

Coaching in Organizations: A Social Psychological Perspective

James W. Smither

La Salle University

Susanne P. Reilly

Chase Manhattan Bank

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It appears that the prevalence of coaching in organizations has recently seen a renaissance. Part of the interest in coaching stems from the increasing popularity of executive coaching. Graddick and Lane (1998) note that the use of external executive coaches is an increasingly popular trend in corporations. Other evidence concerning the popularity of coaching can be found by perusing any large bookstore. A recent search at the online bookstore amazon.com found 16 popular books on the topic of executive coaching (e.g., Hargrove, 1995; O'Neill, 2000), and a search of the online bookstore at the Center for Creative Leadership found 58 publications dealing with coaching.

The renewed interest in coaching is not limited to external executive coaching. The role of internal coaching (managers serving as coaches) has recently been highlighted by Waldroop and Butler (1996). At one large corporation, supervisors are now routinely referred to as coaches (e.g., "I need to talk to my coach" rather than "I need to talk to my supervisor").

The surge in popularity of coaching has been accompanied by a somewhat modest rise in scholarly interest concerning the topic. An October 1999 search of the PsycInfo database found 17 articles in peer-reviewed journals explicitly dealing with executive coaching or coaching skills in general. Of these, 12 appeared in a single journal (*Consulting Psychology Journal: Research and Practice*). Many of the articles approach the topic of executive coaching from the perspective of counseling psychology (e.g., multimodal therapy, psychodynamic theory), and rely on case studies as illustrations or sources of evidence (Diedrich, 1996; Goodstone & Diamante, 1998; Kilburg, 1996, 1997; Levinson, 1996; Peterson, 1996; Richard, 1999; Saporito, 1996; Tobias, 1996; Witherspoon & White, 1996).

Kilburg (1996) provides a useful review of the coaching literature. He points out that there is very little empirical, rigorous study of the effects of coaching in business. Kilburg states, "The application of coaching as a concept and set of techniques to the art and practice of management has been growing rapidly through the 1980s and 1990s. However, the scientific basis for these applications is extremely limited at this time."

In this article, we argue that social psychological theory and research can provide a valuable foundation for research and practice in this area. We first define coaching and then present a five-stage model of coaching. This model incorporates recent theory concerning executive coaching while also reflecting our own experiences as practitioners in this area. We then discuss each stage in succession. For each of the five stages, we describe how social psychological research can help enhance our understanding of critical issues associated with the stage, directions for research, and implications for practitioners.

Defining Coaching

Kilburg (1996) defines executive coaching as “a helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organization and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioral techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction and, consequently, to improve the effectiveness of the client's organization within a formally defined coaching agreement.” A less formal definition from Hall, Otazo, and Hollenbeck (1999) states that executive coaching is “a practical, goal-focused form of personal one-to-one learning for busy executives. It may be used to improve performance, to improve or develop executive behaviors, to work through organizational issues, to enhance a career, or to prevent derailment.” Harris (1999) says simply that executive coaching is “an on-going, one-on-one learning process enabling people to enhance their job performance.”

Referring to managers as coaches (i.e., internal coaches), Kinlaw (1996) defines coaching as “...a disciplined conversation, using concrete performance information, between a leader and an individual or a team that results in the continuous improvement of performance.” Waldroop and Butler (1996) describe coaching as just plain good management, requiring such generic management skills as keen powers of observation, sensible judgment, and an ability to take appropriate action.

Steps or Stages in Effective Coaching

Table 1 presents a summary of the key steps or stages in effective coaching as seen by a variety of authors. It can be seen that there is considerable overlap among the descriptions that these writers offer concerning the basic steps or stages involved in successful coaching.

(Insert Table 1 about here)

Several common themes emerge from a review of Table 1. First is the importance of establishing a relationship between the coach and the person who is being coached. Second, assessment of the person (strengths, limitations, etc.) and the context in which the person is working is an essential component of effective coaching. Third, effective coaching includes goal setting and developmental planning. Fourth, the centerpiece of coaching involves implementation – the person tries new behaviors (e.g., to address performance problems), meets regularly with the coach, and gradually gains a sense of behavioral mastery or cognitive control over the problems or issues he or she is facing. Fifth, the coach and the person being coached monitor and evaluate the person's progress and the coaching relationship. Based on these common themes (and our own applied experience in this area), we organize this chapter around a five-stage (or five-step) model of effective coaching: (1) establish the coaching relationship, (2) assessment, (3) goal setting and development planning, (4) implementation, and (5) evaluating progress and the coaching relationship.

Next, we describe how social psychological research can help enhance our understanding of critical issues associated with each of these stages. It is of course beyond the scope of this chapter to describe all of the social psychological phenomena that might be relevant to coaching processes. Instead, we describe the relevance of several phenomena as a way of illustrating how social psychology in general can provide important insights for coaching research and practice. Although we draw on research and theory from many areas of social psychology, we especially emphasize literature dealing with person perception and interpersonal judgment. Major themes, applications to coaching, and directions for research are summarized in Table 2.

(Insert Table 2 about here)

Establish the Coaching Relationship

We recently interviewed six executives about their experiences being coached by others. One common theme that emerged in their comments was the critical role of trust. For example, we were repeatedly told that a successful coach ‘had my welfare in mind’ and provided feedback that was ‘in my best interest.’ These executives also said that effective coaching was characterized by a sense of reciprocity – there was a two-way relationship. They also described how successful coaches helped build the relationship, for example by becoming vulnerable in some way (perhaps by discussing feedback they had received about their own limitations or by discussing issues they were facing).

Social psychological research also points to the critical role that relationships play in behavior change. For example, when people try to change themselves, their interpersonal connections play a critical role. Successful change is often instigated by others or by observing someone else change (thereby pointing to the role of reciprocity in successful coaching) and is accompanied by considerable help and support from others.

Unfortunately, establishing a relationship that can provide a strong foundation for subsequent coaching is not necessarily a straightforward matter. For example, Swann and others (1992) have found that people choose, like, and retain partners (in close relationships) who see them in a way that is consistent with their self-views. Indeed, people remain longest and happiest in relationships with partners who share their inflated views of themselves (Baumeister, 1998a, p. 712). This finding can pose a problem for coaches who may often find themselves trying to establish a relationship with an employee who has an unrealistic (inflated) self-evaluation (Baumeister, 1998a, p.709).

Table 2 summarizes several issues that are likely to be relevant as a coach seeks to establish a relationship with an employee who will be coached.

