting, the box becomes familiar and comfortable over time. We know its contours and its boundaries.

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The beginning of the breakthrough occurs when the person realizes that their problem has been no matter how sensible they seem. A deeper understanding of the person and their personal experience is required. And yet this person’s current situation is likely to be a confluence of individual factors, multi-faceted by definition and bordering on the intractable. Quick and easy solutions to problems are unlikely to stick, no matter how sensible they seem. A deeper breakthrough is needed.

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If the paradigm created the problem, and the paradigm is invisible to the person asking for help, then the coach’s job is to help the client see their paradigm. Einstein said it well: ‘You cannot solve today’s problems from the same level of thinking that created them.’ Once someone sees how their problem (their box) was created, then and only then can images of an enduring solution become available.

Too often coaches, especially health and wellness coaches, scratch the surface when working with clients. They recognize that their client is in a box but then focus on treating the symptoms and not the deeper underlying causes. As a result, the client, with a lot of help from the coach, gets better, but is wholly reliant on the client to boost them up or keep them accountable to their own rigorous behaviour changing plans. As long as the coach is there guiding, cajoling, and demanding behaviour change, then the client will stay on a healthy path, but remove the coach from the equation, the client will eventually revert back to their old patterns. This is, in part, because the coach did not work with the client on the underlying paradigms that create the problem for the client in the first place. Too often we believe that insight and even catharsis are enough. These may be necessary, but they’re not sufficient to produce enduring change. Old habits rarely die easily. They require diligent attention and effort to produce enduring change and they require us to look at the underlying paradigms that created the pattern in the first place.

What is a Personal Paradigm?

A paradigm is a mental model that shapes our understanding. The word itself comes from the Greek word, παράδειγμα or paradeigma, which means ‘pattern, example, or sample.’ A paradigm is, in effect, the patterns in our minds that shape what we see and how we understand. Our paradigms shape the parameters for how we act in the world, what we should or shouldn’t do, and what we can or cannot do. In the realm of culture, our paradigms shape how we collectively see, understand, and act in the world. In the personal realm, it is how an individual sees, understands, and behaves in ways that become life patterns.

In my view, a paradigm is made up of beliefs and assumptions, needs, goals, strategies, actions, and outcomes. The totality of this makes up the paradigm.

Any action we take is shaped by and shapes our personal paradigms. More importantly, whenever someone is stuck – like the man in the box – a personal paradigm is at play and that paradigm is almost foreordained to keep them stuck. Only when they become aware of and understand their personal paradigms can they shift them and adopt new practices. In this sense, the process of transformational coaching is not an event – it’s a journey.

If a client comes to a coach and says, ‘please help me lose weight/eat healthily, repair my (fill in the blank), they are asking for a different outcome. Too often the coach then focuses on the strategies and actions that the client employs that creates these outcomes. The problem is that there is something that drives the strategies the client has been using and unless these drivers are addressed, the change in strategies will likely not take root. The key is transformational coaching rather than skill building coaching.

How Transformational Coaching Is Different

The primary goal of transformational coaching is to shift the deeply held personal paradigms we have been discussing. The term ‘transformation’ itself is instructive. It means, in literal terms, a shift in form. In our case, it means shifting an existing personal paradigm that is marked by limiting beliefs to a new paradigm that is more expansive, and effective, and that will open up new opportunities to live life fully and well. Stephen Covey said it well. ‘If you want small changes in your life, work on your attitude. If you want quantum-leap changes, work on your paradigm.’

To learn more about how you can increase your effectiveness as a coach by helping clients shift their paradigms, see my workshop called, The Art of Transformational Coaching. Here is my website for more information: www.artoftransformationalcoaching.com.

Keith Merron
Managing Partner, Leadership Pathways

Keith Merron is the Managing Partner of Leadership Pathways, a consulting firm dedicated to helping organisations with bold visions achieve sustainable high performance and industry leadership. As an organisation’s effectiveness and an executive development consultant, he has more than 35 years of experience assisting executives and managers in business, government, and education.

In the context of his consulting, he works with the C-suite as a transformational coach. In addition, Keith has designed and led over 100 seminars and workshops for leaders. He has helped create some of the most innovative leadership training programs in the country. Through his consulting firm, he regularly offers a workshop for coaches called: The Art of Transformational Coaching. See his website: https://www.artoftransformationalcoaching.com for more information.

Keith received his Doctorate from Harvard University in 1985, where his studies spanned the fields of human and organisation development. He is the author of five books on human and organisational change and is putting the finishing touches on a new book, tentatively titled: The Art of Transformational Coaching.
I define myself as a holistic coach. That's what it says on my business card, my website, all the social media I use. When I began my training as a life and executive coach, I thought that it would be enough to get my diploma and fly into the world helping people solve their problems in life and making the world a better place.

Near the end of my studies came a disturbing awakening. My fellow students and I were told that it is highly recommended to choose a niche to focus on as coaches. I was very disappointed by this and didn’t care to listen to the marketing logic of having a niche and branding my coaching practice. I believed that every coach should be able to tackle every life issue a client presents in session just like a real-life superhero.

Feeling somewhat disillusioned and disappointed for several days, after my ego tantrum was over, I sat down and dived into several weeks of soul-searching introspection. I emerged with the inspiration I was looking for – my niche was searching introspection. I emerged with the inspiration I was looking for – my niche was the journey within.

I regularly watched videos on YouTube of famous coaches and it seemed that in the world of coaching, most coaches focused on what the traditional Eastern spiritual practices might label as ego-driven activities and goals: more money, more success, bigger house, new car, career advancements, etc. You get the picture.

Now I am not saying those things are bad, nor that people should not be fulfilled in the material arena. This is just something I observed as a trend in the coaching world. Just like water takes the shape of the container it fills, so does coaching cater to the demands of the people it serves. And most people have material desires. Even worse, society tells us which goals we should have, what goals and life choices will make us happy, what we will be praised and acknowledged for, and what not. Society and external factors in general have a powerful grooming effect over us, implanting upon our mind visions and values we should have in order to be more likeable and accepted.

I define myself as a holistic coach. That’s what it says on my business card, my website, all the social media I use. When I began my training as a life and executive coach, I thought that it would be enough to get my diploma and fly into the world helping people solve their problems in life and making the world a better place.

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Finally, holistic coaching is about experiencing this joy of being that comes when you are in touch with your core self and treat your life and all its elements as an indivisible whole. This enables you to create a life which is a balanced and stable structure upon which you can build your inner sanctum of bliss and see the bigger picture of your life – that life isn’t fundamentally about achieving and having, life is about being.

In conclusion I would like to encourage all of you my coaching colleagues to consider including a holistic dimension to your coaching practice. It doesn’t matter what your niche is, adding a holistic element to your practice will not dilute your work and effectiveness. In fact, it might be that special, secret ingredient that will enhance and improve the service you offer your clients. And don’t be surprised if your clients enjoys this as well!

Holistic coaching brings you in touch with your core self, and through this connection you gain an awareness of yourself which is beyond the labels and identities forced upon you during your childhood by family, peers and society. You become aware that there is a deeper self that is fundamentally immune to what society tells you will bring you success and happiness.

This inner self knows what it wants. It craves peace, harmony and tranquility. It loves balance, stability, integrity, listening to the inner voice and following the inner compass. The classical corporate language and achievement mindset is alien to this inner self.

The job of the holistic coach is to help the client realize that by engaging in holistic coaching, the client begins primarily an inner journey of personal growth and increased self-awareness. The client doesn’t give up on material goals per se, but realises that external rewards on their own are a source of fleeting pleasure and satisfaction, and do not necessarily bring a sense of inner completion and existential joy. Instead, the client is encouraged to go after goals that come from their heart and soul. There is an essential difference between manifesting a job that brings you joy and happiness, and a job that just brings you x amount of euros per month.

Growth and shifts brought about through holistic coaching are not about pushing yourself, not about blind achievements, more of this and that. Holistic coaching is about growth and shifts initiated from within, from your heart, and manifesting things that complete you, that heal you, that evolve you and make you a better person. Holistic coaching is about manifesting things that serve your heart and nourish your soul instead of feeding the endless appetite of your ego. It is about having the entire tapestry in all its beauty and glory, instead of just a few disconnected threads.

In: www.linkedin.com/in/boris1pavlov1/
There are several themes which are important in coaching, especially in the present pandemic, that Anna brings out in our discussion and her blogs.

**Achieving your Dream**

Anna has bridged that great gap between knowing and doing. How many of our clients – and us as coaches – know what we really want to do but never do it?

She has approached this in two ways, which I would categorise as the pragmatic and the transformational.

- **Pragmatic:** Nothing will happen until you make the first step. It’s up to you and you alone to move out of your comfort zone and do something different.
- **Transformational.** Anna uses Visualisation to enable her to see what it is and where she wants to be. She is using her experiences to ‘…travel towards [being] the best version of yourself. Learn.’

The achievement of goals is a theme of Anna’s speaking engagements which she arranges on stops on her travels. These are often to children, students or any institutions. “If you have any idea that comes into your mind, it means automatically that it can be accomplished” Seeing the spark in children’s eyes confirms to Anna the mission of her trip - to enable people to achieve their dreams. Hence the trips being called ‘I have a Dream’.

