



The  
British  
Psychological  
Society

Special Group in Coaching Psychology

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# The Coaching Psychologist

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# The Coaching Psychologist

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# Chair's Report

Siobhain O'Riordan

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**A**T THE TIME OF WRITING there is just less than three months before my term of office as SGCP Chair comes to an end. As such this will be my last report in *The Coaching Psychologist (TCP)*. It is, of course, never possible to fully reflect progress and developments within the context of a short report. However, I do hope that I have been able to provide you with a flavour of activities undertaken by SGCP throughout 2007. Whilst not quite over this has been another exciting year. It has presented both challenges and opportunities and meant that once again we have remained busy but committed to the promotion and development of coaching psychology.

One important change in 2007 has been the revision of the British Psychological Society's office service charging system. You will find an update report to provide you with further information in relation to what this means for SGCP in this issue of *TCP*. As part of the 'future-focus' I have reported upon previously the SGCP committee held a strategy day in September for the purpose of identifying key future priorities and planned areas of work to ensure we continue to progress in line with our current strategic aims and that SGCP remains fit for purpose. If you have not yet had the opportunity to review the SGCP strategic aims I would encourage you to visit our website where they are available: [www.sgcp.org.uk](http://www.sgcp.org.uk).

Following on from the re-structure of our sub-committees earlier in the year we have now welcomed three new co-opted committee members. SGCP recognises the importance of research into coaching psychology as a key element in the development of the profession and we are delighted to welcome Dr Kristina Gyllensten as SGCP Research Officer. The main objective of this role is to be responsible and lead on

coaching psychology research-related matters relevant to the SGCP and the development of coaching psychology. We are also pleased to welcome Dr Lisa Matthewman who has joined the committee to undertake the role of SGCP Standards Officer. The main objective of this role is to provide support to the SGCP committee on matters that are relevant to the development and application of coaching psychology standards. I have previously reported that we are currently focusing on a number of initiatives to further establish our existing links and develop new opportunities to work with other psychological professional bodies in Europe and beyond. I am pleased to report that we now have welcomed Vicky Ellam-Dyson to the committee whose role will be to specifically focus on this area of SGCP activity.

The conference sub-committee has continued to work hard on the co-ordination and arrangements for the 3rd National Coaching Psychology Conference to be held on 17–18 December, 2007, at City University. I do hope that as many of you as possible will be able to attend this important event in the coaching psychology calendar. The full conference programme and online registration process is available at [www.city.ac.uk/sgcp](http://www.city.ac.uk/sgcp). Looking further forward, planning has now also begun for the 2008 conference. To continue our initiative to work with different psychological bodies and associations across Europe I am pleased to announce that we will be hosting the 1st European Coaching Psychology Conference in 2008.

In July we ran a successful regional event in Edinburgh on the topic of Health Coaching, facilitated by Prof. Stephen Palmer. This was the first event SGCP has held in Scotland and also our first regional event since 2005. In September we held a one-day

event at the Society's London office, which covered two separate topics – 'Evaluating Personal Coaching Relationships' facilitated by Dr Lisa Matthewman, and 'Using Appreciative Enquiry in Coaching Psychology' facilitated by Indrani Choudhury. As well as running three successful events this year the event team has also been busy focusing on arrangements for the 2008 event programme. Planned event topics for next year currently include 'Boundaries and Professional Practice', 'Feedback in Coaching Psychology' and 'Business Coaching using a Family-Centred Approach'. We hope to announce further details soon on the 'News Page' of the SGCP website.

For those of you who have joined the SGCP e-mail discussion list you may have noticed that we have recently introduced a new theme of the 'Topic of the Month'. This has been for the purpose of generating further interesting and useful discussion within our online community of coaching psychologists. The e-mail discussion list provides an interface between members and updates on current issues, events and workshops taking place in the area of coaching psychology. On this note, I would like to extend my thanks to the team of moderators who facilitate the smooth running of the discussion list to ensure that the e-mail forum is managed professionally and appropriately. Details on how to join the e-mail discussion list are available on the 'Join' page of our website.

An important update since my last report is that we are currently awaiting some detailed guidance from the Society on the work required to move us towards possible accreditation frameworks or options for coaching psychologists within the Society. At the time of writing we are expecting this information imminently. This piece of work will be a key priority for the Accreditation Working Party and the SGCP committee for the remainder of the year. We will also be running a session at the conference to provide members with an update on progress.

As part of our drive to create an accreditation route for coaching psychologists we are launching a new online list for SGCP members who have chartered psychologist status. Offering an opportunity for chartered members to list in more detail the coaching psychology services that they offer the list will be posted on the SGCP website and will be accessible by members of the public. This new facility is based and linked to the Society's *Directory of Chartered Psychologists* so at the current time only members who currently appear in the *Directory* will be eligible to appear on this new SGCP online list.

The SGCP currently has two regular publications. *TCP* publishes articles on all aspects of research, theory, practice and case studies in coaching psychology. The *International Coaching Psychology Review (ICPR)* focuses on the theory, practice and research in the field of coaching psychology. I would like to encourage you to submit articles to these publications. Information on how to do this are available on the inside covers of each publication and more detailed notes for contributors are available on the publications pages of our website.

The Society expects members and employees to demonstrate standards of behaviour that recognise and respect the dignity of all individuals at work. As such SGCP fully supports the Society's Dignity at Work Policy, which currently applies only to employees and members of the Society. As members we have a personal responsibility to ensure that our behaviour does not amount to either a breach of this policy or the Society's *Code of Ethics and Conduct*. Therefore, we will be providing you with further information in relation to this important issue next year.

Finally, as I will move into the role of Past Chair at the end of the year, I would like to take this opportunity to wish Dr Alison Whybrow every success as she will become SGCP Chair at our AGM in December. I would also like to express my thanks to all of my hard working SGCP colleagues for the time and commitment they have given

voluntarily to support the work of SGCP. The Society's subsystems team has also provided ongoing support and help throughout the year, which has been much appreciated and valued.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of the role of Chair has been the opportunity to communicate with members on a wide variety of different topics and I will miss this part of my role the most! So, my final thank you is to the SGCP membership for your support, feedback and contributions throughout 2007.

**Siobhain O'Riordan**

E-mail: [sgcpchair@bps.org.uk](mailto:sgcpchair@bps.org.uk)

## NEW WAYS OF WORKING FOR APPLIED PSYCHOLOGISTS IN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

This is to announce that the following reports can now be downloaded from the British Psychological Society website ([www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk)) and the New Ways of Working website ([www.newwaysofworking.org.uk](http://www.newwaysofworking.org.uk)).

- New Ways of Working for Applied Psychologists in Health and Social Care: The End of the Beginning: Summary Report
- New Roles Project Group
- Training Models in Applied Psychology in Health and Social Care
- Career and Pathways Roles
- Leading, Managing and Organising Psychology services.
- Working Psychologically in Teams.
- Good Practice Guide on the Contribution of Applied Psychologists to Improving Access to Psychological Therapies.

**Tony Lavender**, Canterbury Christ Church University and **Roslyn Hope**, CSIP/NIMHE.  
*Joint Chairs of New Ways of Working for Applied Psychologists.*

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† Courses accredited by Middlesex University

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# Editorial

Kasia Szymanska

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**I**N THIS LAST ISSUE OF 2007 we have seven papers, starting with an introduction to our December conference. Stephen Palmer interviews the conference keynote speakers, Anthony Grant, Carol Kauffman, Ernesto Spinelli, Sir John Whitmore and Alison Whybrow. The keynote speakers talk about they first became involved in the fields of coaching psychology and coaching how they see the disciplines evolving. Then Jonathan Passmore and Oberdan Marianetti discuss the role of mindfulness in the practice of coaching psychology, with a focus on how mindfulness can be of benefit for both the coaching psychologist and coachee alike.

In the third paper Addy Hackett, Stephen Palmer and Jacqui Farrants, focus on the role of coaching in the management of stress in staff working in the hospice service. In the fourth paper, the debate continues on the topic of NLP, as Susie Linder Pelz and Michael Hall reply to Bruce Grimley's article published in the August issue of *The Coaching Psychologist*. In the next paper Ho Law from the SGCP committee addresses the issue of using your membership ethically.

In the 'International News' section Paul Olson updates us on the development of coaching psychology in Norway. Finally, Alanna O'Broin and Siobhain O'Riordan update our members on the issue of the Society's office service charging system and its potential impact on SGCP.

I wish you all a restful Christmas break, and send my sincere thanks to all involved with *The Coaching Psychologist* in the last year and you the members for submitting articles.

**Kasia Szymanska**



The  
British  
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Society

## THE SPECIAL GROUP IN COACHING PSYCHOLOGY

### 3<sup>rd</sup> National Coaching Psychology Conference 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> December 2007

To be held at City University, London, UK

#### *Putting the Psychology into Coaching*

The conference where the Coaching Psychology community comes together, providing delegates with a range of professional development and networking opportunities. Established and emerging speakers discuss some of the thinking and developments in this field. The opportunity to deepen your learning and skill base is further enhanced by a carefully chosen suite of Masterclasses.

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**<http://www.city.ac.uk/sgcp/> or e-mail [sgcpcon@bps.org.uk](mailto:sgcpcon@bps.org.uk)**

*The 2007 membership fee to join SGCP is £3.50. SGCP membership benefits include membership rates at our events and free copies of the 'International Coaching Psychology Review' and 'The Coaching Psychologist'. Join now and obtain the discounted conference fee.*

# Putting the psychology into coaching

## Stephen Palmer interviews the Keynote Speakers from the 3rd BPS SGCP National Coaching Psychology Conference

Stephen Palmer

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**T**HE 3RD BRITISH PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY, Special Group in Coaching Psychology (SGCP) National Coaching Psychology Conference<sup>1</sup> has an important message for 2007: *Putting the Psychology into Coaching*. It is hoped the Conference will live up to this 'mission statement'. In reality, coaching has always been underpinned by psychological theory and possibly research. However, for many years, the theory was not explicitly explained on many coach training courses. Often it was there implicitly but only obvious to course delegates or students with prior psychological knowledge. It was not always obvious to the trainers as Dr Tony Grant points out in his interview below. To make matters worse, most coaching books had little psychological theory either and possibly 90 per cent had no academic references at all. Yet back in the 1920s Dr Coleman Griffith (1926) was literally putting the psychology into (sports) coaching when he was writing and researching into this area of work.

For *The Coaching Psychologist* and for the SGCP Conference website, we interview<sup>2</sup> the conference Keynote Speakers. This provides us with an insight into their professional background, views and opinions on coaching and coaching psychology, and also what their paper will be about. This year we are privileged to have Dr Anthony Grant (Australia), Prof. Carol Kauffman (US), Prof. Ernesto

Spinelli (UK), Sir John Whitmore (UK) and Dr Alison Whybrow (UK) as our Keynote Speakers who are well known in the field of coaching and/or coaching psychology.



We hope that the interviews will encourage psychologists, coaches, HR and other professionals to attend the Conference this December to find out more about putting the psychology into coaching and the coaching psychology movement.

### Correspondence

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### Reference

Griffith, C.R. (1926). *Psychology of Coaching: A study of coaching methods from the point of view of psychology*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

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<sup>1</sup> Technically speaking, the December 2006 International Coaching Psychology Conference was also the 3rd National SGCP conference. This would make this year's conference our 4th National Conference.

<sup>2</sup> Interviews are carried out by e-mail correspondence.