Attributions about the Other Person’s Motives

The coach and the employee are likely to make attributions about the other’s reasons (goals and motives) for pursuing the coaching relationship (Hilton, 1998). Is the coach interested in my welfare or does the coach have unstated and perhaps self-serving motives? Does the employee seek coaching as a

way to attain some extrinsic reward (or escape an anticipated punishment) or is the employee motivated by more intrinsic goals (e.g., the value of becoming more skillful for its own sake)?

In the case of a manager as coach, the relationship between coach and employee is likely to be reciprocally contingent (Fiske, 1998). That is, the employee depends on the manager for tangible rewards but the manager depends on the employee to accomplish important tasks. In general, the more A's behavior is contingent on B the greater the need for inferences about B's motives and personality (Fiske, 1998). This suggests that attributions about the motives of the other participant are likely to be especially important when an internal coach and employee begin a coaching process.

As illustrated in Table 2, each person's schemas are likely to shape the attributions he or she makes about the other (Baron, Byrne, & Johnson, 1998). Once established, schemas and scripts save us a great deal of mental effort because they tell us what to expect and how others are likely to behave (Baron et al., 1998 -3). They affect attention (what we notice), encoding (process by which information gets stored in memory), and retrieval (recovering information from memory). Also, when perceivers (e.g., employees) begin to question the interaction goals of a target (e.g., a coach), they are likely to be cautious about accepting expectancy-disconfirming behavior. For example, an employee might think, "Why is my manager suddenly trying to coach me, in view of the fact that he or she has never before expressed interest in helping me develop skills or advance my career? Maybe the manager has an ulterior motive."

The Employee's Motives for Participating in the Coaching Process

Another factor likely to affect the success of this stage of the coaching process is the reason why the employee enters into a coaching relationship.

Sometimes, employees may be asked to participate as a result of poor or declining performance. In such instances, it may be especially difficult for the coach and employee to establish a trusting relationship because the employee has not asked for and does not welcome the coaching (perhaps feeling coerced into participation). Such a prediction follows from reactance theory (Brehm, 1966). The self resists loss of control; when people feel their freedom is threatened they may respond by aggressing toward the person who has restricted their freedom or try to reassert what is being taken from them

(Baumeister, 1998a, p.714). In such cases, the likelihood that subsequent stages of coaching will be successful is seriously diminished.

At other times, the employee may welcome the coaching and be eager for feedback and the opportunity to grow skills. In some instances, employees may seek coaching for extrinsic reasons (external rewards or benefits). In other instances, employees may pursue coaching for intrinsic reasons (Deci & Ryan, 1991) such as a need for competence (controlling the environment and seeing oneself as capable and effective), a need for autonomy (experiencing an internal locus of causality for one's actions rather than being controlled or directed by external forces), and a need for relatedness (constructing satisfying relationships with others – knowing and caring for others and believing they care about oneself).

Social psychologists (Baumeister, 1998a, p. 689) point to three possible motives for self-knowledge (see Table 2). Although accurate self-appraisal would seem to be the motive most conducive to a constructive coaching experience, self-enhancement motives may often be stronger. While self-enhancing beliefs, even if unfounded, may help breed persistence (which may produce genuine success), the benefits of positive illusions such as good adjustment and mental health (Taylor & Brown, 1988) may be outweighed by the dangers of illusions (e.g., overconfidence may breed fruitless persistence or dangerous risk taking). In sum, employees may enter into coaching experiences with the hope of enhancing their self-views, a situation likely to detract from the outcomes of coaching.

Although motives for self-knowledge are often self-enhancing, Swann (1992) coined the term self-verification to describe people's quest for feedback that would confirm their view of themselves. People desire stable predictability above all else and changes to one's self-concept are therefore unwelcome – in most cases, the consistency motive overlaps with self-enhancement.

Regardless of the motive for entering into the coaching relationship, the heightened self-awareness that often accompanies coaching (as the employee receives feedback and becomes more preoccupied with assessing his or her behavior and progress) may be uncomfortable. For example, Duval and Wicklund (1972) have argued that self-awareness will generally be an aversive state because people

will generally fall short of the standards against which they compare themselves (Baumeister, 1998a, p. 685).

In sum, an important task at this stage of the coaching process is for coaches to understand and manage employees' expectations about the coaching experience (e.g., helping employees become comfortable with heightened self-awareness and helping them keep their illusions small, Baumeister, 1998a, p.690).

Impression Management Strategies Used When Establishing the Coaching Relationship

For reasons outlined below, coaches need to be seen as likeable, trustworthy, and competent. But how do effective coaches establish trust, liking, and perceptions of competence?

We know that efforts at impression formation can exert lasting effects on social thought and social behavior (Baron et al., 1998). Gordon (1996) found that the success of different ingratiation tactics across studies varied widely (see Table 2). But some tactics (e.g., making the other person look good) may not be feasible, especially for external coaches who initially know little about the person being coached. It is also difficult for a coach to make the employee look good in instances when the need for coaching has been precipitated by the employee's poor performance. Also, although people generally present themselves as favorably as they think they can get away with, internal coaches are constrained to be consistent with what the employee already knows about the coach (Baumeister, 1998a, pp. 705-706).

Moreover, ingratiation efforts can be successful in getting others to like us but they have a much smaller effect on getting others to think we are competent (Baron et al., 1998) – a critical concern for coaches. And ingratiation tactics carry a potential risk for coaches -- transparent ingratiation efforts may tend to boomerang with the target (employee) reacting negatively (Baron et al., 1998).

How the Coaching Relationship Affects the Coach's Ability to Influence the Employee at Later Stages of the Coaching Process

Building a productive relationship sets the stage for success in later stages of the coaching process. For example, the relationship established at stage one of the coaching process can affect the likelihood that the employee will be persuaded by or comply with the coach's advice during later stages.

Cialdini suggests that all forms of compliance rest to some extent on six basic principles (Baron et al., 1998, p. 193). One principle focuses on the role of *friendship or liking*. That is, we are more willing to comply with requests from friends and people who we like. The ingratiation tactics discussed above represent one (albeit difficult) avenue for coaches who want employees to like them. A second principle points to the role of *reciprocity* in compliance. Recent evidence also suggests that reciprocity plays a role in persuasion – specifically, we tend to change our attitudes in response to persuasion from others (e.g., a coach) that have previously changed their attitudes in response to our efforts at persuasion. Thus, one way a coach can help create an effective coaching relationship is by showing early on that he or she is open to being influenced by the person being coached (Baron et al., 1998, p. 116). The opportunity for such reciprocity may be more available for internal than for external coaches. Moreover, it would be helpful to better understand the tactics used by effective (vs. ineffective) coaches to create liking and a sense of reciprocity.