Here she brings out another theme that often emerges in coaching – that of Purpose.

She reflected that ‘Literally every day I experienced miracles’ and realised for her it was not just about taking the richness of the journey but about giving back sharing her story. Certainly she consistently leaves audiences fascinated!

Anna’s work with young people highlights for me a large gap in many educational agenda – proving people with the skills and awareness of self-actualisation. And a core purpose of coaching.

**Deep Reflection**

Anna has built in reflective time to her journeys. This has enabled her to take part in two journeys simultaneously – her physical and her inner journeys. She said ‘We all have our own ‘things' to deal with. The world is moving too fast and C19 is giving a chance to focus on our inner journey.’

Many writers, including Kegan in ‘We are In over our heads’ (1995) argue that the human ability to learn is being short circuited by our inability to reflect. We learn by finding out, doing and then reflecting. The pace of life for many and the ‘always connected’ approach means that we are minimizing reflective time and are consequently reducing our ability to learn.

A great reminder that we and our coachee’s should be actively building in reflective time.

**Gratitude & Mindfulness**

Anna has discovered the ability to make life better by being present and feeling gratitude – from a universal level through to her own personal gratitude.

‘To be thankful, we need to notice and see; to see, we need to pay attention; and to pay attention, we often need to stop and focus. Isn’t it exactly what we have plenty of opportunities for right now? I really hope and wish for each of us to come out of the current crisis with a significantly increased list of things to be grateful for and new healthy traditions and habits.’

She followed this up by saying ‘It took me quite a lot of effort to direct my mind towards gratitude and to make it part of my daily life and my journey. And I noticed that it brought practical results. Not only did I feel better and happier, but it seemed that more and more positive things started to come into my life.’

**Metaphors & Analogies**

Anna reveals many of her reflections and personal learning’s through metaphors and analogies, which as all successful communicators know, are very powerful ways of creating new insights. Several of these are available on her blog, and include inspiration from a statue of the Old Man And The Sea, as well as events she has encountered whilst travelling – like riding through tunnels, something which, as a cyclist, she does not enjoy – ‘It’s the same thing to remember about tunnels in our lives. From time to time we will bump into them on our way and they will seem endless and unbearable. But it is important not to forget at this point that somewhere ahead, and most likely closer than we think, we will exit to the bright and long-awaited light.’

**Curiosity & Meaning Making**

The journey has enabled Anna to grapple with issues of developing meaning. As with others who have reached a higher level of awareness, she has become comfortable with the journey for its own sake, not to reach a destination.
Indeed, she reflected that – at one level – there are so many places to see, that should she return to a location she had previously visited, that she would have changed to the degree that she would be presented with new experiences, making for an eternal journey. ‘In the world of duality, when there is black or white, yes or no, good or bad, it’s hard to believe and accept that maybe both can exist at the same time... My norm has only one criterion and measure – my satisfaction with who I am and what I do.’

She believes there are no coincidences – things happen for a reason, everything is connected and it is up to us what we gain from it, so she takes everything as a learning opportunity. ‘Life is so interesting and that’s why I wake up with curiosity every morning.’

Anna has confronted many other themes – pushing herself out of her comfort zone, seeing through different eyes, influencing people (to the extent that she has needed to keep herself safe), not always being in control yet always finding a way through, positivity – that have given her tremendous insights and experience. As she said:-

‘Besides the fun and hardships the road is my best education and sometimes I feel that I have lived many lives while traveling, something I would never have gained through university or degree.

I’ve learned to understand other people, be more flexible and tolerant and to focus on similarities rather differences. I learned also that every tiny and invisible deed of kindness matters and it is our responsibility not to miss a chance to make a difference.

I for one, will look forward to following Anna’s journeys online and to reading her ICN articles. We can all learn from her.

I will leave the last words to Gerard O’Donovan. ‘Anna is one of the world’s great adventurers and explorers. She has shown the most incredible courage and self-discipline while all the time keeping a most incredibly positive and charming attitude... She speaks with such clarity and enthusiasm about the challenges and obstacles involved in following your dream and how to achieve what you truly want in life. She really is a motivational and inspirational speaker.’

You can view the entire interview here.

ABOUT MALCOLM NICHOLSON

Malcolm Nicholson is the owner and Coaching Director for Aspecture, and has worked successfully with a wide range of international business people for 20 years, enabling them to improve business results and personal growth through transformational changes. To find out how he can help your organization contact him at malcolmnicholson@aspecture.com or on +44 1932 267597.

Hi, I'm Ruby McGuire, Head of CPD over at the IAPC&M (International Authority of Professional Coaching & Mentoring).

The IAPC&M has a proven track record in providing coaches, mentors and training providers with a 1st class personal service; a wealth of value added business building resources, and outstanding CPD benefits to help you to deliver the best possible service to your clients. The IAPC&M is the ONLY accreditation body for the coaching & mentoring industry that is approved by the British Industry Ombudsman.

Over the past few months, we’ve been sharing some fabulous content and opportunities, both for members and non-members. Here’s what you’ve missed.

1. Achieving Happiness in 2021 with Jeremy Glyn
2. Mentoring in the Workplace with Dr Stephen Hopkins & Jennifer Helene Popken
3. How to Change Your Pain Into Power with Dr Liz Sparkes
4. Releasing Blocks to Fear with Nina Cooke
5. Business of Coaching with Nikki Wilde - A year long webinar series to help you maximise our Business of Coaching & the Mentoring online training programme - Initial Goals & First Steps in Business, How to Price Your Services and Comfortably Coaching a Sales Conversation (Recordings can be accessed in the Secure Members Area)
6. Introduction to Mental Health 1st Aid with Benn Commins

CPD Business Building Webinars

1. Achieving Happiness in 2021 with Jeremy Glyn
2. Mentoring in the Workplace with Dr Stephen Hopkins & Jennifer Helene Popken
3. How to Change Your Pain Into Power with Dr Liz Sparkes
4. Releasing Blocks to Fear with Nina Cooke
5. Business of Coaching with Nikki Wilde

Book Reviews

We added six new book reviews to our growing Book Club review list that you can find here. We hope it helps to shortcut your search for books you might like to read.

1. Cognitive Bias (In Articles)
2. Training Evaluation (In Evaluation)

New Member Resources

(Secure Member’s Area)

1. Cognitive Bias (In Articles)
2. Training Evaluation (In Evaluation)
As usual at the end of the year, we like to share with you a review of your accreditation ROI.

- PR opportunities
- Work opportunities
- Business building discounts
- Support & documents as required
- Affiliate opportunity to off-set annual renewals
- Industry news, trends, legal, CPD information
- Connect over coffee & chat support during Covid
- Discounted supervision, coaching and mentoring
- Nearly 60 hrs. of content rich CPD & Business Building
- Promotional copies of How to Win Clients & Keep Them

Fantastic feedback from our monthly coaching capability calls series
- Video & blog on safe guarding and confidentiality for coaching minors
- Book Club Review – this will become a great resource for readers & authors
- Some great master classes: Doing Business Virtually and How to Deliver Effective Webinars
- Invitation to write for our industry based community project strengthening contributors credibility
- Discounted reciprocal coaching for students building hrs. & confidence with professionals giving feedback
- 40,000 web hits last month, proving our international reputation is growing, that means people are looking at you too!

**Marketing Department - providing ROI for you and your business**

**Exciting PR Opportunities**

1. Both Sides of the Coin podcast with Jenny Butter
2. Can Do Attitude podcast with Gail Gibson
3. Life Made Better podcast with Fleur & Lucia
4. Coach Yourself Blog - a site that drives the public to your directory profile

**New Initiatives**

To protect our physical and mental well-being, we’ve had expert Jennifer Helene Popken’s start her series of health webinars.

Lots of exciting things have been happening over the past few months. If you’re a world class Coach, Mentor and/or Training Provider that wants to be recognised as a leader in your field, come and join the IAPC&M 1% Club, for practitioners who believe in the importance of accreditation. Here’s what people say about us:

"The IAPC&M is the most caring sharing hands-on practical support available."

We’d love to have you join our 1% club

**Your Accreditation Represents £6,000+ worth of added value!**

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What are the steps to identify and focus on “what really matters” to reach inner balance and express it into overall fulfilment both at the end of the day and on the professional life span?

We approached this question with Adelina Ștefan, Professional Certified Coach (ICF AAC), Personal Agility Recognized Practitioner and Intercultural Facilitator, based in Switzerland. Adelina and we spoke in particular about the Personal Agility System (PAS), a powerful tool to get clarity on ‘what really matters’ and acknowledge the ‘small wins’. Let’s start!

The topics we dive into:

1. How to understand and find inner balance. Some of the biggest challenges nowadays.


3. Personal Agility System and the importance of celebrating small wins.

Q1: How to understand and find inner balance and what are the biggest challenges nowadays?

Adelina: Inner balance is a combination of factors that many people find more and more challenging to achieve. The most common I would highlight are:

- Knowing yourself and your values.
- Prioritisation, i.e. How can one achieve a balance coping with the family responsibilities, career goals / current job and finding some time for self-care?
- Lack of self-confidence and to communicate their needs and expectations, i.e. difficulty to say ‘no’ with assertiveness.

