WHAT CAN SYDNEY TELL US ABOUT COACHING? RESEARCH WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE FROM DOWN UNDER

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This paper details material from 2 presentations given at the 2015 Society of Consulting Psychology Mid-Winter Conference in San Diego, California, which presented a summary of the coaching research conducted at the Coaching Psychology Unit (CPU) at the University of Sydney. The CPU was established in 1999 with a mission to enhance the performance, productivity, and quality of life of individuals, organizations, and the broader community through excellence in education, research, and the practice of coaching psychology. Drawing on over 150 CPU publications—including 8 randomized, controlled, outcome studies; 9 between-subjects or within-subject outcome studies; and a range of cross-sectional studies—this paper considers the empirical CPU research related to 4 key questions of relevance to practitioners: (a) What is a practical theoretical framework for coaching? (b) Does coaching "work"? (c) What makes a difference in the coach–coachee relationship? (d) How can coaching psychology contribute to the broader psychological enterprise? CPU research supports the notion that a solution-focused cognitive–behavioral theoretical framework is an effective and practical approach to coaching that facilitates goal attainment and enhances well-being and is effective with a wide range of populations. Implications for research and practice are discussed.

Keywords: coaching, executive coaching, life coaching, evidence-based coaching

The Coaching Psychology Unit (CPU) at the University of Sydney was established in 1999 with a mission to enhance the performance, productivity, and quality of life of individuals, organizations, and the broader community through excellence in education, research, and the practice of coaching psychology. It should be borne in mind that, in 1999, there was virtually no

coaching-specific academic presence in universities worldwide and very little coaching-specific published research. Between 1995 and 1999 there were only 102 coaching-specific publications on the database Business Source Premier (in contrast there were 880 publications between 2010 and 2014).

Many of these early publications were discussion articles on the application of theoretical approaches to coaching (e.g., Kilburg, 1997), reports on how to evaluate executive coaching engagements (e.g., Peterson, 1993, 1996), or descriptions of workplace coaching (e.g., Graham, Wedman, & Garvin-Kester, 1994). The few empirical studies tended to be qualitative case studies (e.g., Diedrich, 1996; Kiel, Rimmer, Williams, & Doyle, 1996; Tobias, 1996), although there were some quantitative studies on coaching effectiveness (e.g., Miller, 1990; Olivero, Bane, & Kopelman, 1997).

It was against this background that the CPU developed its primary aim to conduct a broad and comprehensive research program into the psychology of coaching and to help establish an evidence-based foundation for the emerging discipline of professional coaching (Cavanagh, Grant, & Kemp, 2005).

This program has resulted in over 150 publications to date. This includes eight randomized, controlled outcome studies and nine between-subjects or within-subjects outcome studies. These studies have explored the role of self-insight and self-reflection in the coaching process, as well as issues related to the supervision of coaching; the nature of effective coach–coachee relationships; mindfulness in health coaching; comparisons of efficacy between professional and peer coaches; the impact of executive coaching on leadership self-efficacy; executive coaching in times of organizational change; and the adoption of workplace coaching by managers in relation to various stages of change. In addition we have conducted systemic explorations of the "ripple effect" of coaching in organizations using network-analysis meth-odologies, as well as reporting large-scale international research into the coaching industry and the professionalization of coaching. Further work involves a range of theoretical and discussion papers on, for instance, the use of complexity theory and goal theory in coaching, and various commentaries on the teaching and practice of coaching psychology.

The CPU coaching research discussed in this paper covers a wide spectrum of coaching practices (e.g., personal or life coaching, executive coaching, workplace coaching, and health coaching) with a broad range of populations, including executives, managers, educators, and members of the general population. The CPU has deliberately taken this broad approach to coaching research in order to test the robustness of coaching methodologies in a wide range of situations and contexts.

This paper summarizes some key studies from this 15-year-long program of theoretically grounded research and highlights the implications of this research for practitioners. In conducting this program we sought the answers to a number of important questions.

Question One: What Is a Practical Theoretical Framework for Coaching?

