

Mentoring for Change

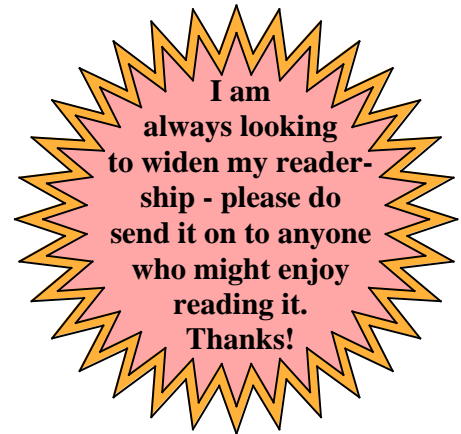
executive mentoring and coaching, values management, storytelling

Welcome to the Mentoring for Change newsletter. In this issue:

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- Affirmations

With best wishes

Heike the Mentor



Resilience

Resilience – the ability to suffer hardship and not falter – is one of the most important determinants of whether we succeed or fail in achieving our desires.

According to a recent article in HBR (May 2002 p46) there is an increasing body of evidence showing that resilience can be learned. Resilient people possess three characteristics:

1. **A staunch acceptance of reality:** Resilient people have very down-to-earth views of those parts of reality that matter to survival. That's not to say that optimism doesn't have a place – conjuring a sense of possibility can be a very powerful tool. But it is only when we are crystal clear about our reality that we can really deal with it – if we are trying to engage with what we imagine rather than what is, then we set ourselves up for failure.
2. **A deep belief, often buttressed by strongly held values, that life is meaningful:** Resilient people make meaning out of their suffering and set-backs enabling them to build bridges from present-day hardships to a fuller, better constructed world. For example, Viktor Frankl in *Man's Search for Meaning*, his account of life at Auschwitz, tells of finding a sense of purpose through, in part, imagining himself giving a lecture after the war on the psychology of the concentration camp.
3. **An uncanny ability to improvise:** Resilient people have the ability to make do with whatever is at hand and imagine possibilities where others are

confounded. So they have more choices and are more resourceful.

Thus coaches can help people become more resilient by helping them find the motivation to persevere in the face of hardship and difficulty because they see a point in prevailing (life is meaningful), improve their chances of overcoming the hardship by seeing clearly what the problem is (staunch acceptance of reality) and can find the resources to successfully deal with it (uncanny ability to improvise). An approach to bringing more resilience to the challenges that changing our behaviour can bring is the PAR process (overleaf).

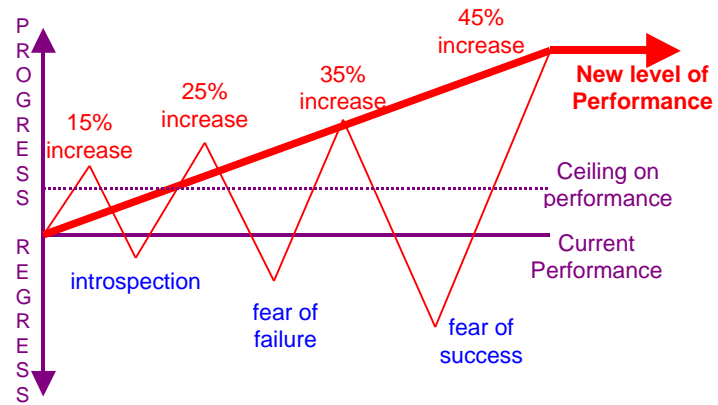
MBTI and Coaching

The Myers Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI) is widely used to give insight into how people structure their reality and make sense of the world. Some coaches also use it to determine the style of coaching most likely to be effective with particular individuals (see *Introduction to Type and Coaching* by Hirsh and Kise, www.mbti.com).

But the MBTI also seems to tell us something about the type of people drawn to be coaches. Over the past few years I have asked around 40 coaches what their MBTI is. Strikingly, every single one has had an N preference on the S-N (Sensing-Intuition scale) – that is they have a preference for seeing the big picture and focusing on possibilities over seeing what is actually happening and focussing on practical realities. This doesn't of course mean that people with an S preference can't coach but does seem that such coaches are rare. (In fact I just showed this to a colleague who said, "I've just started

Classic Models – CDM Corporate Transformation Process

In the late 80s and early 90s an American consultancy, Creative Dimensions in Management (CDM), delivered corporate transformation processes based on one-on-one mentoring to a succession of UK banking organisations. The mentoring model used combined coaching with techniques and models drawn from Comprehensive Family Therapy. One of these models was based on a concept termed Progressive Abreactive Regression (PAR). At its simplest this model predicts that, when a person attempts to significantly change their performance, they are likely to follow a zig-zag path to growth, alternatively progressing and regressing (see diagram).



CDM's approach to corporate transformation explicitly stimulated and managed these progressions and regressions. The person being mentored committed to deliver a performance improvement of at least 35%, this level of "stretch" being designed to provide the momentum to adapt to an entirely new level of performance.

Iris Martin, CDM's founder gives the following example of her work with CEOs. A commitment to a 15% increase in performance leads the CEO to ponder "Is this actually possible and if so why I hadn't I thought of this myself?" (introspection); a 25% performance improvement leads to a deeper regression where the CEO questions whether they can sustain this performance and whether it was really a result of their efforts anyway (fear of failure); a commitment to performance improvements of more than 35% leads to

a still deeper regression in which the ego's existence is threatened (fear of success) and where breakthrough will result in a new sense of identity being forged and sustained higher levels of performance.

The key to managing these regressions lies in increased self-awareness. As the growth goal increases, awareness and self-consciousness must deepen in order to manage the regressive trends that occur. These trends include moving beyond one's illusions about oneself and one's potential; moving beyond the defences that protect the self from the anxieties of growth; examining and resolving the ambivalence that prevents a total commitment to achieving one's vision; embracing fears and terrors associated with failure and success including shame and abandonment; and, ultimately, discovering one's will – an energy source that can fuel the activation and achievement of any vision.

For more on this approach see "From Couch to Corporation", by Iris Martin, ISBN 0-471-11958-X.

with a great new coach and she's an S!")

I would be interested to hear from anyone who has any other information about coaches and type. Also, as a piece of informal research, if you know your type could you send it to me saying whether you are an internal coach, an external coach, or not a coach. If any interesting patterns emerge, I will publish them in the next newsletter. (If you're curious to know your type visit <http://haleonline.com/psych/> where there is a short free assessment.)

Affirmations

I've never been sure about where I stand on affirmations (eg, "Every day and in every way I am getting better and better") – are they flaky New Age superstition or a practical tool for changing your life? On the other hand, one technique for evoking change (from the Inner Game and from solution-focussed therapy) that I have found to be very effective is noticing key variables and scaling them (for example by asking the question "On a scale of

1 to 10, how efficiently are you working at this moment?"). Rather improbably, repeatedly getting an answer to such a question will tend to move the variable being noticed in the appropriate direction (so in this example, you will find that your efficiency increases).

Repeating an Affirmation also has the effect of focusing us on the variable we want to change. But what the scaling question adds is the ability to notice exactly how the variable is changing – and it is this concrete information that then drives an automatic learning process that leads to a change in our behaviour. Try it and see!

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