



EDITED & FOREWORD
BY NICK BOLTON

COACHING KIDS

EMPOWERING
YOUNG PEOPLE
THROUGH
COACHING



SERIES EDITOR NICK BOLTON

COACHING KIDS

EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH COACHING

Edited & Foreword by

NICK BOLTON

Selection and editorial matter © 2014 by Nick Bolton

Foreword and chapters © 2014 (in order) Nick Bolton; Yaa Antwi-Nsiah;
Craig Coggle; Sally George; Sonia Gill; Emily Johnston; Jennifer Riley; Robert
Stephenson; Ursula Villemsonne

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or
used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the
publisher, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

Printed in Great Britain

First published 2014 by
ANIMAS PUBLISHING

Animas Publishing is an imprint of Animas Education Limited

ISBN-13: 000-0-000000-00-0 (Paperback Edition)

Animas Publishing
16th Floor, Portland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5RS

www.animascoaching.com

CONTENTS

FOREWORD ■ v

Nick Bolton

ABOUT THE AUTHORS ■ ix

COACHING AND THE SEEDS OF LEARNING ■ 1

Craig Coggle

“CHOICES ARE THE HINGES OF OUR DESTINY”

–PYTHAGORAS ■ 12

Ursula Villemson

KNOW THYSELF ■ 20

Yaa Antwi-Nsieh

COACHING TO REALISE TRUE POTENTIAL ■ 28

Emily Johnston & Jennifer Riley

WORKING WITH THE OUTSIDER ■ 38

Robert Stephenson

COACHING YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE ■ 47

Sally George

MOTIVATION FROM WITHIN ■ 55

Sonia Gill

FOREWORD

Nick Bolton

When you take a moment to think about it, it seems obvious that coaching has no better or more fertile ground than with young people!

- Young people are in an almost constant state of change as they grow up and so are ideally placed to benefit from the focus, clarity and exploration that coaching offers.
- Young people have yet to develop the fixity of self-image that so many people develop in later life and so can fully engage in the process of self-challenge that coaching offers.
- Young people are beset by pressures to perform, to behave, to fit in, to adhere, to please, to adapt - indeed to essentially be someone and something for different people and institutions - and so can hugely enjoy the space that coaching offers just to explore who they are without expectation.

So why is it so rarely used?

Why has coaching yet to be adopted in the culture of schools, universities, families and all the other contexts in which young people find themselves.

The answer to this seems on the one hand pretty simple and on the other multi-faceted.

I, for one, don't believe there has been any kind of conscious rejection of coaching by schools and similar bodies nor are the principles antithetical to them. Rather, it's simply that coaching is still a young profession and, like most things, it will take time for it to become established as a serious alternative to existing ways of doing things.

The old way of teaching has moved on in line with the wider shift towards greater responsibility for self-development that coaching is a part of. Thus it can be said that coaching and the new form of teaching are part of a cultural movement, a zeitgeist, of personal discovery.

And yet, nonetheless, coaching is not yet a go to form of development of schools.

Those in the position to make these kinds of choices need to be more aware of coaching and need to see that it has very real benefits to offer.

I believe it's partly the job of the coaching profession (ie. the coaches within it) to make the case for coaching and it's partly the job of the decision makers within organisations to stay alert to alternatives that help them achieve the best outcomes for young people and not simply do what they've always done because it's what they've always done! There is a discourse needed between coaches and those who would benefit from coaching and I am hopeful that step by step that discourse is happening and the fruits are being seen.

There is more to be done for sure: coaches and coaching organisations like Animas Centre for Coaching need to continue to spread the word of what coaching is capable of and how it differs from traditional approaches, new ways to fund coaching as a part of the organisation's work need to be found if we're not to rely on the

goodwill and pro bono mentality of many coaches and more creative ways to engage families in coaching need to be found if youth coaching is going to become something more than a pocket of good practice based around sole practitioners.

But progress is being made and youth coaching is no longer the preserve of the sports ground.

And so it's with a great deal of pride that I present these chapters to you. They are proof that in different ways and with different groups, coaching is finding its way in to organisations that work with young people.

Whether that's in implicit ways, with coaching being used as part of the wider pedagogic approach or in much more explicit ways in which coaching is specifically sought out as a solution to the challenges being faced by young people, it is clear from these chapters that youth coaching is being used more than it ever has.

In *Coaching and the Seeds of Learning*, Craig Coggle points out how the importance of young people forging their own outcomes is being seen in the significant changes in education and offers some core coaching tools that can be used with great effect with young people.

In *Choices: The Hinges of Destiny* Ursula Villemsonne highlights the critical skill of decision making and explores how and where young people can develop this ability.

Yaa Antwi-Nsiah, in *Know Thyself*, takes a more existential angle in chapter 3, exploring the importance of working with young people to find out who they really are. For Yaa, this is the route of all further work and is missed with serious consequences.

Mindfulness forms the subject of the fourth chapter as Jennifer Riley and Emily Johnston explore *Coaching to Realise True Potential*.

In *Working with the Outsider*, Robert Stephenson explores the critical skills needed within youth group work to help all members

of the group find the confidence to step forth and, in particular, the power of coaching to help the *outsider* find their courage.

In *Working with Young People In or Leaving Care*, Sally George shows the critical importance of simply being there for someone for whom life is about change, loss and a lack of consistency. Sally shows just how important coaching is for allowing a young person to explore their desires when their actual experience is a constant challenge.

And finally, Sonia Gill in *Motivation from Within*, tackles the importance of helping young people find motivation. She demonstrates the importance of negotiating the needs of the sponsoring organisation with the lived experience of the young person so that motivation is found in the only place that really matters – the self.

I am thrilled to have been able to put this book together with these coaches and am proud that they have taken what we offer at Animas Centre for Coaching and brought it together with their own set of skills make a real difference to the lives of young people.

It takes tenacity, care, commitment and skill to work with young people using coaching and I'd like to thank all the coaches who took part in sharing their experiences. And, of course, there would be no book without all the young people who are living out their changes, discovering their potential and shaping their lives ready to be the next generation. My best wishes go to all of you!

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

NICK BOLTON

Nick Bolton is founder and director of Animas Centre for Coaching, editor of the Animas Publishing series on coaching and a coach, trainer and supervisor. Passionate about coaching as a methodology for personal change, Nick is committed to sharing what coaching can do for both those who train as a coached and those who use coaching.

Find out more about Animas Centre for Coaching at www.animascoaching.com

YAA ANTWI-NSIAH

Yaa Antwi-Nsiah is the YouthFull coach working with young people helping them to become leaders. Starting her career as a Summer Camp Counsellor in New York, Yaa has worked with young people (aged 8-25 years) for over 15 years.

Yaa combines her passion and skills in Youth Work and Life Coaching to design and coordinate workshops and bespoke programmes using her unique DREAMS© strategy to equip young people with tools that empower them to follow their passions and realise their goals.

Yaa can be contacted at: www.youthfull.co.uk.

CRAIG COGGLE

Craig Coggle is a an educator, consultant, coach and website developer.

Craig's writing has appeared in Pick the Brain, Tiny Buddha, Change This and many other publications. With a reputation as a workshop leader and education consultant he now also works with solo professionals that want to build their own professional online platform. You can find out more at <http://craiggoggle.com>

He currently lives in the north of London with his wife Adeline and their son Cassidy.

SALLY GEORGE

Sally has been working with young people for the past 7 years supporting them into training, education and / or employment, or generally moving them onto a better place in their lives.

Many of the young people she coaches have been in care and have had to overcome huge barriers. Others have had short spells in young offenders institutes and want to change their lives putting this behind them.

As Sally says, "Many young people feel isolated not knowing how to move their lives forward, this is where life coaching comes into being as with adults there are times in our lives when we need that support and help to see where our actions, ideas, skills and experience can lead us."

Sally can be contacted at Sallygeorge@hotmail.co.uk

SONIA GILL

Sonia Gill is an educational leadership coach who helps heads make their school outstanding by developing the school's leadership and culture to create a high performing team.

As a qualified teacher of over 14 years and a graduate of the John Lewis business leadership programme she is very familiar with the challenges of both schools and leadership and over the last few years has used this to help over a 1000 Heads and school leaders and of the 1000+ school leaders she has trained all of them recommend her training.

Sonia's mission is to make all schools outstanding.

She can be contacted at www.ukheadsup.com

EMILY JOHNSTON

Emily Johnston is a Health and Wellbeing Practitioner working in three schools alongside her own practice. She uses acupressure massage, coaching and meditation to reduce stress in staff.

She is also currently Head of the Meditation Programme at St James's School for Girls, promoting and developing meditation for staff and students, and using coaching techniques alongside meditation to aid focus and concentration in students.

Emily's aim in all her work is to bring space and peace into people's lives so that they can, through their own self-awareness, see what can be let go of and what will help them on their journey.

Emily can be contacted at www.emilywellbeing.co.uk

JENNIFER RILEY

Jennifer Riley is a Head of Mathematics who from May 2014 will be Deputy Head with responsibility for pastoral care at a new specialist mathematics sixth form college being launched by King's College, London.

She believes passionately in using coaching to unlock the unlimited potential in every child and uses mindfulness meditation regularly with her classes.

Jennifer can be contacted at jennymriley@hotmail.com

ROBERT STEPHENSON

Robert Stephenson is a trained Performance and Person Centred Coach, who explores how NLP, Hypnotherapy and Creative Thinking can enhance the Coaching environment, creating awareness and change, to enable clients to overcome their fears, achieve their outcomes and reach their true potential.

Robert specialises in working with young people, 1-2-1 and groups, in the school environment, youth clubs and university. He uses his training in 'theatre and education' to enhance the coaching environment, both with metaphors, storytelling, artwork, games/exercises and role play.

He is also the Youth Coaching trainer for Animas Centre for Coaching

Robert can be contacted at www.robertstephensoncoaching.com

URSULA VILLEMSONE

Throughout her higher education years Ursula has always been a mentor to fellow students.

She feels passionate about the personal growth and development of young adults. After graduating from University she turned to life coaching, to create a generation that is able to take control of their lives. She is currently training as a life coach at Animas Centre for Coaching in London.

Ursula can be contacted at Ursula.villemsne@ymail.com

COACHING AND THE SEEDS OF LEARNING

Craig Coggle

Wow, how the teaching profession has changed! The face of the modern classroom is unrecognisable from my own time attending a regular comprehensive in the 80's, especially in my specialism of music education.