All these, when unfulfilled, may lead to lower self-esteem, feeling unhappy, having too many things on the plate and not knowing where to start, or lacking time for self-care.

iCN: Inner balance was often hard to achieve even before 2020 transformed home environments into full-time offices, schooling, or created redundancies or furloughs in several industries. Adelina spoke about coaching methods effective in dealing with such life/ career challenges.

Q2: How can coaching help in dealing with challenging times and/or work environments?

Adelina: Coaching is an authentic relationship between the coach and the coachee, serving the coachee’s goal. Any transformation that is going to occur is going to be the result of the transference of life on life.

First, a relationship based on trust, clear communication, transparency, empathy and rapport should be built in order for the transformation to occur.

Not everyone is open to try coaching or many people are confused about what coaching is and their expectations from the coach.

Coaching can help in creating a safe and courageous space for the coachee, where the latter needs to take risks in order to develop and grow, and be ready for change. As Coach, we play a role in ensuring the space is safe enough and the coachee can open themselves. A coach believes that the client is capable, strong, and enough, unleashing their potential and seeing them shining.

Visualizations and metaphors are very powerful, making the client explore their own ways and envision their current situation from a different perspective. The most challenging part and where coaching is really helpful is on helping the client identifying what really matters to them – on a professional / family / personal level (we develop this point in Q3 - the Personal Agility System).
6 Contexts of Life/Career Challenges and few Coaching Approaches

1. I need a job to pay the bills, no matter what kind of job.
Coach: What if you got "no matter what kind of job" and it’s not something you like or can manage? Let’s redefine the job you really want.

2. I lost my confidence / I don’t believe in myself / I don’t think I will succeed.
Coach: What lies behind the loss of self-confidence (barriers, challenges, obstacles)?

3. I fear when I will be asked to have an interview as I won’t manage it.
Coach: What lies behind the fear – is it lack of self-trust, lack of practice, stress etc.? Do they see the interviewer in a superior position than themselves, instead of building a common ground where both are in an equal position?

4. I don’t know how to present myself in a job interview and answer those questions.
Coach: What is expected from your side? How would you define ‘everything’?

5. I don’t have enough time to manage everything.
Coach: How would you define ‘everything’? What really matters to you? What if you had enough time, what would you do?

6. I planned to focus on myself and do my ‘coaching’ homework, but I couldn’t, due to other things that needed to be done (can be around family, children, lack of energy).
Coach: What was really important for them? What challenges they faced in staging focused on themselves and prioritising their individual / professional needs? Who can help with these tasks in future so that they have some time for self-care? What kind of further support do they need?

What Lies Behind the Stories we Tell Ourselves
by Petra Juhászová (United Kingdom)

From the beginning of times people told stories to each other. These stories weren’t only for pure entertainment but often carried a moral lesson. Storytelling is a unique human skill. We use it not just in relation to others, but also with ourselves. We tell ourselves stories about what we should be doing, what we should have by now, what our life should look like, why we are behaving the way we behave, how we should feel...etc.

We often start telling these kinds of stories when the emotion we experience we don’t want to fully face for some reason - it might be too heavy for us or it triggers us. Therefore, instead of experiencing the difficult emotion, we decide to take the route more comfortable for us. For example, when we start feeling grief, we might get angry, as it is easier to be angry, than to feel grief.

Sarah Peyton, a neuroscience educator, explains this wonderfully in her book ‘The Resonant Self’.

Talking of which, neuroscience proved that our body actually relaxes when the difficult emotion is recognized and named. We would think that it doesn’t help. On the contrary. It allows something to be seen in daylight, rather than keeping it in the dark. Once seen, we can choose the appropriate approach.

We can’t heal, anything until we don’t know what it is that we are facing. In order to heal our pain, we need to feel it. But feeling something painful isn’t easy.

How can we achieve this? With compassion. We don’t always have the right words straight away. We grew up in a society where people’s emotional vocabulary is lacking. Due to the fact that we were never encouraged to talk about how we feel, what is bothering us. Though this is slowing changing.

Somehow, we made ourselves believe that if we talk about these feelings we become vulnerable. This is a misconception. When we start showing up as our authentic selves, we name the feeling we also give our body the relaxation it needs, the tension we held onto is released.

You can start practising this attitude towards yourself first, and then you can create a space for others to go through their experiences. As a coach and systemic constellation practitioner, I found constellations work a gift, as they allow people to experience different emotions (sometimes really difficult ones) while they are in a safe place.

For example, when somebody is not able to feel grief, in a constellation workshop they might end up representing somebody with deep grief. This experience allows the person’s body to learn the physiological sensations of this grief. And next time when they feel grief the body will remember what it is and deal with it appropriately. Thanks to neuroplasticity we are always able to learn new things.

Adelina: From a more practical perspective, Personal Agility System (PAS) helps people achieve more of what really matters in their life or work, and strive to use their time accordingly using PAS to get things done, achieve long-term goals, and build alignment around what really matters.

Q3: How does Personal Agility System work in practice?

Adelina: The Personal Agility System is a very useful framework that allows people to have a clear image of what they have done / achieved weekly, choosing one thing they are proud of to celebrate.

Often people forget to celebrate small wins and tend to start working on another goal as soon as they have achieved something. It is crucial to have a short period of reflection on what you have accomplished so that you can move forward, feel more connected with yourself and know how you can perform better.

Visual example: Adelina shared a story written by a client using “Personal Agility as a Family”. Creating an analogue visual board that engaged the whole family, including non-readers (small children), helped her client “build Productivity around What Really Matters”. Adelina’s client story, here (LinkedIn article).

Thank you, Adelina, for the helpful insights in finding and maintaining inner balance. Wishing you and Cristina's activity, on:
https://balanced-communicator.com/

Adelina can be found and contacted on:
LinkedIn: Adelina Stefan
Facebook: Advanced talent, Training & Consulting – ATTC
Book a free call via Adelina’s website: https://adelinastefan-ttc.com/

Our Needs in Difficulties

In the moment of difficulties, we want to experience safety. We want the following needs of ours to be met (either all of them or just some):

To be heard
To be seen
To be connected
To belong

From:
https://balanced-communicator.com/

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It is about our capacity to be and sit with uncomfortable emotions or sit with somebody experiencing these kinds of emotions. Saying ‘You’ll be fine, That’s gonna be ok’ won’t help. As at this point, we need the difficult emotion to be seen and heard. We want to connect to it in order to free ourselves from it. The more we are able to do this, the more we can offer a safe place for others. As we won’t rush into a ‘positive’ feeling but we acknowledge the unpleasant feeling. By this act, we don’t despise it, we don’t deny it. How could we? It is part of our life, part of being a human to experience hardship as well. As Edith Eger said in ‘The Gift’ it is up to us what we do with our experiences and how we react to them.

**The CALM Technique**

There is a Technique called CALM developed by Jennifer Kolari, a family therapist that I would like to share with you. In my practice, this works really well not just in a family setting but any other setting. We can use it with our friends, and even with ourselves. The main idea behind it is ‘connect before you correct’.

Yes, you guessed it right - CALM is an acronym.

**C - Connect**

This is where you really connect with the other person. You put your phone down, leave any distraction on the side. Your body indicates that you are really listening to what the other person has to say.

**A - Affect**

This is affection matching. If the other person looks sad, you also look sad, if the other person looks scared you also match this. Avoid telling them how they should feel. At this point their brain will not respond to it. By matching their affective, you are getting to their limbic system, that does not understand spoken words, but picks up the emotions from the body language and other sources.

**L - Listen**

Paraphrase, clarify and summarise or wonder out loud all with that affect. That way you can really listen to what the other person is saying — have them feel that they’ve really been heard.

**M - Mirroring**

Sit in the moment and let them share what they are feeling. Empathize but don’t try to fix it.

Often people just want their innermost feelings to be heard without judgement. By trying to fix what they feel, even if it comes from a good place, we devalue their experience, and don’t help them to process what they are dealing with. It is not about what you are saying, it is about you being there for them and creating a space where they can truly express and explore the feeling that might be difficult to do on their own.

We created a society where we try to sweep the unpleasant experiences under the carpet. We need to understand that this isn’t possible, just like we can’t remove the night and enjoy only daylight. Day and night go together. The same goes for seemingly opposing feelings like Sadness and Happiness. But are they truly opposite? I would rather say they are complimentary. By having the capacity to experience them both we are complete. Our aim is not perfection but completion.

Don’t be afraid of the uncomfortable feelings. Be cautious not to allow them to suck you in. When you work with people - allow them to feel the pain, the sorrow, the grief they need to feel, be there with them. And when the time is right you guide them away from that pain. You gently remind them that they have a choice. They aren’t that pain, that sorrow, this is just an experience. Therefore, they can transform these energies in a healthy way to propel their life forward.

**SCOOOP**

**Quollify App, a Tiger by the Tail**

Quollify, business matching app has been referred to by some, as TikTok, but for business only.

It is based on thirty second videos, whereby the speaker announces their name, exactly what he or she is doing and exactly who they are seeking. Then, through clever algorithms, key words and many other methods, instantaneous matches will be created. Business networking in a blink...