The theoretical framework for the outcome studies reported here is a solution-focused cogni-tive–behavioral (SFCB) approach. The assumptions underpinning this approach focus on the notion that goal attainment is best facilitated by understanding the reciprocal relationships that exist between thoughts, feelings, behavior, and the environment and structuring these in ways that best support goal attainment. The inclusion of solution-focused techniques into the cognitive–behavioral framework helps orient coaching to personal strengths and solution construction. One practical advantage of using this approach is that there are a large number of well-validated outcome measures that align with the cognitive–behavioral tradition, including measures of resilience, well-being, workplace engagement, anxiety, stress and depression, self-efficacy, and goal attainment, among many others. In addition, SFCB coaching is relatively easy to standardize, an important practical factor when conducting research involving a number of different coaches, as a degree of consistency is important. SFCB coaches tend to approach

coaching using frameworks such as the GROW[1] model (Whitmore, 1992) to structure each coaching session, again adding a measure of consistency.

Cognitive–behavioral approaches to coaching have been criticized as being too simplistic or mechanistic for use in executive-coaching engagements (Ducharme, 2004). However, the experience at the CPU is that seasoned and skilled coaches can use cognitive–behavioral approaches very flexibly and pragmatically to explore deeper, underlying beliefs and unconscious motives when necessary or to focus on tasks or goals as and when needed. Recent theorizing supports this notion (Good, Yeganeh, & Yeganeh, 2013).

Of course, coaching per se is informed by a broad range of theoretical frameworks ranging from the cognitive to the psychodynamic and the solution-focused (see Passmore, 2005), and some of the research at the CPU has also drawn on systemic (Cavanagh & Lane, 2012) and adult-developmental (Kegan, 1995) approaches. However, this paper focuses on CPU outcome studies that use an SFCB approach.

Question Two: Does Coaching "Work"?

In asking if coaching "works," it was important at the beginning of the CPU research program in 1999 to ascertain if coaching can indeed help coachees[2] reach their goals. We have also been particularly interested in exploring the impact of coaching on a psychological level in terms of changes in constructs such as self-reflection and self-insight (i.e., the clarity of the understanding of one's thoughts, feelings, and behavior), solution-focused thinking, mental health, and resilience.

There are good a priori theoretical reasons to assume that SFCB coaching will indeed impact such psychological constructs. This is because there are three key cognitive and behavioral mechanisms central to the process of coaching. First, having a confidential and supportive relationship in which to reflect upon and discuss personal and professional issues from a range of different perspectives can relieve stress and anxiety (Myers, 1999). Second, the setting of personally valued goals and then engaging in intentional goal striving can enhance well-being, build self-efficacy, and help develop solution-focused thinking (Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006; Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001). Third, systemically engaging in such goal striving along with being supported in dealing with any setbacks can develop personal insight and resilience and enhance self-regulation, all of which are vital factors in successfully dealing with change (Baumeister, Gailliot, DeWall, & Oaten, 2006).

Finding 1: SFCB Coaching Facilitates Goal Attainment and Enhances Mental Health

The first coaching study conducted at the CPU explored the impact of SFCB group-based life coaching over 10 weeks on goal attainment, metacognition, and mental health (Grant, 2003). This was the first peer-reviewed published study on the effectiveness of life coaching in the literature. Participation ($N = 20$) in this within-subjects study was associated with enhanced mental health, quality of life, and goal attainment. In terms of metacognition, levels of self-insight increased but, unexpectedly, levels of self-reflection decreased (for an in-depth discussion of the complex and often counterintuitive relationship between self-reflection and self-insight see Stein & Grant, 2014 and Lyke, 2009). Furthermore, there was a negative correlation between postcoaching self-reflection scores and goal attainment, and as will be discussed below, these findings have implications for future explorations of the psychological mechanisms associated with coaching and for coaching

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[1] GROW is one the most commonly used methods for structuring coaching conversations. With the GROW model, coaching sessions begin with setting a goal (for the session), then move on to explore current realities and develop a range of options for action, and conclude with a wrap-up section in which actions to be undertaken by the coachee are delineated. Although the acronym GROW suggests a linear process, in practice this is iterative and flexible.

[2] In line with the nomenclature used in the contemporary coaching literature, in this paper, the person being coached is referred to as "the coachee."

practitioners. Goal attainment in this study, and in most of the studies conducted at the CPU, was measured using goal-attainment scaling (for a detailed discussion see Spence, 2007).