Not only have the chalkboards gone and technology changed how students access and use information, but also the fundamental approach to teaching and learning has been transformed.

For years the creative teaching approaches of the Performing Arts have involved enquiry, trust building, exploration, and self-reflection - things that are already quite familiar to coaches.

Now the rest of the education system is catching up by introducing more and more strategies that foster creativity and value individual achievement. There is a recognition that each of us has a 'seed for learning' within us and that not every seed grows in the same way.

Creative partnerships, project based work, learning communities, assessment for learning, and teaching through play all challenge the status quo of traditional knowledge and fact based transfer.

The focus is now, more so than ever before, on the 'learning seeds' of each individual. Education, for the most part, is no longer about 'first past the post' and 'only the brightest succeed', but is genuinely about achievement for all.

In true coaching fashion, the typical one way flow that teaching has had for so long is now becoming a dialogue that involves enquiry, challenge, and listening.

Okay, there are still some die hard traditionalists in schools and government who would prefer a return to the Victorian school system! But from within the schools inspection body (OFSTED) the emphasis is squarely on achievement and progress for all.

This means everyone from the most able to the low achieving and hard to reach.

In response to this, the didactic teaching approach is being adapted. Teaching is becoming more about dialogue, engagement, shared feedback, and independence.

Learning is about choosing where to focus, gaining clarity on individual strengths, reflecting on progress, and agreeing on strategies for the next step.

Does that sound familiar?

Coaching anyone?

COACHING PRINCIPLES

I've been working in music education for over ten years now and I've seen my own shift towards coaching as a process for change echoed within the structure of the schools agenda.

They don't call it coaching, but it is still there. It is an important breakthrough that a coaching-centred approach is considered suitable for young people and not just for business executives or sports people.

Many of the principles of coaching are becoming recognised as essential elements of successful learning in young people:

- Collaboration: not just talking *at* students, but exploring learning *with* them
- Connection: building relationships with students
- Curiosity: understanding their learning needs
- Challenge: raising expectations across all levels
- Creation: using engaging pedagogic approaches that stimulate minds
- Change: allowing transformation in young people to occur

To enable this to happen, and in order that it become more widespread, an open and empathic approach from teachers and schools is necessary. This means the caring and understanding of all the students within a schools' influence, the kind of thinking that produced the Government green paper 'Every Child Matters' in 2003.

COACHING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

How often has a coaching client come to you and needed help with their progress, clarity, and strategies for moving forward?

Young people are no different and coaching can be a powerful process to help them.

The impact of coaching can be transformational. If you're reading this then that is something that you probably already consider a statement of fact.

For a young person, the power of coaching can reach them when they are already undergoing a major transformation.

Coaching can touch young people at a transitional point in their lives when it can be easy to lose sense of who they are, where they are heading, and most importantly, what they are worth.

At this point in their lives young people are facing huge changes in their moods, their hormones, and in their physical appearance which can make everyday issues and decisions much more taxing and scary.

The role of the teacher / coach is not yet one that is appearing in the National papers' job section, yet it is a huge part of the way in which schools in the UK are steering their approach to the development of young people.

In a school you can find coaching approaches contained within these areas or departments:

- Mentoring
- Pastoral care
- Teaching and learning support
- Teaching through creativity

I find two main approaches helpful in my work and I outline these below:

Student Targets and Goal Setting

As students get older there is an emphasis on becoming a more independent learner, certainly when making the shift from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 (GCSE) and from Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 5 (A levels). The learning expectations can be vastly different from what the young person has experienced before.

When faced with a lot of project work, or units that require course work to be completed, students find it very difficult to manage their time, meet deadlines, and evidence the best of their work.

I will often co-construct a unit of work with students, particularly with the older sixth form students. This is a process where, as a group, we can examine the criterion that they need to meet in their work and set out the process to achieve it.

In true coaching terms, we are exploring the capabilities and potential of the group and matching that to the requirements of the course.

This can be done through a process of questioning, listening, and most importantly, getting each of them to declare in their own words what their targets are and how they intend to reach them.

All students have potential, and recognising their unique strengths can be a very motivating exercise for them to complete.

The process of co-construction fits very neatly with the BTEC syllabus which is popular in the Performing Arts. In project based subjects such as this there is a great need to collaborate with the students on how to plot the milestones that need to be reached through the course cycle.

In the same way that some people are easy to coach, some students are suited to co-construction. They look positively on the help that they are receiving and are generally committed to taking the steps needed to achieve their goals.

On the other hand, other students may interpret any attempt to propose deadlines as authoritarian and become resistant to collaborating. In these cases it is important to remember that *challenge* is an important coaching principle and a key part of learning.

In one case, a student of mine was given a very specific task to be completed in the three remaining periods of that day.

The deadline had arrived and this was a final opportunity for each student to complete whatever was outstanding, to get any help or feedback, or to begin preparing for the next assignment.

He was very obviously disengaged and was occupying himself with some non-related task.

I challenged him on this and he was very quick to announce that he had permission from another teacher to extend the deadline and that he would complete the assignment at home.

This was a tricky situation for me. I had a three hour session just beginning and one student essentially writing off the entire time in order to complete this work at home.

So I asked him how he will manage when *that* deadline approaches? I could tell from his reaction and his body language that he found the question uncomfortable.

I had seen similar delaying tactics in students before but I was careful not to presume that this was the same thing. I also remained interested in why he would choose to focus on arranging a deadline extension when there was plenty of time, right now, to get moving.

I reflected this back to him. Eventually he talked and I listened. He was having a tough time at home, in fact he had been suffering from panic attacks. He certainly seemed to be getting anxious as I asked questions.

I thought that it was important not to collude with his story and create a situation where he might feel that he was being pitied. He may have begun to get embarrassed and feel even more anxious.

We skirted around several questions for a while until he revealed that 'his mind was a blank' and he didn't know what to do to start the work.

There was a clear block stopping him from accessing his incredible musicianship and producing the kind of work that I knew he was capable of. Giving in to his anxiety was an *easy* way for him to not have to admit that he was confused and finding it difficult.

So we agreed that it was okay for him to produce the *worst* report that he could, that it was okay to scrap everything he does today, if he can come up with a better piece at home.

To start with, I gave him some simple steps so that he could begin making small progress with the task. I helped clarify any parts of the assignment that were confusing. He set to work and became engaged with the task and was soon part of the learning group again.

I suppose that a traditional punitive teacher approach to a situation like this may have still ended up with him getting down to work on the assignment. But the end result would have been so very different.

Creativity and self confidence

Within my role there is plenty of opportunity to not only focus on musical achievement as it relates to a curriculum or course criteria, but also to use the power of music to build confidence and develop creativity.

I use coaching alongside music workshop facilitation techniques when running community music sessions with young people.

Sometimes we might not pick up an instrument at all, instead we might explore an experience, a feeling, or something deeper like a fear or anxiety.

It is quite common for these emotions to surface during music performance and for them to have similarities to emotions that the

young people are encountering in their lives. This commonality can spark a connection that allows transformation or, in some cases, just coping to take place.

In a recent community music project I led a team of workshop leaders delivering weekly sessions with a group of young people for over two years.

This sort of long term project can be compared to the sort of long term coaching relationship that you may develop with a client.

It does also mean that, over a long time, the coaching principles of connection and collaboration become particularly important. Developing trust and understanding is vital to ensure that a group of young people will continue working together week in and week out for a number of years.

These are some of the testimonials that we received as we closed the final session and prepared to let the group go to find their own path.

'Because of you guys I found my inner musician.'

'I have grown so much as a musician and in confidence.'

'It has made such a massive impact on my life and made a future career in music look more like a reality.'

Coaching might manifest in a number of ways during a music project.

INTERVIEWS

Role playing through interviews allows young people to future vision themselves and begin to get excited about possibilities that are open before them. We have used this exercise to allow young people to imagine themselves five years into the future being interviewed by a high profile and highly relevant magazine or TV show.

By allowing their imaginations to run free they can start to unlock their own values, their dreams, and their desires as well as getting clear on some very real steps that they can begin to take.

As a facilitator of this, I would ask questions to uncover how events came to be, why certain things were chosen over others, and which key relationships became crucial to the projected success. By listening and watching the response of the young person we can both learn about their authentic visions and hopes.

This playful exercise can be inspiring and incredibly positive and also builds rapport between the team and the participants. I've seen a number of young people be surprised at just how positive their own visions of themselves turned out to be!

SONGWRITING EXERCISES

Although care must be taken not to always make songwriting a deep and cathartic process, it is undeniable that writing things down helps all of us to express things we find difficult to verbalise.

Even in its most playful form songwriting can be a great way to learn about ourselves and about each other. It also gives young people a vehicle to examine issues that they might be facing but in a way that can be less overt or raw.

The power of performing a self composed song that may have a significance to it can also be extremely liberating and powerful. Equally, in times when we have worked with particularly vulnerable young people, such as young carers, there is a great deal of value in steering well clear of emotive subjects.

Sometimes these issues may bubble to the surface, but usually after a great deal of trust building. I find this so similar to the coaching approach, treating people as valued human beings, not as broken things that need fixing.

GAMES AND ICE BREAKERS

Games can be such a great way to develop confidence and establish strong relationships with young people that they form a large part of facilitated sessions.

Participants can be challenged out of their comfort zones with the result that personal growth and self esteem rockets. Speaking out, voicing opinion, talking to new members, and building new friendship group can all be valuable outcomes.

MENTORING SESSIONS

Time to talk and listen formed an essential part of our weekly sessions. In many cases, issues from outside the workshop would manifest as unusual behaviour and a change of emotional state. Often the support from the group, and the trust that we established over time, allowed a space for topics to be discussed privately.

In other examples, young people who found it hard to integrate with the core group would be given individual time to reflect on their experience and how they might want things to develop. Again, nothing more involved was needed than some appropriate and open questions, and a whole lot of listening.

Because of the creative and generally open nature of the work most topics are able to be explored, provided the rest of the group are comfortable with that.

For instance:

- They get the chance to talk about difficult subjects such as bullying, relationships and alienation
- They are encouraged to become more open and see the world from fresh perspectives.

