Ten Trends in Personal/Life Coaching

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Agendas in personal and life coaching focus on hope, meaning, aspirations and the future. This form of coaching concentrates on what could be, even more than what currently is. When we ask people to "follow their bliss" or to search for what in their soul or heart is most compelling, coaches are looking beyond their current-day assessments. Similarly, as we were preparing this article and considering the trends in personal and life coaching, we decided to anticipate rather than merely observe. The authors of this article decided to take a risk and suggest where we project these endeavors will be moving during the coming decade. Rather than reflecting on where the state of personal and life coaching are right now, we are looking at trending that has been done over the past five years and projecting these trends forward. Through focusing on the future of coaching we are taking some leaps into new territory. Much as Taleb (2010) has noted with regard to other trends in our society that look like unpredictable "black swans," (unexpected events) we are inviting you to consider some new ideas that we base, at least in part, on our own accumulated experiences over the past thirty years as coaches, consultants, therapist and educators –experiences that are admitted biased, opinionated and hopefully provocative.

We have identified ten trends in personal and life coaching. We offer examples of how each of these trends has manifest itself in recent years, and we take a glimpse into what each of these trends might look like if it were to fully unfold.

Coaching and the Wiring and Firing of Our Brain

We are entering a new world of knowledge and understanding with regard to the complex processes ongoing in our brain and in the many other "thinking" parts of our body. The new findings in the field of neurobiology are likely to impact the way in which we do personal and

life coaching in the near future—in large part because, in the coaching relationship, a client is often invited to discover the core values in their life, and then to begin altering their life to live in accordance with those values. This involved a lot of behavior change. The question of how the brain makes those behavioral changes is increasingly becoming an interest to coaches. The science of neurobiology is providing some answers.

The first insight recent findings in neurobiology provides us is in the area of memory. We now know that habitual behavior requires the shifting of knowledge and skill-sets from focused, intentional and explicit (conscious) memory systems to another memory system located in a different part of the brain (often called "procedural" memory). This second memory system is holistic, much less accessible to intention, and implicit (unconscious) in nature. When personal or life coaches try to "break up" the habitual behavior of their clients, they may be trying to move stored material between two different memory systems.

Resistance to the disruption of habitual behavior may be based not only on our fear of changing established behavior patterns, but also on the profoundly difficult task of recovering stored memories, and the early beliefs associated with those memories, up from the implicit, unconscious system. This resistance makes it difficult to examine those memories and to address primitive beliefs created by those memories, let alone to take on the task of reprogramming the explicit, procedural memory system.

Furthermore, recent neurobiological research (often called social neurobiology) (Rock and Page, 2009) indicates that the social/psychological constructs which guide our life and our relationships with other people are deeply embedded in and reinforced by and through complex, highly-redundant and multiple-level neural connections and networks. To examine (let alone attempt to "break up") these constructs may be quite difficult. The outcomes of such a disruption may be difficult to predict. This holds major implications for the personal or life coach who is encouraging her client to see things "in a different way?"

The second finding is that we react before we think. Specifically, it is now known that we immediately process most incoming stimuli through "templates" in our Amygdala (mid-brain) (LeDoux,1998). The Amygdala "templates" are applied to each incoming stimulus to determine whether or not this stimulus represents a threat to us (or perhaps the prospect of personal pleasure). Many of these Amygdala templates are probably established early in our life or may

actually be “hard-wired” (could they relate to what Carl Jung identified many years ago as the “collective unconscious”?). We process these same stimuli through our cerebral cortex at a later point (1 or 2 seconds later) and process them more slowly. In most cases, we eventually temper the immediate reactions of our Amygdala by means of this more “rational” cortical analysis. When a personal or life coach is working with her client on difficult issues that may evoke fear-based templates, the coach is dealing with more than rational content. He or she must bypass or counter or at least address the emotional impact of these more primitive templates.

While there are many other neurobiological implications for the personal and life coach, we want to mention just one more. It involves the entire body. We establish “stress ruts” when exposed repeatedly to real or imagined threats. These ruts are grooved deeper with each stressful event and lead to permanent structural changes in our nervous/hormonal systems. We become increasingly vulnerable (“trigger happy”) to stress (Sapolsky, 2004). A personal or life coach can play an important role in assisting her client in identifying and even seeking to avoid or reduce the impact of these stress ruts.

