Coaching for All—New Approaches for Future Challenges

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Abstract Considering today's social challenges, the main goal of this chapter is to discuss what the role of Coaching has been in the organisational context in particular, and in the context of society in general. The discussion is mainly focused on the role of Coaching and how it has developed from organisational interests exclusively centred on Executive Coaching, to being a global instrument for individual psychological development.

1 Introduction

We are living in a time of great reflection due to the changes occurring to our planet and in our world, our society, our families and ourselves. We arrived in the twenty-first century to a world full of great innovation, but where uncertainty about the future is the rule, and where socio-economic differences are huge and widespread within each country and between countries. Robotics and artificial intelligence are hand-in-hand with the lack of regard and exploitation of children in some societies. The astounding evolution of technology and the consequent advances in human knowledge and competencies have far outpaced the moral values and laws currently in place to control them and prevent the misuse of certain scientific achievements and promote economic interests that could threaten the future of humankind. Indeed, achieving a balance between the use of different types of resources (including human) and respect for their innate nature has been a big challenge in several areas throughout the centuries.

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The way modern societies have been organised after industrial revolutions has dictated today's socio-economic challenges. There are always two sides to any reality depending on the observer's perspective. The technological evolution has clearly reflected both sides—the side that brings improvements and has made life easier on this planet, and the other that is related to undesirable side effects, like the overuse of limited resources and the ensuing pollution. The pursuit of continuous economic growth has created a consumer society in which material goods and needs are developed as major assets to be perpetuated. This has led to the establishment of deep-seated values that influence the development of certain attitudes and behaviours that relate to a specific style of living. Nowadays, health problems brought about by stress and depression have called this into question and the pursuit now is for new ways of living and for new values that can orient new attitudes and behaviours that will promote people's well-being. The imbalance between work and personal life is the symptom of some mismatch between lifestyle choices and emotional health. Moreover, the ecological problems identified have also revealed the way natural resources are being overused, calling into question the very survival of human life on our planet.

In the light of all these challenges, what are the main skills and competencies that each of us needs to develop to be more able to survive in a world that is not only changing but that needs to change?

The 4th Revolution is already out there, with robotics and artificial intelligence altering work processes, silently transforming the way we work, and creating new jobs that will herald the end of others. Everyone needs to be aware that digital literacy is no longer merely a professional opportunity but has become a necessity for professional survival. Quite apart from honing technological skills and competencies, there is a need to develop greater psychological resources. This is where Coaching has a word or two to say since adequate psychological resources could help each of us to properly adapt to change and uncertainty in order to meet the big challenges we will face in the near future. The action-driven nature of Coaching, together with its solution-focused approach, combine to make an excellent tool for dealing with that changing environment (Grant 2014; Grant and Gerrard 2019). In fact, when focused on achieving goals and needing to overcome obstacles, the Coachee develops several psychological resources that will enable them to handle the particular situation that triggered the resource activation. What is more, they should then also be able to bring those psychological resources to bear in future situations in the form of self-efficacy, for instance.

2   Coaching in Society and the Relevance of Values

By the end of the twentieth century, Coaching had acquired a special status in the organisational domain. Coaching promoted the improvement of leadership competencies, which responded to the need to gain an advantage in an increasingly competitive organisational environment. Today, rapid change and a need to be creative in

all areas of work are challenging Coaching to become an instrument that can help everyone enhance their personal and professional development (Cox et al. 2009; Theeboom et al. 2017).

In this global world context and specifically within the context in which we live, it is more than ever relevant to understand the role that Coaching needs to assume. The essence of Coaching can be conceived as a reflection process, whereby asking powerful questions can lead/challenge people to think differently than usual, in search of a pool of possible answers/solutions. With Coaching being a helpful relational instrument, it is relevant to understand the role Coaching can play today…in a pandemic crisis, like the one we are all currently living through. Indeed, what has the role of Coaching so far been in the big social crisis that we have been through? Given that Coaching has been enjoying a special status in organisations, how has Coaching served the various interests of different people, with different positions, functions, backgrounds, lifestyles?

The many, profound changes that have occurred in modern societies, especially from the 90s onwards, have affected organisations by creating specific circumstances that need to be adapted to. Having to deal with downsizings, restructurings and acquisitions, among others, has made organisational contexts much more demanding. Continuous change has made the world more uncertain and economically more competitive. This being so, executives are called upon more and more to improvise new competencies to creatively reorganise goals and develop further strategies and ways to motivate teams to respond to unexpected demands. All this contextualisation has opened the way for Coaching to proliferate as a new intervention that helps executives meet organisational demands and, indeed, even exceed expectations (For a review on executive Coaching, see Grant et al. 2010). The demands to achieve economic indicators quickly and consistently trigger a need to promote leadership skills based on psychological and behavioural skills (Grant 2014; Theeboom et al. 2017). In fact, knowing that Coaching is a customised intervention, it can be adapted to all types of contexts and cultures and, as such, overcome some of the barriers that might be found in traditional training. Additionally, if it promotes the development of psychological resources, it is easy to understand how the effects can be expanded beyond the immediate goals established in the Coaching sessions.

