

Coaching Psychology

(Applying Psychological Models in Coaching)

Paul Smith

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This book is based on a previously released digital version, now revised and expanded.

Disclaimer: Please note this book focuses on the use of psychological theories in coaching and does not refer to the field of Coaching Psychology as practiced by licensed Psychologists.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to all those looking to enhance their coaching by incorporating psychological models into their practice, supporting others to find a new positive perspective on the challenges we face in society today. For those not afraid to enter the grey area between coaching and therapy, remembering to stay within their competencies but also expanding themselves to help those in need.

May this book bring a new perspective to your coaching and equip you with the tools to make meaningful change with your clients.

“When we change the way we look at things, the things
we look at change.”

Wayne Dyer

Purpose of this Book

This book was originally created as part of an Accredited Coach Training Programme with the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC), aimed at supporting coaches in enhancing their business and professional skills.

The programme offers a comprehensive curriculum designed to equip coaches with the knowledge and tools necessary to succeed in the dynamic field of coaching. Participants will benefit from interactive workshops, online study and peer-to-peer learning opportunities. Join a community of experienced professionals dedicated to advancing the coaching profession.

Upon completion of the programme, coaches receive five years' accreditation from the EMCC, a globally recognised accreditation body. This credential demonstrates to potential clients a commitment to excellence in coaching practice and signals a high standard of professionalism. To enrol in the programme, scan the QR code below. Access our online learning hub for coach development and collaboration projects.

All tools discussed in this book are available in the 'Coach Library' within our hub.



The CM Hub

Foreword

Written in a clear and engaging style, this book offers an accessible introduction to key psychological aspects of coaching, with a focus on practical tools drawn from Cognitive Behavioural Coaching and Transactional Analysis. Each chapter provides concrete examples and invites readers to integrate theory into their practice, encouraging critical thinking.

As a dual-qualified practitioner, both a psychodynamic therapist and an organisational coach, I'd like to acknowledge the significant expertise and practical wisdom Paul Smith brings as the author of this book. Paul highlights the transformative potential of various coaching models adapted from psychological frameworks, grounding theory in ethical and effective coaching practice.

As a former student of the Accredited Coach Training Programme at Coaching Minds, I have experienced first-hand the practical insights offered by the first edition and have come to appreciate the advancements of this second edition even more. Within the Training Programme at Coaching Minds, this book serves as one of the key theoretical foundations for accreditation with the European Mentoring and Coaching Council, supporting coaches worldwide and providing a strong platform for professional growth in an ever-evolving coaching landscape.

While I am not an expert in CBT or Transactional Analysis, I particularly appreciated the clarity and level of detail with which the different models are introduced in this book. Each model is presented with both its strengths and limitations, offering a balanced perspective. The STAR model is introduced as a tool to help clients map out their responses to recurring situations.

The SPACE model encourages clients to develop a “bird’s eye view” of their experience. The FUTURE PACING model utilises

the power of visualisation to provide clarity around the client's vision. The DEEP MODEL explores ways to challenge limiting beliefs, while the PAC MODEL offers a framework for understanding human interactions. In addition, the introductory and concluding chapters offer readers further tools and guidance on how to apply psychological principles within coaching practice.

This book encourages readers to embrace new perspectives and will benefit trainee and qualified coaches alike, as well as professionals interested in integrating psychological tools into their work. It inspires practitioners to approach models and methodologies creatively, tailoring their work to meet clients' unique needs and support them in achieving their goals. It also highlights the importance of respecting legal and ethical boundaries between coaching and psychotherapy, encouraging coaches to embody their role with curiosity, psychological insight, and integrity.

Thank you, Paul, for your incredible expertise and for consistently placing values and ethics at the heart of the coaching profession.

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An Introduction to Coaching Psychology

‘The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes.’

William James

What is Coaching Psychology? How do we integrate psychological models into coaching? Are there any crossovers with coaching and therapy? Coaching is a powerful tool for personal and professional growth, and when grounded in psychological principles, it becomes even more effective. Understanding the psychological foundations behind coaching allows us to support our clients with evidence-based tools and approaches. Within this book, we will begin by exploring theories, models, and exercises from two areas of Psychology: Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Transactional Analysis (TA). For those of us who may have studied a course in Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), we may find that some of the tools in this book are similar. This is because NLP works to help reprogramme our thoughts through the concept of unlearning and relearning. Whilst working through this book, I encourage you to get creative with the models and explore ways and methods in which you can help your clients change the way they look at things, respecting our ethical and legal boundaries in doing so.

As we move through this book, we'll explore each of the two areas of psychology in turn, discussing how each theory offers unique insights, while also recognising any overlaps between them. The aim is not to prescribe a singular path but to provide a range of tools and perspectives that provide us with the ability to define our own coaching toolkit to support our clients.

Exploring Cognitive Coaching

‘Humans create their cognitive powers by creating the environments in which they exercise those powers.’

Edwin Hutchins

What areas of psychology do we explore as a coach? Are there links between Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Cognitive Behavioural Coaching? Where is a good place for us to start? Throughout this book we will explore several different types of psychology, but we will begin with Cognitive Coaching throughout the first nine chapters, providing us with practical tools we can apply to our coaching.

Cognitive Coaching is founded upon the basis that it is not what happens to us that causes us suffering but how we interpret or respond to what is happening to us. For example, some of us may feel anxious about flying. To overcome this fear, we must understand that it is not the act of getting on a flight that causes anxiety, but our thoughts behind it. There is a fine line between fear and excitement, and it is our thoughts that determine the difference.

When looking into Cognitive Coaching, we must also understand that pain is inevitable, but suffering is an option. Over 90% of human suffering comes from our mind, from holding onto those negative thoughts, from trapping ourselves in our past or worrying too much about the future. The remaining percentage comes from physical suffering. As a Cognitive Coach, we use a range of models and exercises to help our clients see the world differently and ultimately help them change their thoughts. By

guiding them to change their thoughts, we help them to change their life.

2.1 Cognitive Behavioural Coaching (CBC)

Cognitive Behavioural Coaching is designed from the psychological theory of ‘Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)’ and uses the same basic tools, models, and exercises. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy is a form of Psychotherapy that helps those suffering from anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder and many other mental illnesses. As a Coach, we must understand how therapy is a very different form of help for clients and although there are similarities when it comes to Cognitive Coaching, we must introduce the tools of CBT and work with our clients in a very different manner.

Figure 1: The Difference between CBT and CBC

Dimension	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)	Cognitive Behavioural Coaching (CBC)
Theoretical Basis	Based on clinical psychology and psychopathology; integrates cognitive theory (Beck, Ellis) and behavioural learning theories	Draws from CBT but integrates coaching psychology and positive psychology; focuses on goal attainment rather than clinical recovery
Primary Goal	Alleviation of psychological distress and treatment of mental disorders (e.g. depression, anxiety)	Facilitation of performance, personal development, and wellbeing within non-clinical populations
Client Population	Individuals with diagnosable mental health conditions	Individuals without clinical diagnoses; functioning individuals seeking growth or overcoming everyday challenges
Professional Training	Requires licensure or accreditation in mental health (e.g. psychologist, psychotherapist); extensive clinical supervision	Typically requires coach training with familiarity in CBT principles; supervision standards vary across professional coaching bodies
Assessment Tools	Uses standardised clinical tools (e.g. BDI, GAD-7) and diagnostic interviews	May use reflective assessments, non-clinical questionnaires (e.g. strengths inventories, self-efficacy scales)

Dimension	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)	Cognitive Behavioural Coaching (CBC)
Session Structure	Structured, often short-term (6–20 sessions); includes psychoeducation, homework, progress monitoring	Semi-structured, goal-oriented, varies in duration; focuses on insight and action planning but avoids diagnosing
Focus of Intervention	Diagnosing and treating dysfunctional thoughts, emotions, and behaviours	Enhancing self-awareness, challenging unhelpful thinking patterns, and developing constructive behaviours to reach goals
Techniques Used	Cognitive restructuring, exposure, behavioural experiments, thought records, relapse prevention	Questioning, guided discovery, cognitive reframing, goal setting, solution-focused strategies
Ethical Boundaries	Regulated by healthcare ethics; clear duty of care including safeguarding, confidentiality, and clinical accountability	Governed by coaching ethics (e.g. EMCC, ICF); emphasis on boundary awareness, referrals when mental health issues arise
Measurement of Outcomes	Often uses clinical outcome measures (symptom reduction, relapse prevention)	Uses coaching metrics (goal achievement, behavioural change, client satisfaction)

When it comes to mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety, therapy may be the best service of support. However, this does not mean we cannot coach clients who suffer from mental illnesses. We must always keep in mind Coaching is an alternative method of support. Unfortunately, there still lies a degree of stigma in society that ‘taking therapy is a sign of weakness’ and some people may prefer to choose coaching to avoid appearing weak. When we have clients suffering from depression or anxiety, then Cognitive Behavioural Coaching provides some of the best exercises and tools to help explore the client’s thinking without stretching outside of our competencies.

2.2 Our Role as a Coach Using Cognitive Behavioural Coaching

In exploring literature and books on Cognitive Behavioural Coaching, we will find that behaviour is a function of our

environment, physiology, thoughts, and feelings. Many of us can often believe that events in life cause our reactions and fail to understand that our reactions are in fact caused by our own interpretation of the events. By taking a 'cause and effect' approach, we will find that many of our clients focus too much on the effects (whether we like or dislike what is happening) rather than the cause of the liking or disliking.

When we talk about 'cause' in this sense, we are not referring to the 'cause of the event' but the 'cause of suffering'. When we explore the cause of suffering, we support clients in shifting their perspectives.

Take the below as an example:

Event: Client is made redundant from their job.

Perspective:

“This is awful, that job meant everything to me. I am going to lose my house too; I am not going to be able to provide for my wife and kids. My wife will leave me. I can’t believe the company allowed us to get into this state.”

The cause of the client losing their job is irrelevant here. Whilst it is useful facts for us to obtain the bigger picture, focusing on the reason why they were made redundant is not going to help the client move forward. What we must realise as a coach, is that the cause of the client’s suffering here, lies in their thoughts behind them losing their job and not the loss of the job itself. Our aim as a Coach is to use our skills, tools, and exercises to help them think differently towards the situation to a more positive mentality that leads to positive action. For example, a good result from coaching could look to help the client to a new perspective like the below:

New Perspective:

“Although I’ve lost my job, this opens a new path for me, and I am going to use it as an opportunity to pursue a new career. It might be a little difficult for my family at first, but I am going to put in the effort I can, to get a new job and it will prove to be great in the long run.”

The client has shifted from a negative perspective to that of a more positive one, which from here, allows us to work with our client on getting them back into work.

When we look at Cognitive Behavioural Coaching as a coach, we explore the relationship between the ‘State’ (emotions) and cognition (thinking). Our role is to first find what thoughts and emotions are behind the client’s suffering or lack of action. Second, understand the client’s interpretation of their thoughts and emotions. Then finally, work with the client to make a shift in their thoughts and emotions. This can be achieved through the tools within this book, adapted from Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

2.3 Using CBT Tools in Coaching

The way in which we use CBT tools in Coaching is very different. We are not playing the role of a therapist; we are playing the role of Coach. This means that we are not using the tools in a way to improve symptoms associated with a diagnosis, but we introduce them into our coaching space to help guide our clients to a new way of thinking. As a starting point, we can use what I like to call the ‘3-step process for introducing cognitive tools into our coaching space’.

Step 1: Identify a negative thought pattern or perspective.

Step 2: Explain and offer the tool to the client.

Step 3: If client agrees, work through the tool with them, if the client rejects, continue the coaching conversation.

The important point in this process is that we must never force a model or exercise on our clients. We must offer or introduce the client to a tool that may help them but if they reject, we must not attempt to convince them they need it. If a proposed exercise is refused, we continue the coaching and find another route or avenue to help guide our clients.

The final point to note is that we must always stick within our areas of expertise and not enter the role of a Clinical Psychologist or Therapist. We must be careful not to slip into advice or offer our observations, using the tools to define what we think is going on for the client. It is important that we act as facilitators and that results and awareness are deriving from the client. Our role is to use the tools in a way that helps the client find clarity, awareness, and understanding of a new perspective.

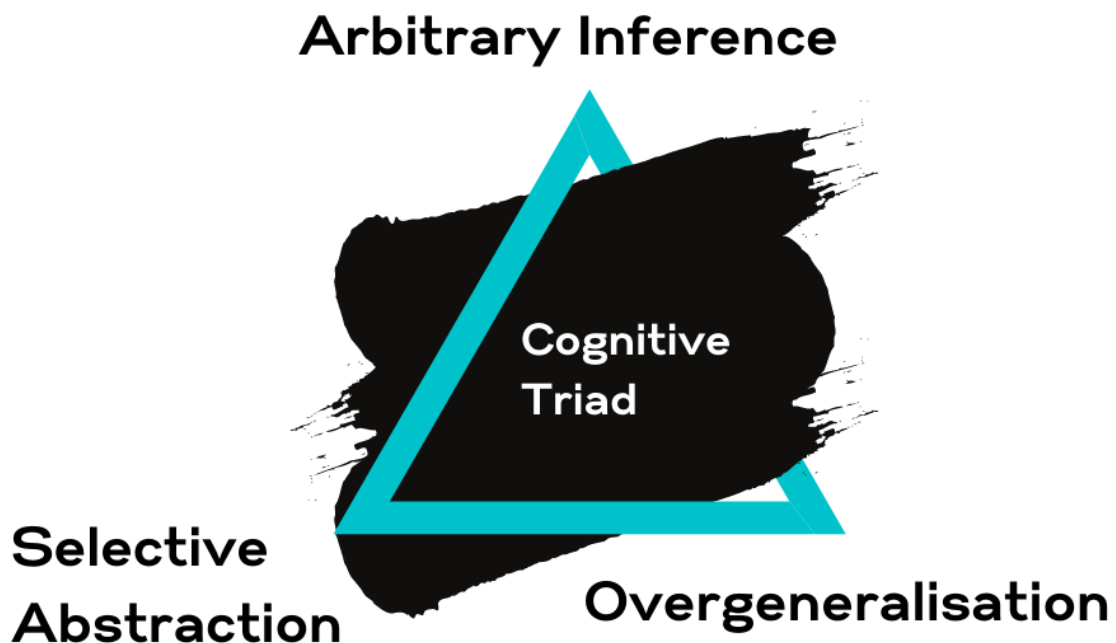
2.4 The Cognitive Triad

An introductory model into Cognitive Behavioural Coaching that can help us begin to understand how we view the world, is the Cognitive Triad. The notion of the Cognitive Triad was developed by the American Psychiatrist, Aaron Beck in 1976 as part of his work behind Cognitive Behavioural Therapy in his book *Cognitive Therapy and the Emotional Disorders*. The cognitive triad was created by Beck to describe how depressed adults tend to think about the world. The central concept of the model is that our thinking influences our emotions and behaviour and, our emotions and behaviour can influence our thinking. Whilst initially created for those who suffer from depression and anxiety, the model is now widely used for several disorders within

psychology and is a useful tool we can use in our coaching practice.

The interrelationship amongst our thoughts, feelings, and behaviour is illustrated by the diagram below:

Figure 2: The Cognitive Triad



In his research and through the Cognitive Triad, Beck identified three patterns of habitual thinking that he labelled as 'Errors of thought'. These were:

- 1. Arbitrary Inference:** Where we draw quick conclusions based on the most limited evidence. For example, they did not smile back at me. They must hate me.
- 2. Selective Abstraction:** Where we focus on only a selected amount of evidence to draw a conclusion. For example, they gave me some feedback and improvements on my work. They really hated it.

3. Overgeneralisation: Where we take one negative event and apply its meaning to our whole life. For example, I did not get that job. I will never succeed at anything in life.

We can simply the three points above to identify three types of negative thought patterns we might witness our clients facing:

- Negative views about oneself
- Negative views about the world
- Negative views about the future

The Cognitive Triad, is a useful framework for our coaching, focusing on how negative thought patterns about the self, the world, and the future influence our own emotions and behaviour and that of the clients. In coaching, this means helping clients identify and challenge their limiting beliefs about themselves by questioning these beliefs and exploring their strengths. By reframing negative thoughts and encouraging clients to look for evidence that contradicts their self-criticism, we can support clients in developing a more positive and realistic self-view.

Similarly, clients often perceive the world and their future through a negative lens, which can lead to a lack of action and avoidance. As coaches, we can guide clients in shifting their focus from problems to possibilities, helping them see their circumstances from multiple different perspectives. By setting achievable goals, developing hope, and using techniques, we help clients develop a healthier outlook on both the present and the future. Through the process, we help clients shift their thoughts from limits to opportunities, developing an action plan to help them succeed.

Aaron Beck dives into this concept in a lot of detail through several books. I have added some of these in the 'Additional

Reading' section at the back of this book for those of us who wish to explore this concept in more depth.

2.5 Digging Deep with 'Why'

One of the simplest of ways to help our clients begin to think differently, is to guide them beyond their 'surface level thinking'. By asking our clients questions that change their perspective or questions that enable our clients to reflect further, we allow them to explore a deeper level of thinking. Through our environments, childhood and people in our life, we programme our subconscious with automatic thoughts. These thoughts can be positive or negative, constructive or destructive, empowering or damaging. We will explore these automatic thoughts in detail later in this book, but the important point to note for now, is that our automatic thoughts and responses can prevent us from taking a deeper look at what is really going on for us and why we may be behaving in a certain way.

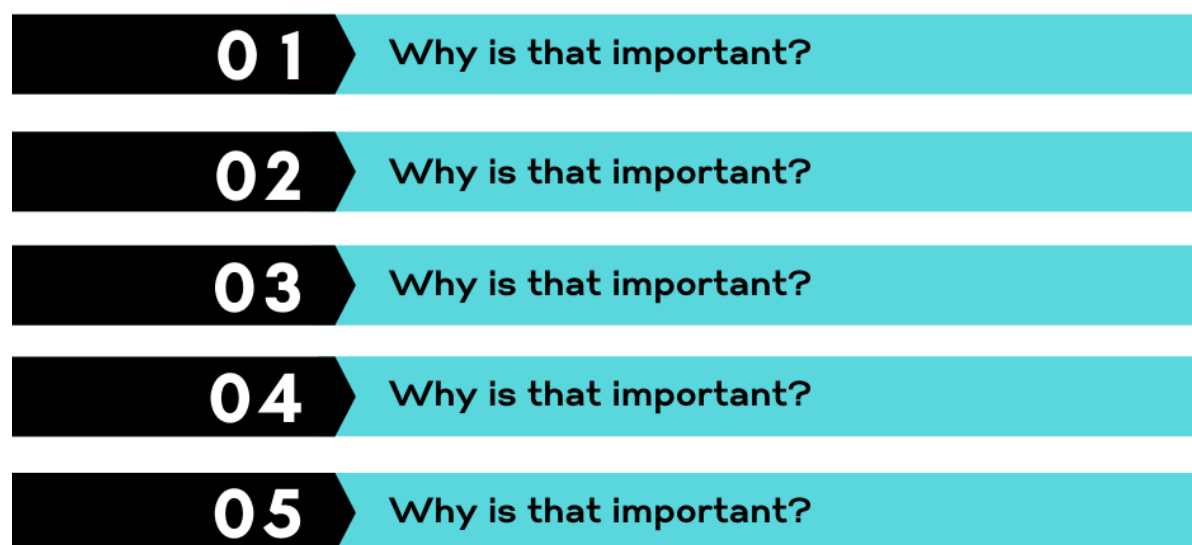
One of the most effective tools for both demonstrating and exploring a deeper level of thinking is that of what I like to call 'Digging Deep with Why'. Many of us can explain in detail what it is we do, and how we do it, but many of us tend to overlook the reasons why we do what we do, or how important it really is to us.

Through 'Digging Deep with Why', we help our clients scratch below the surface by asking the simple question of 'Why is that important to you?' We can use this in response to anything that a client is seeking. For example, why is being a Coach important to you? Several thoughts may spring to mind. It may be because you need to earn a living, it may be because you want to help people, or it may be because you are naturally good at it. However, whatever your response, how much thought have you really given to your response? If you are becoming a coach

because you want to help people, then why is it important for you to help others? If you are training as a coach because you want to earn a living, why is it important that you earn a living? By asking the question, 'Why is that important?' we allow our clients to dig down into the next layer of thinking.

We can use this question of 'Why is that important?' to dig into several levels of thinking. We may wish to stop at asking it three times, we may want to dig deep and ask the questions to seven levels. As a coach, it falls to our intuition and the rapport we build with the client, as to how deep we wish to explore. However, it is important to note, we must avoid making it feel like an interrogation for our client and our questions are constructive. I would therefore recommend sticking to a five-level exploration.