Assessment

This stage of the coaching process generally involves assessment of the employee's strengths and limitations as well as understanding the context in which the employee operates. Generally, the coach will be assessing aspects of the employee's behavior and performance while also encouraging the employee to engage in ongoing self-evaluation.

External executive coaches may gather data by interviewing the employee's coworkers and by using psychological instruments (e.g., personality inventories) that can help profile the employee's dispositions and leadership style. In contrast, internal coaches may use a less formal approach to assessment, often relying on the rich data they collect merely by observing the employee during day-to-day interactions.

In many organizations, the assessment stage begins with a 360-degree feedback process where the manager receives structured feedback from peers, direct reports, and the manager (Graddick & Lane, 1998; Hall et al., 1999; Hollenbeck & McCall, 1999). Such feedback may increase self-awareness (Goodstone & Diamante, 1998; London & Smither, 1995), and, because a discrepancy between the person

we are and the person we want to be can be upsetting (Baron et al., 1998, p. 78), it is expected that 360 feedback can motivate efforts at behavior change. All of this is consistent with Higgins' view that self-knowledge is pursued for the sake of adaptive benefits of improving person-environment fit (Baumeister, 1998b). In coaching, knowing the self is a means not an end in itself.

The assessment stage is also shaped by the purpose of coaching. For example, Graddick and Lane (1998) found two major reasons why executive coaches are hired -- first to help talented executives who are 'in trouble' because of behavioral or style deficiencies and secondly to help executives through critical transitions such as having to lead a major change effort. Internal coaches are also likely to begin the coaching process because the employee is facing a difficult situation.

In such circumstances (when confronted with unexpected, difficult, or unpleasant events), coaches and employees are especially likely to engage in careful attributional analysis. Unfortunately, attributional processes often lead to erroneous inferences and people act in accordance with those inferences (Hilton, 1998).

The success of subsequent stages of coaching will depend on the ability of the coach and the employee to accurately diagnose the employee's skills and the situational constraints that are likely to shape the employee's behavior. For the reasons detailed below, such an accurate assessment of the employee and the situation is likely to be a frustrating and difficult endeavor.

The Coach as Assessor

It is likely that coaches with different educational or work histories (e.g., counseling psychology, organization development, industrial/organizational psychology, executive development) may attend to different employee behaviors or categorize the same behaviors in very different ways. For example, it is likely that a coach who routinely uses the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (with dimensions of sensing-intuitive, thinking-feeling, perceiving-judging, extraverted-introverted) might attend to different behaviors than a coach who uses the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation instrument (with dimensions of need for affection, inclusion, or control) or a coach who uses a personality inventory that focuses on the five-factor model of personality (i.e., emotional stability, agreeableness, extraversion,

openness to experience, conscientiousness). As noted in Table 2, this is because traits and categories become more accessible and thus likely to capture ambiguous behaviors through long-term frequency or recency of use. Thus, trait accessibility produces automatic behavior-to-trait encodings just as if the behavior was not ambiguous but instead clearly diagnostic (Wegner & Bargh, 1998). Moreover, when people are asked to evaluate targets about whom information is available on several dimensions, primed dimensions are given more weight in overall evaluations (Wegner & Bargh, 1998), again pointing to the influence that the coach's schemas are likely to have in the assessment process.

Self-image bias can also affect the coach's assessments. That is, we tend to judge others according to the traits on which we ourselves look good (Baumeister, 1998a). For example, if a coach has excellent interpersonal skills but weaker decision making skills, the coach may place more emphasis on interpersonal skills (and less on decision making skills) when judging others. Accessibility is a common factor here – attributes the self-emphasizes operate as highly accessible categories for interpreting others' behavior. These effects are much more likely to operate when information about a target person (e.g., employee) is ambiguous (Baumeister, 1998a).

One critical problem that coaches face is suggested by Jones' (Jones & Nisbett, 1971) well known notion of correspondent inference – people routinely underestimate the power of situations and overestimate the power of dispositions in governing behavior (see also Heider's, 1958, notion of behavior engulfing the field). Indeed, Gilbert (1998) argues correspondent inferences appear to be made automatically and considerable effort is usually required to correct them (although others argue that dispositional inferences are sometimes automatic and sometimes controlled - Kunda, 1998). In this context, Ross (1977) has noted that the most important task of lay psychology is distinguishing situational causes from personal ones. Coaches need to work hard at appreciating the situational constraints that face the person being coached. Internal coaches face the difficult task of seeing themselves as part of the situation that influences the person's performance. Of course, this may be difficult for internal coaches who are likely to make self-serving attributions that deny their potential role in contributing to the person's poor performance. Internal coaches also need to overcome the influence of hedonic relevance

(the other's behavior has implications for the perceiver for good or ill) which may increase the likelihood of attributional distortions (Jones & Davis, 1965). Because the behavior of an employee often has implications for internal coaches (e.g., the employee's manager), internal coaches may be especially likely to make internal attributions for the success of a coworker who is liked while blaming that person's failures on external constraints. That is, like most people, internal coaches may want friends to be given dispositional credit for successes and situational dispensation for failures (Miller, 1998). In contrast, the internal coach may make internal attributions for the failure of a coworker who is disliked and attribute that person's success to external factors.

Relative to an internal coach, external coaches may be at a disadvantage here because they generally know less about the situation facing the employee. Because the salience of the situation has repeatedly been shown to affect one's willingness to make dispositional inferences (Nisbett, 1998), external coaches need to take special steps (for example, by focusing on 'invisible' situational factors such as social norms, Gilbert, 1998) to appreciate the situation as the employee sees it. On the other hand, relative to internal coaches, external coaches are less likely to be juggling multiple organizational issues. Because their attentional capacity is not loaded elsewhere, attributions made by external coaches are more likely to be influenced by clear situational constraints (Wegner & Bargh, 1998).

Both internal and external coaches need to remember that when people choose constraining circumstances, those situations do not mask their dispositions but instead provide evidence of them (Gilbert, 1998). Thus, when a manager chooses repeatedly to work in fast-paced, aggressive business cultures, it makes less sense to argue that the manager's behavior is shaped by the organization rather than by the manager's dispositions.