Our daily behavior is profoundly impacted by these stress ruts and by our patterns/decisions regarding sleep, exercise, exposure to light, and the consumption of alcohol, tobacco and other mind-altering drugs. Caffeine consumption might be a major culprit (Bergquist, 20110> When clients are trapped in such a rut they become less coachable. It may be hard to assist other people until they are “physiologically-primed/prepared” for this assistance. A personal or life coach might insist that her client be physiologically prepared for the challenges of coaching prior to beginning the coaching process.

Coaching and Health

Back in the early Seventies, when life coaches told people that they were a coach the usual response was, “What sport?” Coaches had to go on to describe what Life Coaching was. A decade ago that explanation rarely included concerns that athletic coaches had, such as diet, exercise, physical challenge, sleep patterns, physical health and fitness. This is changing. A foundational cornerstone of one major coaching school (CTI) is “Focus on the whole person.” (Kimsey-House, et al 2011). Coaches are beginning to realize that their coaching also needs to

include paying attention to the parts of the person located below the neck—as we noted above with regard to stress ruts. Specialties in personal and life coaching now include fitness coaching, nutritional coaching, coaching clients with chronic physical conditions, stress reduction and mindfulness coaching and finally health coaching as an adjunct to medical treatment. As Baby Boomers age and begin to redefine retirement, coaches working with this population are learning how to dovetail their coaching with medical breakthroughs to make life after sixty meaningful and rewarding.

One health-related coaching specialization appeared early in the history of coaching: coaching clients with addiction issues. (Skibbins, 2000). As the entire addiction field began to move from self-help perspectives, to approaches that included medication, family therapy, and group therapy, coaches have also created a niche in addiction treatment. Coaches were not successful as a resource in the early stages of recovery, but began to be utilized by individuals and recovery centers in later stages of treatment, to help the client make the transition from treatment into a sober or functional lifestyle.

Another area where coaching and psychotherapy has had a very successful marriage is in the area of Attention Deficit Disorder treatment. Prevatt and Levrini, (2015) points out how the practical coaching skills of accountability, brainstorming, and time management can aid any mental health professional working with these clients. Often teams of therapists and coaches can make a powerful difference through working together to provide a wider range of services to this population. In the future, coaching may be utilized in the treatment of a number of medical conditions in which a radical change of lifestyle is necessitated, such as stroke, Parkinson's, loss of limb, or diabetes.

In the future, insurance companies may see that health-related coaching, post-medical-treatment coaching, and medical compliance coaching are cost effective approaches. That will be a two-edged sword for the coaching industry. Coaching has been a relatively lawsuit-free enterprise because there have been no deep pockets in which to reach for high judgement rewards. If insurance begins to compensate coaches that may situation may change for the worse.

Coaching and Psychotherapy

From its inception coaching has been on the frontier of the human services territory. As with all frontier towns, all a Sherriff needed was a six gun and a badge. In the early days of coaching all a coach needed was a business card that said, "Coach." In those early days the boundaries between coaching and therapy were more clear cut. Therapy focused on dysfunctional behavior. Psychodynamic approaches sought to uncover past patterns that led to that dysfunction. Cognitive approaches sought to modify behavior patterns to improve functionality. On the other hand, coaching focused on strengths, potential, values, goals, ideals, and attaining a long term vision of the future you desired. It appeared that these were two distinct human services (Skibbins, 2007).

These days the boundaries blur. Trends in modern psychotherapy include mindfulness training, narrative therapy, sports psychology, positive psychology, Neuro-linguistic Programming, Holistic Psychotherapy and the entire Human Potential Movement. Psychotherapy is beginning to focus on defining and meeting the client's needs. Psychology is moving towards areas previously addressed by coaching. At the same time, coaching is incorporating neuroscientific innovations, couples coaching, Emotional Intelligence work, mindfulness training, and Insight oriented coaching. The coaching profession is moving into that boundary region between psychotherapy and coaching.

Coaching seeks to professionalize itself. Training programs that seek certified recognition from the International Coach Federation must meet standards that include supervision, class instruction, and many hours spent coaching. An individual wanting ICF certification must certify their education, be tested, and participate in Continuing Education. (https://www.coachfederation.org) However, none of this training can begin to compare with what is required to become a licensed professional psychotherapist. This leads to acrimony between the two professions, especially as each begins to encroach on the territory previously ceded to the other.