Figure 3: Digging Deeper with Why



We must be mindful with 'why' questions. The question we ask here is 'Why is that important?' replacing 'that' with the context in which the client is sharing with us. This model is not about asking why a client did something or asking a 'why' question in a judgemental tone. It is about curiously trying to understand why

something is important to the client to receive more information and a deeper perspective.

One final point to note is that this tool is also useful to demonstrate coaching to potential clients. We can simply apply this model in a general conversation to illustrate how coaching can make us think deeper. It can be a useful tool we pull out of our pockets at networking events when people become curious about what we do as a coach.

2.6 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored the concept of cognitive coaching. We have touched upon how it stemmed from cognitive behavioural therapy, the cognitive triad and introduced the 'digging deeper with why' tool.

To integrate these concepts into your own approach, take a moment to consider the question below:

- ✍ Applying the 'Digging Deeper with Why' model, why is developing yourself as a coach, important to you?**

Values: The Heart of Coaching

‘Peace of mind produces right values; right values produce right thoughts. Right thoughts produce right actions’

Mark Richardson

What role do values play in coaching? How can we explore values with clients to understand them at a deeper level? Are there any models we can use? Values lie at the heart of cognitive coaching and are what fundamentally motivate and drive our behaviour. They are intrinsic to what we feel to be important in life and play the key role in our decisions, actions and satisfaction in life. We all have a different set of values, and it is important to bring awareness to the fact that there is no such thing as a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ value. Values should never be judged or labelled. Whilst they help shape our ‘moral compass’, as coaches we must remember that morality is a matter of perspective. We must never judge or impose our own values on our clients. In this chapter, we will explore the importance of values, our role as a coach and how to use the ‘Value Pyramid’ tool in our coaching practice.

3.1 Why are Values Important?

Many of us may be unaware or fail to understand our core values due to several different reasons. Maybe we have inherited the values of our parents growing up, maybe we have forced ourselves to adopt values to mould ourselves into a business culture or maybe we go through life picking up values that we see others being rewarded, hoping to receive the same. It is

therefore important for us to understand our true, authentic values, as they both drive our behaviour and subsequently produce the outcomes occurring in our lives. If we are not in alignment with these core values, then we will likely fail to feel satisfaction or fulfilment in life. In terms of cognitive coaching, exploring the values of our clients is a great starting point to help understand what is important to them. We aim to explore whether a loss in what is important to a client or a conflict in values, is driving the negative thought patterns that are being shared with us.

Figure 4: Values, Behaviour and Outcomes



Values give us clarity & purpose

One of the reasons clients may lack clarity in life may be due to them failing to understand their core values and the drivers behind their behaviour. When we think about purpose and vision which is essentially our compass in life, our values form the mechanics behind the creation of our purpose and vision. The parts of that keep our compass working. If we are fitting together

our purpose and vision with the wrong parts, then our compass will send us off course.

It is therefore important that we understand our core values and define our purpose and vision based on what lies at our heart. This provides us with clarity and allows us to steer ourselves in the right direction.

Values help us be proactive

When we understand our core values, our path becomes clearer, our actions become more conscious, and our decisions become easier. This allows us to be more proactive and flow with what life brings our way. We have clarity in what is driving our behaviour, and we use this to get things done and move forward.

Values identify where we may be misaligned in life

When we have clarity on our core values, this allows us to identify where we may be misaligned in life. For example, if our core values are making a difference and helping others and our job/career does not enable us to do this, then we can identify that this lies at the root cause of why we are feeling unsatisfied with our job, despite our poor relationship with our manager or the tasks we don't enjoy. The reason could be a clash or conflict in values. When we understand our values, we gain a perspective to look at which areas of life are not aligned, and we can make positive changes.

Values attract people

Our values or the values that we portray is what attracts people into our life. By understanding our core values and consciously creating behaviour that is aligned with them, we attract the right people into our life. If we are portraying values adopted elsewhere, then we are only going to attract people into our life who are aligned with those values we display. Gaining clarity on our core values allows us to reset our circle, remove those that are unaligned and attract those who are.

Values provide awareness of conflict

When we understand our core values, we can become aware of any conflicts that arise. This is particularly helpful in relationship with others. Remember there is no such thing as a 'good' or 'bad' value, however, there are values that conflict with one another. For example, someone driven by making a difference won't mix too well with someone driven by money or status. Equally, someone who holds a core value of freedom will find themselves at times in conflict with another who holds a core value of security. By becoming aware of these conflicts, we can better manage situations and our actions to move things forward.

3.2 Using Values as a Coach

There are several ways in which we can work with values as a coach. Firstly, we can help our clients understand their core values. This can be done in a number of different ways, through assessments, exercises, and value cards. At Coaching Minds, we have created our own model for assessing values through what we have labelled the 'Value Pyramid'. This is discussed

further below. However, this is not the only method for assessing values and we should explore different methods to find the one that works best for us and our clients, adding a little of our own creativity. If we plan to coach in person (as opposed to online) then it might be a good idea to purchase a set of value cards or create our own, to act as visual aids when we explore values with clients.

In addition to helping clients identify their core values, it is our role as a coach to spot when a conflict of value comes into play. As a coach, we might identify from the choices our clients are making, certain values that are driving a decision or preventing a client from deciding. It is therefore important for us to understand as a coach, that their values could be playing an impact on the client and through effective questioning guide the client to find the conflict and help them move forward.

For example, a client may not be happy in their relationship. They may believe it is due to certain ways in which their partner behaves which is causing the unhappiness, but if we dig a little deeper as a coach, we may be able to surface the fact that this is due to a misalignment or conflict of values. Maybe the client does not feel free in the relationship or feels under control. If they hold a core value of 'freedom', then we can bring awareness to the fact that this misalignment of a core value could be the root cause of the client's unhappiness. As a coach, we can then explore ways on how the client can gain freedom in their relationship to realign with their values.

In certain circumstances, clients may be required to choose between one of their core values. Let's say a client has two job offers, one provides them with a good income which satisfies their core value of 'security' however, the role is not one of providing service and goes against their core value of helping others. On the other hand, job offer two pays a lot less, offering very little security but is fully service driven. In this situation, the client will have to decide which value is of more importance to

them. As a coach in these scenarios, we must bring awareness through our questioning and help guide the client to the answer that lies within them.

There are many examples where our values crop up in scenarios in life, however, our main role as a coach is to spot where values may be coming into play within our coaching sessions, bringing awareness to this through our effective questioning and guiding the client to finding a way forward.

3.3 The Value Pyramid

Understanding a client's core values is crucial, especially when they feel lost, stuck, or uncertain about their direction in life. At Coaching Minds, we've developed a model that helps clients uncover their true core values, distinguishing them from those they may have adopted over time. This model also allows clients to prioritise their values and offers a tool to resolve any conflicts that may arise between them. In our Coach Library that sits within our level 5 accredited coach practitioner programme, we provide a Value Pyramid assessment form, a list of values and a space designed to support this process. Below, we walk through how to use this model effectively, providing the context and insights behind it.

3.4 The Purpose of the Value Pyramid

The purpose of the Value Pyramid is to help our clients identify their true, authentic values and display them in order of importance through a pyramid. By developing the pyramid, we can look at the primary, secondary, and tertiary core values and ask our clients to reflect on them. We can then explore where these values are showing up strong in their life and where they may not be in alignment with them. This will allow the client to

identify where they may need to change certain aspects of their lives, where certain conflicts of values are arising and behaviour they can change to live by their values.

As discussed earlier, these values also provide the mechanics behind our vision and purpose in life, so with a clear set of values in mind, our clients can gain a stronger sense of direction and purpose and begin to shape a vision or mission that is fully aligned with who they are. The pyramid itself becomes a strong and effective tool.

3.5 Building the Value Pyramid

In this section, we will explore a process designed to help clients identify and prioritise their core values. By guiding the client through a structured assessment, we can uncover their true values and gain deeper insights into what truly drives them. This process, using value cards or sheets, will not only highlight their core beliefs but also reveal any potential conflicts between values. As we move through the five steps, we'll help the client build their own Value Pyramid, a visual representation of their priorities, which will serve as a useful tool for reflection and decision-making. This exercise will offer clarity, enabling both the coach and the client to address any misalignments and create a path forward that aligns with what matters most to them.

Remember, we must first offer the exercise to the client. Once accepted, we can explain the purpose of the exercise with a quick overview of the five steps we have outlined below, before walking the client through each step.

Step 1: Provide the client with value sheets or cards

After introducing the model to our client and receiving their permission to walk through the exercise, we begin by providing our client with a list of values or display value cards on a table for our client to review.

Step 2: Choosing the 10 most important values

We then ask our client to take 10-15 minutes studying all the values and to select 10 of which really mean or hold the most importance to them. We take note of the 10 values the client selects and write these down on a list.

Step 3: The assessment

Once the 10 values have been captured, we begin the value assessment by working down the list of values selected by the client and asking the client 'which matters most to you.... X or Y?' Whichever the client responds, we mark a tally next to that value and proceed to the next.

We assess each value against the others, working our way down the list until all values have been assessed.

Assessment 1: Love

'Which means more to you, Love or Making a Difference?' Client Answers. We mark tally next to the response.

'Which means more to you, Love or Freedom?' Client Answers. We tally.

‘Which means more to you, Love or Personal Growth?’
Client Answers. We tally.

We work our way down the whole list to kindness. Then we begin with assessment 2.

Assessment 2: Making a Difference

‘Which means more to Making a Difference or Freedom?’
Client Answers. We tally.

‘Which means more to you, Making a Difference or Personal Growth?’ Client Answers. We tally.

We work our way down the whole list to kindness again. Then begin with assessment 3, Freedom.

We continue this through assessment 4, 5, 6 and all the way to 10 which will ensure each value as been scored against each other. (Note: We must never go back up the list with an assessment, we begin from that assessment and always work down. If we go back up, we create duplicate assessments and inaccurate results.)

Step 4: Creating the value pyramid

Once we have completed the assessment and scored all values against each other. We count the tally and provide each value with a score.

Figure 5: Value Scoring



We then identify the value with the highest score and share this with the client. If there is a tie with two values, we then ask the client again, which of the two matters most to them. When we have the highest scoring value, we put this at the top of the pyramid. This is the client's primary core value.

Next, we identify the second and third top scoring values, sharing these with the client and putting them on the second level of the pyramid. These are the client's secondary core values.

Finally, we identify the fourth, fifth and sixth top scoring values and place these on the third level of the value pyramid. These are the client's tertiary core values.

Step 5: Reviewing and analysing the value pyramid

Once we have captured the value pyramid, we can present the client with the results and ask them what their initial thoughts are. We can then begin to review the pyramid with the client by

asking them if they feel it is an accurate representation, asking them if they can identify any misalignment in their life with these values and exploring the situation that led to the exercise to see if we can bring any awareness to a potential conflict in values.

This step is about bringing the pyramid back into the coaching conversation as a tool, providing the client with a new lens to see the situation in and using it to help the client find a way forward.

3.6 Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Levels

It is important to note that at times our values may slightly change depending on the environment we are in and our stage of growth in life. As mentioned above, there are three levels to our value pyramid. The first is the primary level which holds our top core value. This core value will most likely never change and be our most powerful driving force behind all our behaviour. For example, if our core value is kindness or love, we will behave in a way that shows kindness or love in everything we do. If we are feeling strong negative emotions, there is a high probability that this is being caused by a misalignment with our core value.

The next level of our value pyramid is the secondary level. These values will never leave our pyramid, but they may fluctuate between our secondary and tertiary levels in different environments. If we are feeling annoyances in life or find that we struggle to have a good relationship with a particular person, then we can look to our secondary core values to identify the misalignment.

Finally, we have the tertiary level, these may drift out of our value pyramid and be replaced, or they might shift up to the secondary level given our environment. It will be harder to spot misalignment with these values, but some indicators may be

things like slight annoyances, pet peeves and small things that bother us.

It is important to note, that our whole value pyramid may change if we go through a huge shift in our emotional maturity. We may create a shift in what matters to us which will create a huge shift in our behaviour. Such a change in a person is obvious and appears as a huge transformation.

3.7 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored the importance of values, the value pyramid and how to guide our clients through an assessment.

To integrate these concepts into your own approach, take a moment to consider the question below:

-  What does your own value pyramid look like and how are you aligning coaching with your values?**

Challenging Unconstructive Thoughts

‘Believing in negative thoughts is the single greatest obstruction to success.’

Charles F. Glassman

How do we work with negative thinking in coaching? How do we introduce exercises to help clients think more positively? What models and tools exist to help us with this? In life, our thoughts can be constructive, unconstructive, or destructive. What we tell ourselves daily, is what we become. As a Cognitive Coach, we must help our clients become aware that we are not our thoughts and because we are not our thoughts, our thoughts can be changed. One of our roles as a coach is to identify when our clients are thinking negatively and explore how we can change these negative thoughts into positive thoughts. We can do this by introducing several models, tools, and exercises to help our clients change the way they think. In this chapter, we will explore Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTs) and Positive Empowering Thoughts (PETs), how we can help our clients become aware of these and shift from ANTs to PETs.

4.1 Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTs)

As we go through life, we may pick up several negative thoughts that become automatic. This could be due to our childhood, relationships, work, memories, culture, life experiences or through thinking patterns that we have learned. Automatic negative thoughts are thoughts, doubts, pessimistic views that

show a lack of self-belief and confidence. They are thoughts that prevent us from moving forward and cause us to feel negative.

If an automatic negative thought is deep rooted, then it may form what is known as a 'Dysfunctional Assumption'. These are unquestioned truths or beliefs that have become engrained in us over a period. Maybe our parents always told us or showed us that we were never loved, maybe we had a manager at work who constantly criticised our performance, maybe we were in a long-term relationship in which our partner always told us we were not good enough or maybe we were bullied in school. Sometimes these negative comments remain embedded in us and become our way of thinking and these dysfunctional assumptions we have created for ourselves will remain until they are challenged, and a new assumption is created.

As a coach, it is important for us to understand that automatic negative thoughts and dysfunctional assumptions do not reflect reality. They only reflect our own way of thinking and perspective of the world. Therefore, they can be changed.

4.2 Positive Empowering Thoughts (PETs)

Our aim as a coach, is to help our clients change the way they think to move them towards a more positive perspective that assists with their visions and goals. Positive empowering thoughts help create a shift in our automatic negative thinking. They play a huge part in development of positive self-talk. As a coach, we need to become creative and try different ways to guide our clients to make a shift in their thinking from ANTs to PETs.

It is important that we keep our thoughts positive because our thoughts become our words, which become our actions, which become our habits, which eventually become our reality. Our role

as a coach is to spot and identify negative thoughts or patterns of thinking from what our clients are sharing with us and guide them to a shift in their thoughts, which subsequently leads to a shift in their words, actions, and behaviours. We reshape and help our clients make the change they want in life by assisting them in finding a new perspective.

4.3 Five Ways to Challenge Unconstructive Thoughts

There are many ways in which we can work creatively as a coach to develop exercises, models, tools, and methods to help guide our clients to a change in their thinking. The important point to note is that any exercise we create, must allow the client to find their own answers and they must never offer advice.

At Coaching Minds, we have developed five methods we can use, to challenge unconstructive thoughts and help our clients develop a more positive way of thinking.

Thoughts are Only Opinions

One way in which we can challenge unconstructive thoughts is by challenging the evidence on which the client's negative thoughts are sourced. Often, we can tell ourselves that thoughts are facts when in fact, thoughts are only opinions. Opinions that we have bought into and believed. When we become aware that thoughts are not facts, we come to a level of understanding that they can be changed. As a coach, we can use an exercise or tool that guides our clients to become aware that the thoughts they have about themselves are only opinions.

Here is a useful four step exercise we can use with our clients.

Step 1: We ask our client to list their negative thoughts or ask them to tell us, whilst we capture them down. This could be done on a shared screen online or on a piece of paper or whiteboard in person.

Step 2: We work down the list of thoughts and ask the client... 'Is that a fact or an opinion?' and we capture their response. Marking fact or opinion next to each thought.

Step 3: Where they may have responded that the thought was a 'fact', we revisit that thought and ask them why they believe it is fact? Finding out as much information as we can to understand the client's thinking.

Step 4: We can then use effective questioning, challenge the evidence on which the client is assuming that their thought is a fact.

It may be that the client comes to the realisation quite quickly that their thoughts are all opinions. When the client is at this stage of awareness, we can ask the question:

“Since all of your thoughts are opinions, what does that mean for you?”

From here, now that we have guided the client to understanding thoughts are not facts, we can work with them to assist changing the opinions they hold of themselves.

Building Positive Evidence

When a client is aware that their thoughts can be changed but are unsure on how they can think more positively, it becomes our

role as a coach to begin to build positive evidence that supports a new way of thinking for the client. As humans, before we can justify or believe anything, our minds always like to have some proof or evidence that the new information we are taking in is true. Most of the time the evidence is there, we just struggle to see it through our own negative perspective. When we understand this, we can work at putting a new lens on our clients that help them see things differently.

We can use the following exercise to help clients build evidence to adopt a new positive way of thinking:

Step 1: We can begin by asking the client to list all their current negative thoughts.

Step 2: We then explain how these are 'Automatic Negative Thoughts' and that a good way to remove them, is to replace with them 'Positive Empowering Thoughts'.

Step 3: As we explore Positive Empowering Thoughts, we can ask the client how they might change the wording of their 'Automatic Negative Thought' to create a 'Positive Empowering Thought'. A few examples could be:

ANT: 'I am not good enough...'

PET: 'I am ready, and I will do this to the best of my ability.'

ANT: 'I am never valued...'

PET: 'I value myself and I am worthy.'

ANT: 'I am not confident'

PET: 'I will build my confidence, and I can do anything I set my mind to.'

Step 4: Ask the client, where in life have, they seen evidence of these positive thoughts. When have they felt confident? Where do they feel valued? What have they achieved to date?

It may not be necessary to walk through the exercise with the client, but we should always work with the client through our questioning to build positive evidence that supports a positive way of thinking. Our following sessions may then become centred around helping the clients believe these new thoughts and building evidence to support this.

Questioning the Source of Negative Thinking

Our negative thoughts may be more believable to us if they have come from a source that we invested our trust in. For example, if it was our parents telling us that we aren't good enough or our teacher telling us we will never make it in life, this can have a larger impact on how much we believe our negative self-talk. Alternatively, a negative thought may stem from a certain life event or situation, for example, where a partner may have left them or where they may perceive themselves as failing at a particular point in life. As a coach another way in which we can challenge unconstructive thoughts, is by gaining a deeper understanding of where those thoughts have developed from and why the source is important to the client.

We can use the following exercise known as the I.O.U (Identify, Obtain, Understand) model to help clients question the source of their negative thinking, whether that be from a person or a situation that happened in their life:

Step 1: Firstly, we must identify where the client's thoughts are coming from through effective questioning. I.e. why might you be

thinking that? Has anyone ever told you that you aren't good enough? Could you give me an example of some situations or relationships where you do not feel valued?

Step 2: Secondly, we obtain a different perspective by finding out how the client thinks about other people's thoughts on the matter might be or if the source is a situation, then change perspective by introducing a new hypothetical situation. I.e. what is your husband/wife's view on this? How would your sibling/friend perceive you with regards to this? What do other people at work tell you?

Step 3: We then understand the relationship that the client has with the source of negative thought or the importance of the situation that caused it. I.e. how close are you to this person? What is the relationship with this person now? What role do they play in your life?

Step 4: We can then bring the steps above together and ask the client why they believe the negative perspective over the positive perspective. I.e. so, if your father is saying this but your husband is saying that, why is it you are more inclined to listen to your father's perspective rather than your husband's?

This model provides us with a structure on how we can begin to question the source of the client's thinking and offer a new perspective. Our role here is to allow the clients to observe the positive perspectives they gain in life with an aim to help them let go of the negative.

Introducing Exercises to Implement Positive Thoughts

Whilst the client may come to the perspective of seeing a more positive way of thinking, it is important that they begin to believe

these new 'Positive Empowering Thoughts' and ultimately change their automatic thinking. This is not something that can be done overnight and takes time and practice to implement. One of the ways we can support our clients in making the shift to a positive thinking is by helping them turn their 'Positive Empowering Thoughts' into positive affirmations.

As a coach, we can become creative in the ways in which we help clients draft and implement positive affirmations. There are many good books that can help us define our approach and I have included a few in Annex A of this book 'Additional Reading'. We must remember, whatever exercise we introduce, it must be led by the client, and it is not for us lead. For example, it is not our role to create and draft affirmations for our clients. Our roles are of facilitator and guide. The following exercise to help draft a positive affirmation with a client:

Step 1: We identify the automatic negative thought and turn it into a Positive Empowering Thought as we have discussed above.

Step 2: We then work with the client to turn the positive empowering thought into an affirmation following the tips below.