One important caveat needs to be considered here. There is evidence that culture shapes the likelihood of making dispositional vs. situational attributions for behavior. For example Asians generally live in societies where tradition and role expectations (coupled with the need for group harmony) are greater than is typical for most Americans. Thus, in many Asian cultures, there are fewer choices to make and less of a requirement that behaviors be consistent with attitudes. People in Asian cultures may

therefore be more inclined to understand their own and others' behavior as being shaped by outside forces rather than being an expression of free will. Asians therefore appear to be less susceptible to correspondence bias. As Nisbett (1998, p.193) eloquently states, "Societies that preach independence are more industrially-based and provide multitudes of choices and decisions, and draw attention toward the isolated individual, independent of the field and its forces as the causal agent. The processes associated with more agricultural, interdependent, and collectivist societies, on the other hand, integrate the individual in the field of social roles and constraints and, therefore, appropriate causality to forces in that field."

The Employee's Self-Evaluation

The employee being coached will of course form his or her own assessments and make attributions concerning the causes of his or her behavior. There are good reasons for employees to develop accurate self-assessments. For example, managers who overrate themselves appear to be the least effective (Yammarino & Atwater, 1993) and most likely to suffer from career derailment (McCall and Lombardo (1983).

Yet a host of social psychological phenomena make it difficult for us to arrive at accurate self-knowledge and make accurate self-assessments or attributions. For example, the false consensus effect points to a widespread tendency to assume that others are more like us (and share our views) than they actually are, while the false uniqueness effect points to a tendency to see ourselves as more unique than we really are in terms of possessing highly desirable qualities (e.g., being smarter than average) (Baron et al., 1998). Self-esteem also affects the attributions we make about our behavior. For example, people with high self-esteem show more self-serving bias in their responses to feedback and other events (Baumeister, 1998a).

Self-deception and inflated self-views seem to derive from several processes summarized by Baumeister (1998a – see Table 2 for a summary). In sum, employees will tend to seek out evidence that confirms their positive opinions about themselves and will distrust, criticize or reject contrary evidence. In this context, it is noteworthy that feedback about how others performed shows a clear primacy effect

(people make up their minds about others quickly) whereas feedback about the self may show a recency effect (people remain open-minded to upward revision of their self-appraisals). This is consistent with the actor-observer effect by which people more rapidly draw dispositional inferences about others than about themselves (Baumeister, 1998a, 1998b).

The result is that employees are likely to develop and sustain positive self-views, even when coaches see the employee as behaving badly or ineffectively. Overcoming the tendency toward biased self-views is likely to be a major challenge at this step of the coaching relationship. Addressing and resolving differences between the employee's self-evaluation and attributions (vs. those made by the coach) will play a central role in the success of the coaching relationship.

There are several ways that coaches may have a positive impact here. First, coaches can help employees attend to unflattering information that might otherwise be ignored. Second, coaches can change the standards against which employees compare themselves (focusing attention on optimal behavior rather than typical or average behavior). Third, coaches can increase the amount of time that employees spend processing negative feedback. Fourth, coaches can discount implausible attributions (for example, pointing out that others performed well despite facing the same situational constraints). Fifth, coaches can more precisely define the behaviors or criteria associated with abstract concepts (like "good management"). Sixth, as noted above, the relationship between the coach and employee (when based on liking, reciprocity, etc.) can enhance the coach's ability to persuade the employee to consider and accept other viewpoints and interpretations.

The Employee's Receptivity to Feedback

The coach's mere knowledge of the feedback may limit an employee's self-deceptive strategy. For example, research has found that the time people spent reading either unfavorable or favorable personality feedback depended on whether the feedback was private or known to someone else (an interaction partner). When feedback was private or confidential, people follow the standard self-deceptive strategy of skipping through less favorable information. But when feedback was public, the tendency to ignore unflattering information was eliminated and reversed (Baumeister, 1998b). When

others know unfavorable information about us it cannot be ignored because it gains 'social reality' - thus, interpersonal circumstances in general, and the coaching relationship in particular, can affect how information about the self is processed even though the implications of the information for the self-concept are identical.

Of course, interpersonal circumstances do not always elicit more accurate and balanced processing of information. For example, people sometimes make more defensive, self-serving attributions for their outcomes when others had monitored the performance than when no one had watched (Baumeister 1998b). Thus, it would be useful to understand how coaches affect the attributions that employees make and the receptivity of employees' to negative feedback.

Goal Setting and Developmental Planning

Once the coach and employee have assessed the employee's strengths and limitations, along with the situational constraints facing the employee, the next step involves setting goals and formulating developmental plans to guide behavior change. Self-regulation is central to this step in the coaching process. Self-regulation involves controlling thoughts, feelings, impulses, actions, and performances to change the self and make it conform to its own goals (Baumeister, 1998a). Self-regulation acknowledges that rats may simply respond to an experimenter's reward and punishment contingencies but people sometimes set their own contingencies (promising to reward oneself for completing a task). Moreover, self-regulation and self-control (unlike self-esteem) seem to be nearly always good. There seem to be almost no instances where self-control is systematically disadvantageous to the person. Still, people have a limited (but renewable) capacity to control themselves. Efforts to control multiple things at once may be ill-advised and the imposition of new self-regulatory demands may undermine control in other spheres (Baumeister, 1998a). Thus coaches need to limit the person's attention to one or two goals at a time. Of course, the voluminous research on goal setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990) directs our attention to the importance of goals that are specific and difficult as well as to the critical role that goal acceptance, commitment, and feedback play in behavior change. Here we discuss several streams of social psychological research (summarized in table 2) that are relevant to the goal setting and developmental

planning process. These include control theory, implementation intentions, and Higgins' influential work on the effects of having a promotion vs. prevention focus in self-regulation.