Ostensibly, this will be a mega, FREE advertising and marketing platform for entrepreneurs and business people and who better to create and market such an app, than “The incredible Ron G Holland, quite possibly the greatest business and mind power guru in Britain.....” (Fleet Street Publishing) “The Entrepreneur’s Entrepreneur” (Success Now) and “UK’s Number One Millionaire Maker” (Streetwise Publications)

Just in the past few weeks Quollify have concluded strategic alliances with a major video hosting platform, a software company, the largest email company in the UK, the largest coaching magazine in the world, one of the largest women’s network in the UK and UKs number one stunt man for publicity purposes. There are many more such technology and marketing alliances, already in the pipeline. Currently, 30 second videos flooding in, for their beta test.

TikTok mkt cap is now 50 billion, Tinder is 4 billion and Clubhouse, launched 12 months ago, is at over a billion. At Quollify, they really do have a ‘Tiger by the Tail’ and know how to market the Quollify app globally, to an audience that is screaming out for such an advertising and marketing platform that delivers qualified leads at the speed of thought. This will be a game changer, a disrupter, and will be used by recruiters; professionals, MLmers, biz-opp seekers, barterers, team builders and entrepreneurs seeking co-founders; investors, coaches, mentors, non-executives, professional advisers, IT people and tens of thousands of others looking for qualified leads.

Coaches should register their interest in the Quollify app immediately and get regular updates on its development and launch. Here is a platform that will attract qualified clients to you. Further, you will be able to introduce it to your clients and allow them to attract clients, people and customers too.

GO HERE NOW: www.quollify.com - register your interest and tell as many friends as you like.
6 Benefits of Accountability
by Anne Bachrach (USA)

Accountability, which is an important element of the workplace, requires both internal control and external support. In order to achieve peak levels of performance, external accountability is necessary. Being an accountable employee, which is what a business owner wants, demonstrates dedication to the job and higher levels of workplace satisfaction. It also contributes to a higher level of innovation with an increased interest in the company’s success.

At work, accountability translates to initiative and ownership. An accountable employee takes responsibility for their actions and the results and is not quick to point to management when things go wrong. People who are accountable are on time for work and meetings, complete projects on time, and go the extra mile when they are able. These are all great qualities a business owner should be looking for in an employee.

There are many benefits to having an accountability culture in your firm. Here are six benefits.

1. Encourages Follow-Through
It is easy to fall off track when trying to reach a goal, or experience points of lower motivation. If you have set goals for yourself in the past and forgot about them within a few days or weeks, you need a higher level of accountability to see them through. Accountability means you don’t feel satisfied until the job is completed correctly, and, ideally, on time.

2. Goals Clarity
Long-term goals can get lost in the shuffle of everyday work life. Defining your goals and an action plan that supports them, gives you clarity as to what you want and why you want it. When you hold yourself accountable to these goals, you eliminate the excuses as to why the plan is not being adhered to.

3. Creates Deadlines
Planning plays an important role when setting goals and completing tasks. Without action tasks with specific deadlines, getting a goal completed on time will be extremely difficult. There is a better chance that you will meet a deadline if you make them public, including to your accountability partner(s). Private deadlines can be ignored or changed too easily.

4. Prevents Large Problems
There will always be challenges and setbacks to every goal. An outside person or people will often be able to see areas that might cause problems that you might not because you are so vested in it. Having someone point out a small issue before it sets you off track with your progress is something you cannot handle on your own.

5. Builds Confidence
Ever have a low motivation workday and felt your self-esteem was low too? They work hand in hand. When you are accountable for your tasks, your self-esteem grows. The personal satisfaction of getting the work completed builds confidence and gives motivation and inspiration to continue with the work.

6. Keeps You Focused
Staying the course day in and out can be a challenge. Being accountable enables you to focus on taking action on both your daily tasks and your end goals. Sometimes it is easy to get caught up in what is going to happen in the long-term. Being accountable helps you see the short-term too by encouraging you to keep working on the smaller tasks. It means that you will remain engaged in your work, so that you have the highest probability to see it through.

How to Increase Accountability

If you are having trouble staying accountable, there are a few ways to work on increasing it. First, you have to become self-aware to be able to take account of your emotions about work. Once you become self-aware, your actions will be conscious ones instead of just going through the daily motions of work. The way to become more self-aware is to reflect on your actions and thoughts. The more you practice self-awareness, the more responsible you will become for your actions.

Set your expectations and objectives on outstanding tasks daily—don’t wait until Friday at 3pm to review your list of what needs to be done.
A good practice to start is reviewing your task list at the same time every day, so you don’t forget to check in. Putting the time in your calendar will help you get into a good habit with this.

Use the SMART method for setting your goals: **Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely.**

This type of goal setting will help with your accountability level. Communicate with yourself and your accountability partner(s), if you have one, on your progress. Follow up often on issues or challenges you might be encountering in your daily task list.

With dedication to being accountable, you will find that you are even more productive every day and the ability to focus on your goals becomes even easier. Your reputation both internally at work and to outside clients, will benefit as well.

Review the various coaching options and choose the one that will best help you achieve your goals in the timeframe you desire, so you can enjoy the life you truly want in life by going to [https://www.accountabilitycoach.com/coaching/](https://www.accountabilitycoach.com/coaching/). If you would like to schedule a complimentary consultation with me, feel free to reach out by going to [https://www.accountabilitycoach.com/contact-us/](https://www.accountabilitycoach.com/contact-us/).

**ABOUT ANNE M. BACHRACH**

Anne M. Bachrach is known as The Accountability Coach™. She has over 23 years of experience training and coaching. Business owners and entrepreneurs who utilise Anne’s proven systems and processes work less, make more money, and have a more balanced and successful life. Anne is the author of the books, Excuses Don’t Count; Results Rule, and Live Life with No Regrets; How the Choices We Make Impact Our Lives, No Excuses!, and The Work Life Balance Emergency Kit. Go to [https://www.accountabilitycoach.com/silver](https://www.accountabilitycoach.com/silver) and get 3 FREE gifts including a special report on 10 Power Tips for Getting Focused, Organised, and Achieving Your Goals Now. Join the FREE Silver Inner Circle Membership today and receive 10% off on all products and services, in addition to having access to assessments and high-content resources to help you achieve your goals so you can experience a more balanced and successful life.

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**Selecting the Right Wellness or Holistic Coach!**

by International Regulator of Coaching and Mentoring CIC

Now, more than ever in our personal history, everyone needs the support of the right Wellness and/or Holistic Coach. As this pandemic continues, the IRCM CIC hears from coaching and mentoring industry Consumers, through the press and media outlets, and from a number of other channels about health and wellness challenges. People on the frontline are facing unprecedented working environments – 14+ hours a day with more people dying in the wards than ever before. People on the frontline not being recognised for the support they provide e.g. the shop assistants and delivery staff. People being ‘trapped’ at home and having to work in an environment that used to be their ‘get away from it all’ place. Parents learning to become teachers to support their own children’s growth and development. Husbands/Wives understanding what the other goes through every day to support their household. Not being able to live a ‘normal’ life and the impact of no exercise, while eating too much. This pandemic gives each Coach whose niche market is health, wellness, and fitness; and each Mentor with the personally gained experience; the opportunity to provide a needed level of support.

Coaching and Mentoring puts each Coach and Mentor in a very privileged position. It is a position from which the correctly selected Coach or Mentor can enrich the lives of their client, but where the wrong coach or mentor is selected, could cause harm.

Are you aware that Consumers have the best kept secret in the coaching and mentoring industry working for them? If not, let us introduce ourselves to you. The International Regulator of Coaching and Mentoring CIC (aka IRCM CIC) is the UK Government approved regulator for the protection of the Consumers who benefit from the services of Coaches and Mentors. The IRCM CIC provides support to all Consumers and not only those who benefit from coaching and mentoring but also their learning from Education/Training organisations, and the support and ongoing guidance from Professional Bodies, Associations, etc.

Over the past years, the IRCM CIC through its Ombudsman Service has been supporting Consumers who have purchased a service from a Coach or Mentor that does not live up to their expectations.

Through its investigations, the Ombudsman Service often finds that no due diligence is done when a Consumer selects a Coach or Mentor. Whether a personal recommendation from a friend or colleague; or responding to an online advert from a platform like LinkedIn or Facebook, it is important to complete your own due diligence.

Due diligence is simply a process that is conducted to provide the Consumer with trust. Trust in their choice of the right person to work with to enrich their own life. The IRCM CIC recommends that, as the person paying for the service or product, you undertake a verification process which includes interviewing the prospective Coach and/or Mentor. Coaching and Mentoring is a personal service, and it is important that as the Consumer:

- You are able to build a rapport with the person who will be providing the level of support you require.
- The person providing this level of support has the right competence – registration, accreditation/credential, qualification, and experience.
• You select the person to work with.

Due diligence does not only apply to the Consumer, but also to the Coach and Mentor. Research shows that often a contract is agreed, even through one person in the party is not 100% sure that the other person is the ‘right’ person to be working with.

The IRCM CIC works closely with all individuals and organisations who have a pride in the coaching and mentoring industry. The IRCM CIC partners with Professional Bodies (who represent their coaches, mentors, and private commercial training organisations) and the Formal Education Bodies, as well as receiving feedback, suggestions, and input from all registered Coaches, Mentors, and Private Commercial Training Organisations. This collaboration has given the coaching and mentoring industry recognised and published fundamental requirements for the Consumers benefit:

1. Industry recognised definitions and terminology explanations.
2. An industry standard for standards and ethics.
3. An industry standard for core competencies of every coach and/or mentor.
4. A consumer checklist to support their due diligence when selecting a coach and/or mentor and/or trainer and/or education/training course or workshop.

