

Building general confidence and self-esteem

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Purpose

This exercise (whose origin is lost in the mists of time for me) can be used independently of the coaching session, where there is a real lack of self-confidence. It can be done between coaching sessions and then followed up at a subsequent coaching session.

Description

The client is invited to write lists of different types of positives from their lives and to repeat three items at a time to themselves until they believe them. A tiny investment of time in this exercise, which can be done alongside other daily activities, can be fun and have big pay-offs.

Process

The guidance you give to your client is as follows. 'Write lists of:

- 10 achievements;
- 10 things you do well;
- 10 things you like about your body.'

You need to be very encouraging as for some people it will be hard to list 10 things so encourage them to capture as many as possible. Alternatively, you could be selective of which lists the client compiles as people often find the third particularly

challenging, but then that can be a good reason for trying to do it. You may need to be careful to explain what ‘achievements’ mean to some people. For example, it doesn’t have to be a major event. The example I use is passing my driving test (yes, therein lies a story), which also helps to keep it light. Likewise, ‘things you do well’ can be *anything* – making cakes, scoring goals etc. You could rephrase this as ‘things you seem to do more easily than others’.

You then encourage your client to take any three items from these lists and suggest that they repeat them especially when they have dead time on their hands, for example when in a traffic jam, in the bath or on a bus. Once the client feels comfortable with these three items then they can move on to another three from the lists.

The selling point of this exercise is not the particular issues themselves but rather a gradual building up of a good self-picture and confidence in this.

At the next coaching session, you can check out how it’s going. It’s also sometimes useful to get them to say out loud to you one or two items from their lists. For example, ‘I am good at making cakes/scoring goals’. You can give feedback on the confidence/assertiveness shown in their words and non-verbal behaviour. Once you have started them off, the process usually becomes self-supporting.

Pitfalls

Some people will be highly sceptical of this exercise. I find it’s usually best not to be too serious (helped by my own examples of where the exercise has helped) and to offer it on a ‘you’ve got nothing to lose’ basis. As in the previous exercise, occasionally it can take people back to childhood issues or other past difficult situations. Again, be prepared to recognize this, but you don’t have to go there.

Bibliography

Jeffers, S. (1999) *The Little Book of Confidence*, London: Rider & Co.
McMahon, G. (2000) *Confidence Works: Learn to Be your Own Life Coach*, London: Sheldon Press.