

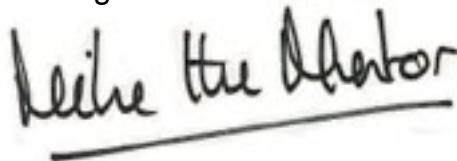
Mentoring for Change

leadership, coaching, mentoring, storytelling

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

- Hassleme!
- Cognitive Behavioural Coaching
- Classic Models – Thinking Environments

With best wishes




Hassleme!

Sometimes we find it difficult to change our behaviours because we lack the skill to be effective at the new behaviour or because we find the new behaviour in some way scary. But often the biggest challenge is neither of those - its simply remembering to do the new behaviour. For some of my coaching clients, this remembering has been key to their creating sustained change in their behaviours and I've manually sent them reminder emails at irregular intervals. No longer – now I get them to use Hassleme.

At the Hassleme website (<http://www.hassleme.co.uk/>) you can arrange to be sent emails at intervals you specify to remind you to do the things you intend to do but somehow don't actually get it together to do. Reminders like "get up and stretch your legs", make a networking call today, walk around the office for, go to the gym, and "go out for a walk on the Malvern Hills this afternoon" (there have to be some consolations for getting up in time to catch the 6.15am train to London!).

Email me (mike@mikethementor.co.uk) with any useful tools you use – I'll publish them in the next newsletter.

Cognitive Behavioural Coaching

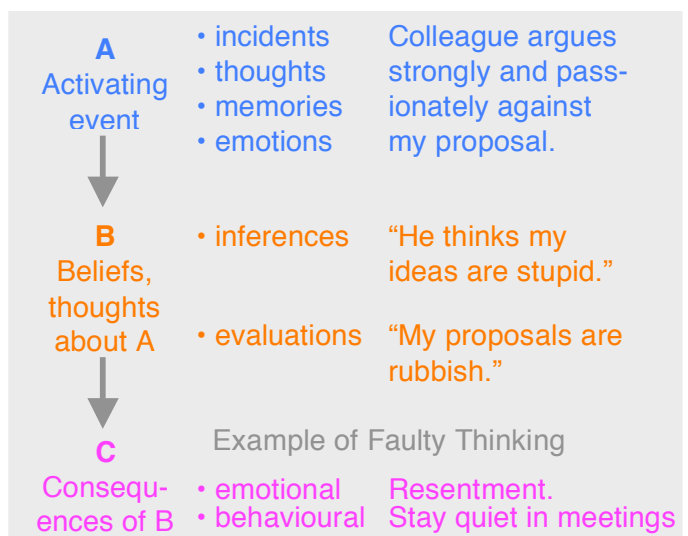
The current issue of Coaching at Work notes, "a growing band of organisations are using cognitive behavioural coaching (CBC) techniques to challenge employees' self-limiting beliefs" (p8, vol 2/2).

CBC has developed out of CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy). CBT is the most researched of the therapeutic approaches and there is clear evidence of its effectiveness, which is perhaps one of the factors making its non-clinical use as CBC attractive to organisations.

CBC proposes that what we feel and how we act is substantially caused by our views about events and people rather than by the events and people themselves. This idea is not new. The philosopher Epictetus in the first century AD said, "Men are disturbed not by things but by the views they take of them."

CBC's aim is to help people replace limiting or negative thinking with alternatives that will help them be happier and more successful. At the heart of CBC is the ABC model. In this model, an **A**ctivating event leads to emotional and behavioural **C**onsequences, with the emotional consequences being created by **B**eliefs. The problem is that we often believe that the **As** directly cause the **Cs**! Thus, at the heart of CBC, is persuading the client that it is wrong thinking that produces **C**, identifying what that thinking is, and changing it.

To apply the ABC model, start by helping the client



identify their current logic (“You say **A** made you feel **C**”). Then identify what beliefs created the link between **A** and **C** (“What thoughts about **A** were going through your head at the time?”, “Why did you feel so **C** about **A**”). Check that the thoughts and beliefs uncovered would lead to the consequences he experienced. Repeat this process a number of times until an accurate map of the ABC process has been created.

Subsequent interventions focus on creating more useful beliefs. With inferences, the simplest approach is to simply ask the client for more helpful alternatives to their habitual thoughts. A more powerful technique is disputation in which the evidence for the dysfunctional beliefs is systematically tested. This can include examining the evidence, seeking evidence that will falsify the inference; exploring alternative conclusions that might be drawn from evidence or, when evidence is difficult to find, asking for alternative inferences to help the client see that it is quite arbitrary which of these alternatives they should believe. The client is then helped to choose more realistic and supportive beliefs.

Helping clients learn more realistic inferences is powerful, but still leaves them vulnerable to negative evaluations. Since evaluations are assertions of good and bad, they can only be disputed if they are exaggerated. If they aren’t then the coach helps the client face up to accepting an uncomfortable truth about themselves. But, if the evaluation is exaggerated, it can be disputed. For example, if the person evaluates the whole of themselves negatively (“I’m **completely useless**”) rather than just a part (“I’m **useless at presentations**”) or evaluates themselves absolutely (“I’m **always useless**”), then this can be disputed since such exaggerated evaluations can never be true.

Through this process of identifying, dismantling and rebuilding personal beliefs, clients can establish effective and productive ways of behaving.

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Classic Models - Thinking Environments



As children, few of us are taught directly the core skills we need to lead fulfilling lives – skills like listening well, relating effectively, dealing with conflict, etc. Instead we’re expected to somehow pick them up as we go along.

Thinking is a good example. We like to think (!) that most of our thinking is novel and creative – but the reality is that it mostly consists of habitual thoughts and ideas we keep churning out day after day.

This is useful when dealing with familiar situations where we already know the most effective approach – but in a time of rapid change when our habitual thinking is becoming part of the problem and when the business and wider environment is calling on new thinking, it is positively dangerous.

Nancy Kline in her book “Time to Think” suggests that we can help others think better by creating a Thinking Environment. Her approach has two underlying principles:

1. attentive and respectful listening encourages people to think for themselves
2. when a person’s thinking becomes blocked, they are usually making an assumption which they treat as the truth and which is preventing progress – and it can be removed by asking Incisive Questions .

To create a Thinking Environment, ask the following

questions:

1. “What do you want to think about?” ... “Is there anything more (you think or feel or want to say about this)?” - repeated until the thinker says “no”. Apart from this just listen.
2. “What more do you want the rest of the session to achieve?” - establish an outcome for the session.
3. Help them find their limiting assumption. Using the exact words the thinker answered Q2 with, ask “What might you be assuming that is stopping you achieve your session goal? (eg, If the answer to Q2 was “to improve my time management” then the question here would be “What might you be assuming that is stopping you improving your time management?”. Listen and then ask “what else?” Repeat until they have no more assumptions. Then ask them to choose the one that is most in their way (eg, “I must do excellent work”). Then find the freeing assumption by asking “What is your positive opposite of that assumption? (eg, “Its OK to do good-enough work”).
4. Now ask the Incisive Question – the question that removes the thinker’s limiting assumption and reveals the ideas on the other side. “If you knew <freeing assumption>, <goal>?” (eg “If you knew that it was OK to do good-enough work, how would you improve your time management?”). Repeat the Incisive Question and let fresh ideas flow.

Thinking Environments are an effective way of improving thinking. Kline believes Thinking Environments could change the world. If we can think together better, perhaps we can live together better.