Control Theory

Carver and Scheier's (1981, 1982) work on control theory and feedback loops is central to self-regulation. People begin with self-appraisal relative to a standard. If we are short of the standard we operate on the self to change, then we conduct another test to see whether the standard has been reached. If not, we resume efforts to change; if yes, the control process ends and we exit the loop (and begin thinking about something else). There is a hierarchy of such feedback loops – higher levels refer to broader units of behavior, lower ones refer to smaller units. Lower levels are often means toward the goals of higher levels. When one is blocked in one's efforts to reach a goal at one level, self-awareness shifts down to a lower level in order to find and solve the problem. Because people are always falling short of some of their goals yet not always feeling bad, Carver and Scheier proposed that emotion is generally a response to the first derivative (over time) of one's standing vis-à-vis these goals. That is one feels good when one is moving toward one's goals and one feels bad when one is moving away from them (or moving toward them too slowly). The feedback loop model tells us that successful self-regulation requires clear and visible standards, effective monitoring of the self, and some potent means of operating on the self. These concepts can provide an organizing framework for coaching relationships and episodes. Carver and Scheier (like Higgins, see below) point out that sometimes we try to minimize the distance between the self and some positive standard (moving toward success), but sometimes we try to maximize the discrepancy between the self and a negative standard (moving away from failure). The same task can be framed either way (in terms of succeeding vs. failing) with very different results. A focus on succeeding tends to increase effort and confidence whereas a focus on failure tends to increase anxiety. This points to the importance of coaches focusing the employee's attention on attaining success rather than merely avoiding failure.

Implementation Intentions

Gollwitzer (1999) has recently drawn attention to the importance of implementation intentions. Implementation intentions are subordinate to goal intentions (such as “I intend to reach x.”) which are the focus of Ajzen’s (1991) theory of planned behavior. Implementation intentions specify the when, where, and how of responses that can lead to goal attainment. By forming implementation intentions, people can switch from conscious and effortful control of their goal-directed behaviors to being automatically controlled by situational cues. Gollwitzer has shown how implementation intentions can allow people to make use of a good opportunity that presents itself only briefly even when they are busy with other things. In this way, implementation intentions help people achieve their goals despite tempting distractions, bad habits, and competing goals. Moreover, implementation intentions appear to create instant habits and their effects have been shown to operate days or weeks after they have been initially formed (Gollwitzer, 1999). In one study, a motivational intervention that focused on increasing self-efficacy to exercise, the perceived severity of and vulnerability to heart disease, and the expectation that exercising will reduce the risk of coronary heart disease raised compliance from 29% to only 39%. When this motivational intervention was coupled with the formation of implementation intentions, compliance increased to 91% (see Gollwitzer for a summary of research). In sum, coaches need to ensure that goal setting also includes the formation of implementation intentions. Doing so could be especially helpful for employees who are otherwise absorbed in an ongoing activity and who would therefore otherwise miss an opportunity to act on their goals.

Promotion vs. Prevention Focus in Self-Regulation

Higgins (1998) has emphasized the role of regulatory focus in cognition and adjustment. Sometimes, *promotion focus* guides self-regulation. At other times, self-regulation is guided by a *prevention focus*. He argues that self-regulatory focus is shaped by caretaker-child (usually parent-child) interactions. Higgins’ self-discrepancy theory (1998) proposes that a nurturant mode of caretaker-child interaction (where parents hope their child will possess valued attributes, and reward a match between their expectations and the child’s behavior with positive outcomes such as hugs or kisses) creates a promotion focus and ideal-self guides that orient the person toward maximizing the presence of positive

outcomes. In contrast, a security mode of caretaker–child interaction (where parents emphasize the child’s duties and obligations, and punish a mismatch between their expectations and the child’s behavior) creates a prevention focus and ought-self guides that orient the person toward maximizing the absence of negative outcomes. As a personality variable, people can develop general viewpoints about the world where they become strongly nurturance-oriented or security-oriented because of their (parental) socialization during childhood. However, Higgins’ notes that both systems (promotion/nurturance and prevention/security) are adaptive and thus all people possess both. Still, different (parental) socialization experiences cause one system to predominate in self-regulation. Moreover, personality differences at the general level of regulatory focus appear to influence perception and memory for social events (Higgins, 1998).

Self-regulatory focus can also be viewed as a situational variable (rather than as a personality variable) such that framing a performance task with a promotion focus should produce greater persistence than framing the same task with a prevention focus. For example, in one laboratory study, participants in a positive or promotion focus condition received feedback such as “Right, you got that one” (when they solved a problem) or “You didn’t get that one right” (when they did not solve the problem). Participants in the negative or prevention focus condition received feedback such as “You didn’t miss that one” (when they solved a problem) or “No, you missed that one” (when they did not solve the problem). Students in the promotion focus condition solved more problems and persisted longer in trying to solve unsolvable problems than participants in the prevention focus condition (Roney et al., 1995). This study illustrates that situational manipulations can make one or the other self-regulatory focus more accessible (at least temporarily) and thereby influence the goals that people set and their achievement and persistence.

This points to a potentially critical role for coaches. To the extent that coaches can make a promotion focus more accessible (perhaps by the way they frame goals and feedback – moving toward success rather than away from failure), they can help shape the behavior of the employees they coach in subtle but powerful ways.

In sum, coaches can play a critical role at the goal setting and planning step of the coaching process. First, coaches can help ensure that goals are specific, challenging (Locke & Latham, 1990), and proximal (rather than distal, Bandura & Schunk, 1981). They can help employees frame goals as learning goals (learning how to perform a task or develop a skill) rather than performance goals (finding out how capable the employee is) (Dweck, 1996). Coaches can frame goals using a promotion focus (achieving a positive outcome rather than preventing a negative outcome). Also, coaches can help people anticipate obstacles and remove competing temptations (Latham & Frayne, 1989). They can help them cope with conflicting goals, perhaps by identifying ways that they can be reconciled or combined (Cantor & Blanton, 1996). For example, the goal of investing time to learning a new skill and the goal of spending more time with friends or colleagues is reconciled by identifying and collaborating with colleagues who also want to learn the skill. Finally, coaches can ensure that goals are accompanied by implementation intentions.

Implementation

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss all of the social psychological research conceivably relevant to implementing behavior change. Instead, we focus on a few areas that we think are especially interesting for understanding the success of coaching.

Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1977) has argued that a person's beliefs about self-efficacy (one's belief in his or her ability to act effectively in a given situation) are crucial determinants of action. Other things being equal, one's self-efficacy beliefs can determine whether one is willing to act and persist in such actions. Stated simply, when people are confident that they can make a desired response (that is, they have high self-efficacy), they are better able to make that response. When they believe they cannot make the response, this prevents them from acting in a way that can produce the desired outcomes (similar to learned helplessness). This suggests that illusions of control (Langer, 1975) may be helpful because it is better to assume one has control when one objectively does not than to assume one does not have control when one could have had it. Indeed, self-efficacy is by no means fixed and unchanging. For example, positive

feedback about skills makes self-efficacy likely to rise (Baron et. al, 1998), and fostering self-efficacy (See Table 2 for examples) is seen as a key step in empowering employees (Whetten & Cameron, 1998). In sum, coaches' efforts to increase the employee's self-efficacy are likely to play a critical role at this step in the coaching process.