- They can set their own goals for self-improvement. Though these might be music specific there will be a corresponding personal benefit as explained previously.
- They can achieve their ambitions.
- They can learn to handle emotions, to express them and to talk about them.
- They get the support of an objective and non-judgemental mentor, and a safe space to explore.
- They learn to build confidence and social skills.
- They regularly feel motivated and inspired.

Using a variety of methods, the workshop leaders facilitate great creative music making but the principles of coaching allow a flexible person centred approach which ensures that all participants feel included, empowered, and transformed.

So whether you call it coaching, teaching, or mentoring what could be considered a more valuable experience than that?

”CHOICES ARE THE HINGES OF OUR DESTINY” –PYTHAGORAS

Ursula Villemsonne

In the short time I have been coaching, it has become more and more evident that young people are simply unsure of themselves and that there is generally a great deal of doubt and confusion regarding decisions.

This is a generalisation of course and based on my own coaching experience, but usually, when presented with a personal question (where there is no right or wrong answer and it is more a matter of their opinions and feelings) I tend to be given an answer with a questioning look, as if they are looking to see if that was the correct answer.

Being young generally means you are looked after by your parents and teachers whom you rely on for a significant part of your life decisions and who generally know better and are there to teach you what is wrong and right. For a very long time in a young person’s life, adults have the final say on almost all matters. Young people are simply used to having their actions and words deemed appropriate or not. So it’s no wonder the young people I have been coaching are not fully confident with their own opinion.

Getting young people to open up and think freely and creatively without a feeling of judgement, perhaps for the first time, is something I feel passionate about and would like to explore in this chapter.

In order for coaching to be an effective and powerful tool for moving forward, at some point the client will need to make a decision. No matter how big or small, they will have to choose a certain path. This is where I see some people get stuck, especially the younger clients I work with.

Decisions can be really hard to make. One decision can completely change the course of your life, forever (it can even be one that seems insignificant at the time). When it comes to decisions, a lot of the time we are working with a time limit or a limited amount of information and limited life experience within that area and yet the consequences of the decision can be life changing.

Current times are uncertain and we are not given a guide book to life to follow. Every life is different and we face so many options. Each option must be looked at differently and each one comes with its own tangle of emotions and worries attached to it.

As human beings we are always faced with having to make a decision of some kind and those decisions are not always easy to make but they must be made. Pretty much anything that happens down the line can be seen as a direct consequence of a decision we have made earlier. It is clear to see that learning the ability to make good decisions or at least an effective methodology is vital. The sooner we get to do this, the better.

Recently, many organisations have put their primary focus on young people getting involved in community decision making. They know that when a young person has the chance to recognise a problem and actually take actions to resolve it, it builds their

confidence, inspires positive thinking and the gives them the belief that they can direct their day to day lives.

The Youth in Action programme is a great example of this. They provide grant funding for groups and organisations to work with young people. They enable organisations to bring young people and decision-makers together to discuss and shape the future direction on a number of issues. These events can take place on a local, regional, and national level. Through participating, young people and decision-makers exchange ideas and gain new skills. To participate in a programme like this the youngest participant would have to be at least thirteen.

But why wait tip then? Children can start to experience decision making by participating in the home. If they are listened to and their opinions are valued, they can begin to grow confidence in their choices. This is also a great way develop their identity, interactive skills, sense of belonging and self-worth. All of this can encourage a young person to get involved in extra-curricular activities and in general respond more positively to educational opportunities.

The Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice states that: "In order to express views, children and young people need to have experience of being asked for their views, being listened to, making some choices and having some influence on what they do..."

I believe that at a young age, getting fully involved in home life and community projects where possible is a great way to build a positive outlook on life and the confidence to make those important decisions. I have been lucky to get my coaching practice from a range of young adults from different backgrounds and cultures. They are all at a point in their lives where they have huge decisions to make, such as; which country should they move to? Which career path should

they go down? After briefly chatting about what decision making means to them, I will share what I found out.

In general from my experience of coaching, the patterns that I see are that decision making is not easy, it can be frustrating, daunting, even tedious in terms of thinking in advance of the possible consequences and weighing up the pros and cons. It is nice to have a grand fantasy of what the right decision will bring you but also at the back of your mind you cannot help but think what if this goes all wrong and it is all doom and gloom? The pattern that I see is that decision making gets easier, or less of daunting and exhausting, and with more practice you learn to trust your instincts and trust your own judgement. As one of my clients said "there is no wrong decision". She feels that every decision is a lesson, you get smarter and wiser with every move, so there can hardly ever be a wrong choice. Every need for a decision that comes along is a reminder to one of my clients that they are in control of their life. They hold the stepping stones to their future; all they have to do is lay them out in the direction of their choice. What a beautiful way to see this!

However, even my most confident decision making clients will struggle when it comes to making a choice that directly affects a loved one. As a new coach, I have found these moments to be quite challenging. A young person has an idea in mind of what they want to do, they have delved into the pros and cons, they are almost willing to make a move, yet they are stopped in their tracks by the thought of their loved ones being put out. At moments it seems as though they completely give up their power of choice, or the will to explore this option by themselves or together with their loved one.

As this is an emotional result rather than a tangible outcome, it tips the balance on the pros and cons scale and the decision can defy

logic. For example a young person might have a job opportunity abroad, it is a fantastic job that will kick start their career but leaving their family behind and risking hurting loved ones can outweigh any number of pros. So when it comes to decisions like these, coaching is a very good tool to explore all aspects, emotional and rational. A coaching session can be a great space to practise different methods of decision making, especially if you are someone who normally sticks to one method.

What I have observed through coaching is that the methods of decision making are as varied as the options they have to choose from. Some people do meticulous research into their topic, some immediately seek advice from those they trust, others simply go with their gut feeling and some just list the pros and cons, or a combination of the above. I guess it is important to realise that most people are emotional during that time where a decision has to be made. It seems as though most emotions are heightened. It is more easy to trust your own decision if you have explored different ways of approach and still come to the same conclusion.

One of my clients has actually noticed the way her body reacts to change. Having taken an action for change that was not easy but certainly exactly what she needed, for two months her body felt different and out of sync. After those two months it was all 'smooth sailing' but it was important for her to know she made the right decision even when her body seemed to say otherwise. She was able to trust herself simply because she had weighed up all the options using different methods of decision making. This gave her courage to keep going without looking back and, of course, soon enough her body returned to sync and she was feeling great and most of all convinced she did the right thing.

When introduced to coaching for the first time, young people may feel like it will be something similar to career counselling, mentoring or a chat with their parents. They are usually taken aback at the self-exploration they may have to do. I guess they are not really used to it, that's all. They are used to getting advice and being told what to do. What I have noticed is that they do not really want advice anyway. Some admit that it is good to hear a different perspective, however rarely does this truly influence them. In most cases, they are happy to go off and do their own thing anyway.

Within a coaching session I have felt it to be useful to ask the young person if there has ever been a time that they have followed someone else's advice against their own judgement. I'm told again and again that going against their personal judgement never worked out well. The lesson learned here was that no one knows you as well as you do, and that your own judgement is more accurate than you think. I feel once people stop and look at their own past experience of getting advice, they realise how often they have chosen their own path anyway. They have been in control of their life, in many more scenarios than they think. I felt like this was a good eye opener for those who doubted their own judgment, as we do not normally look back and analyse all the good decisions we made on our own.

One of my clients was struggling to come up with the right answers. Not being sure of which path to choose, she had settled for staying in limbo waiting it out to see what happens. A question I asked her was "Do you feel you have the opportunity to make decisions, however big or small?" She had been quite independent for a long time already. She has actually had plenty of experience shaping her life into what it is now. We don't normally get a certificate for our smart choices in life, so we are very quick to forget our own

achievements. Sometimes it is so easy to forget about all the good we have done and instead remember only the mistakes. It can be useful to stop and think about the good choices we have made if self-validation is what we need to move on and up.

Some of the young people I have come across have stated that on many occasions when it comes to decision making, they procrastinate and somewhat avoid making a choice. It gets to a point where it is too late and the situation is out of their control and the decision has been made for them. An example of this would be in a classroom environment where a student is asked to mingle around the room and find a group of people they want to work with. They have the person they want to work with in mind already; however, with a fear of rejection or fear of looking desperate they are rooted to the ground and prevented from approaching that person. By staying put and not taking any action at all, the choice is taken out of their hands and they naturally are left to join the last forming group. Looking back at this situation, it made them realise that they feared rejection. By staying rooted to the ground and not making eye contact with anyone, made them feel invincible to rejection (no one can reject them if they don't appear to be asking), however what happened was by being one of the last ones without a group, made them feel just as bad as having their initial fear come true. A useful question to ask was "how did the lack of action serve you?"

Not to make a decision is a decision itself, but one that is most likely in a lot of cases to get you none of the things you really want.

Sometimes if we do not feel that we have enough data to make a wise decision or we are emotionally stuck from choosing, we think time will bring us enough clarity to make that brilliant and wise decision. The problem is that we know that procrastinating for too long can bring us undesired results.

For someone who is struggling over a decision such as whether to accept a job offer or not, like my client who was in limbo “waiting it out, to see what happens”, a good question to ask would be “if you keep waiting, will it result in a “made for you” decision?” If that is the case, they are likely to see the possible outcome, and whatever it may be, it is likely they will feel a sense of urgency to make a move, all of a sudden. For example, realising that the job offer will not be there for ever and can be passed on to someone else at any moment.

I have noticed that, simply, giving someone the opportunity to look back at their previous life choices, no matter how big or small, is an instant confidence booster. It reassures them that they have made good decisions in the past and so are perfectly able to make a good decision again. In addition, they realise that they are mature enough to deal with any of the negative side effects. It mostly leaves them feeling empowered. It is worth realising that leaving something to fate is not as random as you might think. By choosing not to choose, all you would be doing is disempowering yourself and giving yourself a passive victim role in your own life story.

Often when we are uncertain about a decision, it may mean we are faced with an opportunity to face our fears, and rather than admitting this; we pretend that we are not really sure of what we want to do. Until we realise that not taking any action might actually be worse than the fear we have in the first place. So next time when I see someone procrastinate and not commit to a decision I will get them to stop and think as to why that is happening, because we all know that when it comes to important life decisions it is all well and good to create a pros and cons list, however emotions can overrule logic, and a coaching space is the perfect environment to explore this.

KNOW THYSELF

Yaa Antwi-Nsieh

I chose to become a youth coach so I could help young people on their journey of getting to know they really are.

