

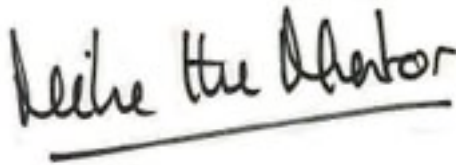
Mentoring for Change

executive mentoring and coaching, leadership, storytelling

Welcome to the Mentoring for Change newsletter. In this issue:

- The Coming Shake-Out in the Coaching World
- Classic Models – The Act of Will
- Which Mentor?

With best wishes




The Coming Shake-Out in the Coaching World

Coaching is very much the flavour of the month at the moment. It seems that every executive has a coach. There are dozens of coach training organisations; thousands of coaches; more and more conferences; there are articles in HBR; hundreds of books on coaching; and flattering articles in the press. So shouldn't we coaches be pleased. Well, yes and no – because all the indications are that we're heading for a major shake-out. We saw the same thing happen in the counselling field a decade ago – over-expansion followed by retrenchment. In the long run it was good for the profession but in the short-term it was painful for many of the people involved. Coaching is following the same path and the profession will emerge leaner and fitter from this shake-out, but without many of its current practitioners. My view? – “Quality always sells”.

Which Mentor?

When we speak of mentoring, we usually assume that our role model is Homer's Mentor who, in the epic poem *The Odyssey*, is left by Ulysses to take care of his household and son, Telemachus, whilst he was away fighting the Trojan War. However, *The Odyssey* relates that Mentor largely failed in his duties, neither taking care of Ulysses' household (which was overrun by suitors of his wife Penelope) nor of Telemachus (who set off without Mentor to find his father). It was the goddess Pallas Athene (goddess of War and of Wisdom) who helped Telemachus, appearing throughout *The Odyssey* in a variety of human and animal forms, including that of Mentor. As Mentor she acted as a wise and trusted

advisor and counsellor to her favourite Telemachus, helping him grow in experience, maturity and courage so that he became a credible ally for Ulysses on his eventual return from Troy.

However Homer's Mentor (whether as himself or as the embodiment of Pallas Athene) is not the model for modern mentors. The word actually didn't feature in the English language until 1750. Its appearance resulted from the story *Les Aventures de Télémaque* by the 17th century French writer Fenelon in which Mentor was the main character. *Les Aventures de Télémaque* went on to become the most reprinted book of the 18th century and led to the word mentor being resurrected after a gap of nearly three millennia. It is Fenelon's Mentor, not Homer's that forms the basis for modern usage of the word. (More on this in the article by Andy Roberts at http://home.att.net/~nickols/homers_mentor.htm)

The word mentor soon came to mean "a wise and responsible tutor" - an experienced person who advises, guides, teaches, inspires, challenges, corrects, and serves as a role model. With the more recent upsurge in the use of mentoring a 'development-focused' view of mentoring has emerged. For example Megginson and Clutterbuck in their book *Mentoring in Action* define it as "Off-line help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking".

As the definition of mentoring continues to evolve I'm increasingly interested in an ecological view of mentoring. As we grow and mature we make the transition through a series of predictable developmental stages. At its simplest this series can be reduced to three stages, named egocentric, sociocentric and worldcentric; or “me”, “us” and “all of us”. The initial