2.1   The Relevance of Values

With reflection being instrumental to Coaching, the first exercise will invite you to think about the relevance of values in your life and how they influence your decisions. Despite differences among individuals and between cultures, there are basic values that have been identified (Schwartz 2012; Borg et al. 2017). According to the social sciences, values are deemed to be social and individual organisers that motivate social trends, behaviours, and attitudes. For an individual, values function as basic principles (e.g. security; achievement; power) that guide perceptions of reality and judgement, which then lead to the subsequent action. Values have several characteristics such

as their stability; their congruence or incongruence, among others, which reveal the various degrees of importance they have for a person or a particular society, and how they are directly implicated in decisions as they affect emotional inner balance. Values are related to what is really important to each of us in life, serving personal interests (e.g. achievement, hedonism) and/or social interests (e.g. benevolence, conformity).

Considering Schwartz's Value Theory (Schwartz 2012) the six features related to values are as follows:

1. Values are related to affect, meaning that people feel good or bad in accordance with a situation that may respect or disrespect their values.
2. Values have motivational power with regard to goal achievement.
3. Values are present in every area of an individual's life.
4. Values are the basic criteria that influence the perception and evaluation of every simple action, event, or person.
5. Values form an ordered system for people, revealing the importance of each value and underlying priority.
6. Multiple values could guide the same attitude or behaviour.

The following Table 1 sets out the ten broad values identified by this theory. The values identified are universal and based on human and social existence in accordance with the maintenance of biological organisms and group needs like survival and welfare.

Reflection moment—Exercise 1

Table 1 The ten values from Schwartz's value theory

Value	Needs served and goal intended
Self-Direction	Motivated by control and mastery needs, shows independent thought and action
Stimulation	Motivated by stimulation needs, shows a level of activation that looks for challenges, excitement, and novelty
Hedonism	Motivated by satisfying pleasure needs, looks for gratification
Achievement	Motivated by personal success and social approval demonstrates competent performance to stated social-cultural standards
Power	Motivated by prestige, control, or people dominance shows social esteem needs
Security	Motivated by needs for safety, harmony, and having stability in the individual and social sense
Conformity	Motivated by restraint of actions, avoiding social harm or norms of disrespect
Tradition	Motivated by respect and commitment to tradition, allows survival of society
Benevolence	Motivated by the affiliation of needs, improves others' welfare
Universalism	Motivated by the survival needs of individuals and groups, protecting the world and nature

Engaging in Coaching requires one to think deeply, to become aware of oneself, one's goals, one's life. This is what we are going to invite you to do now. Take some time, find a space, get a chair, a notebook and set out on a journey. Have you ever thought about what the main, deeply rooted values you hold are?

Based on Schwartz's Value Theory, please select and list according to your preferences the most important values for you, considering what is really important in your life.

List your values (at least 5)	Give an example of how each one affects you in your life	From 1 to 5 (1- the most important to 5- the least important)
1. 2. 3. 4. 5.		

Now that you have listed the most important values for you…. can you relate them to the way they influence or have influenced your life choices?


2.2 The Relevance of Self-Awareness

Given the greater challenges, life today presents, to achieve a better balance it is important to understand that human beings need to be aware that they functioning as a system. Each of us attaches varying degrees of importance to certain areas of our lives, in accordance with our values, goals and motivation. Understanding the dynamic of our own life system in order to ascertain precisely what these are may improve the balance between all the areas. This self-awareness can be considered one of the most relevant outcomes of Coaching (Bozer and Sarros 2012; Luthans and Peterson 2003) As stated by Theemboom and colleagues (2017), raising Coachees'

awareness is one of the first steps in the Coaching process. In the beginning, it could be awareness of their feelings, thoughts and behaviours as well as the values that are the main pillars of the Coachees' motivation and that will help with the goal setting process (Grant 2014). At a more developed stage, this awareness would focus more on the competencies and resources that could be used towards the goal achievement.