The outline of selecting the right Wellness and/or Holistic Coach is to ensure that the coach is working within the coaching and mentoring industry is registered with the IRCM CIC. This will confirm to their Consumers that they have agreed to demonstrate their professionalism by abiding by the industry definitions, terminology, codes of conduct (standards, ethics, and core competencies), and recognise the Ombudsman Service for the benefit of their own Consumers.

Where the Coaches and Mentors qualification cannot be verified as part of their accreditation/credential with one or more IRCM CIC registered or accredited Professional Bodies, the IRCM CIC recommends that the Consumer verifies that the Coach or Mentor is qualified through one or more IRCM registered Formal Education Bodies or Private Commercial Training Organisations.

Although there are additional points on the IRCM CIC’s consumer due diligence checklist, the IRCM CIC is resolute in its support of the Consumers with the IRCM CIC’s Ombudsman Service.
Imagine telling a child, ‘You’re such a loser.’ Or raging at a friend, ‘you’re a stupid jerk.’ Most of us don’t behave that way and intuitively understand why: it’s part of being harmful and does not lead to lasting change. And yet, we would not hesitate to talk to ourselves that way.

But consider this: Our brain cannot distinguish between an external threat and our own self-critical voice. When we talk trash to ourselves, we become both the attacker and the attacked.

Just like under an external attack, we go into a ‘fight-or-flight’ stress response. Which douses us in a stew of stress hormones that shut down all but our most necessary bodily mechanisms for survival. To fight the threat, we may beat up on ourselves; to flee it, we might numb out with excessive distractions; freeze in the face of the threat through rumination—rerunning endless stories of our inadequacies; or, submit to the threat by admitting we really are that terrible after all.

How could anyone be productive or perform at his or her best under those conditions? Never mind feel happy or well.

Since productivity and performance, wellness and well-being are the domain of coaches, noticing how our clients talk to themselves is a relevant area of concern for us. We are in the business of change, which requires experimentation, trial and error. So what happens when our clients fall short? Or experience fear, frustration, and anger at their shortcomings? How can we be helpful to our clients in hard times?

There is an impressive and growing body of research that shows that the antidote to harsh self-criticism is self-compassion: the act of turning kindness toward ourselves when we have failed or see some part of ourselves we don’t like. This might sound obvious—or New Agey. Or, sound simply absurd: When we mess up, don’t we deserve to be punished?

Held accountable, yes. Punished, no. At the heart of self-compassion is the idea that we are worthy of care and respect, despite the unavoidable fact that to be human means we are also flawed. Humans make mistakes. We have shortcomings. But how we treat the fact of our own shortcomings determines how quickly or easily we move through our challenges and failures, learn what we need to, make amends as needed, and move on.

Pioneering researcher and psychologist in the field of self-compassion, Kristin Neff, says that people frequently resist offering kindness to themselves because they think such behaviour will let themselves off the hook—that self-judgment is the thing that keeps them in line. Add to the list of what makes people resistant: fear of appearing weak, self-indulgent, self-pitying, or self-absorbed.

But actually, research shows the opposite is true. It turns out that self-judgment actually distorts reality. Self-compassionate people are less likely to get swallowed up by self-pitying thoughts, and their attendant storylines. They tend to be more reflective, ask of themselves how they could be more skillful in the future and have done a better job in the past. They tend to feel guilt or remorse that’s equal to the deed, and apologise when they have wronged others. Because they feel a sense of their own agency, they also feel more optimism and hope.

The research clearly shows that self-compassion is a generative process, a prescription for motivation, and an antidote for perfectionism. When we know we are on our own side, we are willing to take more risks, dream big, and be less immobilised by fear of failure. We come to trust that whatever struggles and imperfections we have, and whatever mistakes we make, it’s all part of the mill. We will be okay. We will fail. Humans do.

The good news is anyone can develop a practice of self-compassion. Neff created the Self-Compassion Break, a portable, straightforward practice that takes just moments to do. (Hear her lead The Self-Compassion Break on her website: www.selfcompassion.org)

Self-compassion has its roots in Buddhist scholarship. In fact, Neff was introduced to the concept when she took up the study of meditation during a difficult marital break-up. Like meditation, which relies on mindfulness—being aware of what’s happening in the moment—we first need to notice and accept our self-judging or ruminating on our shortcomings. Then, we interrupt those voices and replace them with fitting words of kindness instead. ‘That was really awful. These things happen. You’re gonna be okay.’

While this may seem contrived at first, it becomes easier and faster over time because we actually wire our brain for self-acceptance—it becomes a habit.

While similar to mindfulness, the practice goes one step further. It requires that we learn to self-soothe by embracing ourselves—both literally and figuratively—with warmth and tenderness when we suffer a painful experience, even when we are the source of it. Just as the brain cannot distinguish the difference between a threat that comes from within or without, so too the brain cannot tell if it’s our own touch or someone else’s.

As mammals we are wired for touch—it is part of the mammalian caregiving system, which mends, restores, and signals to us that we are not alone. Touch produces oxytocin, one of the brain’s ‘happy’ hormones. Called ‘the love hormone,’ it is only released through cuddling, but when people bond socially, too. It feels great plus it lowers our cortisol levels—one of the hormones released during stress. We feel calm and more relaxed, positive, we see the bigger picture; we see ourselves as we are: fallible, but worthy.

One caveat for the self-critical: it is a self-compassion practice. Neff likes to point out that people sometimes beat themselves up for failing to stop beating themselves up. ‘You can’t even get this right,’ people will say. It is probable we will fail along the way, so be kind to yourself, even then. We practice to get better at practicing.

The Self-Compassion Break: A How To

1. Notice that you are experiencing a moment of difficulty, and gently interrupt it
2. Place your hands on your heart, or arms folded across your chest and give a squeeze of offer another comforting gesture, feeling the warmth and weight of your hands.

3. Say to yourself some version of the following:
   - This is a moment of difficulty....
   - Everyone experiences difficulties as a part of life....
   - I’m going to be kind to myself in this moment....

For the final step, ask yourself, what do I need to hear? Let the answer bubble up. Offer a word of encouragement, endearment, or earnest support. It could be something like:

4. ‘That was really rough. You did your best. I applaud your courage.’

We can respond genuinely with honest statements, such as, ‘I feel sad when I hear you talk to yourself that way.’ Or brainstorm a list of go-to phrases for when that self-critical voice comes up in the future.

It may not be comfortable at first for some clients to explore this possibility. But given the benefits (and considering the toll self-criticism takes) as a coach, keep it on your radar to help your client tap into the idea of self-acceptance over time. The humanist psychologist Carl Rogers said, ‘the curious paradox is that when I accept myself as I am, then I can change.’ As a coach, consider developing your own self-compassion practice. After all, we are human, too.

Want to dig deeper?
Kristin Neff: Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself
Christopher Germer: The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion: Freeing Yourself from Destructive Thoughts and Emotions

### Positive Psychology Health Coaching

**by Natasha Old (Australia)**

**Introduction**

Positive Psychology Health Coaching focuses on identifying health assets, building health promotion strategies and developing a positive mind-set around health and wellness. Furthermore, these interventions assist in reframing the traditional sickness role into a wellness model and shift clients towards optimal health.

Health and wellness coaches can be found in the fitness industry, to large corporations and now in mainstream medicine. Indeed, these agents for change are making their mark and assisting people to transform unhealthy thoughts and behaviours into life changing results.

With new research pointing to the effects of stress on our physical and mental functioning, it is fair to say that the terms ‘health’ and ‘quality of life’ are becoming synonymous. The worldwide incidence of chronic disease is rising rapidly and is projected to exceed communicable, maternal, perinatal, and nutritional diseases as the most common causes of death by 2030.

Although there have been numerous efforts to battle the progression of chronic Disease worldwide the incidence continues to grow with no solution in sight. There is evidence that education alone is insufficient for people to change their health behaviours. There is a need for innovative creative solutions for the progression of chronic disease internationally.

There is strong support to advance the science of health prevention and the most proactive version of positive health is the promotion of optimal health and sustaining supportive environments.

Health and wellness coaches utilise effective behavioural psychology principles to assist people to make lifestyle changes and become masters of their wellness. They are a perfect vehicle for change, trained or experienced in assisting people to transform their lives and exceed their goals in health and wellness. Adapting a varied approach, coaches shift the power to the client and encourage them to take responsibility for their health.

In 2009, leaders in health policy along with the Samueli Institute created a Wellness Initiative for the United States nation. They proposed creating thousands of Health and Wellness coaches to work with the communities to promote a ‘self-caring society’ to increase community wellness. Through supporting clients to initiate change, health and wellness coaches directly have an impact on the health industry, potentially effecting hospital turnover times and the recurrence of chronic illness.