Building on this foundational research, Green, Oades, and Grant (2006) conducted a 10-week randomized, controlled, group-based life-coaching program for a total of 56 adults from a community population. Participation in the life-coaching group program was associated with statistically significant increases in goal striving, well-being, and hope. (Note: Hope in these studies is based on Snyder's, 2002, tripartite conceptualization of hope as consisting of goals, agency, and pathways of thinking.)

A particularly important finding was that positive change was maintained up to 30 weeks later on some variables.

Finding 2: Coaching Can Be Effective in a Wide Range of Settings

Our early research indicated that SFCB coaching appeared to be an effective change methodology. Our next series of studies explored its utility in a broad range of populations.

Coaching in health settings. In relation to health coaching, Spence, Cavanagh, and Grant (2008) explored the conjoint use of coaching and mindfulness, comparing this to a standard health-education program. Forty-five adults were randomly assigned to three health programs for 8 weeks. Using a crossover design, two groups received an alternative delivery of Mindfulness Training (MT) and SFCB coaching, and the third group participated in a series of health-education seminars. No statistically significant differences were found for goal attainment between the two MT/SFCB conditions, suggesting that the delivery sequence had little bearing on outcomes. Results showed that goal attainment was significantly greater in the facilitative/coaching formats than the educative/directive format, providing further evidence for the efficacy of SFCB coaching.

Coaching in educational settings. We also conducted a series of studies in educational settings. In a randomized, controlled study, 56 female high-school students (mean age 16 years) received individual SFCB life coaching for 10 sessions. Green, Grant, and Rynsaardt (2007) found that coaching was associated with statistically significant increases in levels of cognitive hardiness and hope and with statistically significant decreases in levels of depression.

Even primary-school students can benefit from coaching. In a within-subjects design study (Madden, Green, & Grant, 2011), 38 male students (mean age 10.7 years) participated in a strengths-based coaching program as part of their personal development/health program at an independent, private primary school in Sydney, Australia. Participation was associated with statistically significant increases in the students' levels of engagement and hope.

This research suggested that coaching could be a useful vehicle for positive change in educational settings. To extend this work we explored the impact of coaching on teachers. As teachers are in a very real sense the embodiment of leadership, we theorized that they would benefit from developmental coaching that draws on theories of leadership. Grant, Green, and Rynsaardt (2010) conducted a randomized, controlled design with 44 high-school teachers to explore the impact of SFCB coaching on goal attainment, mental health, workplace well-being, and resilience. Participants in the coaching group received multirater feedback on their leadership styles and undertook 10 coaching sessions conducted by professional coaches over a 20-week period. Participation in coaching was associated with increased goal attainment, reduced stress, and enhanced workplace well-being and resilience. Pre–post analyses for the coaching group indicated that coaching enhanced self-reported achievement and humanistic–encouraging components of constructive leadership styles and reduced self-reported aggressive/defensive and passive/defensive leadership styles.

The results of the above three studies provide useful indications that SFCB coaching in educational settings can indeed be helpful, both in terms of facilitating goal attainment and also in enhancing well-being and that both teachers and students can benefit.

Coaching in organizational settings. The SFCB approach to coaching is also effective in organizational contexts. Grant, Curtayne, and Burton (2009) conducted a randomized, controlled study in which 41 executives received 360-degree feedback, a half-day leadership workshop, and four individual SFCB coaching sessions over 10 weeks. This was the first published randomized,

controlled study in which coaching was conducted by professional executive coaches external to the organization. Outcomes were assessed using both quantitative and qualitative measures. Compared with controls, coaching enhanced goal attainment, increased resilience and workplace well-being, and reduced depression and stress. Qualitative responses indicated that participants found that coaching helped increase self-confidence and self-insight, build management skills, and deal with organizational change. These findings indicate that short-term executive coaching can indeed be effective, an important practical point.

Yu, Collins, Cavanagh, White, and Fairbrother (2008) conducted a within-subjects study to evaluate the effectiveness of an SFCB workplace coaching program aimed at enhancing the work behaviors and well-being of 17 managers in a large Australian teaching hospital. Participation in coaching was associated with significantly enhanced proactivity, core performance, goal attainment, self-insight, motivation, positive affect, and autonomy.

