

Coaching – a definition

➤ **Coaching is defined as the participation of a coach in the learning process of a coachee/group of coachees.**

➤ This process creates the foundation for new, alternative, or revised narratives of the focus person's personal and professional life.



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Two central foundations of narrative coaching

1. Societal/Cultural foundation

- Coaching as a reflective space
- Coaching and meaning making
- Coaching and self-created and reflective leadership
- *Coaching using the metaphors of the coachee's culture (e.g. Turner, 1967; Myerhoff, 1982)*

2. Learning foundation

- Learning as process of co-creation of knowledge [Vygotsky's (1926) proximal development].
- Learning as situation and part of a community of practice



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Coaching – a reflective space

➤ **COACHING shall be presented** as a specific form of dialogical process between a coach and a focus person – the coachee – with the aim to give the focus person a developmental space and thereby the possibility for reflection and renewed understanding:

1. about his/her **own experiences** in relation to a specific context; and
2. about **specific relationships**, coordinated actions with others and about the processes of negotiation in a specific social situation.



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Learning

1. Learning is a process by which experiences is transformed into knowledge." (Kolb, 1984, 38)
2. "For learning in practice to be possible, an experience of meaning must be in interaction with a regime of competence" (Wenger, 1998, 134-139)
 - Experience of meaning is related to membership in a community of practice
 - A community of practice acts as a locally negotiated regime of competence.

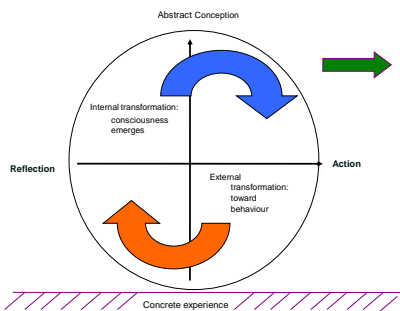


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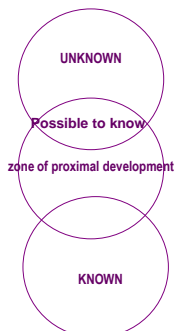


Learning cycle

Modified from Kolb, D. A. (1984) *Experiential Learning*



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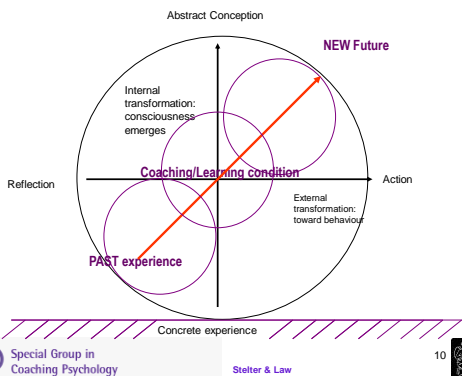


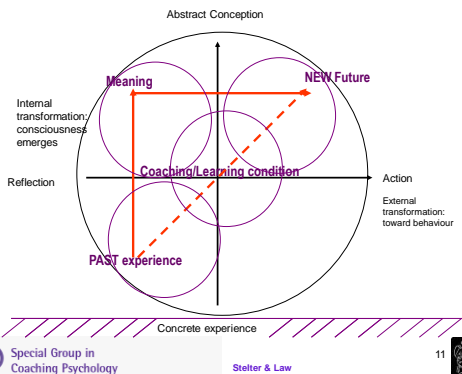
Source: Law, et al (2007)

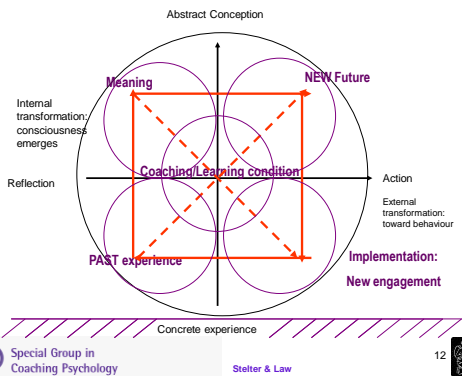


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Coaching and the concept of learning

- Learning is basically a *process*
- A process which always starts on the basis of specific experiences in a concrete social and material environment
- This process builds on two interrelated dimensions
 - **Individual meaning making**
 - **social interaction → co-creation of meaning**
- Because of coaching being a process tool, we can understand coaching as being an influential dimension in both individual and social learning processes



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Exercise 1 - in pairs

The intention with this exercise is to give you a better sense and understanding of your own learning engagement

Please follow these instructions (10 min interview)