# Dr Anthony Grant

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**Stephen:** *In December, 2004, you gave a keynote speech at the inaugural conference of the British Psychological Society, Special Group in Coaching Psychology (SGCP). The setting up of the SGCP is seen by many psychologists, but not all, as an important event for the field of psychology in the UK. This year you return to give another keynote speech and also run a Masterclass. In what way has coaching psychology developed internationally since 2004, if at all?*

**Anthony:** Given the recent emergence of this area of psychology, I think that coaching psychology is developing very well internationally. All over the world psychologists who are interested in coaching are presenting themselves as ‘coaching psychologists’ and we are seeing official bodies and organisations developing in Europe as well as increased profile of coaching psychologists in coaching industry associations such as the International Coach Federation. We are also seeing an increasing number of universities offering coaching psychology programmes. Interestingly, the coaching psychology movement seems to be strongest in the UK, Europe and Australasia and it seems that the US is somewhat behind us. I think this may be partly because the positive psychology movement has had high profile within the university system and has a longstanding and strong following in the US. I want to emphasise that positive psychology and coaching psychology are really two branches of the same tree, and I consider coaching to be an applied positive psychology.

**Stephen:** *Can you tell us about where you work and your professional background?*

**Anthony:** I work at the Coaching Psychology Unit, in the School of Psychology, University of Sydney, where I am the director of the unit. In addition to co-ordinating the activities of the unit, I teach on the Master of Applied Science (Psychology of Coaching) and the Masters of Organisational Coaching, supervise postgraduate students, conduct my

own research in coaching psychology, and have a private coaching and consulting practice. I really enjoy teaching and the interaction with students, many of whom are very experienced coaches, HR practitioners, or psychologists.

**Stephen:** *How did you first become interested in the field of coaching and coaching psychology?*

**Anthony:** Philosophy and the ‘big questions’ had always been part of my life. Both my parents have been involved in the study and teaching of a range of philosophies and meditative traditions since the 1960s to the present day, and I was exposed to many different ideas and developed a thirst for knowledge in this area as I grew up.

Over the years I had been involved in a number of personal development workshops, groups and training programmes, and whilst I certainly learnt a lot about myself by taking part, it seemed to me as if many (if not most) of the people running these trainings had very little idea about what they were doing, beyond the received wisdom they themselves had been taught.

Although this may sound a bit harsh and arrogant, frankly, I got a bit fed up of hearing self-appointed ‘gurus’ talk nonsense in weekend workshops.

I guess it would have been a great opportunity for me to practice mindful loving kindness, but I’m sorry to say I just got rather intolerant instead! So, I thought that if I wanted to really sort out the truth from the hype I better do some real study myself.

I had moved to Sydney, Australia, from London in 1988, and really loved the open and egalitarian nature of Australian society.

At the time I was a carpenter and I had no qualifications at all. The nature of the Australian education system then was that it was possible to go to university as a mature age student if one did some qualifying university preparation courses. So I thought I'd give it a go.

I started studying psychology at university in 1993 at the age of 39 because I wanted to learn theoretically-grounded and empirically-validated ways of working with people to help them (and, of course, myself) create change, and better reach goals. I was interested in the connection between philosophy and action, the nexus between ideas of what is good, and practical ways to achieve that.

The term 'coaching' was not being used very much in the personal or organisational development area at the time, but that's what I wanted to do. I rather naively assumed that academic psychology would teach me those things. I had a rather rude awakening when I realised it was as much about brain science, the eye-ball and statistics and critical thinking as behaviour, and there was very little (if anything) about well-functioning people! This was some time before the 'official' emergence of positive psychology.

When I completed my undergraduate degree in 1996 and went on to my masters and PhD I started to think about what I should call myself. I thought, 'Well, I do coaching, I'm a psychologist and researching the psychology of coaching and the effectiveness of coaching, so I'll call myself a coaching psychologist.' There may well have been lots of other 'coaching psychologists' about around the world but at that time I'd not met any ... now the good thing is I know quite a few of them these days!

**Stephen:** *You have sometimes been referred to as the 'father' of coaching psychology. In what ways do you think you have been influential in this field?*

**Anthony:** Much as my own ego warms to the ring of the 'founding father of coaching psychology', I guess it really is for others to say if I have been influential or not (and if so, if that influence is a good thing!).

I do think I was lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time as regards the founding of the Coaching Psychology Unit. In 1999 I was finishing my PhD and I approached the Dean with the idea for the unit and she was very receptive and supportive.

As regards the development of the work of the Unit, that has very much been in partnership with Michael Cavanagh, whom I first met in our first lecture as undergraduates in 1993.

As regards the development of coaching psychology worldwide; on a good day I'd like to think that the team at the Unit have come up with a few ideas about coaching as an applied positive psychology, and between us we've conducted quite a few studies into the effectiveness of coaching, the nature of the coaching industry and helped point the industry towards a more grounded approach, and away from the hype and self-serving marketing material that all too often substitutes for research.

To date I've been lucky enough to have been involved in running five randomised controlled outcomes studies of coaching, four between subject outcome studies, amongst other work. I'd like to think that this has helped promote greater rigour in coaching and coaching research. I think the two journals I have been involved in to date, the *International Journal of Evidenced Based Coaching and Mentoring*, and the *BPS/APS International Coaching Psychology Review* have been very good in encouraging people to conduct and publish research related to coaching psychology. When the *International Journal of Evidenced Based Coaching and Mentoring* was first published there were very few journals that would publish research on coaching, and now the number of publications has considerably escalated. I'm also delighted to be an Associate Editor of a new journal, *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, to be published by Taylor and Francis in March, 2008.

**Stephen:** *You mention being ‘lucky’ a couple of times. I suspect luck plays a part but only a small part with a solution-focused coaching psychologist! Moving on, in your opinion what distinguishes coaching psychology from coaching?*

**Anthony:** Good question – there are lots of ‘coaches’ out there, and many do good work. But many have very poor training in proprietary coaching systems that do not have a theoretical or empirical foundation. Disturbingly, many seem to be acting as parapsychologists using poor quality assessment tools, and in effect offering pseudo-psychological services. The main difference between coaching psychology and coaching, is that the coaching psychology is explicitly grounded in psychological theory, psychological science and psychological research, and its practitioners have had rigorous university level training in psychology, use the ‘scientist practitioner’ or an ‘informed practitioner’ approach.

But I do not think this should be a matter of ‘us versus them’ – psychologists versus the non-psychologists. There are many good coaches who are not psychologists, and conversely psychologists who are not good coaches. It is about what each can contribute.

**Stephen:** *I have to agree that the ‘us versus them’ notion can be divisive if used in a non-specific manner. In what ways can coaching psychologists contribute to the field of coaching?*

**Anthony:** I think that it is absolutely vital that coaching psychologists be actively involved in the field of coaching, if coaching is to become a respected methodology for creating and sustaining human change.

I think there are at least four key points we can contribute. Firstly, as psychologists we have a sophisticated understanding of what it means to be professionally trained in the practice of behavioural science in the ethical service of our clients. Secondly, we have a tradition of basic and applied research as a foundation for practice, rather than ‘pop-psychology’. Thirdly, as a profession we have the ability to develop a valid and rigorous, peer-reviewed research base, and this is perhaps the greatest long-term contribution psychology can make to the wider coaching community. Lastly, we have a solid knowledge base of theory and practice built up over more than a century, and this means that we are ideally placed to assist clients working on issues that involve significant cognitive or emotional development.

**Stephen:** *What will be the important message you wish to convey in your keynote speech at the Conference?*

**Anthony:** I’d like to focus on how coaching psychology can really flourish and develop, so that both the discipline and we personally can grow and develop,

**Stephen:** *What will your Masterclass focus on?*

**Anthony:** Solutions, solutions and more solutions! Particularly about how to use a solution-focused approach within a cognitive behavioural framework. I’d also like to talk about using different types of goal attainment scaling in coaching, and how it integrates theory with practice.

**Stephen:** *Is there anything else you would like to add?*

**Anthony:** It’s been a pleasure to work with yourself and the Society and I really look forward to a continuing association between the APS and the Society.

**Stephen:** *I look forward to you sharing with us how coaching psychology can flourish and develop even further.*

# Prof. Carol Kauffman

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**Stephen:** *This December you are coming over from the US to the UK to give a keynote speech and Masterclass at the National Conference of the British Psychological Society, Special Group in Coaching Psychology (SGCP). What are your hopes and expectations for attending the Conference?*

**Carol:** I'm eager to meet the members of the Society's Special Group in Coaching Psychology. As you know, we don't have such an organised body in the US, just getting to be among you all will be an unusual experience, and I can't wait.

My expectations are that I will learn more than I teach. I'm looking forward to attending the other keynote speeches and other sessions. My hope is that I will bring something that is fresh and of value in my own keynote speech and Masterclass.

**Stephen:** *I heard that you have over 30,000 client hours. This is quite high. Can you tell us about your professional background?*

**Carol:** It's actually well over that by now. Here's my background.

My undergraduate emphasis was on developmental psychology. But in 1973, I stumbled upon some research on resilient children (highly competent children of psychotic mothers). Between college and graduate school I was a research assistant on one of these large longitudinal studies of high-risk children, and the Harvard professors graciously allowed me to carve out my own project. It was published in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* back in the middle ages (1979) and was called 'Superkids: Competent Children of Psychotic Mother's'.

I mention it here because the resilience orientation was the lens through which all my later clinical psychology training was viewed. In 1978, I did a psychoanalytic internship at McLean Hospital – and I've been there ever since! Back then my mentor, Dr Philip Levensky, started one of the first cognitive behavioural units, and I received post-doc training and prepared to embark on a research career.

A blood disease (since cured) knocked me out of my research career track, but during the two years I could only work part-time. My McLean mentors gave me a private practice so I could survive financially. To my surprise I loved it, and with my integrative, resilience orientation my practice soon became quite coach-like. So, I threw myself in and had a very full-time practice from 1981 on. Take 1500 client hours a year, and multiply the years then add on supervising interns, etc., and teaching.

The great news for me is I love it as much now as when I started.

**Stephen:** *How did you first become interested in the field of coaching and coaching psychology?*

**Carol:** For many years I sort of 'invented' a coaching psychology model of therapy based on a multimodal treatment approach. My practice slowly evolved from eating disorders and dissociative disorders to performers, athletes and writers (some of whom were also part of the first group). My work was a combination of cognitive behaviour therapy, relational cultural therapy and starting with the official launch of the field in January, 2000, positive psychology.

But how did I become a coach? I attended a one-day coaching psychology workshop and wound up winning free tuition for a six-month course. The course was wonderful, and I followed through to receive my professional coaching credential.

In retrospect I now see how very different a comprehensive coaching psychology perspective and true coaching skills are from the work I did previously. I would now say that work was 60 per cent coaching as I was

still informed by a medical model and focus on problem solving, despite my being oriented to a resilience model.

I have since closed my clinical practice and primarily do coaching over the telephone with clients from all over the UK, US and Europe. Much of my work now is coaching supervision as I love working with highly competent coaches.

**Stephen:** *You will be co-founder of the forthcoming Coaching and Positive Psychology Institute at Harvard Medical School. Why do you want to launch the Institute and what will be its main aims?*

**Carol:** My co-founder, Margaret Moore, first thought of it. She spent years in the UK and felt we needed an academic home for coaching psychology in the US. I agreed and we've been working on launching the Institute. Our first goals are to introduce psychologists to the profession of coaching, and bring evidence-based methods to the attention of practicing coaches. We are planning a national, Harvard teaching conference for autumn, 2008.

