

Coaching to improve performance

We've all heard of coaching in the sports sense, but how can it help in everyday life? Dr Lindsey Burns, Coaching Psychologist at First Psychology Centre, Glasgow reveals the benefits of coaching psychology and explains how it can be used as a highly effective development tool for individuals and organisations.

The relatively new field of coaching psychology is developing rapidly. As a profession, it has steadily grown in the UK over the last five years, but what is it and how does it work?

WHAT IS COACHING PSYCHOLOGY?

The ultimate purpose of coaching psychology is the development and well being of individuals (or the organisation at which they work) through the use of grounded psychological approaches.

The British Psychological Society defines coaching psychology as "enhancing well-being and performance in personal life and work domains underpinned by models of coaching grounded in established adult and child learning or psychological approaches," Grant and Palmer.

In practice, this means a qualified psychologist will coach clients, assisting them to develop in their chosen personal/work domain by using practical evidence based psychological techniques and questioning.

Psychologists are in a prime position to be offering this type of helping service as they are equipped with the means to work with those who have issues around anxiety, fear, indecision or those who need to make choices.

By working with a coach you can quickly get to the source of your problems, get past personal blind spots, overcome procrastination, and enhance your energy and performance.

WHO CAN IT BENEFIT?

Working with a coach can generate improvements in individuals' performance/goals, can lead to increased openness to personal learning and development, can help identify solutions to specific problems, create ownership and responsibility, improve specific skills and behaviours, increase self awareness and correct performance/behaviour difficulties.

A coach can help you set goals that will inspire you to achieve what you really want by providing you with an independent and non-judgmental environment in which to work and make sound decisions.

Working with a coach is likely to significantly increase the rate of your development and growth.

COACHING FOR INDIVIDUALS

Coaching psychology has the potential to benefit anyone. The initial motivation to see a coaching psychologist usually comes from a desire to enhance some aspect of one's life or to improve performance in a specific domain.

Clients often start from a position of relative satisfaction and are trying to build on that. Sometimes they feel unsatisfied in a particular area of their lives, e.g. a relationship, career progression, procrastination, or difficulty making decisions and wish to improve it.

COACHING FOR ORGANISATIONS

Workplace or organisational coaching aims to lift, sustain and improve the performance of the individual and the team within the workplace (Carter and McMahon, 2005).

Coaching, due to its efficacy, has become a pervasive learning and development tool - ranking among the top five development interventions for executives.

Recent research demonstrates it is used within 71% of organisations (CIPD, 2008). Coaching can create open dialogue, reduce defensiveness and allow individuals and organisations to learn, grow and perform.

Getting it right' when introducing a coaching culture is vital. The key is to employ a coaching psychologist with organisational expertise - they can advise and introduce a way of embedding coaching effectively within your organisational culture.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN COACHING?

A coach will provide support while also offering challenges. This will be done in a safe environment.

Sometimes coaches use assessments or tools to help clarify areas that need work. You may also be asked to carry out small tasks/ exercises and discuss them in your next coaching session.

For individuals, coaching sessions last about 45 minutes and are usually held fortnightly depending on the goals chosen.

In team/workplace coaching, the format will depend on the needs of the individual and organisation.

CHOOSING A COACH

It is important to choose the right coach - that means feeling comfortable and a sense of rapport with them.

You also need to check they are qualified to provide the services they offer. Look for coaches who are members of professional bodies such as the British Psychological Society and the Society for Coaching Psychology.

If after an initial meeting with your coach you don't feel happy, try someone else. A good working relationship is the key to getting the most out of the coaching!

MORE INFORMATION

To find out more about coaching at our First Psychology centres, or to arrange an initial session, contact your local centre:

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