There is no easy reconciliation to this conflict. As psychotherapy evolves, exploring the future concerns, expectations and ideals of the client will become grist for the mill of the therapeutic relationship. As coaching evolves, exploration into the working of the brain, and a deeper

understanding of the barriers to effective choice making will become grist for the mill of the coaching conversation. A head-on collision is inevitable, and may lead to a deepening of both professions, if member from each side can come to respect the contributions of the other.

Coaching the Couple and the Family

Just as the focus in corporate coaching is broadening beyond one-on-one interactions to include team and work group coaching, so too in the field of personal life coaching the scope is broadening. Coaching is no longer just a one-on-one interaction. Relationship coaching, married couples coaching, and family coaching are now a part of the mix (Ives and Cox 2014). And like all other aspects of personal coaching, one of the first tasks of a coach who is working with more than one person at a time is to clearly distinguish how this form of coaching differs from couples or family therapy.

In couples and family therapy, the first order of work is to identify dysfunctional behavior and communication patterns. The therapeutic intention of this psychologically-oriented work is to create more intimacy and authenticity in the couples or family system with the focus on making that unit more functional, connected, intimate, and aligned. In a sense the goal is: "How can we get past our previous problems and difficulties so that we can be happier today?"

Alignment is also a goal of relationship, couples and family coaching. But the premise a coach operates from is that the couple or family unit is already strong and functional. There are no major problems to be fixed. The goal of this work could be expressed as: "How can we align where we are, and where we are headed as a unit, so that we can be happy today, tomorrow and into the future?" In a sense couples and family coaching begins where couples and family therapy leaves off. The entire field of positive psychology is beginning to focus attention on the dynamics of successful couples, families, friendships and relationships. It is hoped in the future that the practice of life coaching and the research of positive psychology could be married together as a unified approach for supporting successful relationships, while couples counseling and family therapy could continue to focus on repairing dysfunctional communication patterns.

Coaching and Leadership

As Bob Dylan (1979) reminds us, “Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord/ But you're gonna have to serve somebody.” But it is also true that, sooner or later, you’re gonna have to lead somebody. We generally think of leadership within a work or corporate setting. We look at formal positions of authority within the work setting. But leadership extends far beyond those role-limited boundaries. You are called to lead throughout your life: in your intimate relationships, in your family, in your community, at your church, temple or mosque--or sometimes just walking down the street. Circumstances can come up at any time that can call you into leadership.

There are several styles that any leadership can take, and as many categorical systems to describe those styles as the mind can devise. (Blanchard and Johnson, 2012). Let’s keep it simple. You can lead from authority, in a top down fashion. You can lead by participation, working closely, or even side-by-side with those you lead. Or you can lead by giving the authority over to those you are in charge of, with minimum guidance. All these are effective, but in differing circumstances. In a fire everyone needs a leader with clear authority. In many working teams people want a leader who is there with them and who inspires them through the leader’s actions and vision. With a highly functioning group sometimes all the leader has to do is point the group in a direction and they will do the rest.

Dwight Eisenhower (1954) said, “By leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.” Leaders inspire, whether through fear, through respect, through vision, or usually a combination of all three. To be able to lead in all aspects of your life you need a clear idea of who you are, what you believe, and what you want from others. Personal and life coaching provides a relationship in which all these areas of your life can be discovered and explored.

Personal life coaching gives clients a values-based foundation from which they can lead, both in work and in non-work related situations. This style of coaching focuses on discovering what each client’s unique personal values are, and how they can be expressed throughout the client’s life. Personal coaching seeks to establish an authentic, distinctive, values-oriented base of operations from which clients can make decisions, and from which the client can inspire others

to join them in their projects. Leadership-oriented questions that personal coaches are increasingly asking are: “What is your job this lifetime?” “What difference are you going to make in the world, in your community, in your family, and in your relationships?” “Why were you placed on this Earth in this lifetime?” “Who are you meant to lead?” and “Who are you meant to serve?” In the future this focus on leadership which has been so exclusively oriented towards issues relating to leading at work needs to widen its focus. The question needs to become, “How can you lead in all aspects of your life?” (Kimsey-House and Skibbins, 2013).