Self-Fulfilling Prophecies

It has long been established that people are influenced by the expectations of others. For example, Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) showed teachers' initially false expectancies about their students' abilities led to changes in the performance of the students that confirmed those expectancies. The first two of these outcomes appear to be more common than the third. This stream of research points to the critical role that the coach's expectations are likely to play in the employee's implementation of behavior change efforts. It would be helpful to know whether effective coaches deliberately communicate their positive expectancies to employees (and avoid directly or indirectly communicating their doubts).

Irrational Persistence

As employees try to implement changes in their behavior and pursue new courses of action, coaches are likely to emphasize the value of persistence. Yet not all persistence is adaptive. For example, persistence is harmful when it creates an obstinate refusal to change wrong opinions, to cancel unsuccessful programs, to stop investing money in unsound enterprises, or to stop treating people in ways that routinely backfire. One factor that contributes to such counterproductive persistence is the feeling of commitment generated by sunk costs (see Table 2). People often feel that they will lose all of the investment if they quit now. As a result, they persist far beyond the point where it seems rational to continue (Baumeister, 1998a). Indeed, there are examples of irrational persistence where decision makers have decided to continue a project even though the value of the completed project was less than the amount yet to be spent to complete it (Dawes, 1998). It is also noteworthy that people are more likely to persist in a losing course of action when the initial decision had been their own instead of someone else's,

especially if the initial decision had been made in the face of other people's objections. Apparently, we don't want others to say "I told you so." (Baumeister, 1998a).

Here too, coaches can play a pivotal role (see table 2) by encouraging people to make careful and accurate calculations about their contingencies, pointing to the dangers of becoming entrapped in a persistence situation, and showing them that an audience will think well of them if they withdraw (Baumeister, 1998a).

These findings suggest a somewhat counterintuitive role for coaches. On the one hand, coaches want to enhance self-efficacy and rational persistence when the employee confronts challenging, albeit unanticipated, obstacles. At the same time, coaches need to be vigilant of signs that the employee is engaging in irrational persistence (perhaps due to perceived sunk costs).

Finally, sunk costs and escalation of commitment have a group-level parallel referred to as collective entrapment – the tendency of groups to cling to unsuccessful decisions or policies even in the face of overwhelming evidence that the decisions are bad ones. Coaches can help limit this tendency via second-chance meetings (where members are asked to express any lingering doubts), skepticism (adopting devil's advocate approaches where each alternative is carefully questioned), and by asking different groups of persons than those who made the initial decision to decide whether to continue with it (Baron et al., 1998).

Self-Handicapping

Another phenomenon that may affect the likelihood of successfully implementing behavior change (and that is grounded in the attributions that actors make concerning their own performance) is self-handicapping. In self-handicapping, individuals deliberately seek out or create handicaps that will interfere with their performance. This approach can serve a short-term interest, namely preserving the person's self-esteem. But it does so at the expense of the long-term interest of achieving a successful outcome (Arkin & Oleson, 1998). Self-handicapping is most likely to occur when people have experienced non-contingent success. In such a circumstance, the employee may feel like an impostor or

pretender, and fear that success (because it was due to luck) cannot be repeated or sustained. Self-handicapping makes failure meaningless and forestalls drawing unflattering attributions about oneself.

Self-handicapping is a clever strategy because it protects against failure and enhances success. For example, low effort means failure is not diagnostic of low competence whereas success would indicate the person is very talented because he or she succeeded despite not trying hard (Baumeister, 1998a.).

The self-handicapping phenomenon has implications for coaching. For example, effective coaches may be especially likely to attend carefully to the attributions that employees make in their day-to-day conversations and thereby detect whether employees are creating obstacles or excuses (to reduce the risk of failure or enhance the value of success). Effective coaches may also focus the employee's attention on the attributions that he or she makes concerning success or failure, discussing and perhaps challenging the credibility of such excuses with the employee. By doing so, coaches may detect self-handicapping early in the performance cycle so that obstacles and potential excuses can be removed while at the same time working to increase the employee's self-efficacy.

Evaluating Progress and the Coaching Relationship

Many of the concepts introduced earlier (the role of attributions in evaluations, control theory, etc.) play a role in the ongoing evaluation of behavior change and the coaching relationship. In this section, we focus on the extent to which the coaching relationship ultimately changes employees' mental frameworks, and thereby in a fundamental way how employees think about themselves and their organizational roles.

One's self-concept can be thought of as a collection of beliefs and feelings about oneself (Baron et al., 1998). People have a great deal of information about the self that is stored in a very loose fashion. In this sense, it is more appropriate to think about an aggregate of self-schemas than about a single conception of the self (Baumeister, 1998b). Markus (1977) introduced the concept of being aschematic (see Table 2). We suggest that effective coaching will affect the employee's self-concept, for example, by making the employee schematic about domains for which he or she was previously aschematic. For

example, the coaching process may make managers schematic about important constructs associated with effective leadership. This may occur because traits and categories become more accessible through long-term frequency or recency of use. Thus, those concepts that are applied again and again (for example, during coaching discussions) in the controlled perceiving and judging of the self and others eventually become automatized. Changing employees' schemas and scripts shape how they expect themselves and others to behave in specific situations (Baron et al., 1998). Moreover, constructs that become chronically accessible ultimately capture and encode behaviors that are ambiguously relevant to the trait and thereby influence one's impression of the target or self on the trait (Wegner & Bargh, 1998).

Another way in which effective coaching can bring about deep change is by affecting what Markus and Nurius (1986) referred to as possible selves (cognitive representations of the individual's hopes and wishes for the self). Moreover, people who have a very limited number of possible future selves are emotionally vulnerable to relevant feedback (Baron et al., 1998). For example, information that you don't have the necessary skill to be one of your possible selves is of limited importance when you have many rather than few possible selves. In this sense, having or imagining more possible selves (i.e., assuming the possible selves are realistically grounded) is more emotionally beneficial than having a very simple view. Thus, effective coaches may ultimately limit the employee's vulnerability to feedback by increasing the number of possible selves that the employee can realistically envision.

Conclusion

Our purpose has been to illustrate how social psychological research, especially person perception and interpersonal judgment research, can help enhance our understanding and guide research concerning coaching in organizations. At each stage of the coaching process, social psychological research points to critical issues that effective coaches must address. Also, if coaching in organizations is to avoid being characterized as a transient fad, it must increasingly be grounded in research concerning the psychological processes and mechanisms that distinguish effective from ineffective coaching. We hope that this paper has served to direct attention to some of these key research issues.