- 1. Create a positive affirmation that counters your most frequent negative thoughts.**
- 2. Add in verbs (doing words) to make your affirmation actionable and something you start to live rather than see. E.g. By meditating daily, I am at peace.**
- 3. Attach your affirmation to a goal or vision.**
- 4. Attach your affirmation to a manifestation statement if there is something you want to create or attract in your life.**

5. Sign-off all your detailed affirmations with a short snappy affirmation that you want to tell yourself daily. E.g. I am loved. I am confident.

Step 3: Introduce ways in which the client can use the affirmation in their day-to-day life to begin to install it into their thinking. For example, mirror work, displaying it and making it visible every day or saying it out loud or writing it down daily. As a coach remember to ask the client the question, how can you install this into your thinking and use the affirmation daily?

We may wish to work through the exercise on several Automatic Negative Thoughts and help the client draft multiple affirmations. Our role here is simply to support our clients in installing this new way of thinking.

Helping Clients Step outside of Comfort Zone

The Automatic Negative Thought of the client may be the cause of them staying in what is known as their 'comfort zone'. A place where they stay rooted in their habits and become fearful to step outside of their daily routines to help them grow. This is usually caused by a lack of confidence. As a Coach, we may play the role of guiding and supporting clients to get past the fears stemming from their Automatic Negative Thoughts and taking steps outside of their comfort zone.

Again, we can be creative as a Coach on how we do this, but the below exercise can be practical.

Step 1: We can begin by drawing a circle on a piece of paper and labelling it 'comfort zone' or provide the client with a template we have designed for the exercise.

Step 2: We then ask the client to write all the things they are comfortable doing in relation to their goal, with in the circle or we can ask them to share, and we can write.

Step 3: We can then draw another circle and label this 'stepping outside of comfort zone' and ask the client to think of things they could do which would be a step outside of their comfort zone. These will be small actions steps that they feel uncomfortable doing but will take them a step closer to their goals.

Step 4: We then use the space outside of the circles to capture anything the client could do, to break their comfort zone. These will be great actions or big decisions they need to make to push them a lot closer to their goal.

Step 5: We explore the results with the client, asking what is stopping them from taking the steps outside or those large actions to break their comfort zone.

Step 6: Finally, we develop an action plan with the client that they can take to begin to stretch/step out of their comfort zone.

Our role here is to find ways to help the client gain the confidence to act towards what it is they wish to achieve. It is up to us how we do this, if we are guiding the client to their own plan and are not creating one for them.

Challenging unconstructive thoughts is a fundamental part of coaching, allowing clients to reshape their mindset and move towards a more positive and empowered way of thinking. By using structured exercises as explained above, we help clients gain clarity and develop self-awareness. These methods encourage clients to recognise that thoughts are not facts, shift their internal dialogue, and adopt affirmations that align with their goals. However, true transformation comes from consistent


practice, and as coaches, our role is to guide, support, and create a safe space for clients to explore these shifts at their own pace.

Coaching is a continuous learning process, and the more we refine our ability to challenge unconstructive thoughts, the greater impact we can have on the lives of our clients.

4.4 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored challenging unconstructive thoughts, exploring different ways in which we can help clients reframe negative thinking.

To integrate these concepts into your own approach, take a moment to consider the question below:

 **Reflect on a negative automatic thought that you currently have. What would a more positive perspective look like?**

Exploring Our Client's Potential

‘Look at the word responsibility - "response-ability" - the ability to choose your response.’

Stephen Covey

How do we help clients shift perspective and see their potential? What tools can we use where the client appears to be limited in their thinking? How do we guide clients to looking at what is within their control? Another common challenge clients face is investing too much time and energy in areas beyond their control, rather than focusing on what they can influence. In this chapter, we will explore a concept from Stephen Covey introduced by *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* and explore how this concept can be applied in coaching. By guiding clients to shift their attention towards what they can control, we help develop and shape a new perspective that helps them progress to their goals.

5.1 Reactive and Proactive Language

In *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey introduces the concept of us having ‘reactive’ and ‘proactive’ languages. For us to become more successful and to dive deeper into our potential, Covey states that we must make a shift from being reactive to proactive. He defines reactive language as:

‘Thoughts and words that absolve responsibility as opposed to proactive language, which is taking accountability and moving forward.’

This concept is useful for coaches, so we can spot when clients are speaking from a place of ‘Reactive Language’ and work with them to move into ‘Proactive Language’. We can do this through effective questioning and challenging the client.

Below are examples given by Stephen Covey on reactive and proactive language.

Reactive: There is nothing I can do.

Proactive: Let’s look at the alternatives.

Reactive: That’s just the way I am.

Proactive: I can take a different approach

Reactive: I must do that.

Proactive: I will choose an effective response.

To add a couple of my own:

Reactive: This always happens to me.

Proactive: I can learn from this and change my approach.

Reactive: I’ll try, but I doubt it will work.

Proactive: I’ll give it my best effort and adjust as needed.

Considering the examples above, we can ask effective questions where we identify reactive language to transition the client into more proactive language. If a client says, ‘there is nothing I can do’ we can simply ask the, ‘what are the possible alternatives?’ If a client says, ‘that is just who I am’ we can ask them ‘what different approach could you take?’ If a client says, ‘this always

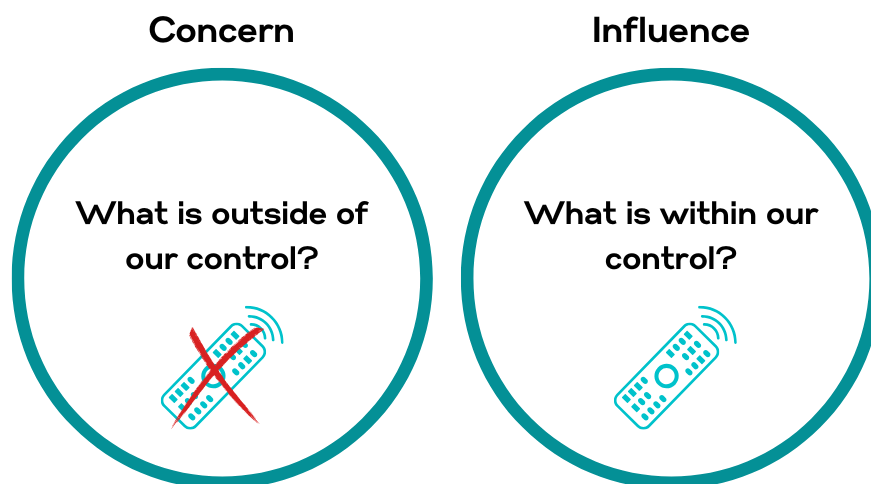
happens to me?’ we can ask them ‘What can you do differently, so it doesn’t happen next time?’ By becoming aware of this concept and training ourselves to identify reactive and proactive language, we can help our clients make the shift they need in their thinking to move forward through our questioning.

5.2 Circles of Concern and Influence

Another great concept we can take from Stephen Covey’s book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* which we can introduce into our coaching sessions, is that of the ‘Circles of Concern and Influence’. Stephen Covey’s concept of the Circle of Concern and Circle of Influence provides us with a tool for understanding where we direct our time and energy. Our ‘Circle of Concern’ represents the things outside of our control (that we tend to worry a lot about), while the ‘Circle of Influence’ consists of the aspects we can actively change (that which is within our control).

It is also important at this stage to note that breaking a boundary and changing a boundary are not the same thing. If a boundary is not working for us, we can re-contract with our client and change our boundary to something that works better. The key thing is sticking to the commitments we make with our clients.

Figure 6: Circles of Concern and Influence



The distinction between these two circles, shapes whether we adopt a reactive or proactive focus. When we spend most of our time dwelling on external circumstances beyond our control, we operate from a reactive mindset, often feeling powerless or stuck. Conversely, when we direct our energy towards what we can influence, we develop a proactive mindset, leading to greater confidence, action, and growth.

To develop a more proactive approach, we must shift our focus to expand our 'Circle of Influence' while reducing the time and energy spent in our 'Circle of Concern'. As coaches, this model is a valuable tool to help clients recognise where they are placing their attention, challenging any reactive patterns, and guiding them towards adopting a more empowered perspective. Through this shift, clients not only change their thinking and perspective but also begin to use proactive language that reinforces their ability to create meaningful change in future situations.

5.3 Using the Circles in Our Coaching Practice

Applying Stephen Covey's model of 'Circles of Concern and Influence' in our coaching can be a practical way to help reshape our client's thinking. As with all tools, we must first offer this to the client and if accepted, we can provide a short overview of the concept of the tool before walking the client through it.

To help reshape a client's thinking, it's essential that we first identify when they are speaking with a reactive focus, perhaps not taking full responsibility for their actions, or putting too much time and energy on things beyond their control. This awareness is the first step in guiding them to shift their perspective. Once we've spotted these patterns, we can introduce the tool to help them reframe their thinking.

The next step involves walking the client through the exercise. We can begin by presenting them with two circles: the 'Circle of

Concern' and the 'Circle of Influence'. Ask the client to identify what falls within each circle, what they can control and what they cannot. It's helpful to keep the focus narrow, ideally related to the specific topic we are addressing in our session, rather than asking them to reflect on all areas of their life.

Once the client has captured their thoughts, we then guide them through reflective questioning:

- Where do you find you spend most of your time?
- Why do you think that is?
- How could you shift your focus to spend more time in your Circle of Influence?
- What actionable steps can you take to do this?

This brings us to our final role as coaches: helping the client develop an action plan that outlines useful steps to increase their time and energy spent in their circle of influence, while reducing time spent on concerns outside of their control. Capture their commitments and revisit them during future coaching sessions to track progress and provide support.

Stephen Covey's framework offers a powerful tool for both our own self-awareness and for guiding clients toward transformative change. For a deeper understanding, I recommend reading *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, which provides greater insight into how these concepts and which I have listed in Annex A: Additional Reading at the back of this book.

5.4 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored reactive and proactive language and the circles of concern and influence, two great tools to help clients change perspective.

To integrate these concepts into your own approach, take a moment to consider the question below:

- ✍ **Reflect on a current challenge you face, how can you spend more time on what you can control, rather than what you can't control?**

The Star Model

‘Beautiful thoughts build a beautiful soul.’

Wayne Dyer

How do we help clients break behavioural patterns? Are there any tools we can use to help clients understand re-occurring situations? How do we help them change their actions? When working with clients in our coaching practice, we may begin to identify reoccurring situations and patterns showing up that are preventing our clients from moving forward. Maybe a client keeps finding themselves in an argument or dispute with their partner over the same topic, maybe they keep hitting crossroads with their manager at work or maybe every time they keep attempting to take a new step in life a fear keeps holding them back.

Whatever the case may be, we can use what is known as the STAR Model to help our clients address these problematic situations and find a way forward. In this chapter, we will explore what the STAR model is and how we can use this in our coaching.

6.1 What is the STAR Model?

STAR is an acronym for ‘Situation’, ‘Thoughts & Feelings’, ‘Actions’, and ‘Results’. It is used to explore the motions in which clients go through, when they find themselves in a reoccurring problematic situation. We can use this model in our coaching to identify the client’s current pattern of response and how their

thoughts, feelings, and actions are leading to specific results. From here, we can then guide the client to establish a more effective pattern of response from their desired result which makes a significant change to the situation.

By walking through this model with the client and mapping out the responses, the client can observe and identify where they can make necessary changes to their response and develop an action plan for the next time, they find themselves in that situation. Let's look at an example in the workplace:

Situation: A client frequently experiences tension with a colleague during team meetings. The colleague often dismisses their ideas, leading to frustration and disengagement.

Thoughts & Feelings: The client feels undervalued and frustrated, thinking:

“They never take me seriously. Maybe my ideas aren't good enough.”

This leads to feelings of self-doubt and hesitation in future discussions.

Actions: The client responds by withdrawing from conversations, avoiding speaking up in meetings, and limiting interactions with the colleague.

Results: The client's ideas remain unheard, reinforcing their frustration and sense of being undervalued. The relationship with the colleague remains strained, and they feel stuck in a cycle of avoidance.

By applying the STAR model here, we can explore an alternative approach with the client:

- **Desired Result:** The client wants to feel heard and contribute effectively to meetings.
- **New Actions:** Instead of withdrawing, the client prepares their points in advance, uses assertive communication, and seeks constructive feedback.
- **New Thoughts & Feelings:** With a proactive approach, the client feels more confident and focused holding thoughts around 'making themselves heard'.
- **Reframing the situation:** They enter the situation seeing it as an opportunity to improve communication rather than a personal attack.

This approach helps the client shift their response, breaking the cycle and leading to a more positive outcome. Through facilitation of the STAR model, we help them arrive at these conclusions, develop an action plan and hold them accountable.

6.2 Our Role as a Coach

Our role as a coach when using the STAR Model is to map out our client's current thoughts, feelings, actions, and results from the situation that keeps reoccurring, then working with them to explore their desired result, helping them identify what it is they need to change and how to get there.

Once we have both the current response and desired response captured, we can work with the client to define their action plan through effective questioning. Our role once we have defined the action plan is to review progress with the client and monitor results.

6.3 Using the STAR Model

As with all models, tools, and exercises in coaching, we must offer the model to the client once we have identified a problematic situation that keeps reoccurring. If accepted by the client, then we can proceed with the following steps.

Establishing Current Response

Our first goal as a coach when using the STAR model is to fully understand and establish the client's current response to the situation. We can capture this by following these five steps:

Step 1: Provide or draw a chart that captures the headings 'Situation', 'Thoughts & Feelings', 'Actions' and 'Results'. If coaching online, we can screen share a document or if we are coaching in person, we can draw these columns on a whiteboard.

Step 2: Identify the Situation in detail and capture what the client is sharing with you under the 'Situation' heading. What is happening for the client?

Step 3: Ask the client what their thoughts and feelings behind this situation are and list these under the 'Thoughts and Feelings' heading. How does the client feel about the situation? What are their thoughts when this happens?

Step 4: Explore what actions these thoughts and feelings are leading the client to take and capture these under the 'Actions' heading. What does these thoughts and feelings lead the client to do? How are they reacting to the situation?

Step 5: Explore with the client, what the results of these actions are and capture them in under the 'Results' heading. What is the result of this reaction?

We should capture as much information as possible for each step in the model to ensure we can create a full picture of what is happening under the 'current response'.

Figure 7: The STAR Model

Situation	Thoughts & Feelings	Actions	Results
Capture the situation	Capture the client's thoughts and feelings	Capture the client's actions	Capture the result

Establishing Desired Response

Once we have established the client's current response, we can begin to explore their desired response. What is it that they want to achieve when the situation arises? We can use the following five steps to explore:

Step 1: Provide or draw a new chart that captures the headings 'Situation', 'Thoughts & Feelings', 'Actions' and 'Results' or draw a line and capture the next steps below the 'Current Response'. Here, we are about to work backwards with the model.

Step 2: Ask the client what their desired result is and capture this under the 'results' heading. What would the client like to happen?

Step 3: Explore what actions need to be or could be taken to achieve this desired result and capture these under the 'Actions' heading. What can the client do to make this happen?

Step 4: Ask the client what thoughts they must have and what feelings they need to enable them to proceed with the desired and list these under the 'Thoughts and Feelings' heading. What must the client think and feel to take the necessary actions?

Step 5: Ask the client what they must change in the situation for them to think those desired thoughts and feel those desired feelings and capture under the 'Situation' heading. How must the client approach the situation to create those thoughts and feelings?

Again, we should capture as much information as possible to help the client fully understand what needs to be changed and actioned for them to achieve their 'desired response'.

Establishing an Action Plan

Once we have the current response and desired response mapped out, we can explore an action plan by asking the client what they need to change and where they need to put their focus to make it happen. We ask the client what they wish to commit to and capture these in an action plan.

6.4 Reviewing Progress

Once we have established an action plan, we must agree a way in which we will review progress with the client. Maybe this is a case of catching up and exploring results of new changes at the next coaching session or maybe we want to check in with our client between coaching sessions to see how they are getting on.

It is for us to define how we review progress with the STAR Model in our coaching practice, but we must ensure that we stick to any commitments that we make.

When reviewing progress, we can explore what changes the client has made and implemented, look and discuss the result of these changes (have the changes led to the desired result?) and explore any blockers to assist the client in moving forward.

The STAR Model is a great tool for bringing awareness on a situation and looking at how we can adapt and change our response. It is important to note that whilst it is a great tool, it may not work for every client or be of use in every situation. It is for us as a coach to tune into our intuition and know when to use it.

6.5 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored the concept of the STAR model and how this can assist our clients change the outcomes of reoccurring situations.

To integrate these concepts into your own approach, take a moment to consider the question below:

- ✍ **Reflect on a challenging situation that has recently occurred for you. Applying the STAR model, how might you change the result of this situation?**

Moving through SPACE with our Clients

‘A man is but the product of his thoughts what he thinks, he becomes.’

Mahatma Gandhi

How might we help a client identify an unhealthy situation? Are there any tools that aren't action oriented but allow the client the space to explore what is going on for them? How might we hold such a space? Another great tool we can introduce into our coaching sessions when looking at Cognitive Coaching and helping a client change perspective is the SPACE model.

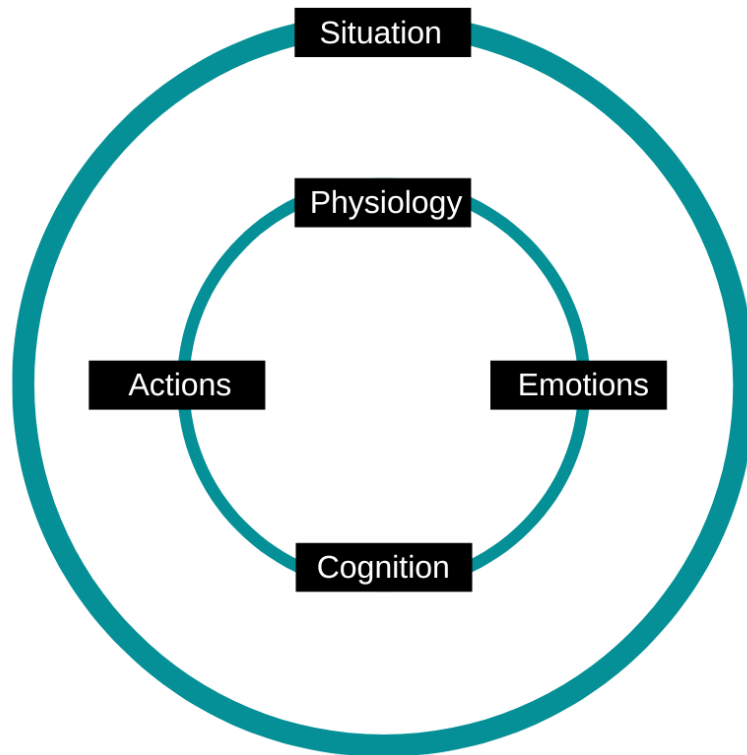
The SPACE Model is used to help the clients gain clarity on their experience of situations and events which allows them to see where changes can be made. This is less action oriented than the STAR model and is more focused on providing an exploratory space for the client. In this chapter, we will take a deeper look into the SPACE Model with some examples and explore how we can use this in our coaching practice.

7.1 What is the SPACE Model?

The SPACE Model is an exploratory tool like that of the STAR model that allows us to work with our clients to develop a bird's-eye view of their experiences. The model focuses on exploring the five dimensions we go through whenever we experience an event in life. By working through these dimensions, the client can discover where changes can be made to improve their experience.

SPACE is an anagram for, situation, physiology, actions, cognitions and emotions.

Figure 8: The SPACE Model



Situation

The first dimension of the SPACE Model is the situation. Here, we work with our clients to explore the situation that keeps presenting itself. It is important at this stage of the model that we gather as much information as possible and really understand the situation from the client's perspective.

Physiology

In this section of the model, we explore what is going on for the client physically in the situation. Does the situation increase their heart rate? Do they get any physical pain? Does their breathing

change? It is important here for us to understand how the client is responding to the situation physically.

Actions

How is the client acting because of the situation? In this section of the model, we must gain an understanding of the types of behaviour and actions the client is taking before, after, and during the situation.

Cognitions

What are the client's thoughts behind the situation? Here, we explore the thought process behind the situation. What thoughts may be leading to the situation, what thoughts are going through the client's mind during the situation, and what thoughts do our clients have when reflecting on the situation? It is important for us to understand what the client is thinking behind the situation.

Emotions

What emotions are evoked for our client from the situation? In this section of the model, we seek to gain a deeper understanding of the client's emotions and feelings towards the situation. What do they feel before the situation occurs, what do they feel during the situation, and how do they feel after?

The aim of the SPACE Model is to guide our clients to a deeper awareness of what is happening for them before, during, and after the situation to allow them to look at where and how changes can be made.

7.2 How to introduce the SPACE Model into our Coaching

Unlike the STAR Model, the SPACE Model is less structured in approach and is much more flexible to use. Once we have

identified the situation, we can start at any other space or point in the model and even ask the client where they would like to start. We can begin with cognitions, move to actions, and end with physiology or we can begin with emotions, move to physiology, and end with cognitions. There is no structure to follow once the situation has been defined.