Classic Models – The Act of Will

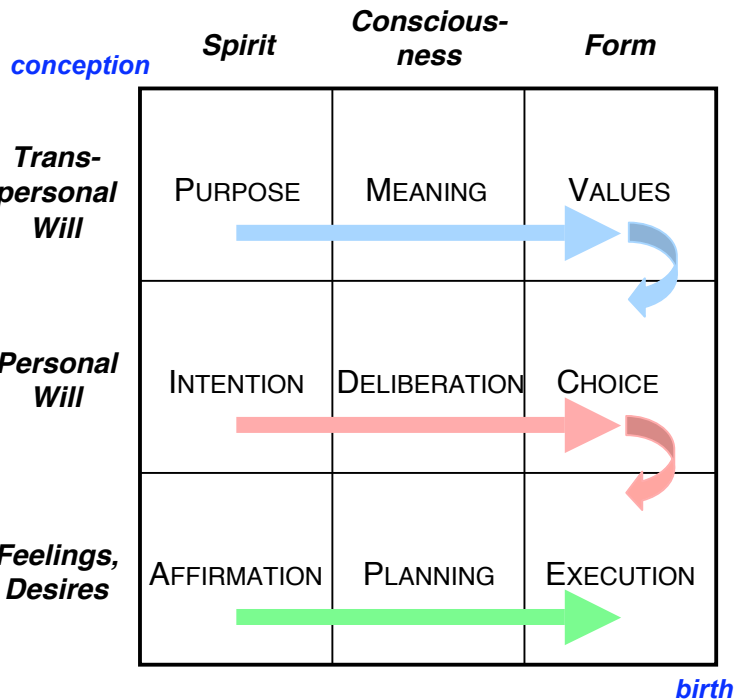
ONE OF THE MOST powerful ideas that Roberto Assagioli, the founder of Psychosynthesis has left us is that of the Will. Will in Assagioli's work is a much broader and more powerful concept than our everyday concept of will-power. This Will is ultimately concerned with how we express who we are – how we transform spirit into action.

In the introduction to his classic book "The Act of Will" Assagioli suggests that, if an ancient Greek or Roman were to suddenly appear among present day humanity, he would initially be dazzled by the material wonders created by advanced technology and would probably regard us as a race of magicians and demigods. But he might also notice that, although we have acquired a impressive degree of power over nature, our knowledge of and control over our inner world is very limited. Despite our technological magic, we are largely ignorant of our true Selves and incapable of dealing with our own emotions, impulses, thoughts and desires. He goes on to say that "this wide gulf between man's external and inner powers is one of the most important and profound causes of the individual and collective evils which afflict our civilisation and gravely menace its future".

Assagioli suggests that we can seek a remedy to these evils through the simplification of our outer life, and the development of our inner powers. Fundamental among these inner powers is the tremendous and unrealised potency of our own will.

Assagioli developed a framework for the process of willing – the version shown here is as refined by the Institute of Psychosynthesis. It consists of nine sequential stages from Purpose to Execution and makes clear that deciding is a more complex process than we often realise. The stages are like links in a chain; the chain itself – the act of willing – is only as strong as its weakest link.

For instance, a person may be deciding on her next career move. Ideally, she would start by connecting to her sense of purpose and what inspires her, she would explore what is meaningful to her, and she would



clarify what was important to her and give this tangible form in terms of her values. She would then evoke her intention, her energetic willingness to work towards her purpose or goal. From this place of intention she would deliberate on the situation, formulate alternatives and explore each before choosing one. She then affirms her choice by mobilising her emotional state in support of her choice, plans the road to follow, and acts.

In practice, the process may not be as sequential or as explicit as this and not every stage of the will may be important in any one willed act. But we need to be proficient in all the stages if we are to act effectively in different circumstances. Typically, I find that there are stages that clients are adept at and others that they struggle with. And when they do get stuck, I use this map as a diagnostic tool to help them get unstuck by backing up through the stages of the model. For example, if they have made a choice but are failing to do anything about it, I would explore the precursors to the choice – have they deliberated fully on the options, have they evoked strong intention, and so on.

focus of most mentoring is on the individual mentee (egocentric). If the mentoring continues (and much mentoring is long-term) then the focus will move beyond the individual to supporting transitions in the larger groups to which the mentee belongs, in the wider society or even at the global level. As the mentee makes this journey from focusing on the self to focusing on the wider world in which they exist, the fundamental question they seek to answer is "What is it that the world of tomorrow needs that I am uniquely able to provide?"

This newsletter is free. Please copy it to others who might enjoy it. If you would prefer not to receive it, let me know and I will remove your name from the mailing list. If you would like to be added to the mailing list, send an email to subscribe@mikethementor.co.uk Previous issues of the newsletter are available at www.mikethementor.co.uk