Proactivity refers to an individual's ability to take charge in a situation (e.g., "I often try to institute new work methods that are more effective for the company") and demonstrate individual innovation (e.g., promotes and champions ideas to others). This was the first published study to use proactivity measures. Given that proactivity is frequently an implicit goal of workplace coaching, it is surprising that this construct has not been more widely used in measuring coaching outcomes in either research or practice settings. Although coaching was associated with increases in self-insight, there was no impact on self-reflection—an outcome that stands at odds with the commonly held view that self-reflection and self-insight are positively correlated constructs.

The above research focused on individual aspects of change. CPU researchers have also examined the impact of organizational coaching on systemic as well as individual levels.

Finding 3: Individual Coaching Impacts Both Individual and Systemic Levels in Organizations

On an individual level, executive coaching is often used in times of organizational change to help executives develop the psychological and behavioral skills needed to focus on reaching their work-related goals while simultaneously dealing with the turbulence associated with organizational change. Yet despite its widespread use few researchers have explored the impact of executive coaching during periods of organizational change. Grant (2014b) explored the efficacy of executive coaching during periods of organizational change in a within-subjects study, using both quantitative and qualitative measures with 31 executives and managers from a global engineering consulting organization who received coaching from external professional executive coaches.

Participation in the coaching was associated with increased goal attainment. In addition, coaching enhanced participants' solution-focused thinking, gave them greater ability to deal with organizational turbulence and change, and increased their leadership self-efficacy and personal resilience while also decreasing levels of depression. This research provided useful empirical support for coaching practitioners working in organizational settings in terms of conveying the multifaceted benefits of coaching to potential clients.

Coaching has also been shown to improve individual-level measures of goal attainment and well-being. However, almost all the research into the effectiveness of coaching interventions is based on a linear model of change, and it is expected that any flow-on effects are also linear. In other words, much of the research is based on the assumption that any change in the leader being coached has relatively uniform effects on the well-being of others and that these effects can be adequately accessed via standard linear statistical analyses.

From a systemic perspective, O'Connor and Cavanagh (2013) argued that complex adaptive systems theory provides a useful nonlinear approach to thinking about how individual leader coaching can influence organizational change and the well-being of individuals on a systemic level. In addition to standardized individual measures of goal attainment, transformational leadership, and psychological well-being measures, they used social-network analysis to assess the systemic impact of coaching intervention across an organization ($N = 225$). Well-being measures were taken for all employees and a social-network analysis was conducted on the degree and quality of all organizational interactions. Twenty leaders received eight coaching sessions each. Individual self-report

measures of goal attainment as well as 360-degree feedback on transformational leadership were assessed in the control, pre-, and postintervention periods.

Statistically significant increases in the individual measures of goal attainment, transformational leadership, and psychological well-being were observed for those who received coaching. On a systemic level, the perceived quality of interpersonal interaction improved for those who received coaching. It was also found that any member of the network identified as being closely connected to those who received coaching was more likely to experience positive increases in well-being. However, the impact of coaching in terms of interpersonal interactions was not uniform or linear; although the coaching intervention appeared to improve the quality of communication from the coachee's perspective, it was perceived by those around the coachee to have become less positive.

This research highlights how the influence of leadership coaching idiosyncratically impacts the broader system beyond the individual leader. The coaching "ripple" effect (O'Connor & Cavanagh, 2013) found in this study thus has important implications for organizational coaching and well-being initiatives. Future researchers could explore how this approach can improve the way we measure the impact of coaching interventions, not least in exploring the often-seen differences between self-ratings and other-person ratings, as well as delineating the ways emotions reverberate through an organizational system.

It is worth noting that we have found the SFCB approach to be applicable and effective in a wide range of contexts, as delineated above. Is our experience that SFCB approaches are highly applicable to a goal-focused approach to coaching. This is not to argue that SFCB coaching is the only effective approach. There are times when other approaches maybe more appropriate; for example, a problem-focused, psychodynamic or strongly developmental approach might be used when dealing with a dysfunctional personality style. For a useful discussion on the applicability of a range of different coaching approaches, see Palmer and Whybrow (2007).

Finding 4: Coaches Themselves Benefit From Receiving Coaching

Drawing on Schon's (1982) seminal work, McGonagill (2002) argued that to be truly effective, coaches need to develop an awareness of their implicit assumptions about themselves, their clients, and the world, as well as the models they use in their coaching practices. Reflective exercises are one way of promoting such development and deepening personal learning (Argyris, 2002), and such reflective practices can be developed by purposefully incorporating the experience of a coachee into coach-training programs.

