



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

www.otcoach.com
0845 130 9054
jen@otcoach.com

PSYCHOSYNTHESIS

This brief overview of psychosynthesis is included because the techniques can sometimes be appropriate and helpful when used with coaching as individuals seek to move forward in their lives and explore their unique potential through the use of imagery and other creative approaches. John Whitmore describes its use in his book “Coaching for Performance” (Whitmore 2006)

Psychosynthesis is a Transpersonal Psychology developed last century by an Italian Psychiatrist, Roberto Assagioli. The model of the human psyche includes all aspects of the individual including, mind, body, emotions as well as the transpersonal.

Crucially psychosynthesis recognises the importance of the superconscious as well as the unconscious. It could be said that life is seen as a journey of growing awareness from birth, through childhood towards maturity and then continuing as the individual aspires towards the potential offered by the superconscious. Amongst other things, Psychosynthesis is about discovering the self and integrating the unconscious and outgrown patterns of behaviour that have developed as reactions to past environmental demands. Assagioli used the term “subpersonalities” for such behaviours or roles.

Subpersonalities, which are locked in the unconscious, are split off from our true self and can dominate our behaviour without our realising it. The work is to identify and unlock these patterns, restoring them to consciousness and then choosing to change them, or not. If we choose change, the energy

www.otcoach.com

Occupational Therapist’s who coach

Find out how coaching and O.T. can “fit” together and how OT’s can use coaching in their day to day work with clients, patients and colleagues.

Coaching for OT’s

Find out how coaching has helped OT’s start their own businesses, develop projects, reduce stress at work, or just reignite their passion for OT.

released through transformation is available for further growth to take place.

Psychosynthesis is about the integration of such subpersonalities around the harmonising, unifying force, the self at the centre. Opposing "subpersonalities", patterns or roles, ways of being and behaving, cause unconscious conflict within an individual. For example, one subpersonality may be dominant and noisy thus quelling an opposing more timid subpersonality. Everyone develops many subpersonalities and these may be either in harmony or conflict. Sometimes the individual over identifies with one or other subpersonality which results in imbalance and disharmony. For example, a carer may allow the carer role to become so overwhelming that there is an over investment in this subpersonality to the detriment of other areas.

Only by dis-identifying from the carer role and re-aligning with the unifying self at the centre is balance restored.

Imagine a classroom full of rowdy children who are too busy to notice the teacher in the centre of the room waiting patiently for them to pay attention. Eventually and usually as result of a life challenge, each child becomes aware of the silent teacher and seeks guidance.

Assagioli said, "we are dominated by everything with which our self becomes identified. We can dominate everything from which we disidentify ourselves." Working from the centre, the personal self can see the whole picture and orchestrate all the parts and help the personality move towards harmony. Energy is released and importantly, the individual is free to choose how they want to be and how they wish to become.

Assagioli's "Egg Diagram" describes a model of psychosynthesis. If you imagine an oval divided from top to bottom into three parts, he placed the Unconscious in the bottom part, the Conscious zone in the middle section and the Superconscious in the top third. In the middle of the "Egg" a small circle represents the personal self (or "I") at the top centre of the "Egg", the Higher Self links the inside of the "Egg" through the "shell" with the

www.otcoach.com

Occupational Therapist's who coach

Find out how coaching and O.T. can "fit" together and how OT's can use coaching in their day to day work with clients, patients and colleagues.

Coaching for OT's

Find out how coaching has helped OT's start their own businesses, develop projects, reduce stress at work, or just reignite their passion for OT.

Collective Unconscious. The personal self below, in the middle centre is seen as a reflection of the Higher Self at the top of the Egg.

The Personal self is unaware of the Higher Self except in extremely rare circumstances because they are said to exist at different levels of being - or dimensions.

The Superconscious is about the more evolved states of awareness and qualities such as beauty, love, trust and creativity which become more and more available as the individual recognises and releases old patterns, unfolds and opens up to new ways of being. As synthesis develops, the urge is to grow from a point of balance and groundedness towards the potential and attributes of the Superconscious.

Outside the "shell" is what Carl Jung called the "Collective Unconscious" where all that is shared by humanity is stored. Archetypes reside here, such as "The Mother", "The Hero" or "The Child", for example and are patterns recognised by the collective. The Collective Unconscious can be likened to a great Sea within which the individual egg resides with the Higher Self acting as a bridge between the two.

Ferrucci, describing healthy human growth saw it as an expanding sphere and the human being as complex and multi-dimensional encompassing "the emerging will and self-determination, the sharpening of the mind, the enjoyment of beauty, enrichment of imagination, awakening of intuition, realisation of love, the discovery of the Self and of its purpose." (Ferrucci, 1990)

Roberto Assagioli emphasised realisation of the Will and placed it close to the personal self at the centre. This is not the old iron, unbending will of the Victorians but rather about willingness and the skilful, good or strong use of will.

When considering personal growth and the changing times we live in, it would seem the need for the personal synthesis of each individual has never been more urgent. Above all the balance and anchoring of mind, body and feelings

www.otcoach.com

Occupational Therapist's who coach

Find out how coaching and O.T. can "fit" together and how OT's can use coaching in their day to day work with clients, patients and colleagues.

Coaching for OT's

Find out how coaching has helped OT's start their own businesses, develop projects, reduce stress at work, or just reignite their passion for OT.

is vital. Before we can begin to reach for our potential, there has to be psychological wholeness and an ability to marry common sense with vision.

Drug abuse, for example, can open an individual up suddenly so that they aspire to transpersonal dimensions without first having their feet on the ground - like a balloon going up in the air without anyone holding on to the string! Another example is the danger of scientific advances where mankind is unable to control the consequences of such experimentation.

Growing awareness enables the wider picture to be seen, developing intuition guides the aspiration of the individual, the integration of subpersonalities releases energy, allows choice and restores control to the centre while the balance of mind, body and feelings keeps feet firmly on the ground and allows common sense to prevail. One way of looking at common sense is as a shared sense that is common to everyone, that which we all share as human beings and perhaps a point of connection with each other.

In the introduction to his book, "The Act of Will", Assagioli said, "Only the development of his (man's) inner powers can offset the dangers inherent in man's losing control of the tremendous natural forces at his disposal and becoming the victim of his own achievements." It seems appropriate that coaching which supports the development of individual potential and the growth of awareness has come to the fore at this time in our history.

Maggie Jeffery
Feb. 2007

References

Assagioli R (1974) The Act of Will, A Guide to Self-Actualisation and Self-Realisation Great Britain, Turnstone Press

Ferrucci P (1982) What We May Be, Great Britain, Turnstone Press

www.otcoach.com

Occupational Therapist's who coach

Find out how coaching and O.T. can "fit" together and how OT's can use coaching in their day to day work with clients, patients and colleagues.

Coaching for OT's

Find out how coaching has helped OT's start their own businesses, develop projects, reduce stress at work, or just reignite their passion for OT.