High on our agenda will be to create a Postdoctoral Coaching Psychology Fellowship, and to initiate research on coaching and positive psychology interventions.

**Stephen:** *In the US the terms 'coaching psychology' or 'coaching psychologist' are not in common use unlike in Australia or the UK. What is your explanation for this?*

**Carol:** I think we are lagging behind in this area. There are also misperceptions here as many US psychologists, and health care providers believe they already possess the equivalent competencies. They are not aware of the breadth and depth of coaching psychology and how knowing this field would transform their practice.

In addition, many US practicing coaches are slow at appreciating the importance of evidence-based methods and the importance of evaluating coaching outcomes.

**Stephen:** *Do you think that your Coaching and Positive Psychology Institute will help to establish Coaching Psychology in the US?*

**Carol:** That is our hope!

**Stephen:** *In what ways can coaching psychologists contribute to the field of coaching?*

**Carol:** By providing theory, and scientific method to the art of the coaching process.

**Stephen:** *What are some of the key issues you wish to convey in your keynote speech at the Conference?*

**Carol:** I'm looking forward to sharing how we are integrating positive psychology into coaching psychology practice. In particular, I hope to convey the information in a way that the participants can immediately begin integrating into their coaching practices.

**Stephen:** *What will your Masterclass focus on?*

**Carol:** Performing under pressure will focus on five sets of interventions coaches can use to help their clients be at their best no matter what the circumstances. We'll look at specific interventions to help clients with optimal: focus, thinking, interactions, emotions and performance.

**Stephen:** *Is there anything else you would like to add?*

**Carol:** Yes, I am delighted to be the Co-Editor in Chief, with Dr. Tatiana Bachkirova, of the new academic and professional journal, *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice* to be published by Taylor and Francis. It launches in March, 2008, and we would like to invite your members to submit articles to us. Please visit:

**[www.informaworld.com/coaching](http://www.informaworld.com/coaching).**

**Stephen:** *Hopefully I can you interview again!*

# Prof. Ernesto Spinelli

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**Stephen:** *At our previous conferences you have given a keynote speech and run Masterclasses. This year at our Special Group in Coaching Psychology (SGCP) National Conference you are returning to give another keynote speech. How did you first become interested in the field of coaching and coaching psychology?*

**Ernesto:** For quite a few years now, I've been interested in exploring the possibilities of therapeutic knowledge beyond the confines of psychotherapy proper. Therapists – or at least the ones I usually meet – tend to mystify the profession and elevate the 'specialness' of therapy. I have disagreed with this view and have been intrigued to explore to what extent therapeutic ideas and practices can be extended to other related, but different, arenas.

About 10 years ago, together with my colleague, Freddie Strasser, I developed the foundations for a therapeutically-focused approach to mediation and dispute resolution which continues to be a very successful training programme run by Freddie and his team at The School of Psychotherapy and Counselling Psychology, where we both work. Some seven years or so back, I became interested in organisational structures and practices and so began to read more about what was going on there. Obviously, coaching kept cropping up. When I read more about it, I could see that a lot of coaches were clearly influenced by theories and ideas that arose in the therapy world. I could also see that some of these ideas were being understood and employed somewhat superficially by a number of coaches, perhaps most blatantly in the area of 'life coaching'. So, I thought to myself: 'Aha! Here's something interesting to get involved in!'. As to coaching psychology ... as I remember it, you and I bumped into each other at a Society Counselling Psychology Conference and you mentioned that you were hoping to bring together various

psychologists interested in coaching in order to see whether a formal grouping could be developed. That was the first I heard of something called 'coaching psychology'. Obviously, I was intrigued. As I still am.

**Stephen:** *For many years you have been well known for your work in existential counselling and psychotherapy and you are now actively involved in coaching. What does existential psychology have to offer the fields of coaching and coaching psychology?*

**Ernesto:** Wow. That's a huge question. I'll try to give as brief an answer as possible. For me, the key issue for Western psychology presented by existential thought is its critique of the idea of a distinct, separate individual human being who can be understood psychologically on the basis of intrapsychically rooted dispositional stances such as his or her thoughts, values, beliefs, behaviours, feelings and emotions and who, as this particular individual, can be comprehensively distinguished from other individuals. Existential thought argues against the underlying dualism of self/other or subject/object that is so ingrained in Western thought and, instead proposes a foundational hypothesis of inter-relatedness. As such, somewhat simplistically, it proposes that the problems and issues and concerns that disturb and disrupt each person's existence arise explicitly from an *inter-* rather than *intra-*psychic set of relational factors. Ok. From that basic assumption, a whole set of novel possibilities begins to emerge. My interest in coaching has been predominantly with what's most commonly referred to as 'executive coaching'. Why I'm drawn to that is precisely

because there's an organisational focus central to this area and because I happen to think that existential thought, through its inter-relational assumption, provides something very particular and unique to the study and understanding of 'humans-and-their-issues-in-the-organisational-world'. For one thing, existential thought entreats us to look at the client and the organisation to which he or she is allied from a perspective that does not isolate either but rather places each within an inevitable relational context. So for instance, it tries to understand the organisation as existing within, and identifying itself through, a whole set of relational factors – relations with and to itself in terms of its assumptions, meanings, identifying characteristics and so forth – and whether its way of being reflects or fulfills these or fails to; relations with its employees and the degree of 'fit' that may or may not exist between the organisation's worldview and that of any one or any number of its employees; relations with other organisations in terms of such things as values and identity and aspirations and so forth; and relations with the socio-political and cultural – or 'world' – conditions from which the organisation arises and that are its 'givens' for continuing existence. Each focus reveals something about the overall worldview being maintained by a particular client or by a particular organisation. What may also be revealed is the degree to which that worldview is actually being reflected in the client's or organisation's actual way of existing. And, as well, what may be revealed is the degree of 'fit' – or lack of it – between the client's worldview and the the organisation's worldview. Each of these points of focus, or any combination of them, I believe, places the issues being presented to the coaching psychologist in an interesting and often surprising light and may well provide novel and useful alternatives for responding to the current concerns under focus.

Perhaps that starts to give you a sense of what's being offered.

**Stephen:** Yes, it was a huge question. Thank you for the overview. There is a question that's been on my mind for while, which I've been meaning to ask you: How does existential coaching psychology assist business executives?

**Ernesto:** My honest answer is: I have no idea. They tell me it does. And the coaches who I supervise tell me that their clients feel more assisted. But what 'it' is, quite frankly, I don't know. Actually, I think that none of us, regardless of the approach or model we employ and believe in, does know.

But ... let me give you a perhaps more palatable answer: One of the main things that existential coaching psychology offers executives is the opportunity to seriously investigate the meanings, values, beliefs and attitudes (and their associated feelings, emotions and behaviours) that make up their worldview. In doing so, the focus topic or area of concern that was the impetus for initiating the meetings with the coach can be explored and examined in relation to what is being exposed of the client's worldview. Sometimes, more often than is usually expected in fact, what is revealed is that the presenting focus (often an area of concern or disruption) is a direct expression of dispositional factors within the worldview and, as such, is not primarily problematic or disruptive but, rather, expressive of a stance that the client may actually wish to maintain. In other words, the disturbing or problematic issue may be an important means through which the client's worldview is maintained and protected. Removing the issue also removes the protection to the worldview and may well threaten its continued maintenance. This is why existential coaching psychologists would be reluctant to identify themselves as 'problem solvers'. More accurately, I would say that they help the client to contextualise the issues under focus within his or her wider worldview. This is a different stance to coaching that is somewhat wary of directive change or conflict removal without first considering the issues and their possible alternatives within a much more informed and explicit set of lived conditions. This runs

counter to the 'quick fix' culture that so many executives claim to want and, I have to say that no one is more surprised than I am that, in spite of such a culture, so many executives are willing to honestly and seriously delve into their worldview and then report that they have found real and lasting value from having done so.

If I can 'sound-bite' this: what existential coaching offers the executive is the opportunity to 'be still' and thereby explore the worldview *that is*. This, I think is a contrast to the executive's (and many coaches') assumptions that the primary task is to 'become someone other than who I am being'.

**Stephen:** *The 'sound-bite' sums it up in a nutshell. In what ways can coaching psychologists contribute to the field of coaching?*

**Ernesto:** Wow. Another huge question. OK, briefly: Obviously, we're psychologists. Now, no matter how we were trained, who trained us and what our own theory-derived preferences may be, I believe that as psychologists we share the following common ground: that we are as concerned by the questions that are posed as we are of their possible answers. In my view, good coaches who are not coaching psychologists also share this relationship to questions. And, also in my view, those whom I personally would term as unhelpful or even unintentionally harmful or dangerous coaches share an antipathy towards questions and only appear to value 'answers'.

That's not to say that I don't have my particular concerns with coaching psychologists. Mainly, although I think that we do give appropriate value to questions, I also think that we're somewhat 'stuck' in our ways of questioning or, more broadly, in the assumptions that underpin our questions. For me, existential thought was, and remains, the biggest challenge to my assumptions both as a psychologist and as a person – which is why I keep trying to understand and practise it. I also think it may provoke something similar for many other coaching psychologists – which is why I keep going on and on about it to whoever may care to listen and discuss.

**Stephen:** *In your opinion what distinguishes coaching psychology from coaching?*

**Ernesto:** I've sort of answered that in the previous question. Maybe I can answer it in another way through a quote from a novel by William Landay that I read some time back: *'There aren't neat solutions to every mystery. People ... complicate everything. They do things for reasons they don't understand. They do things for no damn reason at all ... People are mysterious. The world is mysterious. You can't know everything. You're not supposed to. This isn't a history book. It's just the world. It's a messy place.'*

OK. Now what I think is that, at their best, coaching psychologists both understand and are willing to work within 'the mystery and the mess' rather than assume, as a fair few coaches might, that all mysteries are resolvable and all messes can be cleared.

**Stephen:** *What will be some of the key messages you wish to convey in your keynote speech at the Conference?*

**Ernesto:** Well, I'm going to try to say something worthwhile about the relatedness between coaching/coaching psychology and psychotherapy. This is a recurring question and issue for debate. Obviously, some relationship between the two exists if only insofar as so many theories of coaching are, in part, derived from different models of psychotherapy. Just as obviously, the two arenas are not one and the same. But what makes them similar? And what makes them distinct? This is what I want to discuss for my talk. I can't tell you much more than that at present because I haven't really formulated much in terms of potentially worthwhile questions and answers as yet. Though, as usual, I suspect that whatever I do come up with will be more question-focused than answer-focused. What little I've come up with that I can offer you though once again centres upon the idea of moving away from the 'individual-in-isolation' and towards a more relationally-focused view. I think that this is something that is much more apparent in coaching and coaching psychology – particularly at the level of executive coaching – in all sorts of ways.

And because it is, I'd guess that those models of therapy that insist upon viewing the individual in isolation are going to be the least 'translatable' and useful to coaching or coaching psychology and which will throw up the biggest elements of divergence and difference. But ... that's just an initial thought.

Also, I think it's important to clarify that while therapy is in some way or other predominantly 'problem-focused', coaching and coaching psychology need not be so. Coaching can be a much more openly and obviously an exploratory enterprise focused upon the creative. One could quibble and argue that these, too, are 'problems', and I'd sort of agree, but I think that there's an important distinction there nonetheless.