To to see if coaches themselves would benefit from receiving personal coaching, Grant (2008) conducted a within-subjects study with 29 coaches who were participating in a professional coaching-development program. Participants set personal goals and completed a 10- to 12-week, five-session, SFCB personal-coaching program in which other coaches coached them. Three sessions were face to face, and two were by telephone. Participation in the program was associated with reduced anxiety, increased goal attainment, enhanced cognitive hardiness, and higher levels of self-insight. Participants also had higher end-of-course assessment marks as compared with a cohort that did not participate in the intensive personal-coaching program. There was no change in participants' levels of psychological well-being.

Qualitative feedback indicated that the effects of coaching generalized to other areas of participants' lives. For example, a number of qualitative responses indicated that although challenging, the process of reflecting in the coaching sessions was "a significant learning process . . . invaluable to me in the long term, not just for coaching but everyday life."

Finding 5: The Effects of Coaching Generalize to Other Areas of the Coachee's Life

Most professional coaches would have heard from some of their clients that coaching had a positive impact on a number of different areas of their lives, areas that were not ostensibly related to the specific goals of the coaching engagement.

Indeed, the idea that the positive impact of coaching would generalize to other areas of the coachee's life makes sense in terms of models of self-regulation (Carver & Scheier, 1982;

Fitzsimons & Finkel, 2010; Lord, Diefendorff, Schmidt, & Hall, 2010). For example, it could be reasonably expected that an individual who receives coaching in the workplace to help him or her deal with the frustrating aspects of organizational change would also be better equipped to deal with frustrating situations in his or her personal life.

However, little explicit research in the coaching literature has systematically examined this, despite the idea that such research could be a valuable way to highlight the benefits of coaching and further develop models of self-regulation.

Grant (2014b) explored the potential generalization effects of executive coaching during periods of organizational change. The primary aims of the coaching program included developing participants' ability to manage organizational change and fostering productive relationships across the business. A secondary research aim was to see if any positive effects of coaching generalized to other areas of the coachee's lives, areas that were not specifically targeted in the coaching intervention. To qualitatively assess such potential generalization, participants were asked to respond to the open-ended question, "What specific benefits (if any) has the coaching had on other areas of your life?"

A thematic analysis (Guest, 2012) found six themes, in order of frequency of response: (a) better work–life balance, (b) better relationships with family, (c) less stress and more calm, (d) greater sense of purpose in life and awareness of personal values, (e) better feelings about self and life in general, and (f) ability to use program insights in other areas of life.

One participant commented, "At home I have found that my relationship has improved as I am less cranky to be around and I am practicing the core skills that we identified in the coaching sessions."

Others wrote that they were about to use insights from the program in other areas of life; for instance, one said that coaching "provided impetus to change some of my behaviors that were causing stress, worry, and negativity. I now have an increased commitment to exercise, health, and reconnecting with friends, neighbors, and family." Another participant said, "I have been able to apply my business and work learnings to my everyday (out-of-work) life. There has been a benefit overall."

The coaching generalization effect observed above (Grant, 2008, 2014b) suggests new directions for both coaching research and practice. For example, future researchers could examine the relationship between the degree of generalization and the impact of coaching in the workplace. It could be that better workplace-coaching outcomes are correlated with higher levels of generalization to nonworkplace settings. Indeed, therapists and clinicians frequently encourage patients and clients to use the lessons and techniques learned in therapy in many other areas of life (Rutherford & Nelson, 1988), and the use of personalized strategies aimed at fostering generalization has been found to be an effective way of embedding coaching skills in the workplace in "leader as coach" development programs (Grant & Hartley, 2014).

This area is ripe for future research and has potentially important implications for practitioners. For example, it may be that explicitly encouraging clients to use the skills and strategies learned in coaching in other areas of their lives deepens and embeds workplace learning. By highlighting and maximizing the coaching generalization effect the potential multifaceted benefits of coaching can be made more salient and tangible to client organizations, thereby increasing the attraction of coaching as a developmental methodology.

Question 3: What Makes a Difference in the Coach–Coachee Relationship?

