

Motivational Coaching: Helping individuals generate and maintain self-motivation

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Introduction

The British Psychological Society (BPS) recognises coaching as a particular specialism within the application of psychology. A Special Group in Coaching Psychology was set up by the BPS in 2004.

The main aim of this training report is to provide an overview of the one-day Motivational Coaching workshop offered as part of the BPS' 'Learning a Living' programme. I will also briefly consider its usefulness and application in my role as a Work Psychologist working with Jobcentre Plus customers and advisers.

The workshop is facilitated by Dr. Joseph Gelona, a Chartered Psychologist, who is a founder member of The Register of Psychologists Specialising in Psychotherapy, a member of The Chartered Management Institution, and an Accredited Member of the Association of Coaching Psychologists.

The Workshop

The workshop is predicated on the view that motivation is an important requirement for successful pursuit of any venture or goal, yet all too often individuals do not seem aware of their motivational state or have sufficient understanding of how to boost self-motivation. The challenge for a coach, therefore, is to help clients generate and maintain self-motivation.

The day began with a discussion of motivation theories and concepts considered relevant to helping individuals to boost and maintain self-motivation, eg., basic needs theories (Maslow, 1968); goal setting theory (Locke, 1996); self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000); and self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997). While grounded firmly in a positive psychology framework, a wide range of cognitive, behavioural and person-centred principles and approaches were explored.

The discussion was designed to encourage delegates to think about a number of questions posed by the facilitator, notably: How often do

we consciously engage in self-motivational thinking?; When does self-motivational thinking occur? What is it that moves you to action?; How much of self-motivation is due to intrinsic and extrinsic factors?; and Can one person motivate another?

The key learning points from these discussions can be summarised as follows:

- motivation is a complex process that takes place within the individual involving multiple sources.
- every individual has unique ways of generating and maintaining motivation.
- the level of motivation is related to the potency of our needs, the strength of our values, and benefits that we believe we can gain from our behaviours, actions or goals.
- motivation is a choice and we all have the capacity to self-motivate.
- what we need to do is bring to consciousness the connection between our values and our self-motivation.
- motivational coaching can encourage, support and facilitate clients' efforts and

progress in achieving their goal of generating and maintaining self-motivation.

A Pipeline Model of self-motivational energy

Dr Genola then introduced a basic model to try to describe self-motivational energy in action. Delegates were asked to visualise a pipeline with motivational energy running through the pipe. At one end of the pipe you have a 'commitment to goal', while at the other end is an 'outcome'. Blocks in the pipe (obstacles, barriers, loss of motivation, distraction, etc) are called 'bleeders' and cause loss of motivation in respect of achieving the target goal. Strategies individuals can put in place to counteract the 'bleeds' are known as 'boosters' and will serve to increase motivation in respect of achieving the goal. As Table 1 shows, cognitions and emotions serve as both boosters or bleeders.

According to this model, the total sum of 'boosters' must be larger than the total sum of 'bleeders' in order for the 'block' in the pipeline to be released and for flow between 'commitment to goal' and 'outcome' to resume. The coach can play a useful role here in helping the client to monitor themselves for potential 'blocks' and offering strategies to pre-empt or remove them.

Generating and maintaining self-motivation

A range of motivational techniques and approaches can be applied as 'boosters' in a coaching environment. For example:

- Increasing motivation through increased belief or self-efficacy:
 - The coach could 'persuade' a client that there is evidence that they can raise self-

Table 1: Examples of self-motivation 'bleeders' and 'boosters'

Boosters	Bleeders
Process of goal-setting	Conflicting goals/goals that distract and may seem to have a higher priority at the time
Self-efficacy	Self-doubt
Clear vision of ideal	Unrealistic goal
Self-encouraging talk (cognitive narrative)	Failures/disappointments
Remembering what motivated you in the first place when you committed to the goal	Loss through conscious negative thoughts
Supportive relationships	Loss through low belief of self-efficacy
Positive outcome expectancy	Negative emotions that may persist about significant aspects of the goal
Goals connected with values	Self-esteem will fall as well if taken personally (e.g. "I'm not good at motivating myself")
Benefits of outcome	

efficacy (often indirectly via the coach's professional credibility).

- The coach could help the client to gain an achievement (sense of mastery), perhaps by setting tasks.
- Helping clients to go back to the reasons/motives why they wanted to achieve the goal in the first place, ie. reconnecting with values.
- Breaking long term goals down into shorter term goals so that progress can be seen.
- Vicarious experiences (e.g. visualising what achievement of the goal would be like).
- Positive moods.
- Conscious goal-setting.
- Encouraging positive thoughts and beliefs in ability to gain desired outcomes – "If I do act in this way then I will get the results". This is not the same as self-efficacy – "I can do what it takes".

The delegates were reminded that new ways of thinking or behaving take some effort and time to become habits. The coach can play a useful role here in facilitating practise and monitoring the client's self-motivational thinking/moods.

Relevance for Jobcentre Plus Work Psychologists

An underlying assumption of this workshop is that in a business environment individuals will be motivated to seek a coach and pay for their services. They are likely to have a goal and a desire to achieve that goal with facilitation from the coach, who is perhaps biased only in as much as wanting to provide a good service.

The Jobcentre Plus context differs in a number of important ways. First, our customers do not (directly) pay for our services and, if given a free choice, a proportion of them would prefer not to have to engage with us at all. Second, as Jobcentre Plus employees we need to operate in a way that is as consistent as possible with Jobcentre Plus' organisational aims and objectives, which will not always accord with the customer's view of the world. Third, coaching

forms just one part of the work psychologist and adviser job role.

While these factors may make it more challenging to achieve positive outcomes with certain individual customers, it does not diminish the value of consciously engaging in self-motivational thinking as coaches, advisers and customers involved in employment-related goal activities. Indeed, it may strengthen the case for doing so.

Working with Employment Advisers and Customers

Work Psychologists are increasingly involved in coaching activities aimed at developing the skills and performance of employment adviser colleagues. Typical examples are work-targeted interviewing skills, caseload management and case conferencing.

Many of the 'blocks' and the 'booster' techniques introduced in the workshop are likely to be familiar to work psychology colleagues and will be applied in the coaching situations mentioned above. It is quite possible that some are used less often or less well than they could be, and the workshop provided me with an opportunity to review my current practice to identify ways in which specific motivational techniques can be applied more appropriately and effectively, either directly by myself or indirectly through colleagues, to help our job-seeking customers achieve their goals.

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