This is fundamentally important to the self-development of young people because once they find out who they really are, they begin to discover their passion, uncover their purpose and unlock their greatness enabling them to share their talents with the world.

The social norm goes something like this: you go to school, get good grades, get a good job, fall in love, get married, settle down with your partner, have children and live happily ever after.

If only it *were* that easy.

This *cookie-cutter* story suggests that '*one size fits all*'. But what if this *cookie-cutter* lifestyle is not for you...what then? Do you keep trying to fit into this lifestyle and hope things will eventually work out in your favour?

No! This idealised lifestyle is not for everyone. In fact, life is very rarely this simple and straightforward. Yet it's what many young people strive for to the detriment of their real desires.

Why? I believe it's because most young people are not equipped with the emotional intelligence and critical thinking needed to handle life decisions sufficiently. They are left feeling inadequate and like a failure because the *cookie-cutter* lifestyle didn't work out for them. But what they don't realise is that it's not just them; it rarely works out for most people.

In school, young people are taught to be academically smart, but not emotionally smart. They'll get an A*/A+ for doing well a Maths exam, but not for how well they know and understand who they are.

And because young people aren't taught to be emotionally smart, they don't feel confident enough to be their true selves and never find out who they really are.

This lack of self-awareness can lead to feelings of inadequacy that can follow them well into adulthood as they become people who judge themselves by other people's standards rather than their own.

I once read that by the age of seven most children know what they want to be when they grow up. So why then by the age of 22, as they are graduating university, do they just want to get a job, any job?! What happens in that 15-year period that so many young people go from having such big bright dreams to just wanting to survive?

In my experience of coaching young people, I've often found that they are not given the opportunity to find out who they are and to pursue their dreams. Instead of encouraging them to dream big and work hard to make their dreams come true, people around them thwart their dreams, calling them *'unrealistic'* and *'impractical'*, sometimes even *'impossible'*. They are told to be sensible and get a 'good' job, which neither motivates nor inspires them.

When I have asked young people what they want to be when grow up, many of them are quick to tell me *'they don't know'*, *'haven't really thought about it'* or *'don't care'*. However, digging a little deeper, I've discovered that this is a defence mechanism they use protect themselves from the fear of not being good enough to live up to the greatness of their dreams. They settle for what is socially acceptable. Unfortunately what they don't realise is settling for what is socially acceptable won't ever make them happy.

As a youngster, I was never given the opportunity to find out who I was.

I was definitely the quirky kid who didn't fit in. Although I was smart, I was by no means an A grade student. I was pretty, but not spectacularly gorgeous. My dress sense was what I would call the 'make-do' look. You know, making do with what you have. I made sure I was well liked, and always had a smile on my face. A friend once even described me as *'the person most likely to put on a party.'*

I became a pleaser and was very careful never to leave anyone out so I would fit in and be liked because I thought that if people liked me enough, it would make me happy.

The funny thing was though, that no matter how hard I tried I never actually felt like I did fit in. I didn't believe there was anything special about me and I certainly never felt good enough. So there I was, always trying to please others and get them to like to me, but I never took the time to get to know and like myself. Simply because I was never taught *how* – I had no idea that getting know who I was would actually make me happy.

Of course, as a young person I thought I was the only one who felt like this, but now as a coach I realise many young people feel this way. In fact, this issue comes up time and time again during my coaching sessions.

Young people are trying so hard to be socially acceptable to gain the approval of others (friends, peers, parents, teachers etc.) that they don't realise that they need to like and accept themselves first. They feel like they need the approval of others to be good enough, and the more they please those around them, the happier they will be within themselves. They don't understand that getting to know who they are is what brings them true happiness and fulfilment.

So if the root of the problem is that young people don't know who they are then surely the answer to help them figure this out. Although this sounds simple enough, it presents a very big challenge for young people.

Getting to know who they are is challenging because it requires them to stand out quite noticeably from the crowd, let go of social norms and break out of the '*normal*' box. This, of course, means that they may be judged negatively and won't be liked.

In a world where we are conditioned to fit in, the thought of standing out and not being liked can be very scary for a young person. And what is even scarier is self-examination: looking at themselves from the inside out, which often brings up painful memories and sad emotions.

However, it is essential they go on this journey of self-discovery because in doing so they discover what they love and what makes them happy. When they are doing this, they are too busy enjoying themselves and having fun to care about what others think!

While supporting young people on this journey of self-discovery, I have found that traditional coaching techniques don't have quite the same impact with young people.

Young people don't seek out my services because they have a specific goal they want to achieve. In most cases, they are referred to me because they are '*misbehaving*' or are attending a programme organised by their school or youth organisation. As a result, they are wary of me and I need to earn their respect and trust.

This means I need to build good rapport with them – learn to speak their language and meet them at their level. To do this, I offer a safe environment without judgement about who they are or should be. I allow them to express themselves freely and listen to what they

have to say. Building good rapport with young people allows them to open up and be honest with me about challenging situations in their lives.

I feel it's important that every young person's voice is heard and they must be treated with same level of respect I give to my peers. Although I may have more life experience in terms of years, I don't have *their* life experience – they *are* the experts of their own lives.

I believe that, just like adults, young people know the solution to their own problems and as their coach; it is my job to facilitate and help them discover the answers.

While I still feel it's good to challenge young people's beliefs and values, I also like to take a solution-focused approach. By focusing first on what is working and going right for the young person helps to build their confidence and self-esteem.

It is also vital for young people to have a safe environment in which they are able to ask themselves questions such as:

“Who am I really?”

“What do I want to be when I grow up?”

“What do I love and enjoy doing?”

“What do I want my life to be like in five years time?”

“What do I want my life to *not* be like in five years time?”

I found that asking young people questions like these encourages them to begin thinking differently in order to answer these questions. It allows them grow and become the people that they really want to be rather than who they feel they should be.

An example of this is a young man whom I met during a group coaching programme I facilitated for young people on Life Skills. He

was going through a really tough time and was very upset with life. As a result he was very disruptive in the sessions and even stormed out a few times.

He said he didn't like it when I questioned him because he felt that I was singling him out. I was. But not for the reasons he thought. I wasn't making an example of him to point that he was a *bad kid*. I was questioning him to encourage him to think in a different way and ask himself questions he had never thought about before.

I also found it very interesting that despite his frustrations, he always came back!

Why would someone who claims to be picked on and finds the coaching process so frustrating, keep coming back? Because as well as challenging him by asking open-ended and reflective questions to think beyond his limiting beliefs, I always listened without judgment or interruption – I allowed his voice to be heard.

A few months after the group sessions finished I had impromptu session with him. I focused on questions about what made him happy, what he loved to do and why. Once again, he became frustrated and asked, *“Why do you keep asking these questions?”*

I replied: *“Because I want you to be happy.”*

I believe this was a turning point for him. You see I didn't try to *fix* him or his problem. Through coaching, I offered him something he had never had before – the space he needed to find the solutions to his problems.

Fast forward six months, I am facilitating another coaching session and I see the same young man. He's noticeably different. He has lost a significant amount weight, tells me he has a job and genuinely seems to be enjoying and appreciating life.

So I had to ask, *“What happened...what changed?”*

He just simply replied: "I'm happy now."

In a matter of months, this young man was able to transform his life and be doing the things that he enjoys and make him happy. I think this is a great illustration of how getting to know who they are leads young people to discover the things they love and enjoy in life.

Too often, young people are dismissed as not knowing what they really need and want. They are told how to think and behave because as adults, we think we know what's best for them. However, this only limits them to what *we* think is possible for them.

I believe young people are a lot smarter than they are given credit for and when they are given the opportunity to step up and shine, they very rarely disappoint.

However, they aren't often given the opportunity and as a result, they are unable to discover who they are which means that they are forever trying to fit in instead of just being who they are. It is the classic case of the *square peg trying to fit into the round hole*. No matter how hard they try to mould themselves into something they think they should be, deep down they know something is missing but are too afraid or lack the confidence to go after it.

All young people *must* be given the opportunity to learn the tools and techniques which are necessary for them to develop emotional intelligence. This would allow them to find out who they really are and discover what they love and makes them happy – without seeking the approval of others.

With over 5 million teenage young people (13-19 years) in the UK today, they are tomorrow's leaders. They are our future and will shape how the world will look in years to come.

It is essential to empower young people while they are still young. By equipping them with practical tools and techniques, they are given them the opportunity to embark a journey of self-discovery and –development so they feel empowered to be their very best and become great leaders in their own right.

COACHING TO REALISE TRUE POTENTIAL

*Emily Johnston & Jennifer Riley**

‘Can we meditate?’

Not something you might expect a group of fifteen year-olds to request but something that I hear quite a lot.

It’s a bright group. They are about to sit their GCSE Mathematics a year early and some of them are understandably anxious. Having been introduced to meditation it has become a practice that these pupils turn to when they have a difficult situation to face or are simply seeking mental space in their busy schedules.

I believe meditation is something that would benefit many teenagers: it goes well alongside coaching as it enables pupils to pause and emerge with the mental clarity to keep their eye on their goals and fulfil their potential.

Meditation and mindfulness are making something of a resurgence through the corporate (General Mills, Google, Apple, Nike, Procter & Gamble, AOL) and educational sector at present.

Both meditation and mindfulness originally came from eastern traditions and have mostly been secularized for wide expansion into

* Please note that rather than using ‘I, Emily Johnston’ or ‘I, Jennifer Riley’, ‘I’ has been used interchangeably within the chapter so it may refer to Emily Johnston or Jennifer Riley. We made this decision as our coaching philosophies are aligned and we felt it maintained flow within the chapter.

the western world. There are many independent scientific studies now that prove the effectiveness of meditation. It has been adapted by the medical world for the prevention and therapeutic treatment of depression and chronic pain. In schools it has been shown to reduce bullying and stress, increase empathy between students, increase attention spans and improve results. The 'b' programme run by the Mindfulness in Schools organisation is making leaps and bounds in bringing mindfulness into schools for children with its eight week programme. Meditation is now being used effectively to treat and greatly improve students with ADHD too.