We may find that we spend more time on certain areas, and it is important for us to bring in our intuition to the space to feel which areas are more important for the client to dive deeper into. Remember the model is used to help the client get that bird's-eye view and deep understanding of what is going on for them through the five dimensions.

Here are the steps we can follow when introducing the SPACE Model into our Coaching Space:

Step 1: Identify a situation that keeps occurring for the client and offer to explore this in depth through a model.

Step 2: Give an overview of the SPACE Model and explain what you will be exploring.

Step 3: Provide the client with a template, a share screen if online or draw the SPACE diagram on a piece of paper, white board or other if you are coaching in person.

Step 4: Begin by capturing the situation in detail and getting an understanding of what is going on. It is important to note that when the client is explaining the situation, thoughts, emotions, physiology might be brought into play. We can begin to put these into their relevant places on the diagram.

Step 5: Ask the client which area of SPACE they would like to explore first and then ask questions on that section.

Step 6: Work through all the dimensions of the model asking questions to dive deep into each section.

Step 7: Once completed, ask the client to reflect on what has been captured. What are their thoughts behind what has been mapped out?

Step 8: Begin to explore where changes can be made with the client and develop an action plan, they wish to commit to. The model in practice may look something like this in a scenario where our client has public speaking anxiety, for example:

1. **Situation:** John, a senior software developer, struggles with presenting his ideas during company-wide meetings. Whenever he is asked to speak in front of a large audience, he feels intense anxiety and tends to rush through his presentation.
2. **Physiology:** John notices his hands shaking, his breath becoming shallow, and his face sweating. He often experiences a tightness in his throat that makes it difficult to speak clearly.
3. **Actions:** When presenting, John speaks too quickly, avoids eye contact with his audience, and misses key details. He sometimes tries to minimise speaking by keeping his contributions short or even passing the responsibility to a colleague.
4. **Cognitions:** John believes he will make mistakes, that others will judge him, and that he is not a strong communicator. He often tells himself:

“I look stupid when I make presentations.”

5. **Emotions:** He feels anxious, self-conscious, and sometimes even embarrassed after his presentations,

especially when he receives little feedback or engagement from the audience.

By mapping out this experience using the SPACE model, we may help John realise that his belief about being a poor speaker reinforces his behaviour of avoiding and rushing his presentations. We can then help him explore small, manageable actions to improve his confidence. Through these small actions, John may recognise that by shifting his focus from fear of judgment to engaging his audience, he can start to feel more in control. He could then commit to practising with a trusted colleague before the next big meeting and use that feedback to improve his delivery.

SPACE is a great tool for our clients to jot down their thoughts and feelings on paper and really helps them make a shift to a more positive perspective that leads to constructive and positive action. At times we might find it beneficial to start with the SPACE model for deeper exploration and then work through the STAR model for more definitive action. As a coach, we can use our intuition to feel when it is best to introduce this tool into our coaching practice.

7.3 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored the concept of the SPACE model and how this helps us explore a reoccurring situation in depth.

To integrate these concepts into your own approach, take a moment to consider the question below:

-  **Consider a situation that may keep presenting itself in your life. Applying the SPACE model, what is going on for you before, during and after the situation?**

The Future Pacing Model

'You are today where your thoughts have brought you; you will be tomorrow where your thoughts take you.'

James Allen

How can we use visualisation in Cognitive Coaching? Are there any tools that can help clients move past limiting thoughts? How can we help clients see opportunities rather than problems? A very powerful exercise we can use in Cognitive Coaching to help clients remove blocks and provide clarity on their vision is that of the 'Future Pacing' model. In this chapter, we will explore the principles behind the future pacing model, how it taps into the power of visualisation to reinforce positive outcomes, and practical ways to integrate it into our coaching practice.

8.1 What is the Future Pacing Model?

Future Pacing is an exercise of taking our clients on an imaginative leap into the future and helping them visualise success. Through the exercise, we help our clients map out a path to a future they desire. It is a useful tool to use where the client feels their vision is blurry or they have several blocks that they appear to be unable to see past.

By taking our client into the future and working backwards on the steps it took them to reach their vision, we remove all limiting beliefs, blockers, and challenges they are currently thinking about when trying to move forward. By being in the future, all challenges have been overcome and we reduce the client's resistance to creating a pathway to their success.

8.2 Using the Future Pacing Model in our Coaching Practice

As we have already learned, we first offer the exercise to the client and briefly explain to them what the future pacing model is about. Once accepted we can further explain how the client will be taken on an imaginative leap into the future to help them gain a clearer pathway to their vision. After explaining, we can then follow the steps below, beginning with a short mindfulness exercise that brings the client to the present moment. We are not likely to use the future pacing model in our first couple of sessions, we should be introducing this exercise once we have a clear understanding of what the client wants to achieve, and it is evident they have obstacles and limited thinking to get there. It is also worth noting that walking through the full model can take around 90 minutes.

Step 1: Walk through a short mindfulness exercise with your client, to help them become more present and focused. This can be any short exercise you feel comfortable delivering. A favourite of mine is a short visualisation with some breath work. We ask the client to first focus on their attention to their breath, closing their eyes and taking some deep inhales and exhales. Once we feel the client is calm and present, we can then hen ask them to visualise something simple like a shape or a beach. We can ask them questions about the shape (colour, style, moving, still etc.) or we can ask them what they see, feel, touch and smell on their beach. The purpose of using a visualisation exercise is to warm their visualisation muscles up for picturing their goal in their mind.

Step 2: Ask the client to choose a spot in the room which will be the future date of when they have achieved their vision. Gain clarity on date, which month and year it will be.

Step 3: When they have settled into the spot, begin to guide your client to visualising their goal by asking them effective questions on their vision. Questions could include:

- What does your vision look like?
- Who is there with you?
- What can you see in front of you?
- How do you feel?
- What do you hear?

It is important to note that the more powerful we make the visualisation for the client through our questions, the more effective the exercise will be. If we rush through this part of the exercise we will struggle to work with the client at each stage. We must take our time, allowing the client the space to visualise.

Step 4: We then anchor the vision by reflecting what the client has shared with us. Again, this is an important step for the power of the exercise, we reflect the information back with energy.

Step 5: We then ask the client to then look over their shoulder (to the past) and to take a step back. Asking the question; 'What was the last major step you did to get to here?' We capture the client's response, confirming to which date they are stepping back to. Our aim is to capture a timeline and noting down each milestone as we work back to the present day.

Step 6: We repeat step 5 until the client reaches the present day. Ensuring to capture a full timeline.

Step 7: When the client reaches the present day, we then explore their timeline with them from the present day to the future date. We ask the client how they feel about the timeline and if they believe it is realistic.

Step 8: We work with the client to make any adjustments to the timeline. Thinking of effective questions around anything that may appear unrealistic or maybe missing from the action plan (without making any assumptions).

Step 9: Finally, we develop an action plan of items the client is willing to commit to from their timeline and establish our role in assisting them on their journey to success. At what points in the action plan would the client like us to check in with them? What are the next sessions with the client going to look at? How do we hold the client accountable?

In practice, this could look something like the following:

Our client Gemma, a mid-level manager in a corporate company, has been feeling stuck in her career. She has a strong desire to transition into a leadership role within the next two years but struggles with self-doubt and uncertainty about how to achieve this. During our coaching session, we introduce the Future Pacing model to help her gain clarity and confidence in her vision.

Step 1: Mindfulness & Visualisation Warm-Up

We guide Gemma through a short mindfulness exercise to bring her into the present moment. She closes her eyes, focuses on her breath, and visualises standing on a peaceful beach. We ask her to describe what she sees, hears, and feels, strengthening her ability to visualise.

Step 2: Choosing the Future Spot

We then ask Gemma to physically move to a spot in the room that represents her future when she has successfully stepped into a leadership role.

Step 3: Deepening the Vision

As Gemma settles into the future spot, we ask the guiding questions:

- What do you see around you in this moment?
- Who is with you?
- What does your day-to-day work life look like?
- How do you feel now that you have achieved this?

Gemma for example, describes sitting in a bright corner office, leading strategy meetings, feeling confident, respected, and fulfilled. She hears positive feedback from colleagues and notices a sense of pride in her work.

Step 4: Anchoring the Vision

We reflect what Gemma has shared, reinforcing her vision with enthusiasm:

"You are in your office, leading with confidence, feeling proud of your achievements. You hear your team acknowledging your leadership skills. You have built strong relationships and are making an impact."

Step 5 & 6: Working Backwards – Building the Timeline

We ask Gemma to take a step back and look over her shoulder:

"What was the last major milestone you achieved before this leadership role?"

Gemma identifies that six-months before, she had successfully led a high-impact project that got her noticed by Directors of the business. We continue stepping Gemma back through the timeline to the present day. Capturing the milestones:

For example:

- **One year before:** She completed a leadership certification.
- **Eighteen months before:** She proactively took on more leadership responsibilities in her current role.
- **Two years before (present day):** She realised her ambition and started working with a coach to develop her skills.

Step 7 & 8: Reviewing & Adjusting the Timeline

Gemma steps back to the present day and looks at the full journey. We ask:

"How does this timeline feel to you? Does it seem realistic?"

She acknowledges that the leadership certification might take longer than expected, so we make the adjustment to her timeline. We also discuss the interview process and application for the leadership job which appeared to be missing through the exercise, making further adjustments to the timeline.

Step 9: Creating an Action Plan & Accountability

We work with Gemma to identify her first actionable steps, and she agrees to:

1. Researching leadership courses this week.
2. Speaking with her manager about growth opportunities next month.
3. Volunteering for a strategic project within the next three months.

We also establish accountability check-ins to track Gemma's progress at key milestones.

As we can see from the example above, the future pacing model is a very powerful visualisation tool that is great for anyone who has a goal or a vision that they wish to achieve. The tool removes limiting beliefs, offers the client an alternative perspective from the future, and provides clarity on their pathway to success. We can use this tool with any client who is unsure on what they need to do to achieve their goal and work with them to gain clarity.

8.3 Limitations of the Future Pacing Model

It is important for us to note the limitations with the future pacing model. Whilst it works great in person, it can lose its power when coaching online. Clients may not have the space to pick a spot

in their room, they may find it uncomfortable standing up on camera and internet issues can sometimes affect the flow of the session. By being mindful of this, we can make adaptations to the model. For example, instead of asking the client to physically get up on a Zoom call, we can ask them to choose an item they have nearby that could represent them. We then ask them to place this item on a spot on their desk which visually represents the future. We then work back asking the client to move the item a space at every milestone.

Another limitation we can often find ourselves in whether coaching online or offline, is that clients will feel the urge to jump back to the present day. If we allow the client to do this and we are jumping to and from the future to the present day, we affect the overall usefulness of the model. If this is happening, then it is a sign that one of two things are going on:

1. The client is struggling to visualise, and their mindset is fixed on the problems in front of them. For example, they know what they need to do, they have an action plan, but they just can't see a way past a hurdle in front of them. Trying the exercise does not work and they keep coming back to the hurdle.
2. We are not asking the questions in a way that holds the visualisation in the future, or we are rushing the exercise and not providing the space for the client to visualise the future. For example, instead of asking 'What do you see? Who is there with you?' we are asking 'Tell me about your goal for march? Who is going to help you achieve this? These questions are asked in a way that will bring the client to the present day and we need to avoid asking questions in this way.


In addition, there is also the limitation that it relies heavily on our client's ability to visualise their future in detail. Some clients may struggle with this, especially if they have difficulty imagining long-term outcomes, lack clarity in their goals, or experience anxiety about the future. For example, this model will not be beneficial for anyone that is diagnosed with aphantasia (the inability to create mental images).

Where we feel like the model maybe limited, we need to look at adapting our approach or an alternative model that would be more beneficial for our client.

8.4 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored the purpose and concept of the Future Pacing model and how to apply this in our practice.

To integrate these concepts into your own approach, take a moment to consider the question below:

-  Give thought to a goal or vision you currently have. In applying the Future Pacing Model to this goal, what does your future pacing timeline look like?**

The DEEP Model

‘The happiness of your life depends upon the quality of your thoughts: therefore, guard accordingly, and take care that you entertain no notions unsuitable to virtue and reasonable nature.’

Marcus Aurelius

What techniques can we apply in coaching where negative thinking has become ingrained into our client’s beliefs? Are there any models we can use to help clients change their beliefs? Is this within the scope of coaching? In Cognitive Coaching we can help our clients begin to change their beliefs by applying what is known as the DEEP model. This model is particularly affective where the client’s beliefs are limiting. In this chapter, we will explore the concept of beliefs and limiting beliefs, the DEEP model, and how we can use this with our clients in our coaching practice.

9.1 What are Beliefs?

In a nutshell, a belief is something that we simply hold to be true. Whether fact or opinion, it is something we internally believe to be a reality. We obtain beliefs from several external sources such as family, culture, personal life experiences, and from those we put into positions of authority.

It is important to note that, beliefs are only true to the believer and are not always a definite reflection of reality and because of this, beliefs can be changed.

A belief may be formed from repeated experiences we encounter and can be tested or challenged. However, even when challenged, our clients may still find evidence and reasoning to support the original belief. So, whilst beliefs can be changed, the journey to removing or replacing beliefs can be a difficult one. However, when beliefs become limiting, we need to embark on the journey of change to achieve all we want to achieve in life.

9.2 What are Limiting Beliefs?

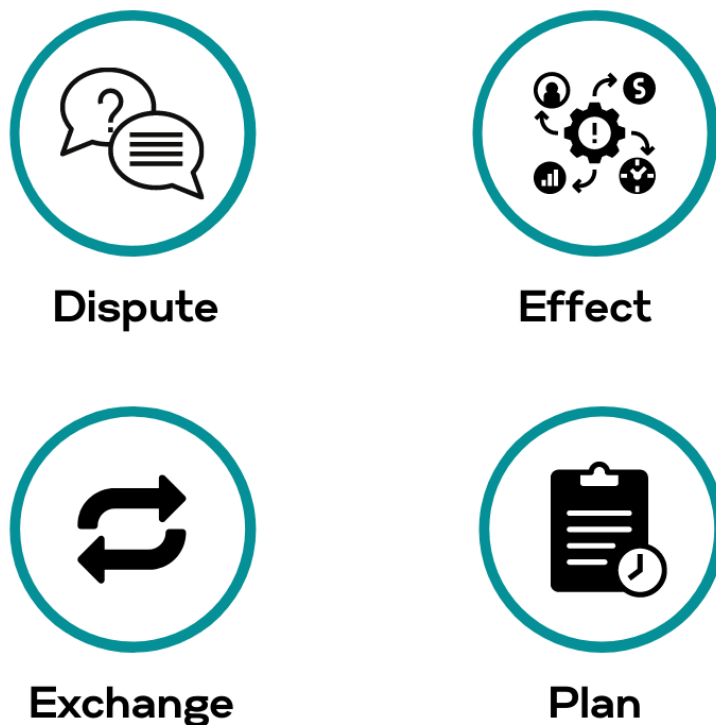
A limiting belief is something we hold to be true in our life, that holds us back from achieving what we want to achieve. These limiting beliefs could be about ourselves, our interactions with others or with life itself. Limiting beliefs have several negative effects on us such as keeping us from making decisions, taking advantage of new opportunities or moving towards our full potential. Ultimately, limiting beliefs cause us to feel stuck, put us into a negative space, and prevent us from living the life we desire.

As a coach, it is our role to help our clients identify their limiting beliefs and work with them to replace these beliefs with more uplifting ones. However, some beliefs can be deep and are not easily changed. To change a limiting belief takes time, work, and commitment. Limiting beliefs can be stubborn and it can be easy for us to fall back on the evidence we created to support them. It is therefore our role to help our clients challenge these beliefs and build new evidence to support them. To do this, we can use the DEEP model.

9.3 What is the DEEP Model?

The DEEP Model is a useful tool we can use in our coaching practice with our clients where limiting beliefs have surfaced. We use the model to help clients challenge and change their limiting beliefs. DEEP is an anagram for: Dispute, Effect, Exchange and Plan.

Figure 9: The DEEP Model



When we use this model with our clients, we walk through the stages of DEEP to help them tackle their limiting belief. We must first identify a limiting belief and then walk through the four stages below. As with all tools, this must be offered to the client first.

Dispute: Challenge the limiting belief

To begin to break down the limiting belief, we must explore and challenge the belief. We can open by asking our client questions such as:

- Where is the belief coming from?
- How might the source of the belief be incorrect?
- How or when might the belief be wrong?
- What evidence does the client have to support the belief?
- How may this evidence be flawed or incorrect?

The purpose of our line of questioning here is to weaken the belief. By opening the client up to look at the possibilities that the belief itself, the evidence, and source of the belief may be false, we begin to break the barriers created by the belief.

Effect: Understanding the impact

After weakening the belief, we must strengthen the reasons for changing it. In this second stage of the DEEP model, we explore the current effect the belief is having on our client's life. We must explore the impact on our clients, both emotionally and practically, by understanding fully the limitations it is creating and its effects. We can think about questions such as:

- How is the belief currently holding you back from what you want to achieve?
- What are you gaining from holding this belief?
- What impact is this belief having on your life?

- What would your life look like if you were to remove this belief?
- Our aim here is to understand our client's limitations and barriers and assess the impact it is having on their life.

Exchange: Replacing the belief

To remove limiting beliefs, it is important to replace them with more positive and constructive beliefs. In this third stage of the DEEP model, we work with our clients to exchange their belief for a better one. The belief new belief must be:

- Positive
- Constructive
- Believable
- Uplifting

It is important that we do not suggest new beliefs to our clients and understand that our role here is to help them discover a new one. We can do this by asking our clients to look and explore alternative beliefs. We can capture the thoughts that arise and then begin to explore each one to look at how the belief might change the client's current situation. Our aim here is to guide our clients to potential new beliefs they can use to exchange. If we feel a little stuck at this stage, we can apply some of the tools we have already explored above for ANTs and PETS in chapter 4.

Plan: Develop a plan to reinforce

At the fourth stage, we work with our clients to experiment the new beliefs identified. For the new beliefs to become part of us, we must tie them to some form of action or behaviour that then becomes a habit and part of our subconscious. Here our aim is

to work with our clients to explore what actions they can take with this new belief and how they can begin to implement it into their life and subconscious.

9.4 How the DEEP Model Might Look Like in Practice

Let's say we have a client, Sarah, who is an entrepreneur. Sarah has been struggling to form deep connections in her relationships. She believes:

"If I open up to others, I will get hurt."

This belief has led her to keep an emotional distance from friends, family, and potential romantic partners, causing feelings of isolation. We decide the DEEP Model could be affective here, we briefly explain the model and offer it to the client. Sarah accepts and we proceed.

Dispute: Challenge the Limiting Belief

Our first step is to dispute the belief. So, we begin by helping Sarah examine the origins of this belief by asking:

- Where did this belief come from?
- Has there ever been a time when you opened and received support instead of pain?
- What evidence do you have that vulnerability always leads to hurt?
- How do others in your life respond when you share your thoughts and feelings?

Through this exploration, Sarah realises that this belief stems from a past breakup where she felt deeply betrayed. However, she acknowledges that she has also had positive experiences where people have supported her when she was vulnerable.

Effect: Understanding the Impact

Now that Sarah has identified where this belief has stemmed from and has acknowledged some positives, we can now explore how this belief is affecting Sarah's life:

- How has this belief impacted your relationships?
- What are you missing out on by holding onto this belief?
- How do you feel when you keep your emotions to yourself?
- What would be possible for you if you allowed yourself to open up more?

Sarah begins to see how her emotional walls have kept her from experiencing meaningful relationships. She realises that while protecting herself from hurt, she has also been preventing herself from feeling deep love and connection.

Exchange: Replacing the Belief

As Sarah increases her awareness of the impact of this belief, we can begin to support Sarah in identifying a new, more constructive belief by asking questions like:

- What alternative belief would allow you to build deeper relationships?

- How would you like to approach vulnerability moving forward?
- Can you think of times when opening up brought positive results?

Sarah decides to replace her limiting belief with:

“Vulnerability is a strength that allows me to build deeper connections.”

Plan: Develop a Plan to Reinforce

Now that we have a new belief, we must help Sarah integrate this into her life, so we help her create an action plan. We ask Sarah what she could do to help strengthen the belief and she agrees to the following actions:

1. Sarah will practise opening up about her thoughts and feelings with a close friend she trusts.
2. She will remind herself that sharing emotions is an act of courage, not weakness and will put post it notes in her home office.
3. She will use self-affirmations, such as "I am safe to express myself."
4. She will reflect on how opening up changes her relationships over time.