So there. Two possible 'preview thoughts'. Come December, they may still be the only thoughts I've had. But, I hope not.

**Stephen:** *Is there anything else you would like to add?*

**Ernesto:** Well ... Just that if people have been intrigued and/or mystified by what was mentioned above about existential thought as applied to coaching and coaching psychology, they might find it helpful to read the chapter that I co-authored with Caroline Horner that appears in the soon-to-be published *Handbook of Coaching Psychology* edited by yourself and Alison Whybrow (2007).

And, as well, that I'd be more than happy to receive views and comments and do my best to reply sensibly to them if I'm e-mailed at: [ESA@plexworld.com](mailto:ESA@plexworld.com). And ... thanks for the interview.

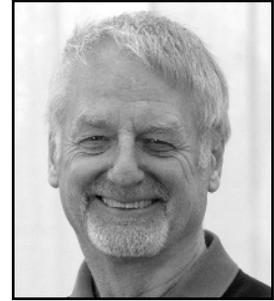
**Stephen:** *Thank you, too.*

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# Sir John Whitmore

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**Stephen:** Last year you attended the 1st International Coaching Psychology Conference held at City University and contributed to the group discussion at the end of day one. That inspired the Conference Committee to invite you back this year to give a keynote speech. You are well known internationally as an ambassador for the field of coaching. How did you first become interested in coaching?

**John:** I studied humanistic psychology in the early 1970s in California and met Tim Gallwey and the Inner Game. I trained with him and started the Inner Game in the UK with a tennis and a ski school. I had been in professional sport myself and always maintained an interest in human potential for myself and others. We soon were drawn into workplace coaching, and formed Performance Consultants about 20 years ago. I wrote *Coaching for Performance* which became a best-seller in the field and was in 20 or more languages. My current company, of which I am the Chair, is Performance Consultants International.

**Stephen:** What has been your involvement in professional coaching bodies?

**John:** I was consulted at the time the International Coach Federation was being formed more than 20 years ago. I was on the founding committee of EMCC and I am an Honorary Vice President of the Association for Coaching. I do not get deeply involved in the admin of any of them as that is not my forte.

**Stephen:** Do you see the accreditation of coaches as important?

**John:** Yes, but academic accreditation is only an indicator that someone has done the work. It does not mean that they have the human skills necessary to be a good coach. It is helpful, however, for HR directors to know that the people they bring in have been trained.

**Stephen:** Can you tell us about where you currently work?

**John:** All over the world. Between mid-September and the December Conference, I will have been to Spain, Denmark, Iceland, Korea, Mexico, Russia, California, Switzerland, Sweden, Ireland, Scotland, Colorado, Prague and Berlin. That is all workshops and lectures on leadership and advanced (Transpersonal) coaching. Oh yes, I occasionally work in England, too. I also am a director of The Institute of Human Excellence in Sydney, working in the AsianPac countries.

**Stephen:** In 1992 you wrote:

*In too many cases they [coaches] have not fully understood the performance-related psychological principles on which coaching is based. Without this understanding they may go through the motions of coaching, or use the behaviours associated with coaching, such as questioning, but fail to achieve the intended results.*

(Whitmore, 1992, p.2)

*Personally I still think that this is an important issue. Fifteen years later are you still this critical regarding coaching and perhaps the associated training of coaches in the UK and overseas?*

**John:** I have long and will always be an advocate of improved coaching training. Some training courses produce competent questioners but the core of coaching which is transpersonal remains in the dark.

**Stephen:** *As many of us know, your professional interests include transpersonal psychology. What has interested you about the transpersonal approach and its application to coaching?*

**John:** Transpersonal is simply the next evolution of psychology that has to be applied to coaching. The Inner Game was already in part transpersonal which simply means beyond the individual or we could say whole system. The whole system in psychology includes the spiritual realm which is an integral part of human experience, and sadly one that Academic psychology largely ignores to its cost. Asian people don't make the separation between psychology and spirituality as we reductionistic Westerners do.

Humanistic psychology advocates awareness.

Transpersonal psychology advocates responsibility.

Coaching, if it is any good, advocates both.

**Stephen:** *What will be the important message you wish to convey in your keynote speech at the Conference?*

**John:** Two things: The need for widespread acceptance and adoption of the Transpersonal by the profession. This will become clear and fully supported by the International Coach Federation at their Annual Conference in California in November. The transpersonal should be an integral part of all coach training.

Secondly, that our global society has reached the stage of evolution at which hierarchy gives way to self-responsibility and that the coaching industry has grown up to meet this need and midwife this birth. Coaching has an unlimited future once it has the courage to step up to the plate, as they say.

**Stephen:** *Is there anything else you would like to add?*

**John:** No, but I am sure I will have on the day!

**Stephen:** *Thank you for the interview.*

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# Dr Alison Whybrow

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**Stephen:** *You have been influential in the setting up of the British Psychological Society, Special Group in Coaching Psychology (SGCP) and you were involved in the original Coaching Psychology Forum. Let's go back a few years. As an occupational psychologist what initially interested you about the field of coaching psychology?*

**Alison:** Before the development of the Coaching Psychology Forum, I felt very strongly that coaching was something that psychologists were doing, and were well placed to do – however, psychologists were not naming it as a distinct area of practice. The concerns for me were two-fold. Firstly, aspects of psychological enquiry and skills that were particularly effective and relevant in the coaching context were not receiving the attention required to truly build this area of practise. Secondly, I was anxious that psychology appeared to have no clear voice in the growing coaching profession.

**Stephen:** *You became Co-proposer of the SGCP and have remained involved in the SGCP ever since. This has taken up a lot of your 'spare time'. Why have you been so keen to help the growth of coaching psychology and the SGCP?*

**Alison:** Mainly for the reasons outlined above. I had no idea that the Coaching Psychology Forum would transform into something as successful as the Special Group in Coaching Psychology has become. There has been a huge amount to do that has been exciting and energising. It's been very easy to be a part of the team who have been committed to the CPF/SGCP and that is so well supported by its members.

The emerging coaching profession has a constantly changing landscape. Together with the internal changes in the Society and the forthcoming Health Professions Council Registration, there is a lot to do to provide coaching psychologists with a bridge between the psychological and coaching professions that will support them in effectively applying their coaching skills.

I say we've done a lot, the SGCP has a lot still to do.

**Stephen:** *In what ways can coaching psychologists contribute to the field of coaching?*

**Alison:** Coaching psychologists have a huge amount to offer to the field of coaching. As psychologists we have a rich heritage that provides us with a set of approaches, a framework and knowledge base that we apply to optimising the performance of individuals, teams and organisations.

Coaching psychologists have a well developed ethical framework and standards of professional practice that are seen as an industry benchmark.

Psychologists are very much developing the evidence base underpinning coaching practice. This ensures that the expectations associated with different approaches are better understood rather than being over or undersold. Through research, we are able to push the boundaries of performance of ourselves as coaches and that of our clients.

Certainly, the SGCPs remit is to be externally engaged, open to and inclusive of the broader coaching community. We believe the coaching and psychological professions will be strengthened by a collaborative approach.

**Stephen:** *In your opinion what distinguishes coaching psychology from coaching?*

**Alison:** Well, I would say that coaching psychologists work within psychological frameworks that enable a structured exploration of our clients' inner world in relation to their context and expectations. These rich insights can very effectively support our clients to achieve their goals.

That is not to say that other coaches don't use psychological frameworks. However, as a minimum, clients can expect that coaching psychologists work within a psychological framework of enquiry.

**Stephen:** *You are currently Chair Elect of the SGCP. You become Chair at the National Conference in December. Please take your time when answering my next question. When you become SGCP Chair what will be the key issues that you would like to address in 2008?*

**Alison:** In 2008, we've got a challenging agenda that is actually set by the main SGCP committee.

As I see it, a key priority is the accreditation of coaching psychologists. During Pauline Willis' year as Chair, the SGCP made some good inroads into accreditation issues. We have been building on that work this year, and now, at least have the list of chartered SGCP members available on our website. We are looking forward to moving the whole issue of accreditation forward significantly quite quickly. However, there is a degree of 'stodge and treacle' to wade through to achieve this.

Second we need to promote coaching psychology externally, clarifying what coaching psychologists are, what we can do and educating our client base. Without promoting greater understanding among coaching buyers and coaching clients as to what coaching psychologists offer that is relevant and valuable to them, we really do limit our offering as a professional body.

Third, we want to continue to develop the coaching psychology and coaching communities. Our coaching psychology events are well attended and very well received. People comment on the diversity and depth offered at our conferences. Additionally they enjoy the informal, inclusive feel of our events.

The support and input from the SGCP members will be invaluable in achieving these aims. Additionally, our committees of volunteers are crucial in keeping the momentum behind the development of coaching psychology.

**Stephen:** *For UK psychologists the whole issue of Statutory Registration has become rather heated. What are your views on Registration and its relevance to coaching psychologists and the SGCP?*

**Alison:** The thrust behind the regulation of the psychological professions has been to protect the public, and ensure that only those with the appropriate qualifications and experience can use certain titles like 'psychologist'.

The Government is going to regulate psychologists through an existing structure, the Health Professions Council, alongside 13 other professions that are more directly health-related (for example, Orthoptists, Paramedics, Dietitians).

There has been justified concern that this is something of a 'square peg in a round hole' solution. Additionally, there is a question as to whether this approach is going to achieve its original intention of really protecting the public. A Psychological Professions Council proposal put forward by a number of psychological bodies has been firmly rejected. Statutory Regulation is set to come in during this parliamentary session within the governance structure of the HPC.

These developments are really interesting for coaching psychologists and the SGCP. Coaching psychologists will have to register with the HPC to continue practicing as 'psychologists'. The standards of practice required for registration as a 'psychologist' are currently being defined and refined.

Coaching psychologists will be straddling two professions; psychology, which will have this additional layer of regulation, and the coaching profession, which has no formal system of regulation although individual professional coaching bodies have developed and are continuing to develop accreditation routes for coaches.

Coaching and psychology could be driven apart by Statutory Regulation legislation, making collaboration even more difficult. Alternatively in the longer term, coaching may be added to the list of professions that are regulated by the HPC.

The impact of the HPC on the Society as a whole will be to transform it from the 'keeper of the standards' for psychologists, to a lobbying organisation that hopes to have a significant role in continuing to develop and maintain the standards that the HPC upholds. To achieve this, the Society will need to be much more externally focused.

This situation leaves the SGCP in an interesting position. Only one representative from each 'health' profession sits on the HPC. Thus, there will be one representative from the Society representing the whole of the psychological disciplines.

Several interesting questions arise – for us, the key question is will the sub-disciplines of psychology, particularly coaching psychology be well represented in this context? To a large extent, this depends on the partnership forged between the HPC and the Society. The exact nature of the impact of the HPC is yet to be clarified and understood, however, the HPC does not appear to offer the best outcome for psychology.

For coaching psychology, the current proposals could leave us very much under represented – but this is not necessarily the case. Indeed, on a very positive note, the HPC may provide an opportunity to enable coaching psychology to be recognised as an area of applied psychological practice.

**Stephen:** *What key message do you want to convey in your keynote speech at the Conference?*

**Alison:** I am very much of the existentialist tradition – my message would be that as coaches, we can only aspire to really know and understand. As coaching psychologists, we have a body of knowledge behind us and a wealth of material available to us, however, does that really provide us with understanding? How do we make best use of our 'knowledge' to enable greater insight, and avoid falling into the trap of being 'experts' rather than facilitators?