Its power lies in simple inner focus. All forms of meditation or mindfulness have a focus: this may be a word or mantra based on sound or meaning, something sensorial like the breath or a visual focus, or a visualisation – an inner journey, etc There are many different types of meditation, the most powerful often being the simplest. Meditation, as well as helping us remove negative elements of ourselves, also unleashes positive aspects such as creativity, as spoken about to great length by David Lynch, the film director, in his book *Catching the Big Fish*. It also increases happiness and wellbeing, and teaches us to live in the present moment.

It is this dropping away of negative ideas and access to creativity and happiness that gives the opportunity for young people to then measure and access their own unique potential.

How can you measure the potential of a young person?

I have been continually surprised by what the pupils I teach achieve through a combination of vision, perseverance and support. Young people need to be challenged, feel they are making a valuable contribution and to have their aspirations treated with respect. The belief of the coach that the young person can do anything, combined

with skilful questioning to find out his or her talents and interests, helps the young person to believe in themselves.

As with any coaching, it's much more valuable when they come up with suggestions.

I was teaching a boy who had an outburst of anger in my lesson. Speaking to him afterwards it emerged that he was feeling angry because he had an argument with a parent the day before and in his words, 'trashed my room'. I asked him why he thought he had done that.

'I was angry because my mum wanted me to do my homework instead of being on Facebook.'

'But why the reaction?'

'I was tired'.

'Why?'

'I'd been up past midnight the night before on Facebook and I get much more angry if I'm tired.'

'So what could you do about it?'

'Well I could finish on Facebook by 10pm and get to sleep sooner.'

'Is that realistic?' He thinks a while.

'Yes,' he says. Two days later he passed me in the corridor.

'Mrs Riley, I was in bed by ten last night and the night before.'

Of course, his behaviour in lessons improved too. Sleep deprivation is a rampant problem among teenagers these days and as a youth coach it is always worth asking about sleep patterns. But I give this as an example of the young person thinking, contributing and consequently putting the necessary measures in place by themselves. Had I reprimanded him for his behaviour in my lesson or even just told him to get more sleep, I'm fairly certain it wouldn't have been as effective.

What young people present to you and what is going on may be worlds apart. For a coach venturing into the world of youth coaching for the first time it is very important to understand this. Young people may change their mind on a weekly basis and they may appear surly or rude when actually they are anxious or upset. It is important not to react to any negative behaviour and to give them the space to trust you. Take an interest in them and their life. If they express an interest in something, remember and follow it up the next time you meet them. Find out about their favourite television programme, computer game, football team or band and they will appreciate the efforts you make.

Whatever a young person tells you needs to be looked at in a positive light with empathy. I recommend highly *How To Talk So Kids Will Listen And Listen So Kids Will Talk* by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish' to any person who works with or cares for young people. Sometimes less is more and very little from the coach will bring out the response, 'Well, I could try this...'

If a young person tells you they want to be a pop star or an actor, take it seriously. You don't know where it is going to lead; it could encourage them to follow a love of music or drama and pursue it as a hobby, which will enrich their life anyway or they might even make it. They almost certainly will not if nobody believes in them. I taught a pupil who said that she would like to be in the All England U18 lacrosse squad and three years later she was. As a coach ask: How? What have people in that profession done to get there? What are the first steps? Often the biggest obstacle to a young person realising their potential is the ideas that he or she holds about themselves.

Doubt, fear and anxiety can cause future careers to be discounted or prevent efforts being made with school work, particularly if he

or she has not so far been academically successful (this limited area having assumed far too much importance). As a coach it is worth getting a young person to review and record weekly successes to boost confidence. It is also worth discovering which negative ideas are present, where they came from and exploring if they are actually true. It is very likely that the young person themselves will be able to give you counter-examples, although will often continue to hold onto the negative beliefs in the face of these, so will need some help from you. It is worth getting them to formulate positive affirmations. As mentioned earlier, giving meditation techniques often helps the young person to face or dispel anxiety when you are not around to support them.

Mary came to me with anxiety about a particular subject at school. She would be asked to write an essay on a particular topic and then become anxious about writing it right up to it's completion. Then, once handed in, she would continue to be anxious about what grade she would get, and even when she received a good grade she would not believe it: 'the teacher felt sorry for me and didn't want to single me out for a bad grade. I don't think the essay was good enough'.

In our coaching sessions it became clear that there were several aspects to this: she loved the subject but denied her ability which caused her anxiety and this strong belief led to a distrust of the teacher's ability to mark it. As an adult I knew that she was more than capable, the teacher had expressed this to me repeatedly. Rather than try and dissuade her from her belief which, despite evidence, was still held to be true, I focused on the reason for the essays and the reasons for the good grades. These are necessary only for others to measure your worth and if their opinion is good then in terms of passing exams this is the standard. It was also necessary to face

the anxiety that this was all causing, as it was disrupting other areas of her life and causing concern for her teachers. It became apparent that she held the view that if she became overly anxious she would make more of an effort, and the opposite would cause her not to care enough and she would do badly.

We looked at the middle ground: what could she say to herself that would not build up the anxiety but motivate her to work? She came up with her own sentence, "I can do well if I focus and work on this calmly". This allowed her to be motivated whilst being less anxious. As I saw her week after week she realised through our sessions that she could have some control over her thoughts, and rather than going with the habitual anxious thought she was choosing to be less anxious and still maintain motivation. Although her high standards for herself remained she could see that what she was doing in her essays was perfectly adequate for her teachers, and for the passing of exams, to lead her towards studying that subject at a higher level at university.

Young people are often especially sensitive to criticism so it is especially important to stay open minded and not adopt a parent or teacher role. One ex pupil said she found stories that I told particularly helpful:

You told us lots of thought-provoking stories which got us thinking about how we reacted to situations and considering other options - interesting and really useful once we got the hang of stepping back and watching ourselves react. Stories worked far better than using our lives as examples as there was no blame and no pressure for anyone to change. Hence when we noticed the links between our lives and the stories we wanted to make the changes. The stories seemed incidental and as though you were sharing something you had enjoyed rather than to teach us a lesson.

Story-telling is a useful tool for group coaching, often you don't need to explore the 'issues' raised –let it sink in over time. I am a great believer that many ideas become consolidated over time, and a conversation you have with a young person may not bear fruit for years, but it is still worth having.

This is a story that I frequently use. It illustrates the futility of holding onto thoughts that are unnecessary and at a deeper level shows the power of responding to situations in the present moment with compassion and then being able to leave them in the past:

Two monks were on a pilgrimage and as they walked they came across a river. By the side of the river was a beautiful woman weeping; she needed to cross the river but couldn't. The older monk asked if she would mind if he carried her across and she agreed. He picked her up in his arms and took her across to the other side and put her down. She went on her way and the monks went on theirs. As they walked mile after mile the younger monk became increasingly agitated and after ten miles could contain himself no longer. He turned to the older monk and asked, "Brother! How could you carry that woman across the river? You know very well that we are bound by our oaths not to speak to women, let alone touch them, and you did both carrying her across that river!!" The older monk replied, "O Brother, she needed our help and I left her on the other side of the river, but you have been carrying her for the last ten miles."

One exercise I have asked many groups to complete is what I call the 5, 10, 20 year exercise – in other words getting the young people (about fourteen years' old is a good age) to write down where they

would like to be in five years', ten years' and twenty years' time. It is without fail revealing. Firstly, it is often the first time that thought goes into anything more than a vague idea of what they would like to do, certainly seeing it as a progression and how to get there is fascinating to them. Secondly, it helps them to set targets now because they are visualising the future and it enables them to see a purpose in what they are doing. Thirdly, it reveals much about them and their background which gives you information as a coach, with a view to expanding horizons if necessary.

A former pupil who went on to do voluntary work in India used this exercise with young people there and found it: 'fascinating for us as an eye opener both in terms of their aspirations but also the knowledge they had of what vocations were available. It gave us somewhere to work from but also things to consider in terms of what was realistic and even ethically/socially the right thing to do in different cultures and social classes. A useful thing to be aware of whoever you are working with and wherever they are from.'

It is important to have a focus in any 1-2-1 session with a young person. The focus might be a topic given to you by the child's school or carers, or if you are a teacher, something which you have selected as requiring attention. The other possibility is to ask the young person to select what they would like to work on in the session. The subject under discussion may expand to other areas such as well-being in the course of the session but meeting with a teenager and simply saying 'How are you getting on?' is likely to elicit monosyllabic replies. As a former pupil commented: 'Meeting with us individually on a frequent basis ... gave us the opportunity to approach you at any other point feeling like we knew you better given the time we had spent with you. It was good meeting about something specific such as how we

were doing academically rather than how WE were actually doing with life in general. That was a) a hard thing to comprehend at the time and b) the kind of thing you didn't want to be meeting someone about; sounds like a counselling session rather than a healthy person reviewing all aspects of their current situation.'

There is also the current issue of young people labelling themselves as having a medical problem when there may not be one: 'I think I have a sleeping disorder' or 'I think I have learning difficulties'. These may or may not be true but it can be a mask for a young person to hide behind and not take responsibility for the outcome of behaviour patterns: 'I have a problem that someone else needs to fix.' It can often be the case, for example, that a child may have difficulty sleeping but through coaching and inquiry it emerges that they are on screens for several hours in the evening, are mentally over stimulated and cannot wind down before they are expected to sleep. Meditative techniques can help here in reducing mental activity and changing the evening behaviour – too much screen time – will prevent overstimulation in the first place. Any genuine problems must be communicated so that a medical professional can be consulted if necessary.

Young people tend to be idealistic but tend not to have fixed ideas, and habits have not necessarily become crystallised. Coaching a young person can be effective over a relatively short period if the young person feels empowered and also that he or she has the tools to face difficult situations.

SUMMARY

Meditation has many benefits for young people and works well alongside coaching

Meditation can give mental focus and inner calm and be a preventative and therapeutic aid for anxiety, depression and sleeplessness.

The coach must have faith in the unlimited potential of the young person, whatever they may present.

Take the young person's aspirations seriously.

Young people respond especially negatively to judgement and criticism.

Stories are powerful for giving a message in a group coaching scenario - no blame, no pressure.

Facilitating the young person to think and make suggestions gives them confidence and empowerment.

Show an interest in their interests.

Future pacing and visualisation are powerful tools which help adolescents connect what they are doing now with their future, and motivate them.

Future pacing gives the coach information about the social horizons of the young person.

Always have a focus for a 1-2-1 session with a young person.

Try not to label (or allow the young person to label) problems which they present to you –a powerful idea can prevent them taking responsibility.