Coaching and the Decisional Sciences

In recent years, a multi-disciplinary field called “behavioral economics” has captured the attention of many behavioral scientists. It has drawn attention to the complex and often challenging process of personal decision-making—whether this process involves the mundane choice between two dinner entrees at a restaurant or fundamental life decisions regarding where we live, who we choose to spend our life with, or what we will do about our rebellious adolescent child.

Why this sudden “invention” of a new multi-disciplinary field? As is often the case, the new field involves a “perfect storm” of aligned insights emerging from seemingly disparate disciplines. In this case, the fields are psychology, economics, marketing, sociology and philosophy (with a few other disciplines thrown in for spice). Perfect storms also often involves a series of crises (political, economic, epistemological, etc). In the case of behavioral economics, the crises have to do with the rapidly increasing complexity and unpredictability of the world in which we operate – a world filled with many unexpected “black swans” and tipping points of chaos.

The unpredictability and complexity of life have led to the creation of great turbulence, with swiftly flowing streams (rapid change) intermixing with swirling pools (patterned change) and stagnant side waters (resistance to change). Connecting the rapid, patterned and resisted change are the areas of complete unpredictability and great complexity. One of the major geographers of this turbulent world, Scott Page (2011), differentiates between systems that are complicated (many working parts) and systems that are complex (many working parts with each part

connected to every other part). It is in the world of complexity that we find the tippiness of life and the unpredictability to be faced as decision makers.

This is where behavior economics comes to the rescue (or at least brings to the world some clarification). When faced with complexity, unpredictability and turbulence, we grasp on to "heuristics" – decision-making rules that enable us to focus, take action and judge the validity and effectiveness of the decisions we do make. These heuristics can sometimes be quite helpful (building on our extraordinary ability to be intuitive), but at other times they can get us in trouble. The behavioral economist and Nobel prize-winner, Daniel Kahneman (2011) aligns these heuristics with a process he calls "fast thinking" and describes a second kind of decision-making process that he calls "slow thinking."

It is this latter type of work that Kahneman believes should be engaged at critical times in our lives. As Personal and Life Coaches we can help provide our clients with some "slow thinking" – help them "put on the breaks" for a few minutes to reflect on their own "fast thinking" assumptions and decision-making process. Ironically, in a recent set of studies, one of us (Bergquist, 2015) is conducting with more than 200 coaches from around the world, it appears that "slow thinking" is also often absent among professional coaches themselves. Thus, the trend might be toward slow thinking not just for our clients, but also for ourselves.

We believe the future of professional coaching at the personal level at least partially resides in this activity of "slow thinking." This decision-making approach which emerged from a focus on work-related situations can be applied throughout the life of the client. A coach can help her client sort out the options, discern that which is real and helpful in the world and that which is misleading and counter-productive. The personal and life coach who promotes and helps her client engage in slow-thinking provides guidance by offering provocative questions, by helping her client to become aware of a set of assumptions and trace out the implications of a particular course of action.

Coaching the Transitions

Frederick Hudson (1999), who was one of the pioneers in the field of personal and life coaching was also a major contributor to the field of adult development. He was founding president of the

Fielding Graduate School and founder of the Hudson Institute. For Hudson, the history of a life occurs not in stages as Erik Erikson (Erikson, Erikson and Kivnick, 1986) proposed, but in cycles. We return (with new insights and strategies) to the same fundamental issues at multiple points in our life. This being the case, then it seems appropriate that personal and life coaching be made available to people of all ages (a trend we note later), as they encounter challenges associated with the beginning of a new cycle--dealing with what Bill Bridges (2004) calls "life transitions". They also encounter challenges associated with the end of an existing cycle. These beginnings and ends – these moments of preparation and reflection—are highly "coachable" moments. They enable each of us to benefit from the thoughtful companionship of a personal or life coach.

When might these "coachable" moments occur and when might personal and life coaching become of particular value. The obvious times are when there is birth (a new child), death (of a significant other), marriage, major illness and divorce. These are usually the defining moments in each of our lives. We find similar moments of major personal transition in our work life: a new job, a promotion, a firing or lay-off, retirement. The critical point to be made is that these major transitions (and many others in our lives) are inherently stressful – whether these are "positive" transitions or "negative" transitions. The life change scale -- developed many years ago and refined by one of us (Bergquist, 2011) -- points to the impact of transitions on our physical and mental health. The key point is that the impact of a major transition typically does not show up immediately, but rather is a ticking bomb—often manifest only six to eight months after the transition occurred.