On the day, the fine details may vary a little, but at least I hope to make people think and reflect a little.

**Stephen:** *Is there anything else you would like to add?*

**Alison:** As a community of Psychologists and Coaches, the SGCP has a very warm and inclusive feel to it. We have a great line-up for December, and I am very much looking forward to another great Conference where we can share, learn and feel energised as we move into 2008.

**Stephen:** *I hope you enjoy your term of office as SGCP Chair.*

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# The role of mindfulness in coaching

Jonathan Passmore & Oberdan Marianetti

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*In this article we explore the concept of mindfulness as a tool for helping both coaches and coachees. We argue that the coaching practice of the coach can be enhanced through using mindfulness as a preparation tool. We highlight research evidence on the impact of mindfulness in managing stress and contributing towards improved performance. We argue that coachees too can benefit when the coach shares these techniques with the coachee.*

**Keywords:** Coaching psychology, Roger's necessary and sufficient conditions, mindfulness, meditation, emotional detachment, performance at work, focus, managing stress, managing emotions and breathing.

THE CHALLENGE OF developing and maintaining focus is one which has been raised in the coaching and counselling literature (Passmore, 2007a & 2007b). The coach can often see a number of coachees during the course of a day and need to balance these demands with the many other demands of a consultant psychologist. The recent BBC TV comedy series, *Help*, joked about the therapist thinking about his shopping list as he nodded and pretended to listen to his client. As this sketch suggests we often struggle to maintain the single-minded focus which our friends and clients deserve. So how do we improve our focused attention on our coachees during coaching meetings? How do we manage the emotions which we feel, left over from the day before or the meeting before? How do we try to manage the emotions aroused during our coaching session?

This article explores the role of mindfulness in coaching, as a tool to help the coach both develop and maintain focus within the coaching session, and as a technique to manage emotional detachment. It also suggests ways in which the coach could usefully teach mindfulness to coachees as a way of developing resilience and as a tool for managing stress.

## What is mindfulness?

*It's not that mindfulness is the 'answer' to all life's problems. Rather, it is that all life's problems can be seen more clearly through the lens of a clear mind. (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, p.25)*

Mindfulness is a practice that has long been proven to increase well-being among medical patients and healthy individuals (Shapiro *et al.*, 1998; Kabat-Zinn, 1990). It is a practice with its roots in Buddhist and other meditative traditions, which teaches the art of 'non-doing' to facilitate absorbing reality 'as is' (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Mindfulness cultivates conscious attention and awareness of the moment in a non-judgemental way.

We assume we know and understand the world that surrounds us. However, this is purely an illusion! On average we can process five to nine items of the several million stimuli that surround us at any one point in time (Miller, 1956). This creates a limited picture of the world that we mistake for reality. Mindfulness provides a break from the limitations of our mental models and promotes a form of pure exploration, a way of investigating reality that challenges our sense of safety derived by the illusion and the safety of 'knowing'. Mindfulness is a window on reality, a channel to the realisation and acceptance of the 'not-knowing', a lens that shows the world 'as is'.

Mindfulness can be learnt and cultivated by anybody through practice and dedication. Research shows that it is composed by at least four elements: awareness, attention (Brown & Ryan, 2003), time (Kabat-Zinn, 1990) and acceptance (Gunaratana, 1993). Awareness is the brain's ability to constantly monitor and recognise internal and external systems and stimuli. Attention is the brain's ability to focus the awareness to a specific phenomenon and so increasing the sensitivity to it. Time refers to 'the now'; the only place where we exist, experience and act. Acceptance represents our ability to let-go and to be non-judgemental; our ability to observe and absorb reality 'as is', without embarrassment, satisfaction or disappointment.

Mindfulness can contribute towards increasing our ability to live a fuller life by allowing us to own our lives moment by moment, as they unfold, in joy or in pain, in our relationships with others and ourselves, in our private and professional lives.

### **Links to other frameworks and approaches**

Coaching and counselling share a great overlap both in their underlying theories and the skills used, there are however some important distinctions. A number of approaches draw on the principles of mindfulness, including the work of Carl Rogers and Fritz Perls.

Central to Carl Rogers' humanistic approach were the concepts of Congruence and Empathic understanding (Rogers, 1961). Congruence is a way for the therapist (read – coach) to be true to themselves. Rogers suggests that during this state 'the feelings the therapist is experiencing are available to him, available to his awareness, and he is able to live these feelings, be them, and able to communicate them if appropriate' (p.61). It is apparent from this quote how central mindfulness is to this concept. Through congruence the coach facilitates psychological growth and provides the environment in which the client can flourish.

Empathy is often described as the ability to 'put oneself into somebody else's shoes'. This implies that a person who is empathic is able to 'step-out' of their own reality and match the one of their interlocutor. Mindfulness is yet again at the centre of this process. Being empathic creates a support structure necessary for the client to feel the presence, the support and the understanding of the coach. Being empathic also focuses the attention of the coach on the client's needs and away from their own perception of them. One of us (Passmore, 2007a) has argued that Rogers' necessary and sufficient conditions are central in developing an effective working relationship between the coach and coachee.

Gestalt is centred on the empathic, moment by moment exploration of the issues as they are raised by the coachee. Bentley has highlighted the value Presence, Phenomenology and Experiment have in developing the coaching relationship (Bentley, 2006). These concepts are key to a successful relationship and central to mindfulness. Presence, similar to Rogers' congruence, refers to the ability to focus attention on the client so to respond as authentically as possible to their needs. The 'Here and Now', and 'Next' refers to the exploration of the past and the future to inform us on ways to integrate learning in the present, the time when both are alive at the same time. 'Phenomenology' is about all that is happening in the session, the observable and the unobservable, both of which can prove very relevant to the development. Sharing what one sees may provide a fresh view and a learning opportunity for both parties. Finally, it is through 'Experiment' that the coachee is able to venture into unknown territory, away from their comfort zone and into their learning one. The coach at this stage can be creative and present novel ways to do things in a safe environment.

Presence, Here and Now, and Next, Phenomenology and Experiment all borrow and benefit from a mindful approach. Mindfulness liberates the mind from the

constraint of our mental models, it fosters our ability to 'think out of the box' and of the 'not-knowing'; it stimulates creativity (Carrington *et al.*, 1980) and allow us to pay attention 'on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgementally' (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p.4).

Another central concept to the Gestalt approach to coaching is that of Context. Everything we are involved in as people and as coaches or coachees is heavily dependent and influenced by the context within which it happens. It is important that the coach approaches every session as a new session and not as a continuation of what has been. The coachee, the coach and their relationship constantly develop, it would be easy to become stuck in our perception of reality. Through mindfulness the coach is able to detach from what has taken place so far and enter the session with fresh eyes and a free mind. Only then the worlds of the coach and the coachee can meet and create a context that promotes change and development.

Mindfulness could be part of our daily lives and certainly of the coaching relationship. A state of mind that is present and non-judgemental shows the world as it actually is. This lessens the scope of the problem and increases the power of our resources, allowing for a path to growth and development.

### **Mindfulness research**

*When you feel physically and mentally disturbed, the best thing you can do is to let go, relax, and still the wheels of your thought processes. Talk to your subconscious mind. Tell it to take over in peace, harmony, and divine order. You will find that all the functions of your body will become normal again.*

(Murphy, 2000, p.42)

Mindfulness research has focused broadly on the fields of health and well-being. Its application has proven very effective in the reduction of stress, pain, anxiety and depression, but its overall positive impact proves effective even for healthy individuals (Shapiro *et al.*, 1998; Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

The following research-review presents some evidence about the positive influences that mindfulness brings at a psychological, physiological and behavioural level.

Stress can be defined in several ways. One widely-accepted model is the Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model (1984). Stress is seen in this model as the interaction between the environment and the individual as moderated by their appraisal, acceptance and coping strategies. As stated earlier, awareness and acceptance are also central concepts to mindfulness; this is what makes it so effective in reducing our perceived levels of stress. Mindfulness influences directly our ability to appraise the events and to interpret them for what they are. This allows us to gain a somewhat more objective view of the events and retain higher control of our response.

The concept of mindfulness can now be found in the corporate, medical, counselling and recreational worlds, with organisations training their staff in both the potential benefits and key techniques, as a way of managing conflict and stress in the workplace.

In a study with Motorola, Barrios-Choplin *et al.* (1997) found that in addition to physiological benefits, contentment, job satisfaction, and communication significantly increased after mindfulness training, while tension, anxiety, nervousness, and physical symptoms of stress significantly decreased.

Other constructs, such as control (Geer *et al.*, 1970), creativity, burnout (Langer *et al.*, 1988), productivity, attentional processes and learning (Langer & Piper, 1987) have all been shown to be positively influenced by mindfulness.

Research into individuals' health locus of control, state anxiety and mental adjustment found positive results in cancer sufferers who had been trained in the practice of mindfulness (Tacon *et al.*, 2004). Other studies into the effects of cardiac coherence also provide supporting evidence for its positive effects on well being. Cardiac coherence is a technique aimed at regulating the heart beat and draws deeply from mindfulness practice.

It has been demonstrated to positively affect brain faculties (Watkins, 2002) and other physiological and psychological functions; blood pressure, cortisol levels and IgA levels are among some of them.

Blood pressure was significantly lowered in a study of 38 hypertensive employees within a large corporation, over a period of 3 months (McCraty, 2003) and in a study of 27 employees from Motorola, where a reduction in sympathetic nervous activity was also found (Barrios-Choplin *et al.*, 1997). Cortisol levels and their relationship to stress were lowered by 23 per cent and confirmed in two other studies (McCraty *et al.*, 1998; Kirschbaum *et al.*, 1996); and IgA levels increased as a consequence of mindfulness practices, while recollecting positive memories (Rein & McCraty, 1995).

Brain structures and functioning seems to also be affected by mindfulness. In a mindfulness-based, randomised, controlled study within a high-stress biotechnology corporation, Davidson and colleagues (2003) demonstrated an increase of left-side, anterior activation in the brain, previously associated to feelings of happiness and dispositional positive affect (Davidson, 1992; Davidson *et al.*, 1990). This study demonstrated a shift in brain activity from right to left hemisphere, which influenced the ability to feel happier, in contrast with previous beliefs that 'trying to be happier is like trying to be taller' (Lykken, 1999).

From a more general perspective, Rosenzweig and colleagues (2003) demonstrated that mindfulness can be an effective stress management intervention. They measured mood disturbance among medical students and assigned a group to mindfulness training and another to a wait-list control group. They found significantly lower mood disturbance scores in the experimental group as compared to the controls.

This evidence indicates some of the profound benefits that mindfulness practice can have on individuals. Research has shown that mindfulness can be developed through practice (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

Given the above, it would seem that mindfulness could be a useful element of coaching practice.

### **Using mindfulness techniques to aid your coaching practice**

Mindfulness can be applied to coaching in a variety of ways. The relationship between the two concepts can be explored from several angles: the coach, the coachee and their relationship.

As individuals, both the coach and the coachee can benefit from mindfulness by practicing it in their daily lives, which, given the research data, suggests that this will contribute to a less stressed and happier experience of life. There are, however, other areas to incorporate mindfulness in the coaching relationship.