**ABOUT JULIA MINES**

Drawing on 20-plus years of experience in communications as a writer, broadcaster, and educator, this coach and consultant enjoys a reputation for her creativity, humour, and warmth in helping individuals improve their performance and achieve their goals. Trained and certified in positive psychology through Tal Ben-Shahar of Harvard and The Whole Being Institute. ICF certified through Positive Acorn with Robert Biswas-Diener. Julia gives workshops, presentations, and works one-on-one with individuals to help them improve performance and achieve their goals.

**WHEN TO USE**

- When we are being hard on ourselves
- When we feel rejected
- When we see something we don’t like about ourselves.

A self-compassion practice builds resiliency over time and creates a more positive climate that energises and helps motivate us to try again. As coaches, when we hear our clients give themselves an undo negative self-appraisal, it’s a flag for us to bring our curiosity and concern because this may be our client at his or her most vulnerable. We can gently challenge the incongruity of our clients’ perceptions with the reality of who we know our clients to be. We can ask powerful questions such as, ‘what might a kind friend say instead?’ Or, ‘if this happened to someone you love, what would you advise...?’
Positive Health spawned from the Positive psychology movement

In 1998 Martin Seligman president of the American Psychological Association puts forward a new innovative theory focused on harnessing the good qualities about people and looking specifically about what in life brings us happiness. Positive psychology, as it was termed, has now been divided into distinct fields including Positive Health. Coaching and positive psychology inform one another and has many similarities. Positive psychology coaches have an in-depth knowledge of the research literature, assessments and interventions specific to this field of practice. Coaching provides a vehicle through which clients can explore the meaning, accomplishment and contribution in their lives.

Positive psychologists deemed the term ‘PERMA’ which means the presence of positive emotion, the presence of engagement, the presence of meaning, the presence of good relationships, and the presence of accomplishment in one’s life.

Even prior to the emergence of the Positive psychology generation individuals were writing about the impacts of positive psychological states in physical health. Edwards and Cooper (1998) describe a positive psychological state as ‘any condition where the individual’s perceived state exceeds his or her desired state’.

There is a need to reframe this mindset through investigating what activities create higher levels of functioning and increased levels of health satisfaction. Research contests that our social relationships, our environment, and our concepts of personal meaning all directly influence on our physical health.

Various studies have outlined the effectiveness of positive emotion on both lymphatic functioning and cardiovascular health. Scientists consider harmonious or smooth heart rhythms, which are indicative of positive emotions, to be indicators of cardiovascular efficiency and nervous-system balance. Meaning in life has also predicted greater well-being, and less psychopathology.

The Angle – Coaching Methodology

It is impossible to foresee or predict how a coaching session will progress in any given situation and the best one can do is consider an approach that is steadfast and evidenced as effective in one’s own experience.

Positive Psychology Health Coaching is almost solely about enabling our clients to focus on the positive meaning of the experience and focusing on what they are doing right for their health.

This method is used in order to supersede doubt and create a world of possibilities. The power of this method of coaching lies in consistently focusing on the client’s successes, their enabling behaviours and acknowledging continuous improvement.

This includes persisting with those activities in life that have a positive influence on the client’s wellbeing versus those activities the client deems damaging or disempowering.

The Process

It is imperative that the coach does some groundwork with the client during the first session to ensure they both have a clear understanding of the health goal and expectations of both parties. Assisting a client to recall past achievements reinforces a positive mindset. Likewise, viewing previous failures as learning experiences builds resilience and demonstrates the ability to persevere in the face of difficulties.

The Goal

When a client does the work on their beliefs around their achievement orientation, they can gain insight into successes and failures from the past. Then the coach is in a position to investigate the client’s mindset and to further investigate thought processes they may be more empowering and consistent with goal success. It is important that the client is clear about their goal motivation and that the goal is made clear and measurable in order for it to be successful.

Diener and Dean (2007) describe intrinsic goals as “those that are inherently satisfying...and extrinsic goals are those that are in anticipation of an external reward”. For example a client may want to lose weight so they feel socially accepted by a group of peers, this is an extrinsic goal versus a client who wants to lose weight so they can feel good about themselves and move more freely.
Suggest readings, movies, activities that will inform the client about the strength they wish to build. Strength work enables a client to consider those attributes of self that help them manage situations and work to their best ability. Early in the piece the coach may wish to teach the client to self-acknowledge and practice this skill on a daily basis. Some may not have considered the skill of reflexion and journaling, have the client consider any given situation from a positive learning perspective only.

One of the biggest concerns for people achieving goals is positive goal reinforcement and persevering. Neuroscientists have shown there is a clear link between dopamine and perseverance. Likewise, other studies have illustrated that positive emotions increased dopamine levels in the brain. Through having our clients focus on positive emotions there is a possibility that their perseverance may be strengthened.

Firstly suggests client starts small and work their way up eventually meeting their goal of gradual but consistent progress. Another suggestion based on a Health Promotion Campaign in Australia states 'Slop it, don’t stop it' whereby the client swaps the disempowering thought or behaviour for an empowering option.

Self-awareness is paramount to the coach’s method and the continuous focus on the client progressing in a forward manner. It is vital that the coach is aware of their own opinions and attitudes and that these do not bias or affect the relationship. It is imperative that if the coach has doubts in their mind as to the client’s success that they address these. A client needs to know that the coach believes in their success and their ability to obtain their goal.

There are two methods a coach may consider so that short term goals are realistic and measurable.

Being curious allows the coach to delve into areas the client may not have considered applicable. There are two methods a coach may consider so that short term goals are realistic and measurable for the client.

Besides being present during sessions there are tools that could assist a coach to understand their client’s motivations and strengths. The VIA strength test enables coaches to see which strengths a client can tap into and employ these when working on goals. For example a client who is strong in humour may choose a goal based around fun and playfulness or a highly creative client may choose a creative way to meet a goal in order to stay engaged.

Being curious allows the coach to delve into areas the client may not have considered applicable. There are two methods a coach may consider so that short term goals are realistic and measurable for the client.

To conclude Positive Psychology Health coaches are in a powerful position to work with individuals regarding Positive health interventions. Not only can coaches provide and positive growth mindset for their clients but a shift in the power relationship enables the client to be more empowered and feel in control of their health. As new evidence continues to be presented Positive Health Coaching strategies continue to flourish.

People desire well-being in its own right, and they desire it above and beyond the relief of suffering... being in a state of optimal health is not merely being disorder free; rather it is the presence of flourishing.'

**Conclusion**

Does the Swedish word LAGOM, representing a concept of 'just enough'. Not too little, not too much. When I first heard about it, I thought: so.... BALANCE. After all, balance is about finding the middle ground.

Lagom is not very common these days, especially in the Western world. Despite the fact there has been a lot of talk about balance in general, in recent years, it seems to be a rare occurrence in our lives. Modern society, driven by progress doesn’t inspire looking within oneself. Unfortunately, the more we observed the outside, the more we are driven by it, and the more we allow it to happen, the more power the outside has over our lives (what we focus on gets a hold of us). The only way to get back into a driver’s seat is by claiming back that power. We do that by making a decision about living consciously and intentionally. That approach, allows us to redesign our life’s blueprint and to focus on what really matters, which brings us to inner balance.

What is it really? To answer that question, allow me first to tell you what it’s like when the balance is non-existent. Starting with mental health issues and deterioration of our bodies, through problems at work and at home, to unhappy relationships and overall feeling of dissatisfaction and or disappointment with one’s life; all of the above, are the results of a lack of balance. People often underestimate the power of our inner experience and the consequences of that attitude are the feelings of anxiety, self-doubt, despair, unhappiness and, what can be described as, walking on a shaky ground. When the balance is gone, nothing feels solid and secure anymore and it’s because, it is the balance that gives us the ability to maintain peace within.

It seems, the materialistic and ego driven approach to life, has pushed some of us to the edge of the cliff and, it felt like the only way forward was to jump or start climbing the clouds (it is a rather mundane way of describing the attempt to step out of our realm and become one with the life force-the Universe/God).

Leading a spiritually abundant life is a wonderful experience and one that is needed for the Inner Balance, I say this as someone who has been on a journey for the last 16 years however, troubles begin when spirituality becomes the sole focus of life. The problem with this approach, is that it takes us from one extreme to the other and, along the way, yet again, the balance is being lost.

Many Want It, Few Accomplish it

Let's Talk Inner Balance

by Alice Thomson (United Kingdom)
So how do we get there? What is the answer to establishing inner balance and, most importantly, how do we maintain it, once accomplished?

**The answer lies in 3 steps:**

**STEP 1**

We start, working on our self-awareness. The subject I rant about endlessly and, for a very good reason. Self-awareness is one of the least developed qualities in people, these days, and, the one we need the most. It is what allows us to recognize our strengths, work on destructive patterns and, most importantly, really get to know and understand ourselves. The aspect I put a lot of attention to, when working with my clients. Reason being, we cannot possibly find a purpose in life, our calling or joy, without knowing ourselves. By extension, if we don’t understand ourselves, how could be possibly understand and balance the relationship between different aspects of our lives?

**STEP 2**

Step 2, of our journey, is growth. Constant self-development, must become a second nature to us; and frankly, if self-awareness work is well on its way, it is not something that needs to be pushed for but, rather something that should not be suppressed. Finding answers to questions, that arise on our self-awareness journey, is the way to start. They will open the doors to the places and subject we have not previously seen, or even heard of. The trick to self-development is, to walk through those doors and continue going as the new ones open.

