

What lies beneath?

Coaching unearths six fundamental drivers of human behaviour

Research from the International Coach Federation shows that 100% of individuals who have undertaken coaching in South Africa would repeat the process given the opportunity to do so. Such a resounding endorsement surely begs the question: why?

As the profession grows in popularity and stature, Craig O'Flaherty of the Centre for Coaching – based at the University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business – says the answer lies in the fact that coaching has the ability to delve beneath the surface and tap into what really makes a human being tick, and that it is at this level that profound change and development can occur.

This is especially true of integral coaching, which is taught and practised at the Centre for Coaching.

O'Flaherty explains that while some forms of professional coaching are concerned mainly with working life, integral coaching takes a more holistic approach to personal and professional development.

"Integral coaching specifically addresses the cognitive, emotional, physical and spiritual aspects of a person so that real and lasting growth can take place. It does not simply reduce people to titles and job descriptions, but rather understands that they are multifaceted, unique beings," he says.

The Centre for Coaching takes its lead from New Ventures West, one of the top coach training organisations in the world,

which for many years has been grappling to understand the key drivers of human behaviour, and how best to tap into and work with these to encourage personal development.

James Flaherty of New Ventures West and Craig O'Flaherty, working with a group of experienced integral coaches, together have identified what they call the 'six fundamental human concerns' – six drivers that they think are omnipresent in all human lives and explain almost all behaviour.

"The six fundamental human concerns as we recognise them – are drawn from years of direct observed experience and grounded in a rich philosophical and theoretical framework," says O'Flaherty.

"Through our collective experiences, we identified six key motivators that crop up again and again in our coaching sessions. They are: Identity, Meaning and Self-expression, Belonging, Contribution, Death, and Somatic Awareness – these are the universal concerns that we believe drive our needs and emotions as human beings."

The coach's job, in O'Flaherty's opinion, is to identify the underlying concern and then help his/her client to understand why certain behaviours or patterns continue to emerge.

Through self-observation and various other techniques, the client begins to arrive at new insights about him/herself, and then learns to replace negative behaviours or attitudes with positive ones.

O'Flaherty explains that the six fundamental human concerns show up in daily life in a variety of ways.

"For example, if a client expresses anxiety about their legacy, or feels their life has no worth, this could come down to a Contribution concern, and the need all



PMSA (The Project Manager South Africa)
01 Dec 2009
Page : 51 #

people have to feel they are adding some value to the world around them.

"Alternatively, fears about losing your job could actually represent a deeper fear of Death; whereas feeling your life is empty could be an Issue of Belonging," he explains.

O'Flaherty, however, is quick to assert that coaching - even at this fundamental level - is not merely psychology in a different guise.

"Psychology looks into people's pasts to discover why they behave or feel the way they do, whereas coaching is about the present, and how to shape your future more positively - it is a very empowering practice," he says.

Also in contrast to psychology, integral coaches work with their clients on three different levels: insight, emotion, and body.

"Insight is a question of how you see yourself, emotion is how you feel about yourself, and body is about how these thoughts and feelings impact on your physical self - which they often do," says O'Flaherty.

He tells the story of a senior executive who enlisted his help to illustrate the point. "A very senior executive came to me for coaching when he had been overlooked for a promotion opportunity - despite years of dedicated service," relates O'Flaherty.

"His language was populated with apologies. As an Afrikaans speaker, he used the word *jammer* in almost everything he said.

"As part of our sessions together, he practised what we call a '360' observation, in which we ask clients to actively observe their behaviour, feelings and thoughts over a period of time, without trying to change anything - just to take note," says O'Flaherty.

"It turned out he wasn't even aware of his constant apologising beforehand!"

On top of these stark realisations that coaching clients sometimes have to confront, it can be even more shocking when you realise you have unconsciously let certain attitudes impact on your physical body, reveals O'Flaherty.

"The client in question had a very slumped posture - he had taken on a defensive stance without even knowing it. He also spoke very quietly.

"Through our sessions together, we deduced that the fundamental human concern driving him was Contribution - he had a real entrenched lack of belief in the contribution he was making to the world around him," adds O'Flaherty.

Several techniques were employed to coach him out of these perceptions, including the 360° observation over a period of months, and learning how to catch and stop certain behaviours in the moment.

"I asked her what was missing, and after much deliberation, she eventually realised there was no space for her."

Everson maintains that this lack of personal identity is not uncommon among such in-demand women executives.

"Whereas her role identity was very strong, her identity of self - of who she really was without the roles - was almost non-existent.

"She arrived at this insight relatively quickly, but it took much longer for her

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He was also asked to keep a "contribution diary" for which he asked people in his life to describe his impact on their lives - and it turned out they had much more to say than he had expected.

The coaching sessions took place over the course of a year and, according to O'Flaherty, the client left a completely renewed and rejuvenated person.

"Through understanding himself better, he eventually resolved he would never be the CEO of the company, but instead of depressing him, he accepted the fact and resolved to take on the role of senator - the wise elder able to help and advise others, in a position of trust."

Janine Everson, academic director of the Centre for Coaching, shares another story, this time dealing with Identity.

"A high profile woman came to see me, feeling completely overwhelmed - she was a public figure working with non-governmental organisations, in periphery politics, she was the chairperson of several organisations, a former member of the Struggle as well as a mother. Her whole life was about giving to others.

"I divided all her activities in a day into groups and it turned out she had eight different groups or areas of activity in her life," relates Everson.

to start changing her behaviour. She had to work through a lot of guilt when she started setting parameters and scheduling in 'me time,'" explains Everson.

"However, she realised that if she didn't replenish her own energy, her own sense of self, she would eventually burn out completely and have nothing left to give, so she needed to give to herself, too. She was almost at that point when she originally came to see me."

Everson and O'Flaherty maintain that these two examples begin to illustrate just why coaching is becoming more and more pervasive. They say it is because it is an unthreatening practice that empowers individuals to take control over their own lives on all levels - thoughts, emotions and body.

Everson sums it up neatly. "Integral coaching allows people to become fulfilled in their lives by enabling them to step out of themselves to see who they are without the blinkers on.

"The coach's job is to help them observe, change, grow and accept - all leading to a more content feeling of knowing one's place in the world, and then living that purpose to the full," she says. ☐

For more information on integral coaching, contact the Centre for Coaching on 021-406 1148