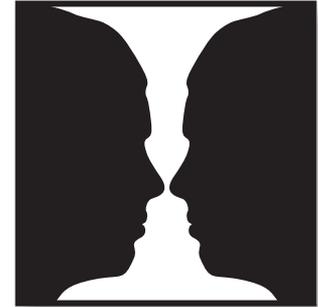


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Dependent on trust and improved by transparency

The coaching relationship

Stephen Palmer and Ole Michael Spaten

Abstract

Ole Michael Spaten interviews Professor Stephen Palmer on the coaching relationship, newer findings and future research. In this interview, Palmer stated that there is no consensus in the precise definition of the coaching relationship. However, Palmer mentions his previous definition of the coaching relationship: 'a unique, co-created, evolving relationship comprising the coaching alliance plus additional client and coach contributions.' Likewise, Palmer pointed out that a fruitful coaching relationship is essential for coachees to accomplish their goals. According to Palmer, some of his key findings is that coaching relationship is dependent on trust and is improved by transparency. Additionally, Palmer declares that striving towards goals and enhancing performance are essential factors in coaching. Moreover, he acknowledged that the phenomena of virtual coaching that we encounter would benefit from further research.

Keywords: Coaching relationship, Coaching alliance, Coachees, Coach

Ole: When and how did you realize that the alliance / relation between coach and coachee was an important and under researched topic?

Stephen: Having worked in psychotherapeutic field since the mid-1980s I had assumed that the coaching alliance and relationship were important in facilitating coachees in achieving their goals. However, how important is probably a key question.

Ole: What brought you to this research field?

Stephen: There were a number of factors. Doctorate supervision at City University, London was an important factor. I was supervising Kristina Gyllensten for her doctorate research and in one of her studies nine participants were interviewed about their experiences of coaching, and 'The coaching relationship' was identified as a main theme. There was limited published research into this area so we realised it was important to publish these research findings (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007). I was also supervising and publishing articles and chapters with Alan-

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na Henderson (formerly O'Broin) for her doctorate research which focused on the coaching relationship. Later I teamed up with Almuth McDowall to co-edit *The Coaching Relationship: Putting People first*, which was published in 2010 (Palmer & McDowall, 2010).

Ole: How do you define the coaching relationship?

Stephen: There is no agreement in the precise definition of the coaching relationship. However, I still like our one sentence working definition for the coach-client relationship published in the Handbook of Coaching Psychology (O'Broin & Palmer, 2007: 296): *'a unique, co-created, evolving relationship comprising the coaching alliance plus additional client and coach contributions'*

Ole: What is some of your most important findings concerning the coaching relationship and the coaching alliance?

Stephen: Those early research findings published back in 2007 with Kristina were exciting (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007: 168): *'The coaching relationship' was identified as a main theme, which, in turn, comprised of three subthemes; valuable coaching relationship; trust; and transparency. These themes highlighted that the coaching relationship was very valuable for the participants and that this relationship was dependent on trust and improved by transparency.*

However, another important finding from that study which is sometimes overlooked was that: *'Working towards goals and improving performance were also valuable components of the coaching'* (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007: 168).

Ole: What do you think would be future key research areas for scholars interested in further understanding and development of this field?

Stephen: As we undertake more coaching in a virtual world, it would be useful to examine the coaching relationship.

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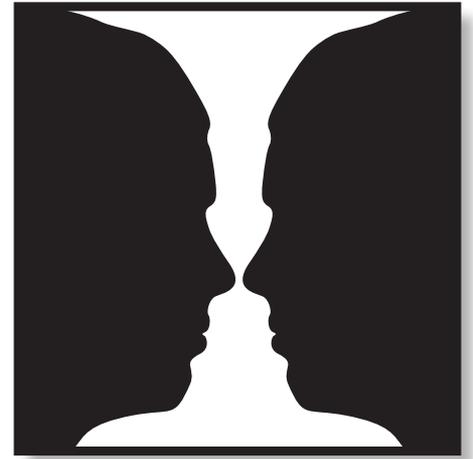


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