

Understanding how previous life experiences have impacted on the client and the connection to the behavioural patterns they demonstrate today

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Purpose

This is a strategy that is used to deepen a client's understanding of how their previous life experiences impact on their behaviour today.

Description

The coaching assumption or belief is that by deepening the client's self awareness, they have a greater capacity to make fundamental shifts in their behaviour. Clients can assess whether their patterns are still in service to them (i.e. are they still helpful?) or whether certain behaviours result in difficulties for them. It is also a great way for clients to stand back and think about where they are going, either personally or in their careers. Typically, as a result of completing this exercise, clients find it easy to see where the 'pathway' is leading.

An influence that underpins this strategy comes from the work performed by life coaches. Life coaching can be focused: where the client is encouraged to set targets and a series of actions to help them reach their goals. The

actions will be a step-by-step approach, leading towards their achieving their goals. This suggests that one can influence one's direction in life, rather than allowing events to dictate one's future. Here are the simple steps for building this self awareness.

Process

- **Step 1**

Using a flip chart or a wipe board, ask the client to draw a path or time line from left to right and plot the most significant events throughout their life, leaving a section blank at the end of the path to represent their future.

- **Step 2**

Ask the client to talk each event through, asking why they chose that particular event, why it was significant to them and what that event/choice says about them. For example, if the client had highlighted a strong academic track record they may say that they have a strength in analysis or creative writing, or that they enjoy research, or that they are driven to achieve a high standard of academic performance.

- **Step 3**

Start with the earliest experiences, moving forward to the present day, and record comments the client makes. Once you have reviewed their 'pathway', look at the comments you have noted and ask the client to summarize their talents and typical behaviours.

- **Step 4**

Review the exercise and ask questions such as:

- What are the main themes that have emerged for you?
- What have you learnt about yourself?
- What would others say about you?
- How do these patterns of behaviour play out for you currently?
- How do you believe that these patterns of behaviour will play out for you in the future?

Behaviour is formed by focusing on strong empathy, listening deeply to what is being said and unsaid and the use of

appreciative enquiry to build deeper self awareness for the coachee. Often, the 'pathway' reveals both highs and lows regarding the client's personal makeup and can lead to deep developmental conversations. You have to be careful not to steer the conversation but allow this journey of self discovery to emerge.

Pitfalls

Make sure that the client states their own conclusions and beware of your own projections on any particular event, for example that a strong academic track record must mean you were a swot at school!

Bibliography

Cooperrider, D. L. and Whitney, D. (1999) *Collaborating for Change: Appreciative Inquiry*, San Francisco, CA: Barrett-Koehler Communications.