The coach–coachee relationship has emerged as a new direction in coaching research (McKenna & Davis, 2009). Although there is considerable research on the therapeutic relationship in the clinical literature (Lambert & Barley, 2001), little has been conducted in the coaching arena. As of June 2015 there were only 10 studies in the literature that specifically examined aspects of the coach–coachee relationship (Boyce, Jackson, & Neal, 2010; De Haan, Culpin, & Curd, 2011; De Haan, Duckworth, Birch, & Jones, 2013; Gessnitzer & Kauffeld, 2015; Grant, 2014a; Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007; Passmore, 2007; Scoular & Linley, 2006; Smith & Brummel, 2013; Stewart, Palmer,

Wilkin, & Kerrin, 2008). Many of these studies have worked from the proposition that the "active ingredients" of coaching closely emulate the common factors found in the therapeutic literature (Rosenzweig, 1936; Wampold et al., 1997).

The CPU has conducted a range of studies that seek to throw light on the nature of effective coach–coachee relationships. However, we have taken a number of somewhat different approaches in exploring this issue.

Finding 6: Professional Expertise in the Coach–Coachee Relationship Makes a Real Difference

One CPU study that has implications for this issue investigated the relative efficacy of professional coaching compared with peer coaching. Much of the research into the coach–coachee relationship implicitly assumes that professional or trained coaches bring unique and highly effective attributes to the coaching relationship. However, the factors often cited as being of importance in coaching (empathy, collaboration, and positive regard, among others) are also prevalent in the general population (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). A study conducted by Spence and Grant (2007) tested this assumption in a randomized, controlled study that compared peer with professional-life coaching over a 10-week period with 63 participants. Results indicated that, although peer coaching can lead to positive outcomes, the coachees of professional coaches were more engaged in the coaching process compared with peer coachees and controls, had greater goal commitment and progression, and had greater well-being in terms of environmental mastery. The findings suggest that the presence of a supportive person (e.g., Rogers, 1951) may be a necessary but insufficient condition for enhancing goal striving in a coaching relationship and highlight the importance of professional expertise in the coaching relationship.

Finding 7: The Coaching Relationship Should Be Outcome-Focused

The importance of solution-focused versus problem-focused coaching questions. Extending the work of Spence and Grant (2007), we tested the proposition that the coaching conversation should be primarily orientated toward solution construction rather than being analytical or problem-focused. Such research has the potential to enhance our understanding of what makes for an effective coach–coachee relationship.

To this end Grant and O'Connor (2010) explored the differential effects of problem-focused and solution-focused coaching questions. This was the first study to explore this issue. In the problem-focused coaching condition, 39 participants completed a range of measures assessing self-efficacy, their understanding of a problem, positive and negative affect, and goal approach. They then responded to a number of problem-focused coaching questions; following this they completed a second set of measures. In the solution-focused coaching condition, 35 participants completed a mirror image of the problem-focused condition but responded to solution-focused coaching questions.

Both the problem-focused and the solution-focused conditions enhanced goal approach. However, the solution-focused group experienced significantly greater increases in goal approach than the problem-focused group. Problem-focused questions reduced negative affect and increased self-efficacy but did not increase understanding of the nature of the problem or enhance positive affect. In contrast, the solution-focused approach increased positive affect, decreased negative affect, increased self-efficacy, and increased participants' self-insight and their understanding of the nature of the problem.

This research was then extended using a design in which 225 participants were randomly assigned to either a problem-focused or solution-focused coaching condition (Grant, 2012). As in Grant and O'Connor (2010), both the problem-focused and the solution-focused coaching conditions were effective at enhancing goal approach, with the solution-focused group having significantly greater increases in goal approach than the problem-focused group.

These findings suggest that some degree of problem analysis in the coaching conversation is useful, but overall the coaching relationship should be inherently solution-focused to maximize the probability of goal attainment.

Future researchers should further extend this work. There is potentially great scope in systematically exploring the impact of problem-focused and solution-focused coaching questions on a range of psychological variables including creative or divergent thinking, problem solving, and perspective taking.

Autonomy support, relationship satisfaction, and goal focus. To further develop these lines of enquiry into what makes a difference in the coach–coachee relationship, Grant (2014a) compared four aspects of it to see which was more related to measures of coaching success. The four aspects were (a) autonomy support, (b) the extent to which a coachee feels satisfied with the actual coach–coachee relationship, (c) the extent to which the coaching relationship was similar to an "ideal" coach–coachee relationship, and (d) a goal-focused coach–coachee relationship. This was the first study to use multiple measures to directly compare the relative efficacy of different aspects of the coach–coachee relationship.