There is one other important point to make when anticipating the future trends in personal and life coaching. This point concerns something called "locus of control" (Skibbins, 2007). We know that transitions look and feel quite different if they were initiated by our client then if they were imposed by some external person, event or circumstance. Typically, when we have some control ("internal locus of control") the transition is accompanied by a sense of hopefulness and personal empowerment, whereas the externally-imposed transitions ("external locus of control") is often accompanied by a sense of hopelessness and helplessness. Even when the external imposed transition leads to positive outcomes, we are inclined to interpret these transition as a matter of luck, good fortune or gift from some divine entity. We typically don't learn much from

this external imposition, whereas a transition that we have initiated can be a rich learning-ful event, especially if we are accompanied by a skillful personal or life coach.

Coaching on Behalf of Fulfillment, Meaning, Generativity in Life

Several decades ago, Robert Bellah and his colleagues (Bellah et al, 1985), wrote about American society in their insight-filled book, *Habits of the Heart*. One of their many poignant observations concerned the substitution of psychotherapy for the religious confessional. We unburden our souls by seeking out a shrink rather than a priest. But this might be changing. Today, Americans (and those from other of the more prosperous and less traditional societies) might be turning to personal coaches for their own existential soul-searching. As we will note later, this type of coaching might often be linked directly to issues regarding spirituality and one's search for faith in a highly secular society.

We find that there is another way in which personal coaching has become something of a confessional. That occurs when fundamental issues regarding life fulfillment and the search for meaning takes center stage in the coaching engagement. This coaching approach is often associated with those coaches who have an ontological or existential orientation. The work of Julio Olallo (Olalla and Bergquist,2008) comes to the fore, as does the narrative coaching offered and described by David Drake (Drake, Brennan and Gortz, 2008).

One of us has recently engaged in work focusing on the process of deep caring in the lives of our clients and leaders we have interviewed (Bergquist and Quehl, 2016). Erik Erikson (1986) associates this yearning for deep and abiding care as the foundation of generativity—the seventh stage in his model of life development. We have expanded Erikson's analysis to suggest that deep caring and generative acts occur at all points in our life. The first act of generativity occurs as we give birth to and provide care to one or more children, or as we give "birth" to a new project which we nurture and care for deeply (often for many years). The second act of generativity typically occurs when we expand our zone of caring to an organization of which we are a member (and often a leader). We provide mentoring and other modes of support for the next generation in the organization.

The third role of generativity occurs when we expand out not just in terms of space (from family to organization) but also in terms of time. We become the guardians of traditions and caretakers of the natural environment or of historical sites. We bring the values and accomplishments of the past into the present and extend them into the future. Finally, there is a fourth role of generativity which extends both space and time. It concerns civic engagement. We care deeply about our community, our society – even our world. We become stewards, advocates, activists, change-agents on a very broad stage.

We anticipate that each of these acts of generativity will be even more effective and of even greater importance to the deep-care giver, when associated with personal and life coaching. We are suggesting an interweaving of essentially "existential" reflection with the practical, action-oriented strategies of deep care-giving. This will probably mean that personal and life coaching becomes even more intricate and valued in the world of professional coaching. Narratives of generativity will be carefully recorded and studied by client and coach, with a sustained focus being placed on finding the patterns of meaning, aspiration and value that reside in these narratives and in the acts of deep-caring.

Coaching Throughout the Lifespan

Personal and life coaching have often been confined to mid-life issues – helping our clients address the now-famous "mid-life crisis" or the 40s and 50s in our life. We would suggest (to reverse an old adage) that "coaching is wasted on the middle-aged client." Great coaching opportunities are to found in working with clients who are much younger (especially those in their adolescent years) and much older.

The coaching of young people has begun—often with regard to assisting students with their education and learning. We are likely to find this approach of increasing value in this time when parents push even harder for their children to be successful and (sadly) as many school systems face a diminishing source of funds to support "extra-curricular" activities (including tutoring). For adolescences the challenge might be even greater, given that they not only lack the life experiences of their parents, but are also saturated with the hormones and other neuro-chemicals

that make thoughtful and careful reasoning that much more difficult. This age group needs more than just assistance with education. The young men and women of our postmodern world are faced with those same challenges of complexity, unpredictability and turbulence that we described above. They have to make difficult decisions, just as their parents do.