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Table 1
Steps or Stages Associated with Effective Coaching

Harris (1999)

- (1) Assessment
typically using a 360-degree feedback survey or various personality tests
- (2) Feedback
- (3) Planning
- (4) Implementation
- (5) Follow-up

Foster and Seeker (1997)

- (1) Helping to monitor performance
- (2) Diagnosing performance problems and deficiencies
- (3) Determining directions for performance improvement
- (4) Sharing constructive feedback
- (5) Creating a supportive environment.

Kilburg (1996)

- (1) Developing an intervention agreement
e.g., establishing the goals, time commitment, resource commitment, methods, confidentiality constraints, and in the case of external coaches, payments
- (2) Building a coaching relationship
- (3) Creating and managing expectations of success
- (4) Providing an experience of behavioral mastery or cognitive control over the problems and issues
i.e., the heart of coaching -- addressing performance problems, dealing with emotions, using feedback and disclosure, emphasize what will work most effectively with the best long-term outcomes, confronting acting out and ethical lapses in a tactful way
- (5) Evaluating coaching success or failure
e.g., assessing coaching sessions and periodically looking back over what has been accomplished

Graddick and Lane (1998)

- (1) Pre-coaching
meeting with the executive, his or her supervisor and the coach to discuss specific issues the coaching should address, calibrating expectations and set goals
- (2) Data gathering
from the executive as well as others in the organization to diagnose problems and develop action plans -- in-depth background interviews, personality inventories, and 360 assessment either via a survey or interviews with the executive's peers and direct reports
- (3) Coaching
meeting regularly -- often 2 - 4 times a month -- for several months to review the data, develop a plan of action and monitor progress

Saporito (1996)

- (1) Setting the foundation
understanding the context in which the person is working and the behaviors required for success in that context
- (2) Assessing the individual
- (3) Developmental planning
- (4) Implementation

Peterson (1996)

- (1) Forging a partnership
building trust and understanding so people want to work with you
- (2) Inspiring commitment
helping people focus their energy on goals that matter
- (3) Growing skills
finding the best way for the person to learn
- (4) Promoting persistence
e.g., building stamina and discipline to make sure learning lasts on the job
- (5) Shaping the environment
to reward learning and remove barriers

Table 2

Examples of Social Psychological Phenomena Related to Each Stage of the Coaching Process

Social Psychological Phenomena	Description	Examples of Application to Coaching	Research Questions
1. Establish the Coaching Relationship			
Schemas shape attributions	Person schemas (i.e., certain traits and behaviors go together), role schemas (i.e., how persons in specific roles usually act and what they are like), and event schemas or scripts (i.e., what is supposed to happen in a given setting) may affect attributions.	An employee whose role schema of a manager does not include coaching may react with skepticism to the manager’s unexpected efforts to coach the employee. Event schemas or scripts will guide expectations concerning when and how coaching conversations should occur. Employees are likely to be cautious about accepting expectancy-disconfirming behavior. “Why is my manager suddenly trying to coach me, when he or she has never before expressed interest in helping me? Maybe the manager has an ulterior motive.”	What are the schemas and scripts that employees and coaches hold about coaching? Do these schemas and scripts create unrealistic expectations or obstacles that limit the coaching relationship?
Motives for self-knowledge	Motives can include a healthy curiosity about the self (appraisal), a wish for favorable information about the self (self-enhancement), and a desire to confirm what we already know about ourselves (self-consistency). Accurate self-appraisal would seem the most useful motivation, but self-enhancement appears to be the strongest motive.	It is important for coaches to understand employees’ expectations about the coaching experience. Coaches can help employees become comfortable with the heightened self-awareness that may accompany the coaching process. The coach can help employees keep their illusions small or turn them off when employees have an important decision to make.	How do the employee’s motives affect the quality of the coaching relationship and the outcomes of coaching?
Impression management tactics	Efforts at self-presentation are a trade-off between creating a favorable impression vs. plausibility. Ingratiation efforts can be successful in getting others to like us but they have a much smaller effect on getting others to think we are competent	The most successful tactic tends to be other-enhancement – making the other person look good, but some tactics may not be feasible in some coaching circumstances. Transparent ingratiation efforts may boomerang with the target (employee) reacting negatively.	What are the tactics used by effective coaches to create a relationship where the employee views the coach as likeable, trustworthy, and competent?
The role of liking and	Compliance and persuasion are affected by liking, reciprocity, and authority. The	To enhance employee cooperation, the coaching relationship needs to be	How do effective coaches create a sense of reciprocity that increases the likelihood of

<p>reciprocity in compliance and persuasion</p>	<p>reciprocity principle indicates that we like those who like us, cooperate with others who cooperate with us, etc.</p>	<p>characterized by reciprocity and liking. Employees are more likely to comply with requests from a coach who they like and from a coach who has previously provided a favor or concession to them.</p>	<p>subsequent cooperation by the employee?</p>
<p>2. Assessment</p>			
<p>The influence of the coach's schemas on the assessment process</p>	<p>Traits and categories become more accessible and thus likely to capture ambiguous behaviors through long-term frequency or recency of use. Those concepts that are applied again and again in the controlled perceiving and judging of self and others eventually become automatized.</p>	<p>Coaches with different educational or work histories (e.g., counseling psychology, OD, I/O psychology, executive development) may attend to different employee behaviors or categorize the same behaviors in very different ways.</p>	<p>How do coaches' work and educational histories affect the way they attend to and categorize employee behaviors?</p>
<p>Correspondent inference</p>	<p>People routinely underestimate the power of situations and overestimate the power of dispositions in governing behavior. Culture shapes the likelihood of making dispositional vs. situational attributions for behavior.</p>	<p>Coaches need to work hard at appreciating the situational constraints that face the person being coached. Internal coaches face the difficult task of seeing themselves as part of the situation that influences the person's performance.</p>	<p>To what extent are coaches' attributions and evaluations influenced by correspondent inferences, self-image bias, and hedonic relevance? How do effective coaches learn about 'invisible' (e.g., social norms) situational factors that shape employees' behaviors? Are internal coaches (relative to external coaches) more or less sensitive to external factors that shape employee behavior? Are coaches' attributions shaped by cultural differences?</p>
<p>Self-deception and inflated self-views</p>	<p>People are likely to make internal attributions for their success and external attributions for failure, discover flaws in evidence that depicts them in an unflattering light, minimize the amount of time they spend processing critical feedback, selectively forget failure feedback while recalling positive information, compare themselves against others that make them look good, sort through memory in a biased way to find evidence that they have desirable traits, think their good traits are unusual while their faults are common, and dismiss criticism as motivated by prejudice.</p>	<p>Once employees have formed an opinion (usually a positive opinion) about themselves it is typically quite resistant to change. Addressing and resolving differences between the employee's self-evaluation and attributions (vs. those made by the coach) will play a central role in the success of the coaching relationship.</p>	<p>How do effective coaches address and resolve differences between the employee's self-evaluation and attributions vs. those made by the coach?</p>
<p>Receptivity to feedback</p>	<p>Interpersonal circumstances can affect how information about the self is processed even</p>	<p>The coach's mere knowledge of the feedback may limit an employee's self-</p>	<p>Does participation in coaching diminish the tendency for employees to sustain inflated</p>