In a within-subjects study, 49 coach–coachee dyads conducted four coaching sessions over a 10- to 12-week period. Results indicated that satisfaction with such a relationship did not predict successful coaching outcomes, and although autonomy support and proximity to an "ideal" relationship moderately predicted coaching success, a goal-focused coach–coachee relationship was a statistically unique and significantly more powerful predictor of coaching success.

Overall, this series of studies emphasized the importance of goals and a solution focus in the coaching process. This can be taken as a salient reminder to coaches that the coach–coachee relationship can have a major impact, not just on goal attainment but also on psychological variables such as positive affect and self-insight.

Question 4: How can Coaching Contribute to the Broader Psychological Enterprise?

From the research presented above it appears that SFCB coaching is indeed a relatively reliable methodology for facilitating intentional change in a wide range of settings (Grant, Cavanagh, & Parker, 2010; also see meta-analyses on the effectiveness of coaching from Jones, Woods, & Guillaume, 2016; Theeboom, Beersma, & van Vianen, 2014). However, although coaching helps people set and reach personally valued goals, we know little about the underpinning psychological mechanisms involved in such intentional change.

We do know that coaching has an impact on participants' psychological processes. For example, CPU research has found that coach-training programs can increase emotional intelligence (Grant, 2007) and that coaching can increase solution-focused thinking; reduce anxiety, stress, and depression; increase self-efficacy and resilience; increase proactivity; increase hope and well-being; and increase self-insight—even when such increases are not the main goals of the coaching intervention. Thus coaching may be a useful methodology for exploring the psychological mechanisms involved in intentional change.

The use of coaching in this way has the very real potential to take such research out of the psychological laboratory and into "real-life" contexts and, in doing so, contribute to both coaching and the broader psychological enterprise. This aspect of coaching has not received much attention in the literature.

The CPU has begun research along these lines in terms of examining the differential processes related to solution-focused and problem-focused approaches to coaching, and untangling the complex relationship between self-reflection and self-insight—two psychological constructs which are central to the coaching process (Stein & Grant, 2014). Key findings from this stream of research were that there is typically no correlation between measures of self-reflection and self-insight (see also Lyke, 2009) and that self-insight is positively correlated with well-being, self-regulation, and solution-focused thinking; self-reflection is not. These findings suggest that it may be far more important to focus coaching clients on developing self-insight rather than spending time promoting self-reflection—an important point for practitioners to keep in mind.

Other researchers are also beginning to use coaching methodologies to uncover the psychological mechanisms underpinning intentional change. For example, using data from leaders who

participated in a 6-month coaching program and a control group, Ladegard and Gjerde (2014) explored the relative impact of coaching on leaders' role-efficacy, trust in subordinates, and subordinates' psychological empowerment and turnover intentions. A key finding was that the degree of facilitative behavior from the coach positively affected the changes in both leader role-efficacy and trust in subordinates. Coaching researchers (e.g., Cinar & Schou, 2014) are also beginning to use more sophisticated analyses such as structural equation modeling to unpack the psychological processes involved in facilitating intentional change. This is a new and promising direction for coaching research that has the potential to deliver practical insights to enhance practice, as well as add to the broader psychological knowledge base.

Conclusion

Over the past 15 years we have witnessed coaching and coaching psychology come of age. No longer a seen as a fad (Nowack, 2003), coaching is now greatly contributing to the performance and well-being of its various client groups, be they individuals receiving life coaching, front-line employees or managers engaging in workplace coaching, executives undertaking developmental coaching, or whole organizations using coaching methodologies as a means of creating organizational change. Research from the CPU has suggested that SFCB approaches to coaching are indeed effective ways of facilitating positive intentional change. In addition to the work of the CPU, an increasing number of researchers from other institutions are similarly developing convincing evidence for the effectiveness of coaching from a number of different theoretical perspectives. This ever-developing body of research forms a solid foundation for an evidence-based approach to coaching practice and represents a new direction in psychological research. In this way, such evidence-based approaches to coaching are well-placed to continue to make important contributions to the performance and well-being of individuals and organizations and to the broader psychological enterprise. Onward!

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