By implementing this plan, Sarah begins to experience more fulfilling relationships, realising that vulnerability is not a weakness but a strength. We agree to check in with Sarah

between now and the next session to see how she is getting on and agree to review in the next session.

9.5 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored limiting beliefs and applying the DEEP model in our coaching practice.

To integrate these concepts into your own approach, take a moment to consider the question below:

-  Reflecting on a limiting belief you may have, apply the stages of the DEEP model to explore the belief further. What does your new belief look like and what actions might you take to integrate this into your life?**

An Introduction to Transactional Analysis

'The past effects people, some let it decide who they are, while others make it part of what they will do.'

Eric Berne

Can we apply any models from the psychological studies on Transactional Analysis? Are there any tools we can apply to help clients become aware of how they transact with others? Where can we start with this? As a coach we can explore concepts and models that sit behind the of 'Transactional Analysis'. Transactional Analysis is a psychological theory with roots in psychoanalytic concepts, used in therapy to explore patterns of communication between us and others

Transactional Analysis was originally developed by the Psychiatrist Eric Berne (author of *Games People Play*), in which he began to examine personal relationships and interactions. Influenced by Sigmund Freud's theories of personality and adding his own observations of human interaction, Berne developed the concept of Transactional Analysis. In Coaching, Transactional Analysis can be used to identify client's interactions and communications with the purpose of establishing and reinforcing the idea that everyone is valuable and has the capacity for positive change and personal growth.

In the following chapters of this book, we will explore concepts such as Strokes, Ego-States, Life Scripts and Injunctions and Counter-Injunctions which form part of Transactional Analysis.

10.1 How Transactional Analysis has developed over Time

Inspired by Freud, primarily his belief that the human psyche is having multiple different aspects that interact to produce a variety of emotions and behaviour, Berne developed an approach in the 1950s that he described as 'Extra-Freudian'.

Holding the need to build upon the concepts Freud introduced and following Freud's idea of the existence of the Id (emotional and irrational component), Ego (rational component), and Superego (moral component) as different and unobservable factions of personality, Berne developed his own ego states of Parent, Adult, and Child (explained in detail later in this book).

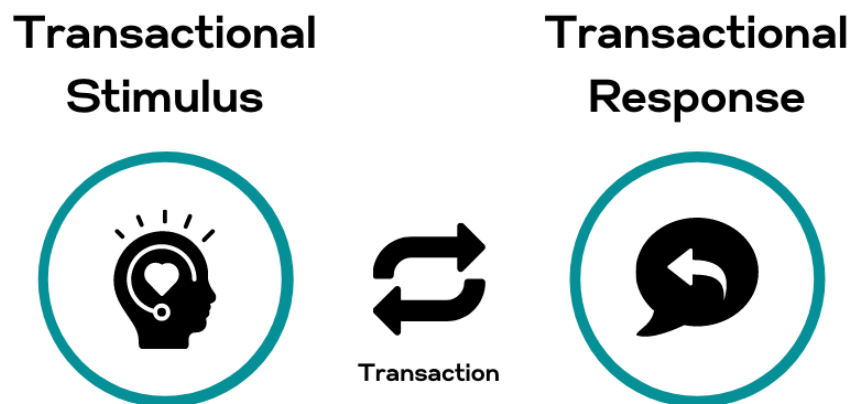
Berne also explored several complexities of human communication. He highlighted that 'Strokes' such as facial expressions, body language, gesture, and tone may be held as more important by the receiver, than any spoken words. He also noted in his book 'Games People Play' that people may hold ulterior motives behind the messages they communicate.

10.2 What Forms a Transaction?

A transaction is any communication between two people. As defined by Berne, 'a basic unit of social intercourse'. The communication can be either verbal or non-verbal, that is in the form of gesture, body language, and facial expressions.

For a Transaction to be formed, there must be a 'Transactional Stimulus' or a 'Sender' and a 'Transactional Response' or a 'Receiver'.

Figure 10: Formation of a Transaction



Under his concept of the 'Ego States', Berne defines three kinds of transactions, 'Complimentary', 'Crossed', and 'Ulterior'. We will explore these in detail in the next chapter, but for now, it is good to note that there are three types of transactions.

10.3 Transactional Analysis in Coaching

As mentioned, Transactional Analysis is a psychodynamic concept that is used in therapy. However, we can apply the concepts and models from this theory in our coaching space to help our clients move past their challenges. As with all models in Cognitive Coaching, we use them differently to how they are applied in therapy, firstly offering the concept/model to the client and secondly using it to bring awareness and self-discovery to the client rather than to provide advice on how they are and should be communicating.

In coaching, we can use Transactional Analysis to:

1. Identify how our clients are communicating with others.


2. Understand which 'Ego State' they are primarily communicating from to others (Adult, Parent, Child).
3. Understand their reactions or 'Transactional Response' to the communication of others.
4. Explore to what extent the client may feel controlled by the 'Transactional Stimulus' of others.
5. Guide our clients to the 'Adult State' which will lead to more empowered responses and communication with others.

Applying Transactional Analysis into our coaching can help us develop an area of expertise. We can choose to specifically apply the work of Eric Berne and others as a niche, working to help our clients improve communication and ultimately their relationship with others. Some coaches are choosing to label themselves a TA Coach which focuses on just that.

10.4 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored a short introduction into Transactional Analysis and the work of Eric Berne through the lens of transactional stimuli and response.

To integrate these concepts into your own approach, take a moment to consider the question below:

-  **Reflecting on this chapter and Transactional Analysis, how important do you believe the relationships we have with others impacts our overall fulfilment in life?**

The PAC Model – Our Ego States

‘A bad day for your ego is a great day for your soul.’

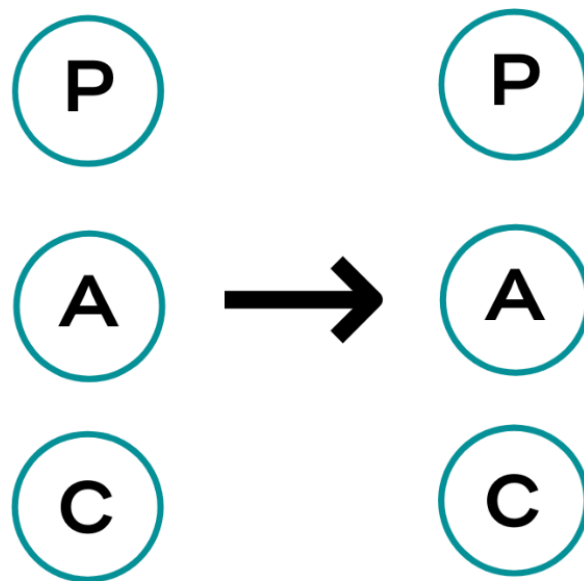
Jillian Michaels

How are relationships affected by our ego? What models can we begin to apply through Transactional Analysis coaching? What are ego states? The ‘PAC’ model also known as ‘Ego States’ forms the foundation of Eric Berne’s work behind Transactional Analysis. As mentioned above, this forms an extension’ of Sigmund Freud’s idea of the Id, Ego and Superego. When using the PAC model, we focus on the impact of our client’s feelings, which are being triggered by their internal personality structure and how they send and receive messages to others through their ‘Transactional Stimuli’ and ‘Transactional Responses’. In this chapter, we will explore the PAC model, the three different ego states and how we can apply this in our coaching practice.

11.1 What is the PAC Model?

The PAC model, developed by Eric Berne, offers a framework for understanding human communication and interaction. It divides communication into three primary components: Parent, Adult, and Child. The PAC Model is invaluable in coaching as it helps us identify which part of a client’s personality is driving their responses and how we can encourage more balanced, productive communication.

Figure 11: The PAC Model



Each of the three ego states above determine how we act and think which ultimately influences how we interact with others.

11.2 The Parent Ego State

The Parent Ego State forms the behaviours and attitudes that we have observed and copied from our parents, carers or authoritative figures growing up. The spoken and unspoken rules we adopted from those in childhood. What we believe we 'should' do in life. When the Parent Ego State is activated, we will act in ways that our authority figures will have acted. The main concept here is that we will have transformed into our own parent, however, everyone will create a different Parent Ego State that forms them to act in their own unique way.

It is important to note that the Parent Ego State holds different 'functional ego states' that can lead to either positive or negative behaviour.

Positive Parent Ego State: This will be of a structuring and nurturing nature. Looking to build others up from a place of authority and nurture them.

Negative Parent Ego State: This will take the form of being critical and smothering. Coming from a place of authority that criticises others or smothers them by being too 'Protective'.

The type of Parent Ego State that we communicate from can determine the type of Ego State others will respond to us with.

11.3 The Child Ego State

The Child Ego State is formed by the behaviours and attitudes we have preserved from actual childhood; it also holds all the impulses we are born with. The Child Ego State stems from the needs and wants of us as a child. The Child Ego State also contains 'recordings' of childhood memories and experiences. Therefore, when we feel and act as we did when we were young, we are experiencing our Child Ego State.

It is important to note that like the Parent Ego State, the Child Ego State also holds different 'functional ego states' that can lead to either positive or negative behaviour.

Positive Child Ego State: This will be of a co-operative and creative nature. Where we co-operate to the communication of others and are playful in a creative way.

Negative Child Ego State: This will take the form of being resistant and immature. We will be rebellious towards communication with others and our playful manner will be in more of an immature way.

As with the Parent Ego State, the type of Child Ego State that we communicate from can determine the type of Ego State others will respond to us with.

11.4 The Adult Ego State

Our Adult Ego State is the logical, rational, and clear-sighted ego state. Similar to Freud's concept of the 'Ego' being at the centre of rational thought to our Id and Superego, our Adult Ego State sits at the centre of our rational thought between our Parent and Child Ego States.

The Adult Ego State is the state in which we should always seek to operate from. The reason being is that the Adult Ego State is not based on responses from past experiences but is the set of our feelings, attitudes and behaviours that are in direct response to the here-and-now. The more present we are, the more we can operate from the Adult Ego State. As a coach, this is the state we should seek to be operating from and the state in which we guide our clients to with regards to their communication with others.

11.5 The Three Types of Transactions under the PAC Model

As explained above, a transaction is any communication between two people. As defined by Berne, 'a basic unit of social intercourse'. In applying the PAC Model, we can identify three types of transactions:

1. Complimentary Transactions
2. Crossed Transactions
3. Ulterior Transactions

Complimentary Transactions

A complimentary transaction occurs when the communication lines run parallel and the person sending the message gets the predicted response from the other person. This could take the form of Adult to Adult, Parent to Child, Child to Parent, etc. Here are some examples:

Adult to Adult Transaction: A Manager acts from the Adult Ego State to communicate change to his employees, sticking to facts and figures, and explaining the reason for change. In doing so, he seeks a response triggered by the Adult Ego State of the Employee. The Employee reacts from the Adult Ego State, being open and accepting of change with maybe a few questions of clarity. Here, the communication lines run parallel from Adult to Adult as the Manager received their predicted response.

Child to Parent Transaction: A person is feeling sick and in operating from a Child Ego State, communicates this in a way to their partner that they need taking care of, seeking to trigger their partner's Parent Ego State. Their partner responds from their Parent Ego State and takes the approach of nurturing and taking care of the person. Here, the communication lines still run parallel, and the person received their desired and predicted response.

Parent to Child Transaction: A person is annoyed at the mess within the home. They approach their partner from a Parent Ego State and asks them to tidy their mess and clean the kitchen with the expectation to receive a response from their partner's Child Ego State. The partner moves into a place of apologising and feeling ashamed and does as they were told by cleaning up their mess. Here, the communication lines run parallel, and the person receives their predicted response and end result.

The other types of Complimentary Transactions are parent to parent, child to child, and any other transaction where the 'Sender' receives a response from the 'Receiver' that they predicted. We can always tell when we are having a complimentary transaction with others when we feel:

1. OK and comfortable with the communication.
2. Understood and that we have been heard.
3. Like the conversation runs smoothly.

Crossed Transactions

Crossed transactions occur when communication lines are crossed. Where the Transactional Stimulus triggers a Transactional Response that was unexpected. In other words, where we have predicted response, but the receiver responds in a completely different manner. For example:

Sender Prediction: Adult to Adult
Receiver Response: Adult to Child

Sender Prediction: Child to Parent
Receiver Response: Child to Adult

Let's use the example of a relationship in which the partners own a joint bank account. One partner notices that the other has been making withdrawals from the account and is unsure of what the money is being spent on. The partner decides to approach the other from an Adult Ego State with the prediction that the other partner will respond from the same Adult Ego State

The partner approaches the situation by explaining their observations of the withdrawals and says:

‘I was just wondering where you had been spending the money and if you are ok financially?’

However, instead of receiving a constructive Adult to Adult Ego state transaction, which was expected by the partner, the other reacts from the Child Ego State by responding with:

‘Why are you checking my finances? This is my money; I can spend it on what I want! Why do you have to always check up on me?’

This response will then cause a ‘Crossed Transaction’. The partner which instigated the conversation was predicting and Adult Ego State response but received a Child Ego State response. The lines of communication were not parallel, and the miscommunication may make the conversation feel uncomfortable and can ultimately force the original partner into another ego state.

We can also illustrate a Cross Transaction using the example above where one partner is sick and is operating from a Child Ego State, predicting a response from the other partner of a Parent Ego State in hope that they will be taken care of whilst sick. However, if the partner responds from an Adult Ego State by saying something like ‘Ah you are fine. Get some rest and drink some water, you will feel better tomorrow’ the lines of communication will not run parallel, and a cross transaction will occur. Again, this could cause the conversation to feel uncomfortable.

Psychological studies and research have shown that many relationship breakdowns are caused by a series of cross transactions. In any relationship, communication is key. The

more cross transactions we have, the more risk we are at of a communication breakdown and a high impact on our relationship. It is therefore important that we make shifts in our communication and ensure we are always operating through complimentary transactions. It is our role as a coach to help guide our clients from crossed transactions to complimentary ones.

Ulterior Transactions

Ulterior transactions are the most complex type of transaction when it comes to Transactional Analysis. It maybe that therapy could be a better option for any client that we feel is operating from a series of ulterior transactions.

An ulterior transaction is a transaction that appears on surface level to be a 'complimentary transaction' but at a deeper level holds an ulterior motive. The surface level transaction holds the 'social message' whilst the deeper level carries with it, a 'psychological message'. When we explore this type of transaction, we uncover manipulation, passive aggressiveness, and unauthentic behaviours. There is a lot of psychological studies on this type of transaction and in his book 'Games People Play' Eric Berne covers his theory on this in detail. We will keep the depth of this psychology at a high level but if you are interested, we have provided further reading into this in Annex A: Additional Reading.

At a high level, people begin to form ulterior transactions because they are unable to express themselves freely. This could be due to several reasons, potentially stemming from childhood. If we have been brought up in an environment that has taught us to suppress our emotions (i.e. the 'stiff upper lip' mentality that we need 'to get on with it' and be strong) or we are in an environment/relationship that we can't fully express

ourselves, then we can find our communication with others to be of a social level, holding on to deeper psychological messages we are not saying.

Ulterior transactions can take the form of purposeful manipulation or passive aggressiveness, or it could be subconsciously expecting others to 'read our minds' or understand how we think from our unspoken words. The latter may be caused out of fear or lack of self-esteem and confidence.

As a coach, it is important for us to understand this type of transaction to bring deeper self-awareness and discovery to our clients and help them understand where others may be transacting with them, or they may be transacting with others by way of ulterior transactions. As mentioned, a client that is communicating through ulterior transactions may find better support through therapy rather than coaching and this is something we must keep in mind through our coaching sessions to stay in line with our ethics.

11.6 Using the PAC Model in our Coaching Practice

As coaches, our responsibility is to ensure we offer the PAC model in a way that promotes self-discovery. Instead of defining for our client's which ego state they are in, we encourage them to explore this for themselves. We can facilitate this process by guiding them through thoughtful questions that open the door for them to reflect on their responses and behaviour. For example, we might ask:

“What ego state do you think you're operating from right now?”

“How do you feel during this interaction - do you notice any shift in your approach or attitude?”

One practical application of the PAC model in coaching is to use it as a reflective tool when a client faces challenging interactions, such as in a difficult conversation at work or with family. By guiding them to identify the ego states they are drawing from, clients can increase their self-awareness, enabling them to adjust their behaviour in future interactions. In these conversations, we can ask questions such as:

“What type of transaction do you feel is happening right now?”

“Are you speaking from your adult state, or do you feel your parent or child taking over?”

This inquiry helps clients gain clarity on how their responses and the responses of others shape their relationships.

By using the PAC model to guide clients towards their own answers, we empower them to take ownership of their behaviour and communication patterns. As a coach, our role is to facilitate this process by providing the model as a resource and encouraging clients to apply it in ways that bring about positive change and growth. We move away from advising clients on how they should behave, and instead, we help them uncover and integrate healthier communication patterns that align with their values and objectives.

11.7 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored ego states and the PAC model, looking at how we transact with others and the different types of transactions that can form.

To integrate these concepts into your own approach, take a moment to consider the question below:

- ✍ **Reflecting on this chapter, consider someone who you feel you often have difficult conversations with, this could be a parent, a boss or a friend. How might your ego state or the ego state of this individual be affecting your communication with each other?**

Understanding Strokes in Coaching

‘For certain fortunate people there is something which transcends all classifications of behaviour, and that is awareness; something which rises above the programming of the past, and that is spontaneity; and something that is more rewarding than games, and that is intimacy.’

Eric Berne

How can we explore Transactional Analysis a little deeper? Are there any more concepts we can consider? What other theories does Eric Berne discuss? Another concept that is important for us to understand when exploring Transactional Analysis is that of ‘Strokes’, how we are recognised by others in our day to day living. In this chapter, we will explore the theory of ‘Strokes and how we can use apply the concept in our coaching practice.

12.1 What are Strokes?

In short, a ‘Stroke’ is the most basic unit of recognition as defined by Eric Berne in his work behind Transactional Analysis. This could be a smile, a nod, a gesture or words. Strokes are something we as humans spend most of our time subconsciously seeking. Imagine going about your days and not receiving a single recognition from any other human being? How would that make you feel? It would most probably make you feel like a ghost, unwanted or non-existent. Strokes are what subconsciously connect us to other human beings. They could also be the beginning to long lasting and strong relationships. Whether that be a smile to the attractive person across a bar, a firm handshake to a new potential business prospect or just that

simple kind gesture to a stranger, strokes make us feel connected to life and they make us feel significant and valued.

We all need strokes to feel like we are alive. Strokes can be:

1. Positive and Negative
2. Verbal and Non-Verbal
3. Unconditional and Conditional
4. Internal and External

Positive Strokes: Strokes that we find pleasant.

For example, we cook our partner a dinner after a long day, and they respond:

“This meal is amazing. Thank you for putting so much love into it - I really appreciate you.”

We receive a pleasant stroke and acknowledgment.

Negative Strokes: Strokes that we find unpleasant or painful.

For example, we respond harshly to our child for forgetting to lock the front door. We respond:

“You always forget to lock the door - what’s wrong with you?”

Our child feels hurt or ashamed, but still receives attention (a stroke), that is negative.

Verbal: Strokes that are spoken. Our words.

Examples of positive verbal strokes:

- **“I really appreciate your help with that today.”**
- **“You did a fantastic job on your presentation.”**
- **“I enjoy spending time with you.”**
- **“Thank you for listening - I feel heard.”**
- **“You handled that situation really well.”**

These types of strokes build confidence, connection, and motivation. On the other hand, negative verbal strokes may look something like:

- **“You never get things right, do you?”**
- **“That’s a stupid idea.”**
- **“I’m disappointed in you.”**
- **“Why do you always mess things up?”**
- **“You’re being too sensitive.”**

These still acknowledge us, but in a damaging way. In some environments, we may become accustomed to receiving mostly negative verbal strokes and even seek them if positive ones are rare.

Non-Verbal: Strokes that are unspoken. A smile, a nod, a handshake. These can also be positive or negative. Positive non-verbal strokes could look like:

- A warm smile when someone enters the room.
- A nod of encouragement while someone is speaking.
- A high-five after a shared success.
- A gentle pat on the back for reassurance or praise.
- Maintaining eye contact to show interest and presence.
- Offering a hug to show care or comfort.

- Leaning in slightly during conversation to show attentiveness.

These gestures silently communicate respect, warmth, appreciation, and presence. On the negative side, these may look like:

- Crossed arms and a cold expression during a conversation.
- An eye roll in response to someone's comment.
- Turning away or avoiding eye contact when someone is speaking.
- Sighing loudly in frustration.
- Tapping fingers impatiently while waiting.
- Shrugging dismissively when someone shares a concern.
- Walking away mid-conversation without explanation.

Even though unspoken, these actions communicate messages that can deeply affect how we feel. They can show recognition or rejection.

Unconditional: Strokes relating to our qualities. These strokes affirm who we are, regardless of what we do.