	though the implications of the information for the self-concept are identical.	deceptive strategy, yet interpersonal circumstances do not always elicit more accurate and balanced processing of information.	self-views?
3. Goal Setting and Developmental Planning			
Goal setting theory and control theory	Goal setting theory directs attention to the importance of goals that are specific and difficult as well as to the critical role that goal acceptance, commitment, and feedback play in behavior change. Control theory shows how self-appraisal relative to a standard and feedback loops are central to self-regulation.	Coaches may focus the employee’s attention on attaining success rather than merely avoiding failure. A focus on succeeding tends to increase effort and confidence whereas a focus on failure tends to increase anxiety.	Are effective coaches more likely to frame goals in terms of attaining success rather than avoiding failure?
Implementation intentions	Implementation intentions specify the when, where, and how of responses that can lead to goal attainment. They have the structure, “When situation X arises, I will perform response Z.”	Coaches can help ensure that goal setting also includes the formation of implementation intentions. Implementation intentions help people achieve their goals despite tempting distractions, bad habits, and competing goals.	Are successful coaches more likely to ensure that employee goals are accompanied by implementation intentions?
Promotion vs. prevention focus in self-regulation	Self-regulatory focus can be viewed as a personality variable (shaped by interactions with one’s parents) or a situational variable (depending on how tasks and feedback are framed). A promotion focus orients the person toward maximizing the presence of positive outcomes and addressing nurturance needs. A prevention focus orients the person toward maximizing the absence of negative outcomes and addressing security needs.	When coaches overemphasize attention to negative events, they may enhance an employee’s concerns with conformity, tradition, and security. Framing goals and feedback in terms of attaining success may help focus employees on self-direction and stimulation. Coaches may encourage employees to frame goals as learning goals (learning how to perform a task or develop a skill) rather than performance goals (finding out how capable the employee is).	To what extent does the employee’s self-regulatory focus (as a personality variable) shape the goals that are set and the subsequent success of coaching? Are effective coaches more likely to shift the employee’s self-regulatory focus (as a situational variable) from prevention to promotion (and if so, how do they do so)?
4. Implementation			
Self-efficacy	Self-efficacy refers to one’s belief in his or her ability to act effectively in a given situation and influences whether one is willing to act and persist in such actions.	Coaches may foster employee self-efficacy by expressing confidence, breaking apart large tasks and assigning one part at a time, celebrating small successes, and providing people with the opportunity to accomplish successively more difficult tasks.	What tactics do effective coaches use to increase employees’ self-efficacy?
Self-fulfilling prophecies	Our expectancy concerning another may affect our behavior toward the other which in turn shapes the other’s behavior so that	When coaches believe the employee will be successful and communicate this expectation either directly or indirectly, the probability	Are effective coaches more likely to communicate positive expectations to employees (thereby triggering self-fulfilling

	the other person ultimately behaves in a way that is consistent with our expectation.	of employee success will likely increase.	prophecy effects)?
Irrational persistence	Commitment generated by sunk costs (investments of time, energy, care, or other resources) creates counterproductive persistence (e.g., refusal to change wrong opinions or to cancel unsuccessful programs). People appear to think, “we must continue to pursue this alternative (even though it now seems less desirable) because we have already invested X and if we do not continue we will have wasted our initial investment.”	Coaches may reduce irrational persistence by encouraging employees to make careful and accurate calculations about their contingencies, telling them about the dangers of becoming entrapped in a persistence situation, pointing out others who have suffered due to costly persistence, and showing how others may think well of them if they withdraw.	How do effective coaches enhance employees’ rational persistence while at the same time help employees to avoid irrational persistence (e.g., due to sunk costs)?
Self-handicapping	In self-handicapping, individuals deliberately create handicaps that will interfere with their performance. Such a handicap (if plausible) reduces the likelihood of success but serves as an excuse that permits the person to attribute failure to a source other than his or her competence (thereby preserving the person’s self-esteem).	Coaches can recognize that self-handicapping is most likely to occur when employees have experienced non-contingent success. Coaches can discuss the credibility of such excuses with employees (for example, challenging the attributions that employees make concerning their performance) and detect self-handicapping early in the performance cycle so that obstacles and potential excuses can be removed while working to increase the employee’s self-efficacy.	Are effective coaches more alert for self-handicapping? How do effective coaches detect self-handicapping early in the performance cycle so that obstacles and potential excuses can be removed?

5. Evaluating Progress and the Coaching relationship

Schematic vs. aschematic	One person may be schematic (e.g., viewing herself as risk-averse vs. risk-oriented) but another person may be aschematic (i.e., lacks any view of herself as one or the other). Schematic people are quicker than others to spot information relevant to the domain (or trait) in others, show greater processing of details, and are better able to integrate it with previously acquired information.	Coaching may affect the employee’s self-concept, for example, by making the employee schematic about domains for which he or she was previously aschematic. This, in turn, influences the way the employee attends to and processes information about the self and others.	To what extent does the coaching experience make employees schematic about domains for which they were previously aschematic?
Possible selves	We have multiple concepts of how we might turn out (cognitive representations of the individual’s hopes and wishes for the self). Information that you don’t have the	Effective coaches may ultimately limit the employee’s vulnerability to feedback by increasing the number of possible selves that the employee can realistically envision.	Does coaching increase the number of possible selves that employees can realistically envision?

	necessary skill to be one of your possible selves is of limited importance when you have many rather than few possible selves		
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