- One coach – one coachee
- As the coach, please take the following questions as a guideline for your dialogue with the coachee:
 - "Can you describe a situation from your work or private life where you really felt that you learned something new and special?"
 - "What happened with you in this situation? What kind of support did you receive from outside?"
- After the interview: Please identify some main constituents that you consider as the basis for a fruitful learning process



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Learning

1. Learning is based on the individuals curiosity and open-mindedness (NB: Zone of proximal development, Vygotsky)
2. Learning is influenced by the individual's *experience* from earlier and similar situations and therefore by specific *expectancies* about how to tackle new tasks and situations
3. Learning is qualified by a *sharpened attention* and *consciousness* in regard to the specific situation and concrete experiences
4. In the learning context, the learner develops a personal meaning and reflects values in regard to the given task/environment. Meaning comes from the individuals involvement and participation in practice



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Learning

5. In many work and life situations *learning is integrated part of the social process*. The knowledge generated in this process is a joint "product" evolved from the social negotiations in the community of practice
6. If we understand learning as part of a social process, which happens in all kind of different forms of practice, then learning is has to do with self and identity development
7. Learning happens, if individuals or groups are *disturbed* in their habits, and their routines, modes of thinking and understanding no longer can be applied to solving specific problems or challenges
8. In that sense, learning is part of self-created leadership



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Coaching

– a dialogue with different perspectives

1. **Problem/goal perspective**
Sportscoaching, GROW model, NLP, psychodynamic coaching, CB coaching
2. **Solution/future perspective**
Systemic and solution-focused coaching, AI coaching; positive psychology coaching
3. **Reflective perspective**
Social-constructionist, narrative coaching, protreptic/philosophic coaching



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Societal anchoring of coaching and of doing coaching

(Stelter, 2009)

- We live in a world of globality (Beck, 2002)
- ... in a hyper complex society (Luhmann, 1997)
- ... where self-reflexivity is a basic condition (Giddens, 1999)
- ... where identity and self-presentation are a central issue for the individual (Gergen, 2006; Keupp, 1999)

→ Focus on meaning-making and local values of fundamental to find orientation

→ Coaching plays a central role in this process!



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How to develop a reflective space in coaching dialogues?

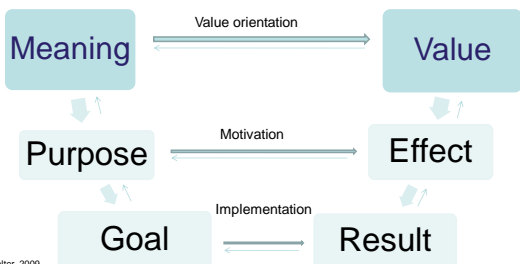
1. Focusing on **values**
2. Giving opportunities of **meaning making**
3. Revisiting the absent but **implicit**
4. Giving space to the unfolding of **narratives**



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Meanings & Values central in the concept of intentionality



Stelter, 2009



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Meaning as a central concept in coaching

- *Meaning* is fundamental, because we ascribe our experiences, actions, our interplay with others and our life and work specific **values**.
- Things become *meaningful*, when we understand our own way of thinking and acting, e.g., by telling specific stories about ourselves and the world we live in.
- *Meaning* is far from being the same as the term information as used in the concept of data processing. Meaning evolves in the interplay between action, sensing, reflecting and speaking



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Meaning as a central concept in coaching

1. Meaning is formed through the **actual experiences and (implicit) knowledge** the individual acquires in the different life contexts.
2. Meaning is shaped through **social negotiation and narratives** that describe the focus person's life practice.



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Meaning as a central concept in coaching

Exercise 2

- 4 persons in one group (coach, coachee, two observers)
1. Coach interviews the coachee about a satisfying working situation
 2. Afterwards the two observers have a conversation together:
 - What kind of word, phrase or expression caught your attention?
 - How did YOU perceive this word, phrase and expression? What are your feelings about it
 - What kind of images of the coachee's life, identity and values do you get?
 3. Coach and coachee continue their conversation on the basis of the conversation of the two witnesses



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Integrating meaning making in two streams of coaching

This is only an analytical differentiation!