- **“You’re such a kind person.”**
- **“I really appreciate your honesty.”**
- **“You have a calming presence.”**
- **“I admire your sense of humour.”**
- **A warm smile or hug simply because someone walked in.**
- **Maintaining friendly body language with someone even when they're not performing or achieving anything.**

These types of strokes develop our self-worth and security, as they aren't dependent on performance or conditions. They are unconditional. However, we can also encounter unconditional negative strokes. These can communicate disapproval of who we are, not what we've done.

- **“You're too sensitive.”**
- **“You're just not very likeable.”**
- **“You always make things awkward.”**
- **A disapproving look every time someone enters a room.**
- **Withdrawing warmth or connection for no clear behavioural reason.**

These can be damaging, especially if repeated over time, as they challenge our core identity rather than offering constructive feedback on behaviour.

Conditional: Strokes in exchange for something we do, or we have done. When positive, these recognise or affirm something we have done.

- **“You did a great job on that presentation.”**
- **“I really liked how you handled that situation with your colleague.”**
- **“You've been so consistent with your journaling - well done!”**
- **A thumbs-up after someone shares a thoughtful point in a meeting.**
- **Clapping or cheering when someone achieves something.**

These strokes encourage and reinforce specific behaviours, making us more likely to repeat them. However, when we

encounter negative conditional strokes, these point out something we have done that is seen as unhelpful, inappropriate, or incorrect.

- **“You were quite impatient with that customer.”**
- **“That wasn’t your best work.”**
- **“You interrupted quite a few times in that conversation.”**
- **A sigh or shake of the head after someone finishes speaking.**
- **Withholding praise after a task was completed poorly.**

Though potentially useful for learning and growth, these strokes need to be delivered with care and clarity. It is important for us to note that in coaching, it is important that negative conditional strokes are reframed as constructive feedback to support development, rather than shame or discourage our clients.

Internal: Strokes delivered by us. Self-praise, fantasies. When positive, these are uplifting thoughts, self-praise, or encouraging fantasies we generate within ourselves.

- **“I handled that conversation really well.”**
- **“I’m proud of how far I’ve come.”**
- **Imagining ourselves succeeding in a future goal—like giving a powerful talk or achieving something meaningful.**
- **Giving ourselves a mental pat on the back after completing a task.**
- **Smiling in the mirror and thinking, “I’ve got this.”**

These strokes support self-belief, confidence, and resilience but if overused, present the risk of increasing our ego. Additionally, when negative, these can involve self-blame, self-doubt, or painful inner dialogue:

- **“I always mess things up.”**
- **“Why did I say that? That was so stupid.”**
- **Replaying a mistake in our head and cringing repeatedly.**
- **Fantatising about a worst-case scenario happening to us.**
- **Feeling undeserving of success or kindness.**

These strokes can sap our energy, erode our self-esteem, and reinforce limiting beliefs. It is important that as coaches we acknowledge the importance of internal dialogue and how we talk to ourselves. Considering also how our clients inner dialogue and how that may be impacting their goals.

External: Strokes delivered by someone else. When positive, these strokes are affirming, energising, and usually make us feel seen and valued:

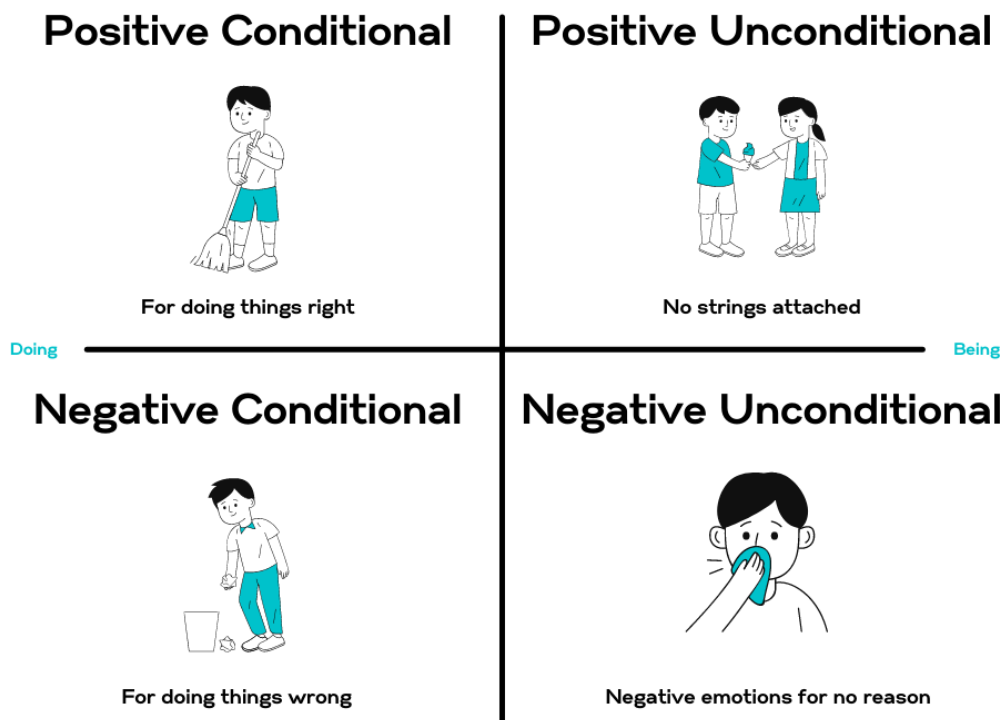
- A colleague says, “You did an excellent job on that report.” **(Verbal and conditional)**
- A friend gives us a warm smile and a hug when we arrive. **(Non-verbal and unconditional)**
- Someone thanks us sincerely for our help. **(Verbal and conditional)**
- A stranger holds the door open for us and nods kindly. **(Non-verbal and unconditional)**
- Our partner says, “I love the way you care for others.” **(Verbal and unconditional)**

When negative, these are unpleasant, hurtful or devaluing and can lead to disconnection or self-doubt if internalised.

- Someone says, “You’re always late. You never take things seriously.” **(Verbal and conditional)**
- We are ignored in a group conversation. **(Non-verbal and unconditional, felt as rejection)**
- A manager frowns and walks away when you present your idea. **(Non-verbal and conditional)**
- A friend criticises your outfit with a sarcastic tone. **(Verbal and conditional)**

Studying and understanding the different types of strokes can help shape our questioning and develop awareness for our clients.

Figure 12: Types of Strokes



12.2 How Strokes Reinforce Behaviour

One starting point to understand as a coach is that any stroke is preferable than receiving no stroke at all. As humans, we are programmed to prefer negative strokes than to receive no strokes at all. This can cause us to fall into patterns of behaviour to receive strokes. When a behaviour is awarded by a stroke, this reinforces the behaviour, and we will more likely repeat the behaviour to receive further strokes. We consistently chase that feeling of significance and value. If we do not receive enough positive strokes to fulfil our needs, then we will start seeking negative strokes. This can cause us to fall into a negative behaviour loop. The quality and intensity of the strokes will determine the time of behaviour patterns we fall into.

This concept is particularly valuable in coaching, as it helps us recognise how clients may unconsciously seek validation through unhelpful behaviours. If a client continually experiences negative strokes (such as criticism or rejection) yet finds these more reinforcing than being ignored, they may persist in patterns that do not serve them. As coaches, our role is to bring awareness to these patterns and support clients in reshaping their relationship with strokes. By helping them identify and actively put their energy to more positive strokes, we can guide them toward healthier ways of seeking recognition, with an aim to break cycles of negative reinforcement.

12.3 Non-Genuine Strokes

Sometimes strokes that are given are genuine or sometimes they may fall into one of the additional two types of strokes identified by Berne in his studies: Counterfeit or Plastic. These are forms of strokes that are not genuine.

Counterfeit: Strokes that are given as positive but are then taken away again. Some examples of counterfeit strokes:

- **"You're so talented, but it's such a shame you don't use it more."** (Verbal, conditional) This seems like a compliment at first, but the "but" immediately negates the positive message, leaving us feeling like we're not doing enough with our talents.
- **"I love how thoughtful you are... when you're not too busy."** (Verbal, conditional) At first, this sounds like praise, but the insincere element implies that our thoughtfulness is inconsistent, conditional or scarce, making us feel less valued.
- **"You're great at this, but I think I could have done it better."** (Verbal, conditional) The initial praise is quickly undermined by the comparison, leaving us feel that our efforts aren't truly appreciated.

Counterfeit strokes undermine self-esteem and trust. While they initially seem like affirmations, they leave us feeling insecure, as though our worth is conditional and not truly recognised. They can confuse us, making us feel as though we are being praised but also criticised at the same time. They are often passive-aggressive because they appear to offer praise on the surface, but subtly undermine us with hidden criticism. This creates a sense of confusion, as we may struggle to accept the positive message because of the underlying negativity. At times, counterfeit strokes can also be seen as egotistical, as the giver may use these strokes to subtly assert their own superiority or control. By offering praise but following it with a hidden criticism, they may be positioning themselves above us with judgment, which shifts the focus from genuine compliment to their own standards or preferences.

Plastic: Insincere positive strokes, given to look positive on the surface. Some examples of plastic strokes:

- **“I’m really impressed, I suppose.”** The word “suppose” indicates that the giver doesn’t truly mean the compliment, making it feel more like a formality than a sincere acknowledgment.
- **“I’d love to help, but I’m so busy.”** While this might be offered with the intention of sounding caring, it can feel like a passive way of avoiding offering real help, masking a lack of commitment.
- **“That’s good, I guess, but it’s not like you did anything extraordinary.”** Here, the positive stroke is undermined by the comment that downplays the accomplishment, offering a half-hearted compliment that is fake.

Plastic strokes are insincere forms of positive feedback, often given with the intention of appearing supportive or encouraging without genuinely meaning it. They are typically shallow and lack authenticity, serving more as a way for the giver to appear positive, rather than offering true recognition or appreciation. A case of the comment being more about how the giver ‘looks’ or is perceived rather than the stroke itself. These strokes tend to feel hollow or forced, as if they are meant as fake or to manipulate, rather than truly acknowledge our worth or achievements. Because of their insincerity, plastic strokes can leave us feeling negative or disconnected, as they we tend to sense the lack of genuine emotion behind the words or gestures.

12.4 Receiving Strokes

We all receive strokes differently and depending on our values, different kind of strokes will mean more to us than others. The quality we put on strokes comes from what drives our behaviour in life and the type of validation/significance we seek. A few points to think about and consider when looking at how we receive strokes are:

1. What strokes are we familiar with and do we tend to devalue these?
2. What strokes do we not receive that we would like to receive?
3. What strokes do we secretly want but are not receiving?
4. Who do we find ourselves receiving strokes from (positive or negative)?
5. Who would we like to receive strokes from?

This gives us a good starting point to analyse and explore where we can build our positive selves through strokes. We can consider what changes we need to make or actions we can take. We will explore how we can apply this with our clients below.

It is also worth noting that in modern day times social media has rapidly increased the giving and receiving of strokes. Likes, comments and engagement on social media platforms provides 'digital' strokes that become more difficult to understand. We can never truly tell whether the reactions we get on our posts and the messages we receive in our inbox, are genuine. The concepts of 'Ghosting' (where someone builds an online connection with another and then completely deletes themselves from their lives like they never existed or were a 'ghost') and 'Catfishing' (where someone builds an online connection with another pretending to be someone else through a fake profile) demonstrate the impact and scale of non-genuine strokes online and how these can truly effect-us.

Unfortunately, younger generations care a lot for strokes on social media and we live in a society where many measure their self-worth based on the size of their social media following. Noting this as a coach allows us the opportunity to challenge our clients and begin to explore how they can redefine their self-worth, stepping away from a virtual world.

12.5 Using Strokes in Coaching

As a coach, particularly one who works within Transactional Analysis, strokes can be a useful concept to help us understand our client's behaviour, bringing deeper self-discovery, and guiding them to navigate through their patterns of behaviour. For us to use the concept effectively, we must first ensure to fully understand the strokes in detail. Once we understand the different types, how they arise and curiously explore this with our clients, we can then:

- Identify the types of strokes the client is currently receiving. Explore if this is leading to any reinforced behaviour.
- Identify any strokes that the client may be seeking and why. Explore whether these are positive or negative.
- Explore how the strokes maybe causing any ineffective patterns of behaviour. Working to explore how the client can break these patterns or navigate to a more positive behaviour.


The concept of strokes can be explained to the client, and we can work to identify the types of strokes they receive and what behaviours they could be leading to. Helping them move away from negative strokes and exploring more positive strokes, with

an aim to help build a positive self and reinforce more positive behaviours to help them achieve their goals and coaching outcomes.

12.6 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored the concept of strokes, the different types of strokes and how to apply these in coaching.

To integrate these concepts into your own approach, take a moment to consider the question below:

-  Reflecting on this chapter, think about the strokes you give and receive in your own life from those you interact with daily. What can you note down about yourself when analysing the strokes you give and receive?**

Life Scripts, Injunctions, Counter-Injunctions, and Programmes

‘Everyone carries his parents around inside of him.’

Eric Berne

Is our behaviour driven by something deeper? How far can we explore our client’s past? Where is the line between therapy and coaching? Our behaviour can be driven by something a little deeper than strokes or negative thinking. Eric Berne explains that we all have a defined ‘Life Script’ that plays a role in our patterns of behaviour. In this chapter, we will explore the concepts of Life Scripts, Injunctions, and Counter-Injunctions going a little further into psychological concepts but exploring it from a level that we can apply as a coach. We need to always remember we are not therapists and must remain within our competencies as a coach.

13.1 Understanding Life Scripts

The concept of a ‘Life Script’ is that we all create our own story or script in the early years of our life. Eric Berne suggests that our personal script is formed in the first 4 years of our life and is then enhanced up to the age of 12. He defined three key scripts in his work:

The Winner: Where the protagonist (ourselves) achieves the stated outcome of what we set out to achieve. For example, maybe we always wanted to become a teacher. Encouraged by

our parents and supported by positive feedback at school, we stayed focused on our goal. Despite setbacks and moments of doubt, we worked hard, got our teaching degree, and now teach in a school that we love. We set our goal and we achieved it.

The Loser: Where the protagonist (ourselves) fails to achieve their aims and purpose. For example, maybe we always dreamed of setting up our own business. But growing up, we often heard messages like “business is too risky” and “you’re better off playing it safe.” Despite having talent and passion, we kept second-guessing ourselves and never took the leap. Years later, we got stuck in a job we dislike, watching others succeed with ideas like ours. We are feeling unfulfilled, believing deep down that we were never meant to succeed.

Non-Winning: Where the person is not challenged. So, they do not lose but equally do not win either. For example, we have worked in the same comfortable office role for over a decade. We do what is expected of us, never push for promotion, and avoid taking risks. While we are not unhappy, we might often wonder what might have been if we had stretched ourselves further. We are not failing, but we are not really progressing either. We are just coasting through life without challenge or growth, and it is not having that much of an impact on our feelings.

According to Berne, the type of script we adopt starts in childhood where we begin to form perceptions of ourselves and of the world around us, turning them into a narrative about what we can and will do in our life. These scripts then continue to play a large part on the decisions we make and have a deep and unconscious effect on how we live our lives. These scripts determine what we think we can and cannot achieve in life and create and develop our self-image. Most of us do not realise that we have a life script at all.

Our life scripts are most often shaped by parents, mentors, and other family members at a young age, whose life scripts were shaped by their parents and so on, through generations. In this way, it can be said that 'we become a product of our family's history'. Other factors that can play a role in shaping our Life Script are culture, society, environment, and peers. Life scripts can be vague, or they can be very detailed. They can limit us or equally they can be very empowering.

Development and refinement of our life script occurs from the messages communicated to us by our parents and their ego states. Bringing in the three types of ego states as discussed above (Child, Parent and Ego), Berne suggests three types of messages we receive from these states:

Counter-Injunctions – Parent Messages
Programmes – Adult Messages
Injunctions – Child Messages

The messages we receive throughout childhood will determine the foundations of our script. Our script can be refined throughout life as we pick up messages from mentors and teachers. In addition to the three types of messaging above, we can also develop our script by:

Modelling: Observing the ways adults and peers behave.

Attributions: Being told that we are like someone or seeing similar attributes in others.

Suggestions: Encouragement such as 'always try your best' or hints such as 'you are not good enough'.

By understanding our life script, the types of messaging we received while growing up and now in our adulthood, we can begin to understand and explore our patterns of behaviour. In coaching, we can help a client explore and understand their life script, as an awareness tool to spark change.

13.2 Injunctions – Child Messages

Eric Berne defines Injunctions as messages we receive that tell us not to behave in a certain way and play a key role in shaping our life script. Injunctions place limits and constraints on us as children which we can then carry forward into adulthood. Below are 18 examples of potential injunctions we may have heard while growing up.

- Don't
- Don't be
- Don't be close
- Don't be separate from me
- Don't be you
- Don't need
- Don't think
- Don't feel
- Don't trust
- Don't be well
- Don't belong
- Don't be the sex you are
- Don't be a child
- Don't grow up
- Don't succeed
- Don't be important
- Don't want
- Don't be well or sane

As you will feel by reading the above, injunctions can lead to us to create limiting beliefs. Beliefs that have been engrained on us by our parents and mentors while growing up. To get a deeper insight of these injunctions and further our understanding, I recommend reading *Changing Lives Through Redecision Therapy* by Robert Goulding, MD and Mary McClure Goulding, MSW where they go into detail on each of these injunctions and give examples of expressions to look for. For the purposes of this

book, I merely want to provide you with a basic understanding of the concept for awareness.

13.3 Counter-Injunctions – Parent Messages

Counter-Injunctions are verbal script messages from our parents telling us how to behave well that work in compliance with injunctions. Also labelled as counter-script by Berne, counter-injunctions can re-enforce and contradict injunctions with key driver messages (see below) influencing our thinking, feeling, and behaviour. For example, where a parent has identified their child as ‘failing’ due to an injunction they have given, they may then try to counter it with one of the drivers below.

The Five key drivers:

- “Be Perfect”
- “Be Strong”
- “Try Hard”
- “Please (people)”
- “Hurry Up”

Other drivers may include (and are not limited to):

- “Work Hard”
- “Be Careful”
- “Please (me)”

These key drivers hold the most meaningful role around responding to the demands of our counter-scripts. We all hold a dominant driver that is most likely to reveal itself when we are feeling stressed or anxious. For example, if we get sick and our dominant counter injunction is ‘Be Strong’, we may refuse to accept we are sick and use our ‘be strong’ driver as a defence mechanism against our true feelings. When exploring transactional analysis, it is useful for us to identify injunctions and counter-injunctions we have received throughout our lives, as

this can act as a useful awareness tool to understand why we might behave the way we do.

Another example could be, where we receive an injunction such as “Don’t Succeed” as a child (perhaps through subtle parental messages of jealousy, fear, or discouragement when we excel or succeed) and then later hear a counter-injunction like “Be Perfect.” Our parent may then push us to get top grades, win awards, or exceed expectations in public, which can create an internal conflict. Our parent wants us to look great to everyone else, but also does not want us to excel to a specific point. This could lead us to grow up striving for perfection not out of self-worth or determination but to counterbalance an inner belief that we are not meant to succeed. This constant push-pull may lead to anxiety, burnout, or self-sabotage, particularly when perfection cannot be achieved.

Understanding more about injunctions and counter-injunctions and reflecting on examples of how they can drive our behaviour.

13.4 Life Decisions

A further concept within Transactional Analysis and which Robert and Mary Goulding dive deeper into within their book *Changing Lives Through Redecision Therapy*, is that of ‘Life Decisions’. Although many Injunctions and Counter-Injunctions are given by our parents and mentors at a young age, they do not become a factor in our life, unless we accept them. At the moment we accept them, they become a ‘Life Decision’. However, it is important to note that at such a young age, Life Decisions are made by the Child ego state with very limited resources available to us as children and are made to adapt to the dysfunction of that time in our life. Below are some examples of what life decisions could be made by injunctions:

‘Don’t’ - “I need someone else to make my decisions.” “I can’t make any decisions on my own.”

‘Don’t Feel’ - “Emotions are for the weak.” “I will never tell anybody how I feel.”

‘Don’t Feel What You Feel... Feel What I Feel’ - “Should I feel like this?” “I don’t know how I feel.” “How would you feel, if you were in my shoes?”

‘Don’t Succeed’ - “I’m stupid.” “I’ll never be successful.” “I can’t do anything right.”

In simple terms, a Life Decision is a choice we unconsciously make as children based on the messages, we receive from those around us. These decisions are our way of coping with the world at the time, like deciding not to show emotions because we were told not to cry. The challenge is that we often carry these decisions into adulthood without realising it, even though they no longer serve us. By bringing them into our awareness, we can choose to rewrite those old decisions and create healthier, more empowering beliefs moving forward.