Effective coaching requires the coach to offer each coachee their full focus and attention. This is not always easy when our personal and professional lives have blurred boundaries and the pressures of the two merge into a mix of worries and confusion. Mindfulness provides an answer; it focuses our attention to the only moment that 'is'. Here, a much narrower range of options are available and our resources all of a sudden look adequate to deal with the situation; we can 'be' with our coachee.

The experience for the coachee is not dissimilar. They too are caught in the vortex of their own pressures and anxieties and are likely to carry unhelpful baggage that holds back progress in the coaching session. Mindfulness can provide them the opportunity to focus their attention to the session and to their learning, effectively providing the ground for personal development and self-actualisation.

Whether the coach and the coachee choose to include mindfulness in their own individual benefits, their relationship can certainly become more effective because of it.

We suggest four specific uses: preparing for coaching, maintaining focus in the session, remaining emotionally detached, and teaching mindfulness techniques to the coachee.

**(i) Preparing for coaching**

From our personal experiences as coaches, we often rush from one meeting or coaching session to another. Our focus can sometimes be more on ensuring we get to the session on time, or arrive at the right place, without allowing enough time for ourselves to leave behind the thoughts, pressures and anxieties of the day. Mindfulness offers a technique to place these demands aside. One of us (Passmore) uses a four-minute mindfulness meditation to help centre themselves before each coaching session. This four-minute meditation involves a series of breathing exercises accompanied by a body-scan to check the bodily sensations being experienced. This is followed by a more practical review of the notes from the previous meeting and planning what the coming session might focus on.

**(ii) Maintaining focus in the session**

The second potential practical application is in helping the coach to remain focused during the session. We drew attention to the comedy sketch from *Help* in which the counsellor's mind wandered during his counselling sessions. As coaches we face the same challenge of a wandering mind. Mindfulness meditations when used between coaching sessions can help improve focus and concentration during two hour sessions. The concept can also be used during coaching sessions through maintaining watchfulness over the mind, and continually bringing it back to focus on the coachee, whenever the mind starts to wander.

**(iii) Remaining emotionally detached**

Mindfulness can be used to help us manage our changing moods and emotions during a coaching session. As a coach, remaining emotionally detached is a key skill. The coach needs to both experience the emotions being felt by their coachee, but not to be flooded by them to the point where these emotions prevent the coach helping the coachee to move forward. Flooding has occurred when the coach finds themselves

crying at the news of their coachees dismissal, or when the coach over identifies with the experiences of their coachee to the point where they feel anger towards the coachees boss or another adversary.

Mindfulness can help the coach manage the conflicting emotions within coaching, for example, balancing empathy while simultaneously providing constructive challenge.

**(iv) Teaching mindfulness to coachees**

Mindfulness can be taught formally, as meditative practice, or informally, as an everyday tool. The coach may choose to engage in the formal or informal teaching depending on their clients' needs and experience, however, it is important that they have direct, on-going experience with mindfulness practice. While learning, clients will experience difficulties and addressing them from a logical, intellectual perspective is not possible. As Segal *et al.* (2002) say: 'A swimming instructor is not someone who knows the physics of how solids behave in liquids, but he or she knows how to swim'. Only through their own practice and understanding will the coach be able to guide their client.

Segal and colleagues also provide suggestions on the skills that should be included in mindfulness teachings:

- Concentration: this is central to mindfulness and represents the ability to focus one's full attention on one object or activity;
- Awareness: the conscious knowledge that life is 'as is';
- Acceptance: awareness of life is not sufficient, one must accept it and let go;
- Decentering: the client's ability to see thoughts just as thoughts and not as truths;
- 'being' rather than 'doing': 'doing' means eating the raisin; 'being' means eating the raisin and experiencing its taste and the feelings this elicits.

Mindfulness is not simply a skill, but becomes a way of being as it develops.

## Summary

In this paper we have shown the nature and research evidence behind a previously discussed but little published area of coaching practice. The evidence suggests that mindfulness can offer benefits both in terms of stress management but also in happiness and focus within our daily lives and in our coaching practice. We have also highlighted ways in which the coaching psychologist can draw on this research to begin to make use of the concept of mindfulness in their coaching practice to enhance their focused attention as well as to contribute towards overall performance improvement.

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### **Omission in the August issue of *The Coaching Psychologist***

In the August, 2007 (vol. 3, no. 2) issue of *The Coaching Psychologist* the Guidelines on Supervision for Coaching Psychology were published on pages 95–102. The document should have included an acknowledgement, to the individuals who contributed to the development of this document. The Guidelines on Supervision for Coaching Psychology have been approved by the British Psychological Society, Special Group in Coaching Psychology Committee (SGCP). The document had been developed on behalf of the SGCP by members of the Professional Practice and Research (PPR) Sub-committee and the Supervision Guidelines Working Party. This consisted of Pauline Willis and Claire Huffington (PPR Co-Chairs), Tatiana Bachkirova, Kris Bush and Emma Donaldson-Feilder. Doug Young also from the SGCP committee helped to format the document in its final stage prior to publication.

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# An investigation into stress and coaching needs of staff working in the hospice service

Addy Hackett, Stephen Palmer & Jacqui Farrants

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*Stress has been identified as the second highest cause of sickness absence in the NHS. Hospice staff could be particularly at risk of experiencing stress, as working with patients with terminal illnesses threatens the sense of omnipotence and brings a repeated need to deal with feelings of loss and grief. Disagreement exists as to whether the work of palliative care nurses is more stressful than the work of other nurses and the literature on specific palliative care stressors is sparse. This research aims to obtain a better understanding of the overall levels of stress and the causes of stress amongst this staff group. A further aim is to run a brief stress-coaching intervention in two hospices and evaluate its suitability and effectiveness for this service using an evaluation questionnaire. This paper presents a review of the literature and an outline of the proposed methodology for this study.*

**Keywords:** stress, stress prevention, coaching, cognitive approach, palliative care, hospice, nursing.

## Stress in the NHS

THE HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE (HSE, 2001) has identified 'Health care' as one of the five priority sectors where work-related stress is most reported as being a major cause of absence. Evidence suggests that work stress is a precipitating factor of diagnosable depression and anxiety in previously healthy young workers (Melchior *et al.*, 2007). Approximately 1.3 million people work in the NHS and the National Audit Office found stress-related illness to be the second highest cause of sickness absence in the NHS accounting for 30 per cent of lost time. Among nurses the prevalence of stress is about three times the national average (Pascoe, 2005). The Annual NHS staff survey run by the Healthcare Commission (the independent inspection body for both the NHS and independent health care) reports that work-related stress has fallen from 39 per cent in 2003, to 35 per cent in 2005 to 33 per cent in 2006. The Commission also reports improvements in safety by illustrating a fall in the percentage of staff saying they saw errors, incidents or

'near misses' with potential to harm patients, down from 49 per cent in 2003 to 38 per cent in 2006. The above figures show a positive trend in the reported stress by NHS staff, however, they also show that one-in-three employees still report feeling stressed in relation to their NHS work.

## What makes the hospice service vulnerable to experiencing stress?

Working in the palliative care service brings its own specific issues in relation to work-stress. People who are drawn to work in a hospice environment often show an abundance of caring concern for those they serve (Fitzgerald, 2002). This may have an impact on professional boundaries causing blurring of roles and an increased sense of responsibility within the caring role. Fitzgerald (2002) states that:

*'Because compassionate care giving is an essential component in hospice care, the hospice worker has a unique challenge of coping with loss on a regular basis. It is fully expected that every hospice patient will die and leave behind*

*a grieving family. Providing hospice care requires staff and volunteers to become an intimate part of their patients' lives. Sharing one's dying, making the remaining time meaningful, providing care for the entire family, and giving so much of oneself is an immense undertaking. In the midst of intimate and intense care giving, hospice workers often forget to take care of themselves ... It is not enough to take vacations. It is essential to have a lifestyle that incorporates manageable stress-reducing techniques...*

Working with patients who are diagnosed with terminal illnesses can be potentially stressful as it brings with it an awareness of personal vulnerability and mortality, it threatens the sense of omnipotence and brings a repeated need to deal with feelings of loss and grief. As the palliative care services evolved over the years, so emerged a recognition of the need to 'get to know the patient' to provide the best possible care (Luker *et al.*, 2000). Whilst it can be argued that the effort to get to know the patients is a positive step towards the provision of best patient care, it also has the potential to cause increased levels of stress amongst the staff as it invites a deeper level of 'emotional involvement'. There are relatively few studies on stress in care givers in the palliative care service. An early study by Lyall *et al.* (1980) found that three months after the opening of a palliative care unit, the nurses studied had distress scores on the Goldberg General Health Questionnaire comparable to a group of newly-widowed women, and almost twice as high as those found in women newly-diagnosed with breast cancer. Following up from this, Vachon (1987) gave some early insight into the stressors experienced by staff working within the palliative care service. In her study on 'Occupational Stress in the Care of the Critically Ill and the Dying, and the Bereaved', she identifies many perceived stressors ranging from environmental stressors to role stressors, to patient illness stressors and stressors around the interactions with the families of the patients. She states that feelings of depression, grief and guilt constituted the single greatest manifestation

of stress across the professional groups in her research, and found that some caregivers may be particularly vulnerable to this due to an over investment in the caregiver role.

More recently, Payne (2001) conducted a research into the predictors of burnout among hospice nurses. She found that the level of burnout amongst this nursing group was low. However, the factors of 'death and dying', 'conflict with staff', 'accepting responsibility and higher nursing grade contributed to emotional exhaustion. This study also showed that stressors made a greater contribution to burnout than demographic factors. Disagreement exists as to whether the work of palliative care nurses is more stressful than the work of other nurses. Munley (1985) and Gray-Toft and Anderson (1986–1987) found that hospice nursing is particularly stressful because it involves having to constantly cope with loss and grief. In contrast, Mallet *et al.* (1991) found that hospice nurses experienced significantly less overall stress than other nurses and had significantly lower scores on the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI: Maslach & Jackson, 1981) than critical care nurses. With regards to burnout, again the findings are somewhat conflicting. A number of studies have reported a positive association between stressors and burnout in hospice nurses (Mallet *et al.*, 1991). However, Masterson-Allen *et al.* (1985) found there was no relationship between these factors among hospice nurses.