**STEP 3**

Which brings me to the step 3, where the sustainability of inner balance begins. I am talking about consistency in the determination or daily habits, if you prefer. Our everyday routine is what determines our long-term success. Inner Balance, is something that requires a constant maintenance and therefore a commitment. That’s to say, really all of us are on the rollercoaster relationship with it. Our daily plan seldom includes an intentional work on it; and to succeed, we must think of it as we think of brushing teeth or shaving. White pearls and smooth skin last for a bit and, then we need to repeat the action of brushing and shaving to maintain the desired effect. The same applies to Inner Balance. We look within ourselves, we ask questions, we pursue the answers; and we repeat the process. We live consciously. Remember, one can never be too self-aware or too developed.

Inner balance is something we all ought to strive for. It is a one kind of balance that affects all the order. It comes from within and radiates outward, affecting everything in its way. It is a bliss that brings peace and joy into our lives, making them desirable. It is represented by restful sleep, healthy body, positive and fulfilling relationships, calm approach to challenges and, a peaceful, relaxed mind. For anyone, who wishes to live a happy and fulfilling existence, accomplishing and maintaining of the Inner Balance ought to be the ultimate goal, the focal point of life and, the measure of personal success.

**ABOUT ALICE THOMSON**

Alice Thomson is a Therapeutic Coach, who works with individuals seeking personal and life transformation, and the founder of Mind Your Mind Academy.

Alice qualified as an Integrative Therapist but, decided to pursue the coaching path. She uses her training and experience in trauma, to inform her coaching practice. Alice is a firm believer in the power of the mind and has a great appreciation for nature and its resources. Apart from her therapeutic qualifications, Alice studied several branches of Psychology, gained a Diploma in Personnel Consultancy and recently embarked on a journey to become a Reiki Master.

**Let’s Meditate on Coaching**

by Denisa Palii (Germany)

The feelings that you get during meditation – ‘inner balance’, ‘joy’, ‘inner silence’ are key. When ‘feeling nothing’ and ‘thinking nothing’ is achieved – ‘feeling present’, ‘feeling like yourself’ comes up, ‘being there’ truly awakens and all you need to do is watch: watch your feelings coming up in the session, watch your mind trying to cripple in some thoughts taking you from non-judgmental awareness to full judgment and paradigms.

Meditation is key. Putting yourself in that ‘nothingness’ state in which you are there for your client, ‘you know you know nothing’, and as a newborn child, you freshly listen and watch as if just born in this world and with full curiosity you put your good energy to use. The benefits come there – when ‘being’, ‘loving’, listening with full open heart and truly connecting with your client happen there.

What would I ask myself more? Well, how does one enlighten his being, how does one awaken his ‘potential’, how does one transcend what he is and connect with is ‘inner’/‘superior’/‘better’ self/version?! If not through connecting with himself, if not through asking himself ‘Who am I?’ and going to all that this means.

What else? Some more?! How about ‘beingness’? How many of us are truly present, are truly there – full heart and spirit?! How many are truly ‘empty-headed’, ‘new born childlike’ in dealing with clients, ready to give our free mental space for them to get ‘enlightened’, for them to ‘figure out their minds, their hearts and spirit’, their ‘true core desires, values, aspirations’…? How many really do that?

How many really know deep inside their guts people feel each others’ and without even knowing, just by ‘being there’ coaching starts to happen. Coaching is a powerful process, it’s true - yet how do we become really true coaches, how do we connect to our deeper being and truly make is happen? What if ‘just being there’ for one another is the key to achieve it?!

‘Despite all its popularity, today very few of us truly know what meditation really is. Some regard meditation as the mental concentration on something, others consider that we meditate when we imagine something that gives us peace and satisfaction. All these methods are being with one goal – to slow down and, eventually, completely stop the incessant activity of our minds.'
These exercises are not really meditating – they are substitutes for meditation because it is normally very difficult to stop our minds altogether. In reality, meditation is a state of thoughtless awareness. It is not an act of doing – it is a state of awareness. We either are in this state or we are not, regardless of what we are doing in life.

Truly, a man can be in meditation while doing his day’s labours as another man can be very far from meditation, while sitting in a lotus posture on the top of a mountain.

Reference:

(1) What is meditation?
- Meditation Explanation
  www.freemeditation.com

(2) www.sahajayoga.org

ABOUT DENISA PALII

Practitioner Coach Diploma
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How Far Behind is Your Soul?
by Catriona Futter (United Kingdom)

Here’s a curious question – how is your soul? And when was the last time you stopped and paid attention to the state of your soul?

We are all too aware that we live in a fast-paced, constantly moving world, where technology allows us to be ‘on’ and available every hour of the day, should we so choose. Expectations – both internal and external, real and perceived – can propel us into seeking to achieve more, be more visible in our work, be successful. In Coaching for health, wellbeing, and life balance, we often focus on enabling clients to identify and live according to their values, to prioritise the important over the urgent, to make choices that facilitate authentic, fulfilled lives. But is there integrity in how we live our own lives, make our own choices?

Let me tell you my own paraphrase of a tale I came across recently. A Westerner, with a first world, 21st century mentality, was travelling through a distant land with native tribesmen on a work project. For several days, there was rapid progress, much distance covered, and many of the Westerner’s boxes were ticked – they were making good progress, goals were being achieved, it was busy and productive. And then the tribesmen stopped. For no stated reason. And nothing happened. Nothing obvious was being done. The Westerner became frustrated with this lack of progress, this waste of time, this enforced waiting. His timetable was slipping and he was not meeting his agenda. Eventually, standing it no longer, he asked the reason for the delay. The answer stopped him short – ‘We had been moving too fast and had to wait for our souls to catch up.’

The tale is attributed variously to South African, African or Inca tribesmen, or Himalayan Sherpas. It matters not a jot. Living in our modern, First world, we all have a tendency to move too fast, tempted to fill our days with endless to-do lists, tasks, work commitments, stuff, stuff, stuff. None of that is wrong. But how often do we take the time to stop and wait for our souls to catch up? To let our tired, overstuffed brains slow and empty a little. To step off the conveyor belt and regroup. To reconnect with what we feel, and who we are, that we are more than just doing-machines.

Each of us is human, each of us is unique. Each of us has a unique package of skills, experience, characteristics, personality that we bring to our coaching practice, and to our lives. That package is of greater worth than gold – it is who we are and what we have to offer. No one else can take responsibility for how we nurture, cherish and steward our very beings. But how often do we neglect ourselves and our own needs – our very souls – as we seek to serve others, work harder, achieve more, or simply because we are too busy?

For many years before becoming a Life Coach, I worked as a Physiotherapist (Physical Therapist). The road to successful rehab for a patient lay in thorough and careful assessment, imparting good information and treatment plans, providing encouragement and accountability, and instilling a sense of self belief that the patient could do what was required of them to recover. Many similarities with Life Coaching, and much that I now draw on within my own Coaching practice. But more than this, success lay also in demonstrating integrity between patient and Physio. How could I expect my patients to work on their exercises and attend to their health and wellbeing if I demonstrated a lack of this in my own life? At it’s most basic, did I walk the talk? Was I keeping myself fit and well and in doing so, seeking to model a responsible attitude to health within my own patients?

Time spent on regular reflection and renewal is not only time well spent but time essential to allow us to bring the best of ourselves to our clients, especially as we seek to encourage their own self-development. Take a minute with me to stop and look inside yourself. Where is your soul currently? Is it far behind your tired and weary body, and running to catch up? But, I hear you say, how can we possibly fit in time for soul care amongst the many complex demands of work, life, family? It is too daunting and costly, neither realistic nor achievable. However, I would beg to ask, what is the cost of running too far in front of our souls all the time, of not letting our souls rest?

When our souls become dried up and wizened through lack of nourishment, we cease to enjoy life and we no longer are enjoyable to be with. Those around us – family, friends, our clients, work colleagues – encounter a tired, frazzled, irritable version of ourselves. I am all too aware of this: it has often been through the disastrous fallout of neglecting my soul that I have learned the importance of soul care especially when life is busy and threatening to overwhelm.

I believe that just as we nourish our bodies with varying quantities of food depending on the circumstances, so too there are layers of nourishment available for our souls. Sometimes we grab a quick snack on the run as a short term energy tops up.
Most days we have a sit-down meal which affords greater sustenance but still requires daily repetition. And holidays and celebrations afford us full blown feasts that satisfy and restore.

So too it is possible with soul rest: for example, regular ‘snacks’ of five minutes mindful breathing throughout the day; a larger ‘meal’ of a brisk 20-minute walk outside or a conversation with a good friend, or a creative pursuit twice a week; a sumptuous ‘feast’ of a half-day retreat monthly that lifts you off the conveyor belt entirely and allows you to refocus on vision, priorities, values and reconnect with all that matters most.

Recognising your need is the first step, knowing yourself and how you rest, without comparison to others, is the second. And then creating and sticking to a plan – again, we know this in theory, but how we struggle to implement this in practice?

Take those morsels of time throughout the day to remind yourself that you are not perfect, nor are you indispensable, but you are precious and unique and have much to offer to this world, simply by being you.

