



At “otcoach” we offer a free consultation: why not find out what coaching could do for you.

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Coaching and the NHS

What made you decide you wanted to work in the NHS? What were your thoughts? How did you imagine your career would unfold? What did you dream of becoming? What were your hopes when you became a part of this unique organization?

Anne’s first encounter with the NHS happened when she was admitted for surgery to St. Thomas’ Hospital in London. The dream of the NHS was still young, vibrant, creative and it is the quality of this energy that she remembers vividly to this day.

Ten years before this in 1948, the promise of care from cradle to grave had lit a candle of hope in those cold grey post war days. Anne had enrolled as a very young and impressionable student nurse straight from school entering the doors of the Preliminary Training School of a big teaching hospital in the Autumn of 1959 and has lived through the great experiment for the past 40 years through all its ups and downs.

This spring, she sat with a family member on a busy ward and recalled those times long ago. Human caring and compassion was still very much in evidence but there was also a sense of frustration and stress. She wondered whether the vision of long ago had been lost in the nightmare of budgets, targets and litigation. Certainly diagnoses and clinical procedures were meticulously followed and time and energy poured into treatments, medication and record keeping. But what had happened to the environment, she remembered, an environment that resonated with confidence, purposefulness and, above all, hope?

So what is going on in the NHS? We hear plenty about financial problems but it seems there are much deeper issues that strike at the very heart of the service, the patients and staff.

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Evidence suggests high levels of stress being experienced throughout the NHS which result in problems with retention and recruitment, absenteeism, sickness and burnout say Anderson et al (1996).

Recent sickness absence indicated of 5% costing NHS more than £700 million a year. (Williams, Michie & Pattani 1998). Psychological ill health in the UK is 27% amongst NHS Staff but 18% amongst the general public.

- How can professionals suffering from stress offer a quality service of care to vulnerable individuals?
- Is such a sick environment suitable for people seeking care and treatment?
- Where are the healthy role models in the NHS? Lifestyle change is hampered when someone is over stressed.
- Who is supporting and motivating the staff under such pressure?

When professionals are over stressed the effect is counter productive to both colleagues and patients? The experience of stress at work was seen to have worrying effects on clinical care by Firth-Cozens (1997). Their study indicates that stress had the following effects:

- 50% of doctors reported lowered standards of clinical care
- 40% of doctors reported feeling irritable or angry with patients
- 7.4% made serious mistakes that had not led to death of a patient
- 2.4% said they had made a clinical error that led to the death of a patient.

“Psychological consequences for staff involved in medical accidents and mistakes include depression, anger, shame and loss of confidence.” (Charles, Wilbert and Franke, 1985)

A poll of 72,000 hospital workers by the Healthcare Commission conducted at the end of 2005 suggested that only 44% of the workers would be happy with the standard of care they would receive at their place of work (Healthcare Commission 2005 cited in Therapy Weekly 2006).

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Some of the factors causing such problems are:

- Ongoing organizational change
- Trying to balance budgets and costs
- Technological change
- Expectations of the public
- Issues of accountability
- Changes in traditional career structures and roles
- Staff shortages and retention of trained staff
- Staff sickness
- Dealing with increasing disability and chronic illness
- Personal values conflicting with those of the organization

These are only some of the issues and it all makes for pretty depressing reading.

Teams and the Individual

A Model of good practice might be of individuals working together in strong cohesive teams, communication openly, respecting and supporting each other. Each person is aware of the different and valued contribution they make to their working environment. Each takes personal responsibility for themselves and each is committed to their professional and personal growth and development. Such individuals enjoy a sound work/life balance. In this scenario staff health improves and decreased absenteeism through sickness helps budgets. Staff retention is good and recruitment and training costs fall. Individuals enjoy their working days, finding fulfillment and satisfaction in line with their values. Above all the heart of the working environment is energetic and healthy.

Such teams are a reality and they do exist but sadly not everywhere. After all, a team is simply a collection of individuals. The strength of the team is in the qualities and personal awareness of each individual, and each one has the potential of unique and valuable contribution to make to the work environment.

Coaching works with individuals and personal development, supporting them in setting goals and planning their own agenda to work towards realizing and manifesting their potential.

Healthy Lifestyles – Healthy Workplace

Contrary to popular belief, lifestyle change is very limited when tackled simply by “telling” and giving information. Change occurs when someone is motivated to change. The

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individual needs to want to be well. Yet many who decide to look after their health and tackle stress or give up smoking or lose weight often find their “wanting to or feeling they should” is simply not enough. Independent reinforcement is important as well as commitment and self- accountability. Increasingly people are turning to coaching to help them succeed in making change.

The decision to change any part of ourselves is the big one –the biggest one we can ever make. If we are to break free of all our past conditioning, all the “oughts” and “musts” and really make the choice that we can and will manifest our true self and unique potential, then it’s important to decide how best to support ourselves.

Emotional issues and the Environment

Apart from the problems being encountered as a result of organizational factors, the clinical staff deal daily with life and death issues that impact on their emotions. How do they cope emotionally for example, when faced with distressed relatives who have just lost a loved one or patients dying for whom they have cared for professionally? This work requires professionals who are in balance emotionally and in touch with their inner values. Values are central to behaviour change. Coaching works with values, process coaching with emotional support.

No one exists in isolation; we connect with each other at many levels. Yet change begins with just one person and that one person can make a difference. Like a stone thrown into a pond, ripples widen and change the whole pattern, the whole environment. Working as professional coaches, we know what can happen when an individual begins to make the connection between their inner values and beliefs and how they live their lives on a daily basis.

Life Coaching is one way of supporting such change. It isn’t a magic wand and there are no quick fixes. Investing energy and resources takes commitment, persistence and hard work and courage. It may or may not be right for you. We are all different. Always ask for a trial session before making your choice. But above all check out your intuition and instincts, and remember part of the magic of coaching lies in the unique relationship between coach and client.

What else can coaching offer the NHS?

- ✓ An independent coach with no “agenda” linked to the workplace
- ✓ Improved productivity

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- ✓ No stigma – Life Coaching isn't therapy or counselling
- ✓ A level playing field – equal relationships
- ✓ Coaching motivates and encourages self responsibility and professionalism
- ✓ Development of a learning culture
- ✓ Supporting change management
- ✓ Improving staff retention
- ✓ Encourages health and wellness
- ✓ Coaching focuses on the future
- ✓ Coaching builds on the values of the individual
- ✓ Looks at work-life balance
- ✓ Often telephone work which has proved to be effective and convenient
- ✓ Builds teams
- ✓ Improves performance
- ✓ Staff development – personal and professional

A research report by the Work Foundation on Coaching (1999 quoted in Foster-Turner 2006) identified that 70% of leading employers use coaching. They report the top five benefits to the organization were that it:

- Allows fuller use of individuals' talents/potential (79%)
- Demonstrates commitment to individuals and their development (69%)
- Creates higher organizational performance/productivity (69%)
- Increases creativity, learning and knowledge management (63%)
- Motivates people (57%)

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Here at "Intention Coaching" we feel that coaching offers the NHS and Social Care a way forward to help support and develop that most valuable resource, your staff.

Call us now to see how Intention Coaching can help you, your team or your organization.

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