Of course, it is important to communicate any genuine difficulties which you encounter to the school or carers so that they can be referred to a medical professional if necessary.

WORKING WITH THE OUTSIDER

Robert Stephenson

She sits alone at the back of the class, eyes down, not wanting to engage with any of the other students, let alone me, the teacher. As the other students joke and laugh about their evenings out and weekend adventures, she simply looks on, not making any comment, not engaging and not sharing any of her ideas, thoughts or adventures.

As the class begins, I notice that look, the look some young people have, that of being the outsider, of being unsure of oneself. Sometimes this is chosen and sometimes placed upon us, and in this case I can see, or rather feel, that this has been placed upon her, the role of the outsider, and she has gotten very good at living up to that role. Head down, hands in pockets, slightly outside the circle, almost invisible while in plain sight.

Perhaps it's the coach in me, or perhaps it's because of my own experience of being an outsider, I think it's probably both along with my creative background. But I am drawn to her, as if what she is going through resonates with my own experiences, and having gone through them and come out the other side, I know that it is possible to be the outsider that becomes part of the insiders, or better yet, the outsider who is totally happy with themselves and who they are, so that they can be part of the group while being different and totally accepting it.

As the warm up continues, I allow myself to simply take in the students, listening to their words, reading their body language, noticing the confidence that comes naturally to some, and how others play at being confident. I see the jokers of the class, and the join in'ers too. I see those with negative attitudes, and those that don't really care, the watchers and workers.

It's like a group coaching session, all the characteristics at play that exists within any group are at play here in the classroom and there she stands, the outsider, watching as I watch, and for a moment we catch each others gaze, I smile just enough to let her know that it's ok, she give me an inquisitive raised eyebrow, as if to say "what are you looking at?" then turns away.

The class continues, with students sharing their dreams and hopes, their wants and desires for being actors or drama teachers, for fame and fortune, for a life full of adventure, or the steady career of the jobbing actor, moving from production to production. And this is the point where they begin to ask about my own experience, and here, for me, is where the work of the drama teacher and the coach comes alive, here is the part where I share my story which brings them into the group, or rather brings about an understanding of the different possibilities, that shows my flaws and weaknesses, that shows my skills and strengths, which shows them that it's all possible from where they are right now, at the beginning of a new journey.

While sharing my own journey, I constantly bring it back to where we are right now, in the classroom on the first week of the first year of a three year journey, and enable the students to think about what it is they want and how they might go about getting it...goal setting ☺. Asking the questions that create the clarity and understanding of where there are right now and where they want to

be. I love this part, as students begin to have mini light bulbs going off, as they begin to recognise the connection between working hard, having an outcome in mind and working towards it. As they begin to understand that they are in control of their outcome, they are in control of their life and what they make of it.

It reminds me of an experience I had once, while working in a Pupil Referral Unit, a young boy who had a lot of energy had gotten himself in a bit of trouble with the police, being at the “wrong place at the wrong time” as he put it. I remember asking him a few questions about how such a thing comes about, being in the wrong place at the wrong time? He talked about how he just happened to be walking by the old factory, and they, the other boys, just happened to be throwing stones through the window, and how he didn’t even pick up a stone, the police just picked on him because he was there....

We spoke for a while about where else he could have been walking, how he could have walked away, about the possibility that he might have thrown a stone or two. I asked about how it might have looked from an outsider’s perspective, someone driving by and seeing this group of boys. What would they have looked like, how did they sound to a passer by?

And by spending the time to get him to look at the situation from another perspective, another point of view, he began to see his part in it, he began to see how he was responsible for himself, for where he was and what he did. By the end of the conversation he was laughing and saying of course the police would pick him up, if he were a police officer he would have done exactly the same. And bingo, his light bulb went off. I first saw it in his eyes, then could almost hear his brain working, a smile came to his face, he nodded, thanked me and walked away.

He walked away with the new idea or realisation that he had control, the same way the students realised that they had control over their own work and performances within our class.

I never saw him again and have no idea what became of him, as often happens when you work with young people. You are not always there to see the outcome of their new thinking, not always there to reflect with them what is working well and what's working not so well. But you are left with the knowledge that you have enabled a young person to begin some new thinking, planted the seed.

With my group of students, I had the luxury of working with them for 10 weeks. This enables reflection, adaptation, new ideas, and the experience of success, even if it's in very small doses. During one of the early sessions as we all sat facing the white board, with my outsider sat at the back of the group, close to the door. I began exploring with them the ideas or themes within a story. We start with the idea that stories are cakes, and that there can be many different kinds of cakes, so what are the ingredients that go into making a good story cake.

The students start by shouting out the ingredients that they enjoy in a story; action, horror, comedy, and as I'm writing there thoughts up on the board, I have one of those moments where I have no idea how to spell a word. So I turn to the students and ask, they tell me, and my outsider is looking at me oddly, so I begin to tell my students about being dyslexic and how for many years it was a challenge for me, to the point where I had some amazing strategies to avoid writing in front of others or reading out loud. I tell them my story about getting glasses so that I could forget them as an excuse when in class.

Like a lot of coaches that work with young people, I believe it is useful to share your own story, your own journey, so that the young

people see you as a real person, not just a teacher or an adult with authority over them. This careful opening up, lets the young people know that you are willing to share. That the process is collaborative, that it's a two way street. It also allows the young person to know that you get them, however sometimes I must say I don't get them... perhaps that's what happens as you get older, you move away from being in touch with some of the aspects of youth culture, but letting the young people know you were a youth at some point, however long ago, always seems to bring out a connection.

During the break the outsider comes over to me, and very quietly begins to ask about being dyslexic and how I dealt with it. I smile and in classic coaching style, I ask her how she thinks I might have dealt with it, and she begins to tell me how she has and hasn't dealt with it in the past, I continue to listen as she opens up more and more, asking her questions about how she might deal with other challenging situations, when has she been successful during a challenge. And once again I see the light bulb begin to go off, but this time it's different, it's a light bulb in slow motion.

One of the great things about working with drama, is that you are nearly always working with groups of students, so as with group coaching, you have a mixture of ideas, thoughts and possibilities available to the group that you are working with, and it's the facilitation of the groups understanding and sharing of ideas that makes group coaching such a rich and powerful tool.

And a lot of drama games and exercises allow you to share experiences and ideas, working in pairs or small groups, creating mini safe environments for the ideas to develop. My instinct tells me that my outsider is lacking in self-belief and self-confidence, which a lot of young people are, more than we often think, as they are so good at masking it.

So I set the group a few exercises, one of them being an observation exercise, simply moving around the space, noticing how other people walk and when I clap my hands copy their walk. We play a few rounds, then I ask for volunteers to show other peoples walk. The super confident people are the ones that go for it first, wanting to show their skills and be centre stage, my outsider simply looks on.

Now one of the skills of a group coach, teacher, trainer, is that of being able to bring people into the conversation, facilitating the space for the less talkative ones to talk, asking questions that bring them in without too much challenge and not putting them on the spot.

In my experience, most outsiders are very observant, so I asked the group about what they saw and who they thought that walk might belong to, then asking how could the performer improve their imitation. The group begin to run out of ideas, and the outsider speaks up, quietly at first, sharing thoughts on the little details. The flick of the wrist, the head tilted slightly to one side, one shoulder higher than the other. My outsider is indeed a very good observer, able to share what she has seen, but not yet ready to take centre stage.

And it's times like this where I have to step back and reflect on what is going on in the space. Am I more interested in the young person's development than they are? Do they want the outcome that I see as being so beneficial for them? Remembering not to get carried away with the reflection of my own story, but keeping an eye on the young person's outcomes, desires and wants. While at the same time, knowing that part of my role as the drama teacher is to prepare them for being on stage, and part of that preparation is the confidence to get up in front of other people.

So I step back and take a moment to ask them, what does being on stage mean for them? And I simply listen. It's amazing what happens to young people when they are truly listened to, when their voice is

heard, when their words are understood. It enables them to grow, grow in confidence, grow in self-esteem, grow in the knowledge that they have ideas that are worth listening too. And with the skills of a coach, I am able to gently question or reflect their words to create clarity or a deeper understanding.

The outsider speaks about what being on stage means for her, the ability to live in a different world, to step into the shoes of another character, someone strong, someone different to who she is, how all her fears and worries slip away when the curtains open and the show begins. But that she has had only a few of these moments, and as she says this she once again slips away, looking down and disappearing in plain sight.

This leaves me wondering what happens for her when the curtains are closed at the end of the show, what happens to all that confidence that she had for a moment, and how can I help her to re-find it.

After a few weeks of classes the young people begin to develop stories that they will perform, as they share the stories, a lot of them involving alcohol, my outsider sits quietly, not yet ready to share her words. I know that time will soon run out and begin to push the young people to get on stage and share their stories. The outsider still sits and watches.

I remember being back at drama school, way back in the 80s. One of my fellow students would sit and observe every one else before getting up and giving it a go. I always used to wonder why he would wait, he always did an awesome performance, but always went nearly last. I used to think it was out of fear, not realising it was all about observation and application.

Knowing that my outsider was good at observation, I asked the group, "What have you noticed about other people's work that is

good, that you can apply to your own?" One of the boys says, "I love the way that 'Johnny' shows us what's going on in his story with his action". The class nod and agree, after a short pause the outsider asks, "Could you tell a whole story without words?" In that moment I notice something going on, an idea forming. I say, "Yes of course, look at all those mime shows that are out there".

It's only a short time before we see the completed formation of her idea, the following week she asks if she can share her story, realising how nervous she is, I run an exercise with the group, exploring our physicality related to emotions, aiming to get the young people connected with memories of being confident, and seeing how that shapes them. This, of course, is work taken from NLP, and as I coach, NLP practitioner, teacher and trainer, I think it's important to use all the skills we have to hand, in order to get our clients...or students, the best outcomes possible.

An adaptation of this exercise that we then do, is for each student, when their name is called, to run on to stage, where the rest of the young people clap and cheer while they take a bow and then sit back down. The class love it, not only do they feel great on stage, they also feel great enabling others to feel great.

After they've all had a good, and we share how it feels to be appreciated and to give appreciation, the outsider asks if she can share her story. I feel the class tense, and simply ask them to hold onto that feeling they have just created, while I do my part to hold the space so she is able to perform at her best.