Reflection moment—Exercise 2—Life Wheel

- *Start by drawing a circle. Then, divide the circle into categories related to the main life areas that are important for you (or that you want to think about in more detail) such as: work, family, health, social life, leisure…*
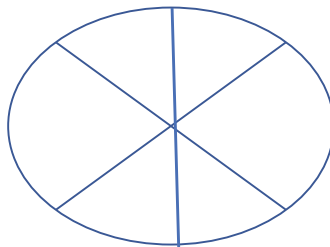
- *Having identified the most important categories, attribute the dimension that each has in your life (most to least important).*

- *For each area, identify 3 positive aspects and 3 aspects that you would like to improve*

- *How satisfied are you with each area (from 0% to 100%)*

- *Finally, identify the first area in which you'd like to make some changes from now on. What can you do immediately to improve your satisfaction with this area? Think about someone that could help you make this improvement. Are there any resources that you need to have/find? When do you want to start?*

Coaching in organisations has so far dealt with adapting to change but today, Coaching must provide answers to other needs. Living in such uncertain times in all areas of life prompts the need to promote Coaching at every organisational level. Everyone needs to be properly prepared and equipped to handle uncertainty, and by developing adequate psychological resources to help bring balance to people's lives they can be.

3   Goal Setting and Psychological Resources

Coaching, at its core, encourages the Coachee to be aware of and reflect on their resources and their strengths, as well as any possible obstacles and limitations they might face. The questioning process and the feedback provided by the Coach should expand the Coachee's knowledge about these factors and "force" them to both activate their resources in order to achieve the predefined goal and simultaneously find pathways to overcome any barriers. Several factors are relevant to this process. Here, we highlight two main factors: (1) the goal setting process that in itself implies the activation of a self-regulatory cycle and (2) the reflection and self-awareness that will lead to the finding of resources extremely relevant to goal attainment (Theeboom et al. 2017).

The goal setting process also drives motivation because when a goal is established, it determines a definite direction and stimulates the identification of the strategies required to attain it (Seijts and Latham 2005). In Coaching, the goals are set by the Coachee and shared with the Coach, albeit with a reinforced commitment (Fontes and Dello Russo 2020).

Personal resources come into play to achieve goals and stimulate personal growth and development (Gilbert et al. 2017; Ghielen et al. 2018; Xanthopoulou et al. 2009). We would like to highlight four specific personal resources: self-efficacy, hope, optimism and resilience which together comprise Psychological Capital (PsyCap; Luthans et al. 2007). Self-efficacy (the belief in one's domain-specific capabilities); hope (a motivational state characterised by agency and pathways); optimism (a positive attributional style about the future); and resilience (the ability to bounce back and effectively from adverse circumstances).

Previous research has shown that PsyCap can be malleable and reinforced through interventions (Luthans et al. 2006, 2010, 2008), as well as through individual Coaching (Fontes and Dello Russo 2020). In fact, the process of establishing a goal, finding and activating resources towards achieving it is the embodiment of hope. In other words, when the Coachee reflects on the necessary pathways to achieve the goal and manifests the agency to act, pursuing that goal is a manifestation of hope. In addition, and linked to the goal setting process, if the Coachee believes the goal can be achieved, he has positive attributions about the future, so optimism is present (Xanthopoulou et al. 2009). When the Coachee finds solutions to overcome the obstacles that inhibit them with regard to achieving their goal and develops strategies to better cope with change, they are, in fact, activating resilience (Youssef and Luthans 2007). And, finally, when the Coachee reflects on the critical situation they successfully overcame, the resources they brought into play and the solution they found, the Coachee is activating the self-efficacy that is a direct outcome, therefore, of the Coaching process (Bozer and Jones 2018). Within a self-regulatory cycle, learning from previous experiences helps build a new and constantly renewed resource package. Thus, through this continuous cycle of questioning and feedback from the Coach, together with the reflection and insight of the Coachee, psychological capital is activated and reinforced. (Fontes and Dello Russso 2020).

The following exercise, involving the four components of Psychological Capital, challenges the reader to experience this process. This exercise was adapted from the manuscript of Fontes and Dello Russo (2020).

Exercise 3—Psychological Capital

1. *Please identify a personally valuable goal (it can be one of those identified in exercise 2):*

    _____

(a) *Create concrete targets to measure success (can be time, value, number,…)*

    _____
    _____

(b) *Then identify sub-goals (if the goal defined above can be divided into smaller goals)*

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

2.   *(OPTIMISM) Anticipate the best possible scenario regarding the goal achievement and be as detailed as possible:*

    Write what would happen

    _____
    _____

    what you would be feeling

    _____
    _____

    and thinking

    _____
    _____

3.   *(SELF-EFFICACY) Recall and list positive/successful past events related to the goal, preferably where you have played an active role, but if you cannot recall any, they can be episodes from other people, that you observed.*

    _____
    _____

    What were the ingredients of that success?

    _____
    _____
    _____

4.   *(HOPE) Generate multiple pathways to the identified goals, as many alternative pathways as possible, regardless of the practicality of implementation*

    _____
    _____
    _____

    considering the resources required to pursue each pathway, now rank them

    1st _____

    2nd _____

    3rd _____

    _____

5. *(RESILIENCE) Anticipate possible obstacles and separate what is under your control vs beyond your control*

       _____   _____

       _____   _____

       _____   _____

Anticipate strategies and actions to avoid pathway blockage

_____

_____

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