### **Difficulties around the definition of stress**

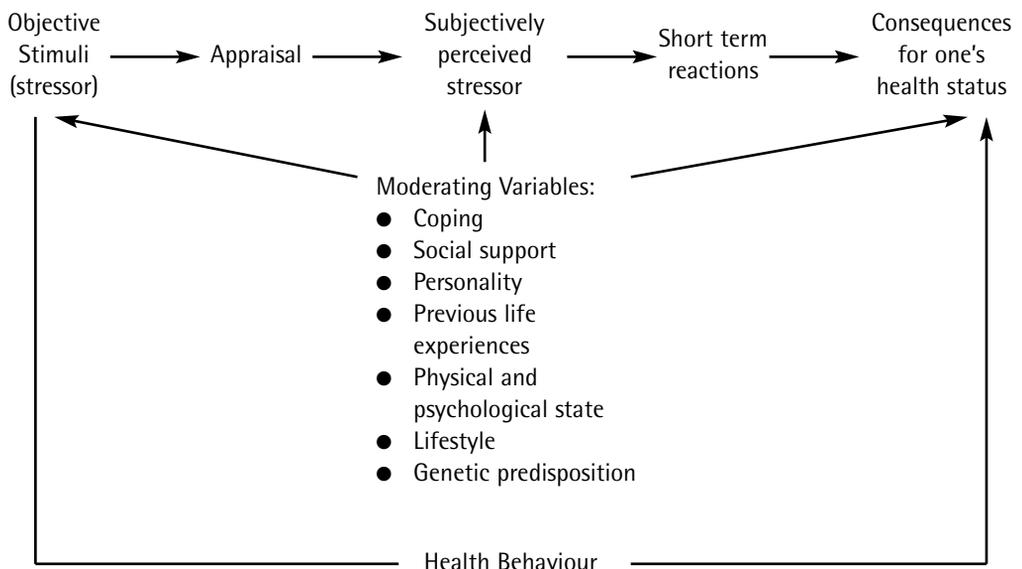
The conflicting results from the different studies mentioned above may be explained by the difficulties around the conceptualisation and definition of the word 'stress'. A critical evaluation of the use of this term both in the lay and the professional literature reveals that there is a serious lack of agreement with respect to the terminology (Vingerhoets, 2004). Sometimes the word stress is used to refer to situations, stimuli and conditions that may trigger emotional reac-

tions and distress, at other times it may refer to the reactions or responses of a person to challenging situations. Some research suggests that it is the source, rather than the amount of stress that differs. For example, Power and Sharp (1988) found that death and dying and inadequate preparation to meet the emotional demands of patients and their families (psychological environment stressors), were significantly greater stressors for hospice nurses while conflict with other nurses and workload (physical and social environment stressors) were greater stressors for learning disability nurses. The HSE (2001) define stress in terms of strain: 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed upon them'. The concepts of appraisal and coping are often central within stress research. Within this context, subjective appraisal and coping ability have been identified as factors that mediate the stress response (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Palmer *et al.* (2003, p.2) provide a cognitive definition, 'stress occurs when the perceived pressure exceeds an individual's perceived ability to cope.'

**Why is the assessment of coaching needs useful in the hospice service?**

Many North European and North American organisations have introduced programmes to help employees cope with their stress. Literature shows that stress management is mainly associated with techniques to reduce symptoms of stress or to facilitate relaxation (see van der Klink *et al.*, 2001). The stress model presented by Vingerhoets (2004) in relation to health behaviour (see Figure 1), shows that there are many moderating variables which could be tapped into to positively influence the stress response. In contrast to the curative methods commonly used to manage stress symptoms, coaching offers individuals the opportunity to work on these moderating variables. By taking this approach, the individual can get to the root of the issues which are causing stress and help uncover permanent preventative solutions (Hearn, 2001).

Figure 1: Moderating variables of stress (Vingerhoets, 2004).



Due to the specific stressors associated with the delivery of palliative care as described above, it would appear that a tailor-made coaching programme designed to help staff manage the stressors effectively, could be of value to ensure staff well-being and effective patient care. This research explores the use of cognitive behavioural coaching (CBC) to influence and enhance coping ability for this staff group with a view to increase perceived control and reduce overall stress. CBC has been adapted from the methodological framework of cognitive behavioural therapy (Neenan & Palmer, 2001; Neenan & Dryden, 2002), which was originally developed by Beck (1976) and Ellis (1994). The effectiveness of cognitive behavioural therapy has now been well proven in the clinical field, and it has become the first choice of therapy recommended by NICE (National Institute for Health & Clinical Excellence) for many psychological and psychiatric disorders. Results from initial research into the effectiveness of cognitive behavioural techniques in the field of coaching are promising (for example, Green *et al.*, 2006). Grbic and Palmer (2006) found in a randomised controlled trial that stress was significantly reduced amongst middle managers after using a cognitive behavioural self-coaching manual. However, cognitive behavioural coaching is still being developed and further research is needed to evaluate its benefits.

### Further research

In order to develop a good understanding of the coaching needs of the hospice staff group, this research aims to firstly gain an understanding of the overall levels of stress and the causes of stress, and secondly to evaluate a brief stress-coaching intervention to assess the suitability and effectiveness of this approach within the hospice service. The

research project will consist of three phases. Phase I will be a quantitative study to assess the levels of stress and the main stressors as experienced by members of staff working within two hospices in the UK. A one-point assessment will be done using three measures; the DASS21 (Depression Anxiety Stress Scale), the HSE (Health and Safety Executive) Stress Indicator Tool, and a Demographic Questionnaire looking at 'Years in palliative care work', part-time or full-time employment, age, locality and professional group 1 (clinical staff) or 2 (support staff). Phase II of the project will be a qualitative study with the purpose of obtaining a deeper understanding of the stressors as indicated by Phase I. Two focus groups will be held, one at each hospice. Phase III of this project will be an evaluation of a brief stress-coaching intervention. The coaching intervention will be informed by the findings of Phase I and II. The objectives of this session will be to help members of staff understand the nature of stress, to identify stress management strategies using a cognitive-behavioural model, and develop a personal plan for managing work-related stress. The duration of the stress-coaching session will be about two hours. It is envisaged that the results of the study will be published in relevant journals within the next two years.

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*Chartered Psychologist*

# Let the research begin: A reply to Bruce Grimley

Susie Linder-Pelz & L. Michael Hall

---

**I**N THE INTERESTS of informed debate, we take issue with several of Bruce Grimley's assertions: that NLP is atheoretical, it has nothing to do with psychology, it is not primarily a communication model and, perhaps most importantly, that there is no room for development and diversity in the field of NLP. We also suggest some steps towards the needed research.

We start with Bruce's view that our article on the theoretical origins of NLP-based coaching adds nothing new (Linder-Pelz & Hall, 2007). Precisely because, as Bruce himself colourfully points out, 'everyone and their dog has an NLP certificate', our intention was not to describe NLP but to throw light on the recognised body of theory and practice NLP-based coaching builds on. Solid theoretical foundations, along with empirical efficacy data, are widely accepted criteria for an evidence-based coaching practice (Cavanagh *et al.*, 2005; Stober & Grant, 2006). Up until now the lack of such evidence has limited the acceptance of NLP-based coaching, especially among potential corporate clients.

## Is NLP really atheoretical?

No coaching model or approach can ever be atheoretical. Every field operates from theoretical premises, even if implicitly. The co-founders of NLP, Bandler and Grinder, snuck them in under the guise of 'The NLP Presuppositions'. Over the years, I (Michael) have found about half of them in the original writings of Fritz Perls and Virginia Satir, then in Maslow and Rogers (Linder-Pelz & Hall, 2007). And specifically, where did the presuppositions come from? From Korzybski ('the map is not the territory'), Satir (about systems and communications) and Perls (about sensory awareness, not asking 'why')

and from all of the ideas that they brought in from family systems, communication theory and Gestalt therapy. When Richard Bandler was 20 years old he transcribed the audiotapes from Fritz Perls' book *The Gestalt Approach and Eye Witness to Therapy* (1973) and then taught a class on Gestalt at the University of Southern California under the mentorship of Grinder; this surely suggests some of the unspoken theoretical origins of NLP.

## NLP as a communication model

While it is true there are many definitions of NLP, key among them is 'communication'. The first book published in the field of NLP was *The Structure of Magic* – two volumes about 'communication' as stated in the subtitle, *A book about language and therapy*. When Richard Bandler asked Michael Hall to co-write a follow-up book on its 25-year anniversary the new book became *Communication Magic* (Hall, 2001). As Bruce himself recognises, the first NLP model was the Meta-Model, comprising 13 linguistic distinctions or language patterns. Asking questions about unspecific words and phrases is referred to as 'meta-modelling' and is known as the Precision Model – for precise *communications*. Reversing that is the use of 'vague language specifically' to create internal states as a person goes into a hypnotic state of inwardly seeing, hearing and feeling.

Any reading of Hall's work will see references to anchoring, reframing and meta-programs. The very content of NLP/Neurosemantic trainings and both volumes of *User's Manual of the Brain* (Hall & Bodenhamer, 1999, 2003) is the NLP communication model: the representational systems, eye accessing cues that indicate representations, strategies, anchoring and meta-programs.

As for modelling; it lead to the Meta-states Model (Hall, 1995) and is the source of other NLP/Neurosemantics models including generative change (Hall & Duval, 2004) and self-actualisation (Hall, 2007). Over the past five years Hall and Duval have trained coaches around the world, in part by live interviewing and modelling of 21 expert coaches who have created viable businesses and are recognised by their peers as highly effective (Hall & Duval, 2004a). From this modelling they benchmarked 26 essential coaching skills (more on this later); benchmarking is a form of modelling a person's expertise in a high level performance

The genius of NLP is that it enables us to work with several levels of meaning within a client's model of the world. It enables us to peek into the theatre of someone's mind and ask, 'What's playing there? What are you seeing, hearing, and feeling?' We can also ask clients about how they edit their mental movie. Is it close or far? Is it bright or fuzzy? Is the sound coming from this side or that? And by working with the cinematic features of the movie (what NLP calls sub-modalities), we can enable a client to create representations of their thoughts that are more empowering.

However, given that the specific *kind of consciousness* we humans have is self-reflexive in nature, a coach also needs to have the ability to ask questions such as, 'Given that you see, hear, and feel that, what do you think or feel about that? What's in the back of your mind about that? And when you step back from that frame of mind, what do you think about that?' This is what enables a coach to work systemically with the layers of thoughts and feelings a client has about something and to then get to the leverage point for change more efficiently. This is the Meta-States model in NLP that Wyatt Woodsmall and the International Association of NLP Trainers recognised in 1994 as the most significant contribution to the field of NLP that year.

Bruce is also factually incorrect in quoting Grinder's challenge to Hall to be explicit about meta-states; Hall has responded and Grinder does recognise the value of some meta-states.

### **Diversity in the NLP community**

And now to the key issue of diversity. Here our disagreement with Bruce is on the value of questioning and curiosity about what works – and what can work even better – in the field founded by Bandler and Grinder. To use Bruce's metaphor of Christianity: many of us prefer not to think of NLP as a religion ruled by a Pope; we believe, instead, that it is vital to have open, respectful debate and to develop additional models which, like the original NLP, are driven by process not content.

### **The way forward in research**

The few rigorous studies of NLP include Zyl and Lee's (1983) random assignment of clients to a intervention using meta-model questioning from NLP compared with an empathetic responding strategy from counselling and Day's (1985) testing of the NLP practitioners' ability to match clients' strategies. While there have been such quasi-experimental control studies to study the efficacy of NLP in counselling, health and spelling (Bolstad, 1997; Hucker, 1995, 2007) there are to our knowledge none yet specifically on NLP-based coaching. We agree with Bruce that any NLP-based coaching models need subjecting to rigorous randomised control studies.

Realistically and feasibly, the way forward is to undertake longitudinal studies of various design and scope – including, but not only, the ideal large-scale random control study where clients would be randomly assigned to, say, NLP (modelling) coaches, NLP (Neurosemantic) coaches and coaches using another model of solution-focused cognitive behaviour coaching. Our encouragement is for coaches who have an NLP certificate – and who want to make even more of a difference – to become curious

and excited about choices in coaching research. See *The Coaching Psychologist*, the *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring* and the *International Coaching Psychology Review* as well as conference papers of the last four years (Cavanagh *et al.*, 2005; Grant & Cavanagh, 2007).