What takes place blows my mind, the outsider takes to the stage and gives us all a lesson in physical acting, performing with style and confidence, taking in all that she has seen before and applying it to her work. The other young people are amazed by her too, praising

her for her bravery. This then builds, as the other students begin to take risks with their work, trying new ideas out, taking the feedback and applying it.

The confidence of the group grows, the outsider, after this experience, after hearing the praise from her classmates, no longer sits on the outside of the group, but takes her place within the group. During the end session review, she shares her thoughts on the class, talking about other students work as well as her own.

I know a lot of you will recognise this story, the outsider finding their way. It is my belief that a good teacher can enable this to happen, is a non challenging or pressured environment, and I believe the skills of a coach enable this to happen in those challenging and pressured places. The youth coach is able to use their experience and that of the group to create the safe space for confidence to grow. The youth coach has the sensory acuity to notice when a young person needs more time and space when they need to be brought in and how long to give them before being more challenging. Perhaps all good teachers are youth coaches too. And its that ability to ask questions that enable the young person to do their own thinking, while feeling that it's ok, while being in a held space, that enable young people to make that leap, to take the risks, and ultimately to take control and responsibility of their own lives.

The outsider is now part of the group, while still holding onto what makes her her, and I think that we are all the outsider sometimes, and wouldn't it be wonderful if in those times we have our own coach to help bring us back into the group.

COACHING YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

Sally George

Working with young people in or coming out of care has really opened my eyes to the problems they face.

I was always under the assumption that children were taken into care and placed with a loving family who cared for them from day one until they grew into confident, successful educated adults...

Wow! How wrong I was...

I was asked to speak to some young people in care about employment, running a short employability workshop for twelve young people coming out of the care system and being supported to live alone.

I excitedly agreed to run the workshop and was really looking forward to the prospect of helping these young people move positive outcomes. I planned my workshop, prepared the hand-outs, created quizzes and question papers, planned a couple of group tasks getting them to think about work skills, what they are, what they would need, what employers look for in potential employees.

The day arrived. I was prepared and all set.

I got to the venue got set up and waited for the young people to arrive. I waited, and waited, and waited, one came in, followed by another half an hour later, then another who said he could not stay

as he had an appointment... one hour later than planned I started my workshop with three people. This was not what I had planned... however I stayed positive. If I could help three young people then I would have achieved something, so I started asking questions: "What do you want to do"? (employment) "What do you enjoy?", "What hobbies do you have?"

All I got back were blank looks, so I rephrased my questions, "do you know what employers look for in potential employees?" Still nothing...

OK, I decided to have an informal chat, and this is where I started to learn about the lives of young people in care, the chaos, the constant moving around the country, moving from school to school, college to college, family to family, the disruption, the lack of confidence, self-esteem, lack of caring about where they ended up, what they did for a living should they even manage to get a job.

Well this just about blew me away. I learnt a lot that day from three very resilient young people.

I have been working with young people in care and young people coming out of care for about five years now. I have delivered workshops, had one to one sessions, delivered training and worked with small groups through life coaching and goal setting. These young people have been amazing, I have seen some wonderful outcomes, young people going onto college and university, some go into employment through apprenticeships, some undertaking voluntary placements abroad and some even starting their own business.

For a young person going into the care system, it can be a very frightening experience, not knowing where you are going, not knowing the family you are going to stay with, not knowing the rules or regulations in the environment.

Just imagine, it is late afternoon early evening, you have just been removed from your family home as someone has decided that your life is in danger. You are now with strangers, you have left your environment where everything was familiar, you are taken to a family home where everything is strange to you, you don't know anyone, you don't know the area, you don't know the surroundings, all you know is that someone is welcoming you in and smiling at you.

You don't know if you are allowed to go to the fridge and help yourself to food or drink. You don't know where you should put your shoes, hang your coat, you don't know if you should flush the toilet at night (you may wake other children up) because you are unfamiliar with your surroundings and the house rules you are of course very unsure of yourself and this is where lack of confidence, lack of self-worth start to creep in if they haven't already.

These young people need someone to talk to, someone they can trust, someone they can confide in and often this is a social worker. But because these young people are often moved out of the area for their own safety, they see so many faces they don't know who they can trust, and with their lack of self-worth many turn to gangs where they know they will be accepted, no one will question them and they will have a sense of belonging.

Listening to these young people talk, it saddens me that a young life has been so disrupted that they feel crime is the only way to be heard, going to prison offers rules, regulations, learning, someone to talk to, peers to engage with, and the knowledge that someone cares, cares enough to help and support them back into society - all be it a society that let them down in the first instance.

This is where the intervention of someone who will listen and be there facilitating the young person's own journey becomes vital.

Carla is a case in point.

I was working with Carla on a schools programme. Carla had been in and out of care since she was quite young and she was back living with her mum. She didn't know how long for though because she had been home before loads of times but always ended up back in care. Sometimes she had split her week between living with mum and living with her other family.

She told me she was afraid of her mum because her mum would hit her. Her mum got very angry and didn't always know what she was doing due to her drug addiction. Carla watched over her younger sisters when she got in from school but she was fourteen and really wanted a Saturday job. She was afraid to leave her younger sisters with her mum incase she hurt them. Carla felt responsible for them and didn't always go to school. In fact, her attendance at school was very poor due to her having to look after her younger siblings.

We talked about this, she said she was scared for her sisters when she went to school all she thought about was them so she couldn't concentrate. Sometimes she would go home at lunch time and said she didn't care about school because she was going to leave as soon as she could and get a job then she would be able to look after the family.

However Carla also knew that attending school and getting her GCSE's was going to help her get a better job. We talked about the type of job she would like and she said she liked sport. She loved horses and would really like to be a jockey so we looked further into this. Carla said she was the right height and if she didn't eat too much she would be the right weight but she kept wanting sweets and chocolate then when she had eaten them she was really angry with herself... because she was getting heavier.

She didn't have a horse neither had she ever ridden a horse and I asked her what was it that she liked about being a jockey? She said when you win you get to ride in front of all these people and you get cups and ribbon things. She told me how she sometimes watched the horses on her way home from school as she walked past a field each day. She didn't know why she wanted to be a jockey, she just did.

We talked about going out to work and what that involved, we discussed time keeping, I mentioned to her that being a jockey you had to be up very early as you have to exercise horses early in the morning, she wasn't too keen on this, although she did say sometimes she is up early as she gets her sisters up before she goes to school as her mum isn't always well enough in the mornings,

Then she said, "but I could work in Smiths in town they want someone, Jenny* (her friend) told me she saw it in the window last week".

I asked her if she wanted to apply for the job In Smiths, she asked me what she would have to do, so we explored different job roles of what we thought someone working in Smiths might do. Firstly, we identified it sold books, papers, crayons, art stuff,... we talked about who would buy these things and who would be coming into the shop, and why? We then looked at how the shelves were stocked, where all the goods came from, how they got there, who put them on the shelves, how the daily papers got there and at what time of day.

We talked about working with people, how to speak and listen to people; we talked about customer service, what it meant and how to deliver great customer service. Carla said she always talks at school and gets into trouble for too much talking so she would be ok. She said she had lots of friends in school so always had someone to have a laugh with. She would be able to talk to customers.

After our discussion Carla was quite confident, she sat up straight and smiled and said she would go into town after school and get an application form. I offered to help her fill it in if she wanted some help of course. Our session ended there so I said I would see her next week.

During the week I was informed that Carla had gone back into care and had not been in school for a few days. However on the Thursday she was in school and we were able to get together again and continue our conversation.

I asked her how she was feeling, she said she was fine. I asked about her sisters, she said they had gone into care again too but not with her, they went somewhere else, she probably wouldn't see them now, well not for a while, anyway it didn't matter. I asked her if she had been to Smiths to get the application form she said no, she couldn't be bothered. We talked about her absence from school she said she was at a friend's house drinking and smoking, she didn't care about school. I asked her if she had thought any more about becoming a jockey, she just said she didn't care about that anymore, besides she was too fat - even her friends had told her she was fat.

Carla didn't want to talk to me, she didn't want to look at me and she didn't want to discuss school work. We sat in silence for long periods of time.

Carla was so different from the previous week when she had talked about jobs, families, horses, friends at school. She was not engaging with me. She was miserable, her confidence had disappeared, she didn't want to talk about anything, except that she had bunked school to drink and smoke at a friend's house. I asked her how she felt when she was drinking and smoking, she said she felt good, it stopped her thinking about things, it numbed the pain, she then said "anyway why are you bothered about what I do?"

I was a bit shocked at this as I thought we had a good rapport and she knew I was there to listen and to help her. I answered: “well I am concerned about you. I think we are friends.” Carla replied, “No. I don’t have any friends”.

However, I continued to work with Carla for six more weeks and we persevered in looking ahead. We drew up an action plan and set some goals for attendance and time keeping. We talked about part time jobs and where Carla may be able to find work. We talked about how she would get this type of work, but most of all Carla set herself a goal to pass her GCSEs.

Although she did not turn up for all the face to face sessions I was able to talk to her on the phone a couple of times where she told me she had been to see her mum and her sisters and was going to see them on a regular basis, she was very excited about this.

Carla’s attendance at school improved, the standard of her work improved and she became happier. She had a group of friends who she was able to talk to and mix with in and out of school. She created a CV which we worked on together. We looked at lots of jobs to see what skills were needed, what experience was needed, and what the job was about.

We worked very hard on getting Carla ready for work by looking at these different job roles and their skills, and putting the skills into action such as time keeping which helped her attendance at school, organisational skills which helped Carla finish her school work on time, customer service skills which helped Carla with her attitude towards teachers and friends, communication skills which helped Carla with all her school work and helped her to settle in her new home by being able to talk to her foster parents about how she was feeling.

I finished working with Carla before she found part time work and before she took her GCSEs. However I have been informed that Carla is doing very well at school her work has improved, her attitude has improved and she is going to be entered for her GSCEs.

This young lady has shown resilience, she could easily have given up and dropped out of school, become involved with the wrong group of people, but instead she is still there attending school and looking towards her future.

The majority of my work is around employability skills and preparing young people for the world of work or helping young people stay in learning or enter employment with learning. To keep young people in learning they need to be motivated, they need to be studying subjects they like and have an interest in, that's why I listen to them and together we write up action plans, we set goals and targets that are realistic, I find what it is they like and arrange some workshops around their hobbies or interests, I encourage them to research their interest, find out if there are any opportunities for work experience or voluntary work and I get them to think of different ways they can incorporate their hobbies into their school work to keep them focused and learning at the same time.

