



*Reflecting pathways to
learning and change*



F. Campone, Inc. Newsletter

Currents in Coaching Research: Training for Coaches- In-Training

Most programs which prepare therapists for professional practice require that therapists in training receive personal therapy as a part of their education. Dr. Anthony Grant set out to investigate the potential value of life coaching for coaches in training as a required element of their formal education. The results of his study "Personal life coaching for coaches-in-training enhances goal attainment, insight and learning" provide us with some useful data about two questions:

1. Can participation in a personal coaching program as a mandatory part of a coach training program facilitate goal attainment and enhanced well-being?
2. Does participation in a mandatory personal coaching program enhance participants' learning of coaching psychology? ¹(sic)

Grant lays the groundwork for his study by extrapolating from the research on the impact of personal therapy on therapists in training. His summary of the themes found in the literature suggest that personal therapy can have several benefits. Among these are improved mental and emotional functioning; better understanding of the client's experiences; deeper understanding of underlying theories and practices; self-insight into potential conflicts and self-defeating behaviors; the direct experience of therapy's benefits. While Grant notes that there are some contradictory findings in the literature as well, he also notes that "coaching is not psychotherapy and coaches are not psychotherapists"; thus, prior studies with therapists may not directly map onto the coach training experience due to the different nature of both practitioners and the underlying purposes and theories of each practice. .

Grant also refers to the literature on the value of reflective practice as a means of fostering awareness of one's own mental models and argues that coach training programs "should emphasize the cognitive and emotional development of the coach" (p. 57) and not merely be a matter of skills or information transfer.

The participants in Grant's study consisted of 29 men and women enrolled in a coaching psychology program as part of a postgraduate degree program. The training program consisted of an initial three-day training, a one-day mid-point intensive training, a one-day end-of-term intensive training and a concomitant twelve-week course on theories and techniques of coaching psychology. The coaching was provided by peers within the group using a triad system (A coached B, B coached C, C coached A). Coaching was conducted following a solution-focused, cognitive-behavioral approach, guided by materials provided by the program. Participants received five coaching sessions over a 10-12 week period using a mix of phone and face to face methods. Grant's article details the application of the

GROW (Goal-Reality-Options-Wrap-up) model in the session structure. Each session was followed by coach and client separately writing their responses to a series of reflection questions. The study analyzed both qualitative data from open-ended reflection exercises and quantitative data from a series of pre-post assessments. The assessment instruments measured goal difficulty and attainment; cognitive hardiness; psychological well-being; depression, anxiety and stress levels; degree of personal insight and learning (as measured by end of course grades).

The study results show that participation in the coaching program was associated with significant increases in goal attainment and hardiness, and with significant decreases in anxiety. There were no significant differences in levels of depression or stress or psychological well-being. Participants in the study also had higher end of semester marks than those in a comparison group.

What does this mean for practitioners? I think that the study provides useful information for two groups. For practitioners who teach or train coaches, Grant's study offers some useful insights (especially in the discussion of reflective practice) into assisting coaches in training to attain greater depth and understanding of theoretical and practical material. For life coaches, the study offers some evidence of potential outcomes of life coaching. The study also points to receiving personal coaching as a means for coaches in training and new coaches to deepen their understanding of the principles learned in the training program and to greater understanding of the client experience.

1. In Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice. 1 (1). March 2008. Routledge.

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Francine Campone, Ed.D., PCC coaches mature professionals to reinvent their lives by reinventing their work. She is a leader in the coaching research community and deeply committed to the development of reflective coaches in practice and to fostering coaching research. Francine teaches evidence-based coaching and coaching research practices for UTD and enjoys a wonderful life in Denver, Colorado beyond her activities in the coaching field.