13.5 Programmes – Adult Messages

The final type of messages we receive from our parents while growing up is that of ‘Programmes’ which are the strategies, tactics, and instructions to achieving certain outcomes. These fall under the adult ego state and are known as ‘Adult Messages’. Examples may include, learning how to manage our finances, learning how to cook, and learning how to build things. A programme is any methodology we have picked up to get things done.

The concept behind programmes is that we can become accustomed to doing things in a certain way and generally as humans, we believe our way is the 'best way'. This can lead us to patterns of behaviour, that may limit us, due to our reluctance to try something in a different way.

In a nutshell, programmes are the "how-to" guides we absorbed from those around us as children. These guides were often helpful at the time, but they might not always serve us well later in life. For example, if we were taught to avoid asking for help because "you should figure things out on your own," we may still carry that belief even when collaboration would be far more effective. As coaches, it's important to help clients recognise when an old programme is no longer useful, supporting them in updating it with a new, more empowering one.

13.6 Script Processes

Further research into Transactional Analysis, by Psychologist, Taibi Kahler describes six 'mini scripts' or 'processes' that can shape the way we think. When we understand these script processes, we can use them to identify patterns and limiting beliefs in our behaviour and then take action to break them. The six Script Processes:

The 'After' Script

When we think through the lens of an 'after' script, there are two ways in which a script process can develop. Firstly, we may get caught up thinking about the consequences of our behaviour after a negative event that may happen in the future. For example, 'after I lose my job' or 'after my partner leaves me', 'I will be poor, homeless' or 'I will be lonely'. This way of thinking

can create a negative spiral where our belief in the negative event eventually causes it to manifest and happen.

Another way an 'after' script can develop, is when we hope for a good event to enable us to feel positive emotions in the future. For example, 'after I get that house', 'after I find a partner', I will be happy. This way of thinking takes us away from the here and now and leaves us forever chasing positive emotions that are in the future.

The 'Until' Script

Through an 'until' script we also ponder on the future, but it is more focused on the period up until a specific event. This way of thinking assumes that present negative event will continue up until some transformational event occurs, after which things will get better. The negative event may well extend indefinitely in some scenarios where the positive event is very distant or unlikely to happen. For example, 'I will be stuck in this rubbish job until I win the lottery'.

In this way of thinking, we use 'until' event as a form of hope. Whilst we know that the event may not happen, we give ourselves some positive feelings from the hope that it might happen.

The 'Always' Script

The 'always' script goes from the past into the future and assumes things cannot be changed. It is the thinking that says, 'this always happens to me', 'every time I try, I always fail' or 'this will always be the case'. 'Always' thinking allows us to find comfort in the negative position of being a victim, where we are

unable to do anything and therefore have no obligation to act or make any effort to change the situation.

The 'Never' Script

The 'never' script is the reverse of the 'always' script, running from past to future but with the thought 'never' rather than 'always'. In this script, we believe that good things will never happen to us, as we always have 'bad luck'. Examples of 'Never' thinking could be 'I will never get a promotion' or 'they will never notice me'. As with the 'Always' Script, this allows us to find comfort in being a victim and acts as an excuse for us not to act.

The 'Almost 1' Script

The 'Almost 1' script is where we nearly complete a task or achieve a goal, but somehow, we never reach it. Through this way of thinking, we procrastinate and put off those last few steps we need to take for a potentially better future. One reason may be because we find comfort in the present and are unwilling to take that leap into the future, the other may be because we love the process or journey and fear that there will be nothing left for us to do once the task is complete.

The 'Almost 2' Script

The second type of 'Almost' script is where we complete something, but fear that somehow it will all break down and we will end up back into our previous negative state. For example, we live in fear of criticism of the work, develop imposter

syndrome, or just live in fear that something will go wrong with what we have accomplished.

Understanding these six script processes offers us useful insights into the unconscious patterns that shape our decisions, behaviours, and emotional responses. By bringing these patterns into conscious awareness, we can begin to challenge the limiting beliefs that hold us back and instead create space for new, empowering narratives. Recognising whether we are living in an 'After', 'Until', 'Always', 'Never', or 'Almost' (1 or 2) script helps us step out of bad patterns and into the present. As coaches, supporting clients to identify and rewrite these mini scripts can help us transform their thinking and achieve their goals.

13.7 Applying Scripts in our Coaching Practice

Whilst all the patterns of behaviour above can create limits and constraints on clients, they can be converted to a positive purpose. For example, we can guide a client to break a 'never' or 'always' script or support them in their 'after' thinking by helping them become more present. By helping our clients understand their life scripts, the messages they received through injunctions and counter-injunctions as a child and recognising patterns in their behaviour, we can create something very empowering because when our clients become aware of what they are doing, they can make a conscious choice to change and break the behaviour.

Our role as a coach is therefore to develop our understanding of these concepts and act as a torch to shine a light on our client's life scripts by helping them identify their behaviour and then exploring ways in which it can be changed. There are many tools that can assist us with this, for the purposes of an introduction to this, here are three useful exercises we can work through with our clients to explore their scripts:

1. Exploring Favourite Stories
2. Considering Old Age
3. Re-defining Script Processes

Exploring Favourite Stories

One method in which we can begin to explore our client's life script is by looking into the stories they are attracted to. This is a technique used in therapy that we can bring into our coaching practice. What we can generally find is that whatever stories and characters we find our clients are attracted to, can reflect and show elements of their own script. Remembering to offer the exercises first, we then explore the client's favourite stories by asking:

- What were their favourite stories growing up?
- Who were their favourite characters?
- Who they identify with or see themselves like and why?
- What important events happen in the story, beginning, middle, and end?
- Do they fit into the story in anyway?
- Does the story reflect in their current life at all?

After we have gathered the above information, we can begin to explain life scripts in a little more detail, identify any patterns of behaviour, and then explore what the client wants to change from their story and explore ways in which they can make that change. Questions to the client could include:

- Which parts of the story/your own story do you not like?
- Which parts of the story would you change?
- How could you change them?
- What do you want the next chapter of the story to look like?

As a coach, we can be creative with this exercise, holding the aim to help the client re-write/re-define parts of their script and create a more positive story.

Considering Old Age

Another way in which we can work with our clients to identify parts of their life script is to ask them questions with regards to their perceived old age. This allows us to gain an understanding of some of the internal stories they are telling themselves and help us begin to re-write these. With all exercises, we first offer this to the client and if accepted we can then proceed to ask questions like:

- What do they believe their old age will look like?
- What will they have achieved?
- How healthy and content will they be?
- Do they feel they will live a long life?
- What do they envisage on their tombstone?
- What would they like to be remembered for?
- What legacy do they want to leave behind?

These questions will explore how clients currently see themselves and their future from the script they are currently telling themselves. Using this exercise, we can explore where the client believes their life is currently heading, where they want it to head, and actions they can take to steer them to a life they want to live.

Re-defining Script Processes

The final exercise we can use, is that of re-defining script processes. Here, we use the knowledge we have gained behind script processes and identify any types of script processes that arise in our coaching space. We then bring awareness to these processes and explore them with the client. For example, if we identify that our client is narrating their story through an 'Until' script, we can work with them to guide them to become more present, which will pull them away from the limiting 'Until' way of thinking.

To apply this softer approach in our coaching practice, we must spend some time reading deeper into the different life scripts and gaining an in-depth understanding so that we can spot when these show up in our sessions. Once spotted, we can bring awareness to the client and explore ways in which we can guide them to re-author their scripts. The methods in which we can do this will depend on the script that presents itself, our ability to effectively question and our creativity behind the exercises we can create.

No matter which of the approaches/exercises we choose to adopt from the above, we must always offer these to the client before proceeding, never give advice or provide conclusions and always facilitate the exercise with questions that help change the client's way of thinking.

13.8 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored concepts around life scripts and processes, the impact these can have on our lives and how we can apply them to coaching.

To integrate these concepts into your own approach, take a moment to consider the question below:

- ✍ **Reflecting on this chapter, consider your own life scripts and processes. What life scripts or processes do you think could be directing any of your current behaviours and why?**

I'm OK, You're OK

'The destiny of every human being is decided by what goes on inside his skull when confronted by what goes on outside his skull.'

Eric Berne

Are there anymore situational transactions that are useful to know as coaches? What other tools or approaches can we apply in our coaching? Can I explore this topic further? Another theory by Eric Berne as part of his research on Transactional Analysis is that of the 'Life Positions' model or the 'I'm OK, You're OK' model, which explores different states of 'Ok-ness' within ourselves and others. In this chapter, we will explore this model and how we can use this in our coaching practice.

14.1 The 4 States of Ok-ness

Within the Life Positions model, Eric Berne defines four states of OK-ness related to how we view ourselves and others. These are not emotions but are foundational beliefs that impact how we interact with the world, make decisions, and interpret experiences. The four states of OK-ness are:

- I'm Not OK/You're OK
- I'm Not OK/You're Not OK
- I'm OK/You're Not OK
- I'm OK/You're OK

These states of OK-ness create a lens through which we see the world, ourselves, and others. We may hold these positions consistently, forming part of our core script or self-concept, or they may emerge situationally - shifting depending on context, relationships, or moments of stress. As a coach, if we understand these states, we can better identify limiting perspectives that might be holding our clients back. From here we can help them reframe towards more positive self-perceptions.

“I’m Not OK/You’re OK”

This position often forms early in our life, particularly when we grow up in an environment where adults are seen as all-knowing, powerful, or emotionally distant. Here, we may internalise a belief that “there’s something wrong with me” or “others are better than me.”

In adulthood, this may manifest as low self-esteem, people-pleasing tendencies, or an inability to speak up in the presence of authority figures. For example, in coaching, a client may consistently feel they’re not qualified enough for promotions, even when objectively competent. They defer to others’ opinions and may struggle to trust their own voice.

It is important not to confuse this concept with ‘Imposter Syndrome’ which we discuss in depth in our **Coaching Essentials** book, The “I’m Not OK/You’re OK” position is a deep-rooted script or belief system. It is often embedded early in life and shapes our core view of self and others. This position suggests a consistent and often unconscious belief that “there’s something fundamentally wrong with me” and “others are better, more capable, more worthy than I am.” It can affect many areas of our life, influencing relationships, career choices, confidence, and even physical posture or tone of voice. It’s a broader lens through which we may see the world.

On the other hand, ‘Imposter Syndrome’ is typically more situational. It arises when we achieve success or recognition but internally, we feel like a fraud. Despite clear evidence of our competence and ability, we believe we are not truly worthy of our accomplishments and live in fear of being “found out.” Imposter syndrome tends to creep up in moments of pressure, starting a new job, receiving praise, taking on and leadership roles or other positions of responsibility. Imposter syndrome often affects high achievers who set very high standards for themselves.

Here’s the key difference:

- “I’m Not OK/You’re OK” is a life position which is a foundational belief system.
- ‘Imposter Syndrome’ is a psychological experience or pattern that may come and go in specific contexts.

That said, if we hold a “I’m Not OK/You’re OK” life position, we are more likely to experience imposter syndrome. The internal belief that others are better or more deserving, naturally feeds into the doubt and insecurity imposter syndrome brings. However, we can also experience imposter syndrome while still holding the life position “I’m OK/You’re OK” (explained below) it just means our imposter thoughts are not our default way of seeing ourselves or others, but rather a response to a stressful situation or environment.

As a coach, this distinction is useful. When working with a client who expresses feelings of being an imposter, it’s important to explore whether this is a recurring pattern tied to a deeper belief system (an “I’m Not OK/You’re OK” life position) or a context-triggered mindset that can be reframed with evidence and self-reflection. Recognising the root helps determine the depth of the work required.

I'm Not OK/You're Not OK

With a “I’m Not OK/You’re Not OK” life position, we have lost all hope and become a pessimist to the world. We neither see others nor ourselves as being ok. We see everyone as being doomed and life being miserable. Again, this may be at a situational level such as a workplace or with a particular area of life such as love, or it may be an overall Life Position and negative lens to view the world that no one is OK.

This position is often the most damaging. It’s a hopeless stance that may lead to withdrawal, cynicism, or depression. Someone stuck in this state may feel there’s no point trying, as “nothing ever works out anyway.”

In our coaching, we might observe this in clients who feel they’ve failed in multiple areas of their life; career, relationships, and health, for example, and have given up on trying. They no longer see value in themselves or trust in others. Recovery from this position requires rebuilding trust in both the self and in human connection.

If we begin to identify this life position and it seems to be deep rooted, we must be mindful that coaching may not be the best method of support, and we may need to refer the client to therapy or to an alternative source of professional help.

I'm OK/You're Not OK

A “I’m OK/You’re Not OK” illustrates that we are living a somewhat successful life and are OK with it. However, there is an underlying issue with how we relate to other people. We may perceive ourselves as being better than others or see others as

victims that need our support. This may be situational or an overall life position.

While this might look like confidence on the surface, it can also lead to superiority complexes, controlling behaviours, or isolation. In the coaching space, this can show up subtly. For instance, a client who believes they have all the answers and sees others as the problem. They may struggle to delegate, dismiss feedback, or resist collaboration, which can limit both personal and professional growth.

It is also important to note that this position can also stem from a protective mechanism, particularly where we once held “I’m Not OK/You’re OK” and shifted to a more defensive stance over time.

I’m OK/You’re OK

The “I’m OK/You’re OK” is the life position on which coaching is based upon. It is the concept that we accept that everyone is OK. This state is that of an optimist. Again, it is possible for us to hold this state at a micro level in certain situations or at an overall life position. It is the most desired state to work in, that is best to help us move forward and grow.

This is the healthiest and most empowering life position. It reflects a mindset grounded in mutual respect, self-acceptance, and an open approach to others. When we hold this position, we can accept ourselves with compassion, accept others without judgement, and live with optimism and resilience. Even when challenges arise, the “I’m OK/You’re OK” state helps us grow, connect, and make the necessary changes we need.

14.2 How to use the Life Positions Model in Our Coaching Practice

As a coach that applies Transactional Analysis to our practice, it is useful for us to understand the four different life positions and that:

- People adopt a 'Life Position' from early childhood, often influenced by their caregivers and early environment.
- Certain relationships can reinforce or trigger specific life positions. For example, someone who is being bullied repeatedly may internalise an unconscious state of "I'm Not OK/You're OK", where they believe others are more powerful or worthy than they are.
- People occupy different positions in different contexts. A client might operate from an "I'm OK/You're OK" position in their friendships but shift to "I'm Not OK/You're OK" in a professional environment where they feel underqualified or undervalued.

With this knowledge behind us, we can begin to identify where life positions show up in our coaching practice with our clients, both within specific situations and at an overall worldview. For instance, a client may come to coaching feeling stuck in their career and describe their colleagues or manager as more capable, more deserving, or more intelligent. By creating the space to listen, we can explore whether this reveals an underlying "I'm Not OK/You're OK" life position that's limiting their potential.

What we generally find is that many people lean toward one of two core positions:

- “I’m OK/You’re Not OK” (+/-): Where the client may adopt a critical stance toward others, perhaps as a defence mechanism to protect their own sense of self-worth. This might show up as blaming others, feeling frustrated with “incompetent” coworkers, or assuming the role of the rescuer in relationships.
- “I’m Not OK / You’re OK” (-/+): Where the client undervalues themselves and overvalues others. This can manifest in low confidence, comparison, perfectionism, or people-pleasing tendencies.

A smaller, though still significant, group may operate from the “I’m Not OK You’re Not OK” (-/-) position. Here, the client may feel hopeless about themselves and about life in general, struggling with both internal and external trust. In these cases, the coaching relationship itself becomes an important space for modelling the “I’m OK / You’re OK” stance and slowly helping the to build hope and safety. Keeping in mind that the client may benefit more from therapy in this instance.

Ultimately, the aim in coaching is to support our clients in moving toward the most empowering life position: “I’m OK / You’re OK” (+/+). This is not a position of arrogance or naivety, but a stance of self-worth and acceptance of others. It is the position that creates healthy relationships, emotional intelligence, and the freedom to take responsibility for what is happening in our life.

14.3 How we support clients to shift Life Positions

Shifting a life position is not something that we can do over night. It is a process that takes time, energy and commitment from both us and the client. We can begin to shift a life position through the Transactional Analysis change principle of:

Analysis & Awareness

Through reflective, non-judgemental questioning, we help clients explore their narratives and emotional responses, seeking to identify if there is a life position in play and creating awareness around this. For example, asking: “What do you believe about yourself in that situation?” or “What does that say about how you see others?” can help us identify a life position. Here are a few examples of exploratory questions we can ask:

- What do you think that situation says about you?
- How do you see the other person involved in this?
- If you were to summarise how you feel about yourself and them in that moment, what would you say?
- What assumptions might you be making here?

We also need to listen to the language the client is sharing with us. It may sound something like:

- “I always mess things up” (**I’m Not OK**)
- “They’re way better at this than me” (**You’re OK**)
- “No one ever gets it” (**You’re Not OK**)
- “What’s the point?” (**I’m Not OK/You’re Not OK**)

To apply this into a practical scenario, let us say we have a client who is struggling in meetings at work. They describe feeling anxious, reluctant to share ideas, and worried about sounding “stupid.” The conversation around analysis and awareness could look something like:

Coach: **“What’s the story you’re telling yourself in those moments?”**

Client: **“That my ideas aren’t as good as everyone else’s.”**

Coach: **“And how do you see the others in the room?”**

Client: **“Like they’re more intelligent and confident.”**

Coach: **“What impact does that have on your ability to contribute?”**

We would then introduce the concept of ‘I’m OK, You’re OK’, explaining the different Life Positions and asking the client if they can identify which one appears to be there position here. We then move onto part two of the TA change principle, Re-decision.

Re-decision & Shift

Once awareness is raised, we then guide clients to make a conscious choice to adopt a more empowering position. This is not about ignoring real challenges but recognising that they can still choose to view themselves and others through a more compassionate and positive lens. Exploring questions like “What would change if you believed you were OK just as you are?” or “How would you show up differently if you also saw them as OK?” can start to assist with making these shifts in thinking.

The “re-decision” is not just a cognitive shift, it is also emotional and behavioural. We invite the clients to experience what it feels like to say, “I’m OK / You’re OK” in practice. Here are some questions we can ask that will assist with this:

- What would it look like to approach this from ‘I’m OK/You’re OK’?

- If you truly believed you were just as worthy as them, what would change?
- What is the cost of staying in your current position?
- What new decision do you want to make about yourself or this situation?

We can then help the client create a new internal dialogue which comes from the 'I'm OK/You're OK' life position. For example, it could look something like: "I have value, even when I don't have all the answers," or "I'm learning, just like everyone else." This is known as 'affirmative reframing'.

Extending this into an emotional level, we can then ask the client to visualise or role-play stepping into the new position. We can invite them to take a few moments, closing their eyes and taking in a few deep breaths. Asking questions like:

- Can you embody what 'I'm OK / You're OK' feels like in your posture, tone, or breathing right now?
- Saying this new position of 'I have value, even when I don't have all the answers', how does it feel?
- What energy is this new way of thinking bringing?

Our continued scenario from above could look something like:

Coach: "If we flipped that lens and worked from this place of 'I'm OK / You're OK,' how might that shift your approach in the meeting?"

Client: "I'd probably speak up more. I wouldn't second-guess myself so much."

Coach: "Would you like to try that position out this week as an action and come back with reflections?"

Client: “Yes. I want to decide that I have just as much right to contribute as anyone else.”

As a coach, our role is to help anchor this decision and support the client in practising it until it becomes integrated into their thinking. We might use visual models, journaling exercises, or role play to help anchor this shift and support the client in integrating it into their daily life. Over time, with consistent coaching, clients will learn to recognise when they’re slipping into an unhelpful life position and are able to identify and reframe themselves, moving towards the ‘I’m OK/You’re OK’ position to create a better perspective of the situation.

14.4 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored the Life Position Model of ‘I’m OK, You’re OK’ and how this can be applied in practice.

To integrate these concepts into your own approach, take a moment to consider the question below:

- ✍ Reflecting on this chapter, think of a situation where you may have held a negative life position that affected your thinking and behaviour. What does the ‘I’m OK, You’re OK’ position look like in that scenario?**

Psychological Discounting

‘The greatest obstacle to discovery is not ignorance, it is the illusion of knowledge.’

Daniel J. Boorstin

How do we empower our clients through Transactional Analysis? How do we help them understand that they hold the ability to make positive changes? Are there any models that help clients find their personal power? As a coach integrating the use of Transactional Analysis into our practice, we understand that people have the mental resources themselves to solve their own problems and overcome their own challenges. However, at times people can often feel powerless and behave in a way that feels as if they have no choice or way forward in their lives. When we give our personal power to external sources, feel powerless or act as if we don't have the power of choice, this is known as 'Psychological Discounting'. In this chapter, we will explore the concept of psychological discounting and how we can use this in our coaching practice.

