Coaching with Compassion: A Framework for **Optimizing Parasympathetic Activation to** Cultivate Sustainable Change Tracy Asamoah, MD

Who believed in you and inspired you?

OBJECTIVES

- Introduction of Intentional Change Theory Framework
- Role of the autonomic nervous system in change
- How coaching can be optimized by an understanding of neuroscience

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Why See a Coach?

- Stress management/burnout
- Health/Wellness
- Career
- Leadership/executive development
- Change/transition
- Financial planning



Richard Boyatzis, PhD

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vision leads to sustainability and desirable change.



Coaching with Compassion

"Coaching to help another person make progress on their intentional efforts towards sustained, desired change "

Intentional Change Theory



Autonomic nervous system activation

Sympathetic nervous system

- Flight, fight, freeze
- Gas
- Norepinephrine/Cortisol
- Tenses muscle
- Increase BP
- Inhibits digestion
- Dilates pupils

Parasympathetic nervous system

Rest and digest Brakes Acetylcholine relaxes muscle decreases BP Stimulates digestion Constricts pupils



Stress response (autonomic nervous system)



Stress in the body

INSOMNIA

Excess cortisol sends alert signals to brain, disrupting sleep cycles

BRAIN FOG

Fuzzy thinking, poor focus, memory problems

MOOD CHANGES

Anxiety, racing thoughts (especially at bedtime), depression

HEADACHES

Migraines and tension headaches

WEIGHT GAIN

abdominal adiposity

MYSTERY MUSCLE ACHES

Muscle tension and stiffness, especially in the back and legs

COMPROMISED IMMUNE FUNCTION

Frequent respitory infections

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

Flight, fight or freeze causes vasoconstriction

HIGH BLOOD SUGAR

Stress triggers release of stored glucose,

spiking blood sugar and increasing diabetes risk

TACHYCARDIA

Faster heart rate to pump blood the the

organs and limbs

HEARTBURN INDIGESTION

Increased stomach acid productions and digestive trouble

LOW LIBIDO

Excess cortisol suppresses sex hormones

MENSTRAUL IRREGULARITIES

Missed and periods

FERTILITY PROBLEMS

Disruption to ovulation cycles

Coaching in the Brain



PEA and NEA

Psycho-physiological states that a person engages in when creating a idealized vision or goal

Positive emotional attractor

Possibilities, dreams, optimism, hope, strengths-focused, approaching

desired outcome

Negative emotional attractor

Problems, expectations, pessimism, fear, weakness focused, avoiding undesired outcome

Coaching and Parasympathetic vs Sympathetic Activation

PNS (Renewal Response)

- Activated by positive emotional attractor (PEA)
- Thriving
- Relaxed, open state
- Creativity
- Learning, new neural pathways
- Moving towards/seeking a desired outcome



- Activated by negative emotional attractor (NEA)
- Surviving
- Defensive state
- Decreased capacity for creativity or
 - openness
- New learning inhibited
- Moving away from/avoid a negative outcome

SNS (Stress Response)

PEA and NEA (cont')

- Neuro-endocrine
- Affect
- Learning Agenda
- Practice
- Relationships

Positive emotional attractor

- PNS arousal
- Positive
- Excited to try
- Practice to mastery
- Resonant

Negative emotional attractor

- SNS arousal
- Negative
- Should do, performance improvement
- Expected actions, supposed to do
- Dissonant, annoying

PEA and NEA (cont')



Visioning in the brain: An fMR study of inspirational coaching and mentoring Anthony I. Jack, Richard E. Boyatzis, Masud S. Khawaja, Angela M. Passarelli, and Regina L. Leckie

PURPOSE:

To understand neural pathways involved with Positive Emotional Attractors (PEA) vs Negative Emotional Attractors (NEA)

Design: 2 coaches 20 college-age students

Day 1: Coached using either PEA or NEA

Days 4-6: •MRI study Watched videos of PEA, NEA or neutral statements

RESULTS:

- With PEA statements: •Lateral visual cortex (imagining) •Nucleus acumbens
- •Orbitofrontal cortex
- •Posterior cingulate cortex

With NEA statements •Medialprefrontal regions •Right lateral prefrontal cortex

Coaching "what if" vs "you should"

Compassion vs Compliance

Coaching with Compassion

- Client-centered
- Client's expectations
- Transformation focused
- Focus on optimizing the client's strengths
- Supportive/collaborative
- Proactive
- Long-term behavioral change

Coaching for compliance

- Other-centered
- External expectations
- Achievement focused
- Focus on improving the client's deficits
- Directive
- Defensive
- Short-term behavioral change

Compassion vs Compliance (cont')

Personal vision

- Internal/self-motivated
- Working towards a desired vision of yourself
- Empowered

"Ought" self

• External/other-motivated Working out of fear and avoidance of disappointing someone else Defensive

Coaching with Compassion

- Caring relationship
- Mutual commitment
- Focus on facilitating desired change

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Envisioning

Hey, I was thinking about you from our coaching a year ago and I remember how great your plans sounded. I could see, hear, feel and smell every detail. how have things turned out?





Parasympathetic Renewal

Renewal: parasympathetic activation

- Mindfulness practices/breathing exercises
- Hopefulness
- Exercise
- Compassion, helping someone
- Joy, laughter, playfulness,
- Prayer/meditation
- Time in nature
- Resonant relationships
- Petting an animal



Technical



Self-help

Thanks! Tracy Asamoah, MD www.tracyasamoahcoaching.com



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Dr. Tracy Asamoah