This, of course, is a process. A daily choice. Our bodies are often moving too fast, and drastic changes to this way of living may not be possible or realistic for now. But learning to lay down the guilt and instead take the time needed to allow our souls to catch up can enable us to sustain the pace, and model balanced, values-based living for our clients.

ABOUT CATRIONA FUTTER

Catriona is a Life Coach with special interests in life purpose, transitions, and Christian Life Coaching. She works mainly with women in their mid-life who are seeking to rediscover their identity and purpose, and live with greater self-belief and freedom. She speaks to groups of women on life balance, living free of comparisons, and gaining greater self-worth. She also offers team coaching to enable small teams to be re-envisioned and create action plans based on clear values and priorities. She is a Certified Biblical Life Coach, 2012, with the Life Breakthrough Academy.

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Is Stress Killing You Slowly?
by Ken Keis (Canada)

Every once in a while, studies surface in the news giving rise to grave concerns about our collective health. In the Western world, we are suffering from epidemic-level obesity and low wellness levels, which are already becoming a concern in developing countries that have embraced Western food practices.

According to The World Health Organization, 2.8 million people die each year of obesity-related causes. There’s no question about it: poor health and stress costs lives, it costs workers, and productive members of society.

Every element of your life is influencing your stress and wellness levels positively or negatively. Your stress levels manifest themselves, physically, psychologically, or behaviourally, in your body and your life, incurring everything from chest pains to difficulty making decisions.

Getting a handle on your current condition requires you to assess every aspect of your life. Your wellness picture is a result of a combination of facets of your life. It’s tempting to search for a quick fix or magic in a pill bottle, but improving your wellness requires a comprehensive approach. Everyone in the workplace would benefit from an honest look at the health and stress triggers in their lifestyles. Unfortunately, many people become overwhelmed by the complexity this requires, and the effort it takes to make meaningful changes in their lives. We are going against the mainstream by taking offensive measures when it comes to our health and this can seem impossible. You might be tempted to quit before you even get started, so here are a few guidelines that will hopefully make the process less overwhelming:

Stress:

A physical, chemical, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension and may be a factor in disease causation; a state resulting from a stress, especially one of bodily or mental tension resulting from factors that tend to alter an existent equilibrium.

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Figure out where you are at

Take a complete, honest inventory of your overall health and stress. Some Corporate Wellness Plans and HR strategies benefit from CRG’s Stress Indicator and Health Planner, a professionally developed, self-administered tool that will assess your health and give you a plan. This gives you a specific idea of where you’re at and how you can make lasting changes.

Set up your environment for success

As Dr. Phil would say, is it working for you? Cleanse your house of junk food. Why tempt yourself with handy candies and treats? Invest in healthy options that are easy and convenient.

Make healthy choices for your family

If you have kids, don’t give in to the pressure to give them high-sugar foods. It’s tempting to be that parent, but a healthy family has unbelievable long-term benefits. Until our healthcare system shifts to a preventative model, make sure to do your own homework in cooperation with your family doctor, so you can make informed decisions that work for your family.

Are you living out your purpose?

Stress is manifested by many factors, including how fulfilled and purposeful your life is. Be honest with yourself. It may be time to think about how you can make meaningful changes for your overall wellness.

In the end, only you can determine if your health, wellness, and a longer, more active and fulfilling life are worth your full attention. Taking care of yourself is always going to be time well spent.

A Holistic Approach to Coaching

by Elena Constantinidou (United Kingdom)

Is it wise to try and conceptualise coaching in all of its spectrum and glory? How can one understand how it feels if they don’t have the experience? How can one know the juiciness and taste of an apple if they never tasted it before?

Is there really a distinction between coaching in its different labels and focus?

In my simplistic understanding, coaching is simply coaching, regardless of how one calls it, how one approaches it, what tools the coach is using.

From the moment we are coaching the individual, even if it’s in a corporate or business context, it is essential to incorporate all the aspects of the Self, or plateaus of life.

And to emphasise that, there is the emergence of holistic coaching. Titles and labels are not really relevant, but they do give an indication of what the approach or emphasis of the coach is on, how wide or not the spectrum of inclusiveness is.

When I coach an individual, I coach the whole of the person in all of his or her aspects.

Body, mind and spirit and we delve deep into all areas of life, personal, professional, social, emotional. And so even if there is an area regarding the professional environment which needs addressing, when there are obstacles in surpassing issues and making leaps, for lasting transformation to occur, it is usually the case that limiting beliefs, programming and personal judgements are not serving the individual to fulfill his or her higher expression. It is of paramount importance for such limitations to be lifted and transcended otherwise the pattern will still run on the background kind of like a computer virus. We don’t want our clients to depend on the coaching relationship and in a way become addicted to it, but we rather want to provide them with the foundation, the tools to cultivate their self responsibility, step into their power and connect with their inner compass to have they life they aspire to.

We grow up and we learn certain ways, we react in usual unconscious ways and by the time we are in our thirties, we wonder why things don’t fall into place? Why can we not create what we would like to have for ourselves. Why is it such a struggle to move through life?

To some, Holistic Coaching would come across as woo woo. What does holistic mean anyway? Some would approach it with cynicism.
As coaches, we are called to undertake a very serious, sacred role. We are there not to take responsibility for our coachees and hold their hands, but to provide the space for them to dig deep, get insights, ask them questions no one is willing to ask. To bring them to their edge, outside their comfort zone, as this, is where the magic happens.

And usually there’s resistance. People get into a coaching relationship feeling excited that their lives have the potential to be transformed, that they can finally attain what they are envisioning. But once the juicy part starts to happen, they usually back off, they start finding excuses. This is an indication of their committed towards their transformation and how fear takes over.

To me mindfulness comes into the equation very early on in the coaching relationship. Without present moment awareness from both parties it is impossible to establish a deep, intimate connection between the coach and the client. Cultivating this present moment awareness is essential in unravelling unconscious patterns and limiting beliefs about various areas of their lives. Through being mindful it helps us stay as rooted as possible to any present moment. We become aware of a vast spectrum of possibility that surrounds us. Not taking a pause, not slowing down, cannot permit us to connect to our inner guidance, our intuitive centre, align with our true essence nature, attain a brain and heart coherence. And when we are out of alignment, we end up stirring through life like puppets, not owning our choices, being pushed from circumstance to circumstance.

As an infinite being there are only two elements. Awareness and choice. And to eliminate suffering we can only do it through knowingness which is awareness. And as our awareness expands, we have far more choice available to us. Self knowledge is key. And to me coaching has its roots in self enquiry.

We live in a belief driven universe and all we attract has direct correlation to our thoughts. How we interpret events is through the beliefs that have attracted them in the first place.

Einstein said that a problem can’t be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it. And this is where awareness kicks in. As we get the lesson from our experiences, we stop recreating them.

When we think we are trying hard to change our environment and we struggle to have any progress, it is because we either haven’t chosen to change it or we have not cleared the judgements blocking us.

Bringing the whole of ourselves as coaches into the relationship, we go beyond coaching training, techniques and tools. These keep us limited within boxes. Transcend techniques and tap into the field of infinite creativity, potential and limitless possibility. Draw from all our experiences, education and own practices like yoga, meditation, mindfulness, neuroscience. Imagine a dancer, having perfect technique, but no feeling into movement, no emotion, no expression, no connection.

And then you have a dancer with not so good technique, but completely connected, fully immersed into being, into the experience. Who do you think would magnetise you more?

The more technique you have, the less you have to worry about it. The more technique there is, the less there is. Pablo Picasso

Opening and nurturing that sacred space for tremendous insights to occur, for creativity to blossom to transcend limitations, cultivates a very intimate connection between coach and client and for the coach as well, listening beyond auditory faculties, merging with clients is what opens up the possibility of magic.

Coaches are leaders. We are called forth to lead the way and with that comes great responsibility primarily to ourselves.

As Rich Litvin says, you can’t take someone any deeper than what you have taken yourself. So it is important for us Coaches to do the deep Inner work for ourselves, never stop evolving, growing, expanding. Self inquiry becomes an integral part to our growth, in getting to know ourselves for what we truly are. And as we come from deeper knowingness for ourselves, we embody our strength, we tap into our wisdom and we are able to utilise our intuitive guidance on demand.

I dare say that Holistic Coaching is Holistic because it’s not only about our clients and all the aspects of themselves. It’s also about us, our continuous inquiry, our own commitment to becoming the highest expression of ourselves so that we can better serve our clients and others.

ABOUT ELENA CONSTANTINIDOU

Elena Constantinidou, holds a Master’s Degree in Organisational Behaviour and Psychology from AUA, a Business Administration Degree from Harvard Business School and a degree in International Economics and Management. She has 20 years of experience in the corporate world of management and Human Resources, and her education in Coaching, accompanied with the immersion in esoteric and spiritual teachings, practices and philosophies, complemented with Personal Development work, the study of Neuroscience, Epigenetics, Consciousness and Quantum Physics, have contributed in the emergence of a fusion style approach encompassing all aspects of our being (body, mind, spirit), a holistic approach to blissful living, personal growth and expansion.

Elena is an International Certified Holistic Coach and Mindfulness Facilitator, as well as a Certified Practitioner in Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), Strategic Coaching and Hypnotherapy. She is a member of the European Association of Energy Psychology (EAEP) and is a member of the European Organisation for NLP (EONLP).

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