I believe it is essential to support our young people and help them find what it is they enjoy and want to do with their lives, I believe that we all want to be happy and healthy and these are two very important aspects of life, if we could teach this in school I believe the world of work would be a less stressful place and the happier we are the healthier we are. Young people face a lot of decisions, they are continually being tested and are expected to perform, those that don't are labelled, but those that don't are often the ones that are creative and think out of the box!

MOTIVATION FROM WITHIN

Sonia Gill

‘OMG, I want it! I want those grades!’ Clare’s eyes sparkled, colour appeared in her cheeks ‘I get it now! Before, everyone, you know, my mum, teachers, everyone went on about (mocks a deeper, older voice) *‘Do well at school’, ‘Work hard and get a good job’, ‘I wish I’d worked harder, don’t make my mistakes’* and all that stuff, it didn’t mean nothing to me. To be honest, it still doesn’t. But now, OMG, now I know why I want it and I reckon I can do it!’ A few hours earlier it had been a very different story...

I’m often asked to work with students who are nearing their GCSEs, aged between 14 and 16. Either the parent has heard about the youth coaching I do or a school has asked me to work with a group of their students. In all instances, I’m asked to motivate the student to achieve what they are capable of: in schools this is specifically students who are on the cusp of passing or failing (C/D borderline), with parents it’s more about the fact they believe their child is capable of better grades, even if they are currently predicted pass grades.

I find working with students deeply rewarding; I don’t know about you but I think the teen years are the hardest part of life (certainly from what I’ve experienced so far): you’re full of hormones; you’ve got teachers; parents and many other adults telling you to do well at school; you’re neither a child nor an adult; you’ve got spots;

you're body is changing (hair is sprouting out of all sorts of places); you need sleep and food in large quantities and you've got nine, yes nine, subjects you're supposed to be interested in *and* good at.

On top of that you have the social side of figuring out and managing your place in the social hierarchy of secondary school (which thankfully in the UK doesn't seem to be as bad as the American High Schools portrayed on TV). There are of course fun parts to it: just look at how much teenagers laugh; their friendships and social groups of support. But there is a lot going on for these guys and gals. And so coaching, for me, provides much needed support in a particularly tricky bit of life, one that is fun, but also is jam packed with changes across life.

Motivating people is one of those things we'd all like to know how to do and I would say it's hard to do because usually the only person who can really motivate you is you. Others might help you figure out how to be motivated but it usually comes from within. When I work with students I have to help them find their motivation and I use some specific coaching techniques to do this and when I do I get results like that of Clare above.

A school where I worked with 32 students saw their exam results spike that year compared to the year before and after; those students had performed better than expected and that's even better news as they were on the C/D border, the crucial pass or fail, the difference between moving on in life or possibly spend a year re-sitting their exams, which no-one wants to do. I don't think it was all down to me, with coaching you're an enabler, an empowerer, but I like to think I contributed to their success which I hope is ongoing.

Here's the story of how it worked with Clare's group.

9:15 am - That morning I stood in front of a class of 16 students, all in Y11, GCSE year, and aged between 15 and 16 years. Half of them slumped in their chairs with a look of indifference about the day they had ahead of them in my company and my colleague, James. I knew they were all predicted C/D grades in their GCSEs, the hope was they'd get at least five C's but the fear was they wouldn't. And with their mock exams less two months away they were running out of time.

9:30 am - Introductions out of the way and time to push on. I've been asked by their head of year to motivate these students into getting better exam grades. They're capable of getting at least five C grades and from their introductions I can already see how bright and sparky these students are, how perceptive they are. But motivated they are not. And the truth is I can't motivate them because no-one can motivate anyone but themselves.

Working with James we start by asking them what they want to do when they leave school, do they have any courses they want to get on, any careers they'd like to go into; we don't ask them what they want to be when they grow up! Some students have very clear ideas others not, whatever they say we are genuinely interested and ask questions, such as who their role models are in that field, what made them decide that's what they wanted to do. We never pass a judgement ('You want to be a film director? That's a really hard area to be successful in. '), as far as we know they might have already achieved in that field; I once met a student who wanted to make a para-olympic team and was going for trials later that month.

10:00 am - We ask students to form a goal of what *they* would like to achieve in their GCSEs. What I don't tell schools when I work

with students is that I'm not going to force to put a grade they would like for all 9 GCSEs. The fact is if a student isn't bothered about, for example, GCSE French then maybe they are better at directing their efforts into other subjects. This is controversial in schools, but practical in reality.

I once had a call from the mother of student I had coached, he had his Y10 exams coming up and although his revision had got off to a good start it was all falling apart now, specifically because he was finding it hard to revise chemistry which had a knock on effect to the rest of his revision. I asked if these exams counted towards his final grade, they didn't, so I suggested not doing chemistry this time round, to focus on the other subjects and get her son back on track with them. 'I can feel the relief in me just at that thought!' she said to me, sounding very relieved. It wasn't ideal, but it was a practical solution to the impasse that had been reached and sometimes that's what is needed. Better to be motivated and do well for a few subjects than unmotivated and do badly on all of them.

10:15 am - As students are formulating their goals and we go around the group to help them get their goal nice and specific, so not just five Cs at GCSEs but five Cs in, for example, maths, English, history and double science, the specific subjects they want. We also ask them why they want those grades in particular - common responses are because it get's them onto the course they want to be on or it's the subject they enjoy most (plus English and maths because they know they will need these). Often they don't just want five C's, they have subjects they want to do better in or want more than five pass grades. For many there is relief when they realise we're not going to ask them to give us nine grades they feel they *should* get, we also don't limit them to just five, our aim is always to help students

formulate the goal that is best for them and best for them in their opinion, not everyone else's. Although you could say they lack life experience, they are bright, intelligent people and so we trust them to make their choices.

11:00 am - The students are back in the room after morning break, looking more alert than earlier in the morning. There is a feeling of liking in the room, far removed from the indifference at the start of the day and my view is this comes from the judgement free communication we are having which I believe is one of the most important things about working with students. We now have enough rapport and trust to move into the most important part of the day: finding their motivation.

I tell the students we're going to do an activity which is closest thing I have to putting them in a time machine and showing them their future. It's a simple activity which they will work on in pairs and which James and I will demonstrate first. It focuses on one point in time, the day in August they will get their GCSE results and we are going to look at two possible futures. I also ask their forgiveness because when I demonstrate it with my colleague he is clearly *not* going to be getting his GCSE results, so he is going to think as best he can to when he did when he was 16 and getting ready for these exams. I could model this with a student but it's a big ask to get them to go through this process and share some potentially personal information in front of other students who they might not know well or even like very much.

The two worlds are one of not achieving their goal and one of *success* where they get the goal they have written. James shares his goal and through a series of coaching questions I am able to get him to feel the emotions associated with each world.

After each world we discuss with the students James' non-verbal behaviour, what they thought he was feeling and what made them think that. Whenever we model this activity the students are mesmerised and there is pin drop silence, I think it partly helps is that James, despite being very successful now, didn't do well at school. We purposely go into the world of *failure* first because we want the emotions we finish the exercise with to be the positive emotions of the world of success which we move on to.

Students work in pairs to go through these two possible futures and I give them a framework of questions they can ask. As they work we keep an eye on them to make sure the emotional connection is happening and I have to say that I've only ever been impressed by how well students use this technique. I always scan the room to see where I think I'm most needed and as I do I see shifts in body language taking place throughout the room. I remember one student was leaning lazily against the wall in the world of success his body language, especially his posture, didn't really look like he was feeling success. I don't know what his student partner asked him but whatever it was it was good because the student suddenly stood up straight on his own two feet and started talking excitedly about what is happening in his future (it's important they talk in the present tense for this).

Interestingly it's often the emotions associated with their friends moving on and themselves being left behind, of feeling 'stupid' in comparison to their friends, of not being out celebrating their success, and then the opposite of this in the world of success, that seem to stir up the most emotions; I guess it's a kind of positive peer pressure.

At the end of the exercise we ask the students how they found the two worlds. Some of them are flushed from the exercise. If

they've done it properly, they will have experienced a lot of emotions in quite a short space of time. I love the realisation on their faces which I see as the beginning of positive change. A lot of students talk about how horrible the *failure* world was, how they'd never thought that far ahead and how they don't want to be in that place. When asked about their thoughts on the successful world, they all seem to instantly grow taller - it's like the mere mention of that world is enough to get the positive feelings flowing.

Many of these students are used to feeling more like they are not doing well enough, that they sit more in the world of failure, at least when it comes to school - and I hasten to add this is not the school's doing a bad job, teachers are incredibly positive and supportive of their students, the fact is they know what a D grade means, and so these feelings of success can be rare feelings.

It's one thing to show people a world they want but another to help them achieve it. To support students achieve their goals we move away from coaching as the main method and use more teaching and mentoring to develop skills to improve their organisation and ability to remember information. In doing this the two aspects of the day dovetail: they are motivated towards a realistic goal, set by them on their terms, aligned to what they want to do after they leave school, and then taught ways to help them overcome common problems which are likely to be getting in their way. We could just teach them the techniques but this wouldn't be anywhere near as effective without clarifying their goal and motivation to achieve it.

I have a few markers of success for this kind of work - firstly, how the students walk out of the room compared to how they walked in. I notice a greater confidence in their body language and a determination in a lot of their eyes. The second is the change in exam grades which

so far have always improved from their predicted grades. The third doesn't always happen, but sometimes I'm lucky enough to meet the school students again, during the course of working in the school with other students, and they often come to tell me how they are getting on and how they are moving toward their goal, both academic and longer term.

As much as I like the increase in grades it's the increase in self belief and esteem that I really value in this work. The 'youth of today' are often talked about negatively, it was the same when we were those youths and when our parents and grandparents were. But what they need and deserve is our support and understanding to help them grow into the stunning adults they will become. We have all lost our way at some time or needed help from others and these students are just the same. Youth coaching is one of the ways we can support these bright and engaging young adults to shape their future, after all it's theirs to live; most of us are merely passing through their lives so let's make sure the footprints we leave are ones that deserve to be in their journey to adulthood.