As Thompson (2006) states, 'NLP can and should be researched, quantitatively and qualitatively ... If adequate research is to take place, concise, highly specified and empirically verifiable descriptions of the models of NLP need to be in place.' As an example: Hall and Duval have designated with precision the components of their coaching model. The 26 NLP/Neurosemantic skills in their model have been operationalised in terms of observable behaviours a coach can demonstrate and which comprise ordinal six-level rating scales (Hall & Duval, 2004). Trained observers could independently rate observed behaviours in live or videoed coaching sessions, together with analysis of clients' non-verbal and verbal responses.

At a recent conference on evidence-based coaching there was a call for both rigour and vigour in research (Stober, 2007). Rigour means discipline, critical thinking, asking good questions, self-reflexion and examining our own biases with peers (Kemp, 2007) while vigour means openness to new ideas, matching the purpose of research to appropriate methods, and doing research that enhances coaching practice (Stober, 2007).

The way forward for people with an NLP certificate, who realise that enthusiasm alone doesn't support the claims of NLP, is to apply their love of possibility-thinking, learning, motivating, goal-setting and behavioural flexibility to making the needed research happen!

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# Using your membership title ethically

## Ho Law

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I AM WRITING in response to the member's enquiry about the use of the Society's SGCP membership description. According to Charter Guide No. 3 (April, 1988) the amendments to The Royal Charter (which was amended in October, 1995), it must be emphasised that the Code of Conduct refers to all Members and Contributors (including Affiliates) of the Society. Statute 31(2) reads as follows:

*'No Member or Contributor shall use any description indicating Membership or Contributorship in a personal notice inserted as an advertisement in the press or elsewhere.'*

Statute 31(3) adds:

*'No Ordinary Member or Graduate Member shall use the description '(Member) (Graduate Member) of the British Psychological Society' (as the case may be) in any context, professional or otherwise, whatsoever, except in such circumstances as may be determined by the Board of Trustees.'*

The prohibitions of Statutes 31(2) and 31(3) apply with equal force to Contributors [affiliates] as they do to Graduate Members. Statute 30(3) states *'... no Foreign Affiliate, Affiliate or Student Subscriber shall use the description '[Foreign Affiliate] [Affiliate] [Student Subscriber] of the British Psychological Society' (as the case may be) in any context professional or otherwise, whatsoever, except in such circumstances as may be determined by the Board of Trustees.'*

The Society prevents Graduate Members and Affiliates from referring to their membership of the Society, as this may be misleading to the public, as they may believe that the Society regards these members as fit to practise psychology. Interpreting the above Statutes within the context of SGCP, it means that the same applies to these grades of members referring to membership of Special Groups. This does not apply to

Chartered Psychologists and they may refer to their membership of the Society and/or to a Special Group of the Society. In other words:

*With the exception of chartered psychologists, no reference to SGCP membership should appear in any public document, list of staff, advertisement, on a letter heading or in any other place where it could be construed to imply a qualification in psychology or authority to practise as a coaching psychologist.*

By insisting upon this principle, SGCP is not asking members to sell themselves short. Indeed, many competent coaches are able to draw on their knowledge of psychology to enhance their skills and effectiveness. This is what SGCP encourages members to do. There is no intention of asking members to deny the value and practical relevance of psychology in coaching. The danger we are seeking to avoid is simply that reference to SGCP membership in any public context is misleading. To the uninformed member of the public it implies a professional qualification to practise as a coaching psychologist. The latter claim should be made only by Chartered Psychologists. The letters after the name of a non-Chartered Member should never be used in any context.

We are also aware that many non-Chartered members in SGCP may be fully qualified members of other professions (e.g. AC, CIPD, CMI, the Science Council, etc.) or in practice, for example, as business or life coaches, management consultants, counselors or psychotherapists. In these situations it is still important that they do not imply they are practising as psychologists by making reference to their membership, even though they will undoubtedly be using their knowledge of psychology to enhance their practice of coaching or other profession.

SGCP is an inclusive group. We welcome people who are interested in coaching and coaching psychology to join the group including those who do not hold any formal qualification of psychology (e.g. psychology degrees, diploma, Chartership, etc.) via the Society's affiliate membership route. The principal purpose of being an affiliate member to the Society is to gain access to various membership concessions from the Society itself (e.g. to join SGCP; to get journals at reduced member rates or to pay the reduced member registration fees for conferences, etc.). However, as explained above, any references to SGCP membership would be misleading (e.g. on a business card, or on a letterheading, in a list of staff or in an advertisement) as it might be construed to imply an additional qualification beyond that of a first degree in psychology on which it is normally based or an authority to practise psychology without supervision (also see the Society's 1987 Guidelines on advertising the services).

Apart from receiving the SGCP journals, paying the reduced member registration fees for our conferences and gaining support from other members, there may be other benefits to being a SGCP member. For example, when applying for certain courses or jobs, it may be advantageous to indicate an interest in psychology. You can list your membership of the Society if it comes under a heading such as 'membership of the following professional organisations'... in your CV when applying for jobs, courses, etc. In these contexts it is right to point out that you are Members of the Society and subject to its Code of Conduct.

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# Norwegian coaching standards: An update

Paul O. Olson

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**D**URING LATE SEPTEMBER the attempt to create a Norwegian standard for coaching collapsed, maybe not surprisingly in such a young and chaotic field. The effort can still be seen as an earnest attempt by the majority to bring order and definitions to chaos, and the work has not been without virtue. No psychologists were involved, for reasons I have already described in an earlier issue of *The Coaching Psychologist* (April, 2007).

In the aftermath of the collapse, some questions were inevitable as coaches continue to claim proficiency in active listening and facilitation. Why did they not do as they preach? Why did the group process fail to the extent, that they could not even agree what coaching is? For example, the representatives from the International Coach Federation (ICF) were alleged to have taken a particularly firm and uncompromising stand, contributing heavily to the conflict level and eventual collapse of the debate.

Of course, some delegates did not appear interested in resolving the pressing issues that were raised, in particular regarding qualification of trainers and the requirement to understand enough about mental health issues to refer to a clinical psychologist if needed.

In a consultation with the Norwegian Psychological Association (NPA) we (three psychological coaches) strongly stated that NPA should not create a particular certificate, but rather build the branding of psychologists as coaches through short courses instead. In addition we advised that NPA issue a one page statement on their website which members could download to endorse the differences between psychological coaching and coaching in general. While we are still waiting for the NPA statement, the future for coaching psychology already seemed brighter.

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*BPS members can join now and obtain the discounted conference fee.*

# Revision of the Society's office service charging system – what it means for SGCP

Alanna O'Broin & Siobhain O'Riordan

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**W**ITH THE INTRODUCTION by the Society in October 2007 of a restructured office service charging system for larger member networks, it seems an appropriate time to update SGCP members on the potential financial impact on the Special Group of the changed basis of charging.

## **The old charging basis**

Historically, the Society levied office service charges from its subsystems on a fixed rate basis. Reflecting its status as a new subsystem, SGCP incurred no office service charges until the year October, 2006, to September, 2007, when office service charges were first levied at a subsidised rate of £8000 on the old charging basis. This was for provision of office services including:

- support at Committee business meetings;
- pre-press printing and mailing of publications;
- printing and mailing of communications to our members and other sub-systems, such as event fliers;
- website maintenance.

## **The new office service charging system**

To address the need for transparency, and to improve customer service, the Society has reviewed and consequently revised the basis on which office services are provided. From October, 2007, onwards, the new charging basis, a combination of free and pay-as-you-go services based on level of activity or usage, will be levied. In order to calculate the office services required under the new system, the Society requested that Divisions and the Special Group in Coaching Psychology prepare a simple financial plan for the coming year. Our thanks go to Phil Kelsey, Assistant

Accountant, Helen Barnett and Annjannette Wells, of the Society for their patient and helpful assistance to us during discussions on the revised Office Service charges.

## **SGCP's office service requirements for the coming year**

Production of a financial plan, including SGCP's requirements for the coming year, and associated discussions with the Society have resulted in a projected requirement by SGCP of Office Service charges totalling £18,545 for the year October, 2007, to September, 2008. Although this figure reflects provision of services in line with those for the previous year, the higher level of cost derives largely from bespoke costings and pass-on costs under the new charging basis. In March, 2008, an activity review will be conducted, following which a Mid Year Report will be sent to SGCP by the Society. In October, 2008, an End-of-Year Activity Review will be conducted, and any under- or over-usage of services for the year will be balanced by way of a financial reimbursement or payment.

## **Financial highlights**

Membership subscriptions have historically represented a relatively small percentage of SGCP's annual incoming resources compared to other Society subsystems. SGCP has been able to self-fund through the first two and a half years of its existence. This is due to a number of factors:

- Deployment of SGCP's own voluntary personnel in a number of its activities, particularly the successful National and International Coaching Psychology Conferences, and also the SGCP event programme

- Support from the Society and its personnel.
- Income from its publications and other communication media.

There was no membership subscription fee in SGCP's first year, and a fee of £3.50 in years 2006 and 2007. Whilst there have been some calls to increase the current Membership subscription rate to a higher figure, suggesting that this would add value to SGCP membership, others feel that a rise should only be considered if financially necessary.

### **No increase in SGCP membership subscription fee in 2008**

The SGCP Committee has agreed that the membership subscription fee will not increase for the year 2008, as reserves currently exist, and, for the 2007 year end, are projected to exceed, the nine months reserves level recommended by the Society.

### **The future**

SGCP is a dynamic, active subsystem working hard for its 2129 members. The restructured office service charging system highlights the need for increased financial awareness in managing the liquidity and financial planning of the SGCP as part of its strategic decision-making and broader business plan.

### **Alanna O'Broin**

*Honorary Treasurer, SGCP.*

### **Siobhain O'Riordan**

*Chair, SGCP.*

# *The Coaching Psychologist*

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## Notes for Contributors

# The Coaching Psychologist

Contributions on all aspects of research, theory, practice and case studies in the arena of coaching psychology are welcome. Manuscripts of approximately 3000 words excluding references, which may be extended with the permission of the Editor, should be typewritten and include the author's name, address and contact details. All submissions must include an abstract and keywords. Included should be a statement stipulating that the paper is not under consideration elsewhere. All submissions, including book reviews should be e-mailed to the Editor, [Kasia.s@tinyonline.co.uk](mailto:Kasia.s@tinyonline.co.uk) or to The Centre for Coaching, Broadway House, 3 High Street, Bromley BR1 1LF.

- Authors of all submissions should follow the Society's guidelines for the use of non-sexist language and all references must be presented in APA style (see the *Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines*, and the *Style Guide*, both available from the British Psychological Society).
- Articles will generally be reviewed by the Editor and the Consulting Editors. In addition, the Editor and the Consulting Editors reserve the right to reject submissions that are deemed as unsuitable for *The Coaching Psychologist*.
- Graphs, diagrams, etc., should be in camera-ready form and must have titles. Written permission should be obtained by the author for the reproduction of tables, diagrams, etc., taken from other sources.
- Three hard copies of papers subject to refereeing should be supplied, together with a large s.a.e. and a copy of the submission on disk or CD-ROM (if possible save the document both in its original word-processing format and as an ASCII file, with diagrams in their original format and as a TIFF or an EPS). Two hard copies of other submissions should be supplied. Subject to prior agreement with the Editor, however, items may be submitted as e-mail attachments.
- Proofs of papers will be sent to authors for correction of typesetting errors, and will need to be returned promptly.
- Deadlines for all submissions:  

For publication in	Copy must be received by
April	24 February
August	30 June
December	30 September

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