1. **Individual experiences and meaning making**
 → **subjective reality**
 - Aesthetic focus - sensing and meaning making
 - Revisiting the absent but implicit
2. **Co-creation of meaning: Reflection, deconstruction, and development of alternative stories**
 → **socially and co-constructed reality**
 - Co-creation of meaning and values
 - Reducing complexity – giving orientation
 - Accepting multiversality
 - Giving space to the unfolding of narratives



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Coaching – to uncover the implicit

Dimension of aesthetic learning (Stelter, 2008)

- **Being intentionally oriented** towards the situation
- **Focusing on the *present moment***, defined as "a subjective, psychic process unit that one is aware of" (Stern, 2004)
- **Being attentive and mindful** to specific situational factors and own thoughts, emotions and experiences
- **Using metaphors**
- **Epoché** - freedom from prejudice and assessment – approaching the situation as it appears through your senses
- **Preparing *kairos*** – *the right moment* which appears in the flow of action and can be experienced by being aesthetically involved in the situation



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Revisiting the absent but implicit

in the coaching dialogue

- The implicit is a form of knowledge which is embedded in action – but it cannot be verbalized without effort
- Making the implicit explicit opens up for new insights
- The implicit has always a bodily dimension
- Getting in touch with the implicit is always a process in the present moment and in a state of mindfulness
- A good way of getting access to the implicit is through the use of *metaphors*



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Exercise 3 - in pairs

The intention with this exercise is to give you a sense how you can develop a in-depth relationship to a specific situation

Please follow these instructions (10 min interview)

- One coach – one coachee
- As the coach, please take the following questions as a guideline for your dialogue with the coachee:
 - "Please choose a specific situation which has been important for you!"
 - "How do you perceive the situation? How would you describe it?"
 - "What more can you describe? ... - "What more can you describe?"
 - "Can you find a metaphor or picture for your felt sense?"



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Giving space to the unfolding of narratives in the coaching dialogue

What is a narrative?

A story is a symbolised account of actions of human beings that has a temporal dimension. The story has a beginning, middle, and an ending. ... The story is held together by recognisable patterns of events called plots. Central to the plot structure are human predicaments and attempted resolutions.

(Sabrin, 1986, 3)



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Focus on the plot of the narrative

- “The plot is able to weave together a complex of events to make a single story. ... A plot is constructed in the realm of meaning, recording relationships among perceptions.” (Polkinghorn, 1988, 18)
- As the general aim of therapeutic work we can speak about the creation of a *fuller plot* that will ideally lead to a “more dynamic and thus more useful plot which serves as a powerful and connective force.” (Polkinghorn, 1988, 179)
- We also speak about making the story *thicker*



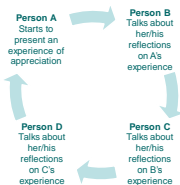
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”Roundabout conversation”

Topic: An experience of appreciation, valuing an initiative taken - and the development of alternative stories

Person A starts to present a situation where he/she receive positive appreciation, person B gives an appreciative feedback and relates the situation to own experiences and invites person C to continue etc.



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Life & Self take shape through narratives

- Narratives structure the events (timeline, inner drama)
- Narratives establish coherence
- By telling stories and forming narratives, our life becomes meaningful
- In telling our life stories, we become responsible and by that ethical beings (see Kierkegaard, 1987)
- "Lives are told in being lived and lived in being told" (Carr, 1986, 61)
- Telling is the "doing" of identity (Kraus, 2006)



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A narrative perspective to coaching

- Coaching in a multiverse perspective → developing "landscapes of consciousness", both in individuals and groups (Michael White, 2007)
 - Seeing the *landscapes of consciousness* by reflecting on one's **identity and personal and social values**
 - Connecting *landscapes of consciousness* to *landscapes of action* and vice versa
 - **Coupling one's own position to positions of others**
- **Outsider witnessing**: resonating with what the coachee has put forward



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Questions that help to develop the narrative

- What does this experience tell you about your life?
- What is the issue or *main theme* of your story?
- *Can you give it a name or title?*
- What kind of personal values, attitudes and convictions lie behind this?
- What would your mother, friend [other important persons] say about that (*if she or he were here with you now*)?
- Imagine that things would look like ..., how would you then feel or think?



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Developing alternative stories

- By focusing on exceptions
- By focusing on situations of success
- By thickening stories and coupling them with others
- By connecting stories with an experiential and embodied implicit
- By building bridges between stories and imagined future actions



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Exercise 4: Coaching with outsider witnesses
(Groups of four: Coach, coachee, two outsider witnesses)

- > The coach/interviewer is guided by the following question
 - Can you remember a situation where you experienced success?
 - How would you describe the situation?
 - What was it that gave special meaning and personal value for you?
 - How did that experience change something in your life?
- > The two outsider witnesses talk to each other. They do not evaluate or judge what they hear, but make the coachee's reflections relevant for their own life. The outsider witness conversation is guided by the following questions:
 - What was it (of what you have heard) that you were most drawn to?
 - How does that resonate with something in your own life? What came to your mind while you listened?
 - Did you get some new thoughts about you and your life?
- > Coachee reflects about what he/she has heard



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