15.1 What is Psychological Discounting?

When we give away our personal power or feel like we have no choice to behave the way we do, this is known as 'Psychological Discounting'. What happens when we discount, is we fail to consider some information that contains the solution to our problem or that provides our way forward. Within psychological discounting, there are four kinds of passive action we may adopt because of our feelings of powerlessness:

1. Doing Nothing
2. Over Adaptation
3. Agitation
4. Incapacitation or Violence

To explore these with a little more context:

Doing Nothing

This is the most classic form of passivity. It is where we avoid the issue entirely and wait for something or someone else to intervene. We can often sit with hope that the problem will resolve itself.

Example: A client wants to leave an unfulfilling job but never updates their CV or applies for other roles, convincing themselves that “it’s not the right time” or “there’s nothing better out there.”

As coaches, this is where exploration and goal setting can help spark action to change their current position.

Over Adaptation

Alternatively, we can take the passive action of ‘over-adaptation’. Here, we overcompensate by trying to please others or by acting from a submissive or compliant position, often resembling childlike behaviour. This might look like saying “yes” to everything or excessively seeking approval.

Example: A client continually agrees to unreasonable demands from their manager, even when it leads to burnout, because they believe asserting boundaries would lead to conflict or rejection.

In coaching, this is an opportunity to explore inner beliefs and boundaries, encouraging the client to connect with their adult ego state (as discussed above in Chapter 11) and reclaim their voice to speak up and learn to say 'no'.

Agitation

Agitation is another method of passive action. It is when we express discomfort, frustration, or dissatisfaction but we do not take meaningful action. There might be a lot of talking, complaining, or fidgety behaviour, but no real steps toward change.

Example: A client frequently complains about their partner or their living situation but consistently avoids making decisions or setting goals to improve things.

The coaching work here involves helping the client shift from venting to visioning; identifying what they want and how they can take small steps to get there.

Incapacitation or Violence

This final passive response is more extreme and often more destructive. It may include self-sabotage, substance misuse, reckless behaviour, or in rare cases, violence. These actions tend to stem from a deep-seated feeling of helplessness.

Example: A client continually binge drinks before important meetings, sabotaging their performance. Underneath, they may feel they're not good enough or fear success.

The coaching approach must be trauma-informed here and may require collaboration or referral to therapy. However, we can still support the client in identifying alternative coping strategies and reconnecting with a sense of themselves.

15.2 The Discount Matrix

It is important to note that psychological discounting occurs at different levels. Some levels will take precedence over others. We can use what is known as the Discount Matrix to help identify this. Under the Discount Matrix, there are four levels of discounting:

- Existence
- Significance
- Change Possibilities
- Personal Abilities

Within these levels of discounting, there are three elements we can discount:

- The Stimulus
- The Problem
- The Options

The best way to illustrate the levels of discounting and elements we discount is through the Discount Matrix below:

Figure 13: The Discount Matrix

Level	Type		
Existence	Existence of Stimuli	Existence of Problems	Existence of Options
Significance	Significance of Stimuli	Significance of Problems	Significance of Options
Change Possibilities	Change Ability of Stimuli	Solvability of Problems	Viability of Options
Abilities	Ability to react differently	Ability to solve problems	Ability to act on options

The above table illustrates the level of ‘Psychological Discounting’ referenced alongside the type of elements we discount.

15.3 Practical Examples of Discount Levels

When exploring the above, we can analyse our behaviour to identify what it is we are discounting and at what level. For example, we may be in a relationship that is unhealthy or toxic for us. Through our passive behaviour, we may discount at the level of existence, in that we deny the existence of toxicity in the relationship. What is causing us to discount at this level is, denying nothing is causing toxicity or that there are no problems in the relationship and there are no options to move forward. Despite the negative emotions and thoughts, we have towards the relationship, we discount the existence of any toxicity.

Using the same example, but at the level of ‘Significance’ discounting, here we are not denying the existence of toxicity, but we are not holding it as being significant enough to make a change. Either what is causing it is not significant; the problems are not significant, or the options that we must move forward are not significant. We therefore choose to stay in a relationship that is causing you negativity.

At the ‘Change Possibility’ level, we may see the significance the relationship is having on us and the need for change, but we see the change possibilities as too problematic, difficult or the situation as being unable to be changed through either the stimuli, problems, or the options.

Finally, at the ‘Personal Abilities’ level, we may see the ability to change, the possibility of solving the problem and how viable our options are, but here we discount our ability to make that change. Whether this be our ability to react differently to the stimuli, our ability to solve the problem or our ability to act on our options. At this level, we see the need for change but feel powerless to make it.

To further illustrate Psychological Discounting, we can explore situations where we may feel stuck in an unfulfilling job. At the level of existence, we may not acknowledge there’s a problem. We go to work every day feeling drained and uninspired but convince ourselves that this is just the way things are. We might think, “everyone hates their job,” and ignore the emotional discomfort we are experiencing. In doing so, we discount the very existence of the problem, failing to notice that something is wrong.

If we move to significance discounting, we may recognise we are not entirely happy in our role but downplay its importance. We might say, “it’s not ideal, but it pays the bills,” or “at least I’ve got a job.” The dissatisfaction is acknowledged but not held as important enough to explore change. We discount the

significance of how the situation is impacting our wellbeing and professional development.

When discounting occurs at the level of change possibility, we may admit that the job is making us unhappy and that something needs to change. However, we hold the belief that change is not possible. We may say things like, “there’s nothing else out there,” or “I’ve been in this job for too long to do anything else.” We see the problem, but not the path forward. The options feel blocked or unrealistic, so we remain where we are.

Finally, when the discounting happens at the level of personal abilities, we see the problem, its impact, and the fact that change is possible, but we do not believe we can act. We may think, “others can do it, but I wouldn’t cope,” or “I’d never get through an interview.” There’s an awareness of the need for change and even some hope in the possibility, but the block lies in our own perceived capability. We feel powerless to act, not because of the situation, but because of the story we tell ourselves about our own ability.

These are just two examples to help illustrate the model. Psychological discounting can appear in many situations and as a coach that adopts Transactional Analysis, we must be able to observe where this might be happening within our clients’ situations.

15.4 Applying Psychological Discounting in Coaching

Psychological Discounting is a useful tool that we can use in coaching to help our clients identify how they are discounting certain information, that is preventing them to move forward in life or with their problems or challenges. As a coach, we can use our knowledge and understanding of Psychological Discounting to identify any passive behaviour that the client may be

explaining to us in our coaching sessions and look to analyse the behaviour through the Discount Matrix. Here are some useful questions to keep in mind:

- Is the client discussing or illustrating any passive behaviour that could be a sign of discounting?
- What level is the client discounting at?
- What element is the client discounting?
- What effect is the discounting having on the client and their problems?
- How can we change the client's perspective and guide them to recount the information and take back their personal power?

Our aim as a coach, when applying Psychological Discounting in our coaching practice, is to help our clients become aware that they are discounting important information that holds the solution to their problem, and then guide them to 'recounting' this information and taking action to move forward. This is achieved through our coaching skills and effective questioning, keeping in mind the concept and theory of Psychological Discounting.

15.5 An Exercise to Illustrate Personal Power

It may be useful to illustrate to the client the importance of personal power and how we tend to give this to external sources which causes us to feel lost, confused, or powerless. When we take back this personal power, we can take action to overcome any problem and move in the direction we want in life. We can illustrate this through the short exercise below, which allows our clients to see where they may be giving away their personal power.

Step 1: Ask Your Clients the following questions

We begin by asking our client the following questions without giving them any context to personal power. When offering the exercise, we explain to them that based on what they have been sharing, we are curious to ask a series of questions to understand their situation a little more. After explaining this, we ask the following:

1. Do you believe success comes through luck or personal action?
2. What does 'being lucky' mean to you?
3. Do you believe we make our own luck?
4. Do you feel you have any influence over the government?
5. Do you believe in destiny or that you are in control of what happens in your life?
6. Do you think leaders are born or made?
7. Do you think success comes by who you know or being the right person with the right skills?
8. Do you think one person has right to power over another?
9. Do you think the state of economy dictates your success or do you have the power to make things work in a difficult economic position?

Step 2: Score Your Client's Personal Power

We can score our client's personal power out of nine by awarding a point for each answer that shows they hold their own personal power and are not giving it to external sources. For example, if the client believes they create their own luck, award one point. If they believe luck is something that only a few people have, mark as a zero. Once scored, move to step 3.

Step 3: Analyse and Open Discussion on Personal Power

We then explain to our client the purpose of the exercise and the concept of personal power. Reflect to them their score. We ask our client further questions on their answers that scored a zero. For example, we could explore deeper why the client believes 'leaders are made'. From here, facilitate a discussion on personal power, and see where else in their lives they may be giving this away.

To illustrate this through a working example, let's say we are working with a client who feels stuck in their career. They've been in the same role for years, feel unfulfilled, and often express frustration that promotions always go to others who are "better connected" or "just get lucky."

We sense some passive behaviour and suspect they might be giving their personal power away. We introduce the reflective exercise, explaining we curiously want to explore this further and want to ask a series of questions. It may look something like:

“I'd love to explore this a little deeper with you, just to get a clearer picture of how you're seeing your situation. Would it be okay if I ask you a few questions?”

We go through the nine questions highlighted above. Their answers are as follows:

1. **“Mostly luck, I think. Right place, right time.”**
2. **“Being lucky is when life just hands you good things.”**
3. **“Not really, some people are just born lucky.”**

4. **“No, not at all. Government decisions are completely out of our control.”**
5. **“I believe in destiny, like things are meant to be.”**
6. **“Leaders are born. You either have it or you don’t.”**
7. **“Definitely who you know. It’s all about connections.”**
8. **“I suppose yes, in business or politics, some people do have more power.”**
9. **“The economy dictates everything. When times are bad, there’s not much you can do.”**

Based on their responses here, the client scores zero out of nine. Every answer places their sense of power externally on luck, destiny, systems, or others. We then reflect their score back to them:

“Thanks for being so open. Based on what you’ve said, it seems like a lot of your views about life and success come from external sources, things outside of your control. That can make life feel heavy and disempowering. What are your thoughts on that?”

We might go deeper on one answer or two, such as:

“You mentioned that you believe leaders are born. I’m curious, what would it mean for you if leadership could be learned?”


This opens the client to a conversation around beliefs, assumptions, and where they may be unknowingly giving their personal power to external sources. As the client becomes more aware of these patterns, we can begin working together on

reframing and helping them take steps that are aligned with owning their personal power, step by step.

15.6 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored the theory of 'Psychological Discounting' and the different ways in which we discount.

To integrate these concepts into your own approach, take a moment to consider the question below:

-  Reflecting on this chapter, consider a situation where you may have psychologically discounted, acting passively or giving your personal power to external sources. What would a reframe of this discounting look like and what action can you take to change the situation?**

The Drama Triangle

‘Many games are played most intensely by disturbed people, generally speaking, the more disturbed they are, the harder they play.’

Eric Berne

What about positions people tend to put themselves in? How do we help clients who might be perceiving themselves as victims? Are there any models or tools that explore this? In his book ‘Games People Play’, Eric Berne explains various psychological games people can find themselves playing in life. One key game that derived from research of his work is that known as the ‘Drama Triangle’. This is a useful tool to explore a ‘game’ that we many of us can find ourselves playing. In this chapter, we will explore the concept of ‘Games’ and the ‘Drama Triangle’ and look at how we can apply this in our coaching practice.

16.1 What are Games in Transactional Analysis?

In his book ‘Games People Play’, Eric Berne goes deep into a concept of all the different types of games people play in life. In short, a ‘Game’ is a set of transactions with a set of rules that players of the game subconsciously understand and repeat, which then leads to a series of negative emotions and outcomes. An example of some games could be:

1. A disappointed partner of an alcoholic.
2. A couple that continuously argue.
3. A partner stuck in an abusive relationship.

Games are formed with a series of ulterior motives, which never ends positively for any player, and hold a series of characteristics which include:

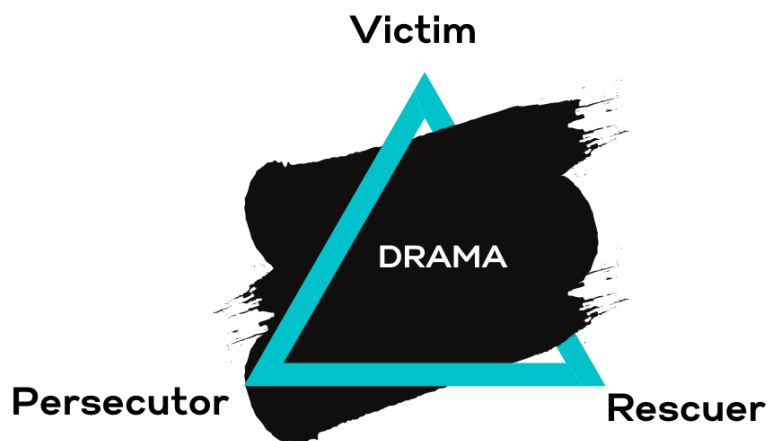
- Unconscious and automatic behaviour.
- Repetition.
- Result in negative feeling towards everyone.
- Unspoken patterns through ulterior motives.

As coaches, it's important to become aware of these dynamics, so we can bring them into light and help our clients step out of unconscious patterns and games. One game that appears to be more common than most, is that of the drama triangle.

16.2 What is the Drama Triangle?

The Drama Triangle is a psychological model of social interaction under Transactional Analysis, that was created by Psychotherapist, Stephen Karpman. Each point on the triangle represents a common response to conflict in a 'game' that results in patterns of repeated behaviour and negative emotions for all parties involved.

Figure 14: The Drama Triangle



As we can see from the above diagram, there are three roles that form the drama triangle: the Persecutor, the Victim, and the Rescuer. When a drama triangle is formed, we can put ourselves into any of these roles and essentially 'lead' the game.

The Victim

Victims feel helpless and hopeless and tend to refuse to take responsibility for their negative circumstances and situations, denying they hold the power to make the change. A person may put themselves into the role of a victim when they give too much of their personal power to another or an external situation.

The Persecutor

Persecutors tend to blame the victims, trying to take their personal power or exercise an element of control. They are critical of others and unpleasant. They find fault and put blame on others. They often feel inadequate underneath. They control with threats and make orders. Extreme persecutors will take the form of a bully. They also criticise the enabling behaviour of rescuers attempting to discredit them without providing guidance, assistance or a solution to the underlying problem.

The Rescuer

Rescuers provide short-term help or repairs to the problems of the Victim. Neglecting their own needs and focusing on providing support. They are always working hard to "help" other people. They can at times become exhausted, tired, and may often find

themselves with physical problems because of their support to others. At times, they can use guilt to get their way.

16.3 How is the 'Game' Played?

The game will be played when three people (players) who form the triangle stepping into the three roles above. The persecutor will be seen to be 'attacking' the victim and the rescuer will find themselves attempting to support or protect the victim with an aim of providing some form of support or 'fix' to the problems. The game will be played subconsciously through the words and actions of each role and each 'round' will result in negative feelings for everyone playing.

The behaviour will be repeated as new events or problems present themselves and the drama triangle will continue for as long as the players play the game. The only way to break the game is for one of the players to refuse to play or to step out. When a player steps out, the triangle will be broken, and the game will end. For example, if the persecutor refuses to play, the victim will feel free. If the victim takes back their personal power and refuses to no longer be a victim, this will also break the drama triangle. Equally, if the rescuer becomes tired of the game and steps away, this can force the victim to find their personal power and take back ownership and responsibility rather than relying on the rescuer.

16.4 Applying the Drama Triangle in our Coaching Practice

Our role as a coach when using the Drama Triangle is to identify where this may be occurring for our clients and guiding them to find their own role in the triangle. Bringing self-awareness and

discovery to the subconscious game they are playing and through effective questioning helping them to break away from the triangle. Are they making themselves out to be a victim? Are they trying to rescue a friend and family member? Are they being labelled a persecutor? Our approach as a coach will depend on the role, we have identified the client is playing. Below is some guidance on how we might approach each role to support our clients.

Where the Client is the Victim

Where the client is playing the role of 'Victim' our role as a coach is to help them create an empowered shift to leave the game. For example, a client may say something like:

“I just can't do anything right at work. My manager is always on my back, and no one seems to care. I feel completely stuck.”

We sense the client has a sense of helplessness here. We may feel their manager is the persecutor and the client is positioning themselves to find a rescuer. They could invite ourselves as a coach into the space to 'rescue' them from the situation. We must always remember never to fall into any game or play rescuer for our clients. We are there to remain objective, to support them and facilitate a change in thinking. Here we would gently challenge the client's helplessness and bring their focus to what they can control and what is within their personal power. We could ask questions like:

- What's one small action you could take this week to feel a little more in control?
- How would the situation look if you believed you had options?

- What does 'stuck' mean for you and what might be possible if that changed?

The aim here is to help the client move from a victim (helpless, passive) to a Creator, someone who sees choices, takes responsibility, and initiates change. Stepping out of the game.

Where the Client is the Persecutor

Where the client is playing the role of 'Persecutor' our role as a coach is to help them create a constructive shift to leave the game. For example, a client may say something like:

“Honestly, I’ve had enough of my team. They’re lazy and never meet deadlines. I always must sort out their messes.”

We sense the client is entering a role of persecutor (and possibly the rescuer), their team becoming the victim. It is important to note that a drama triangle can be formed where one person plays a dual role. Here the client is persecuting the team but then also stepping in to 'sort out the mess' which could also be perceived as a rescuer. A rescuer in this triangle could be another member of the team who defends them or a manager. Where the client is perceived as the persecutor, we invite them to reflect on their language and impact and consider more constructive ways to address issues. Here are some questions we could ask:

- How do you think your team experiences your feedback or leadership?
- What might change if you shifted from blame to curiosity?
- How can you challenge your team in a way that empowers rather than criticises?

The aim here is to support the client to move from a persecutor (blaming, controlling) to a Challenger, someone who sets clear boundaries and expectations with respect and integrity. Refusing to create or play the game.

Where the Client is the Rescuer

Where the client is playing the role of 'Rescuer' our role as a coach is to help them create a supportive shift to leave the game. For example, a client may say something like:

"I've been staying late every night trying to help my colleague who's overwhelmed. I know I shouldn't, but I can't say no. I just want to help."

Clients that are likely to form a rescuer role are often those who like to help others but do so at their own sacrifice. It is important to note that sometimes the rescuer can instigate the game with someone that may not need help or support. The game is not always started by the victim. Here, our role is to guide the client to explore their need to help and the impact it's having on themselves and others. Some useful questions we can ask:

- What would happen if you stepped back and let your colleague handle their own workload?
- What are you really hoping to gain by helping in this way?
- How can you support others without taking on their responsibilities?

The aim here is to guide the client to move from rescuer (overhelping) to also playing a role of a coach, someone who supports others by encouraging independence and growth (like ourselves) rather than dependency. We know as coaches that if clients become dependent on us, it can become emotionally draining. It is about guiding the client to encourage and empower rather than take on extra workload at their own cost.

Through all scenarios, it is important that we remain as a facilitator when coaching our clients and never step into a role of rescuer as a coach or seek any form of emotional 'stroking' from our clients for the work we are doing. Our role is to remain objective and guide the client to step away from the game.

16.5 Theory into Practice

In this final chapter we have explored the game of the 'Drama Triangle', the roles within it and how we can apply this to our coaching practice.

To integrate these concepts into your own approach, take a moment to consider the question below:

- ✍ Reflecting on this chapter, consider a situation where you may have entered a game of the drama triangle. What role did you play in the triangle and how did you leave the game?**

Additional Reading

For those who are interested in learning more, here is an additional recommended reading list:

- 1. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy** - Stephen Briers
- 2. Change your Life with Positive Psychology** - Charlotte Style
- 3. Games People Play** - Eric Berne
- 4. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Dummies** - Rhena Branch & Rob Willson
- 5. Changing Lives Through Redecision Therapy** - Mary McClure Goulding, Robert L. Goulding
- 6. I'm OK - You're OK** - Thomas A. Harris
- 7. The Gift of Therapy** - Irvin D. Yalom
- 8. Cognitive Behavioural Coaching for Dummies** - Helen Whitten
- 9. Cognitive Behavioural Coaching in Practice** - Michael Neenan & Stephen Palmer
- 10. Cognitive Behavioural Coaching: A Guide to Problem Solving and Personal Development** - Michael Neenan & Windy Dryden
- 11. Cognitive Behavioural Coaching: Distinctive Features** - Michael Neenan
- 12. Developing Resilience: A Cognitive-Behavioural Approach** - Michael Neenan
- 13. The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People** - Stephen Covey

14. Cognitive Therapy of Depression - Aaron Beck

15. Brain Drain the Breakthrough That Will Change Your Life - Charles F. Glassman

16. Transactional Analysis: 100 Key Points - Mark Widdowson

17. Cognitive Therapy and the Emotional Disorders – Aaron Beck

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