We can move to an even older age: early adulthood. Faced with the same daunting challenges as other adults in our society, and the added challenge of making a living wage in an adverse job market, it is understandable why young adults would want to cocoon, living at home well into their 20s— and regularly escaping into a substance misuse and a world of faux computer-generated graphics and narratives. They could use a coach! We might find that this request for a coach will be made not to mature adult-coaches (who they might consider to be no better than surrogate parents) but instead to peers who have been trained as personal and life coaches. Their peers are more likely to have some credibility when it comes to empathy (and also provide a bit of role modeling).

At the other end of the life spectrum, we find men and women in their 60s, 70s and beyond. As George Vaillant (2012) has noted in his extraordinary study of Harvard men at each stage in their adult lives (the study beginning in the late 1930s), there are many new challenges and changes facing mature adults during the final decades of life (if they are fortunate enough to be still healthy after their 50s). We now not only live longer (in Western Societies) but also have many decisions to make about how we wish to live the last third (or even half) of our life.

Most mature adults find themselves at mid-life standing between two worlds: the world of active, income-earning work and the world of retirement and avocations. As mid-centurions living in the United States or most other prosperous Western countries, we are allowed to explore alternative identities at the point we retire, provided we are not living in poverty or are not in ill health. During the 20th Century, retired husbands were often quite fortunate if they came from the middle or upper-middle class. The man could move in many new directions: take up hobbies, spend time at home reading or playing games, or engaging in recreational activities such as golf, tennis or bowling. Traditionally, women living in Western civilizations did not have it so good. They were expected to remain occupied as homemakers even after their husbands retire. Their

work might even increase, given that they must now “look after” their husband who is suddenly “underfoot.”

The world of retirement has grown a bit more complicated in recent years, and the transition between work and retirement has become more confusing for many men and women. First, mid-centurions do not necessarily retire at 65. Some work by choice, many work by necessity. Second, some mid-centurions want to make the transition in life and career earlier than at age 65. In either case, the question is: how do we handle this transition—which brings us back to that trend of transitions that we identified earlier in this essay. A personal and life coach can be of great value at this point in a client’s life.

If we are in our late sixties or early seventies, we often don’t have enough money saved for retirement. Do we have time for activities that lead to fulfillment and generativity during our sixties or seventies? Or do we still have to be "working stiffs" who have no time for gratifying work outside our immediate family? A generative option is available to those who have been financially successful in life or are particularly courageous. These fortunate or brave men and women alter their life style so that they are doing what they really want to do. The traditional distinction drawn between work and retirement begins to break down for the men and women who choose this option. Their work often becomes their avocation and their hobby becomes that for which they are paid. A personal and life coach can be of great assistance in finding their older clients the path to this often gratifying late-life path.

Coaching to the Spirit and Soul

Alan Sieler (2005) uses the term Ontological Coaching to describe a way of work that encompasses the entire being of the client. Counseling and coaching the client’s sprit and soul involves looking at the deepest level of one’s identity, one’s discovery of meaning in one’s actions, and one’s belief in and alignment with something greater than one’s own ego or personality. It can involve seeking redemption for one’s past unskillful actions, committing to act skillfully in the present moment, and making intentions for one’s future actions. Earlier in this article we discussed how, in this secular age, psychotherapy had become a modern ritual

with deep links to confession. Coaching, psychotherapy and religious counseling may address transgresses in past behavior and can point to a form of atonement, be it through adopting skillful changes in your behavior or through reciting ten Hail Mary's. However, those past transgresses are not so interesting for a coach. Coaching orients itself to the future, and is not very concerned with past sins. It focuses on what is most meaningful right now in the client's life. It seeks to focus on an individual's unique values: but the boundaries between values and morals can become quite clouded at times. Often it is hard to distinguish between doing what you should do, because it is the right thing to do, and doing what you want to do because it is a manifestation of your deepest truth.

A minister, rabbi, cleric, priest or spiritual guide usually has an established set of beliefs and codes of behavior to operate from when doing such an exploration with a member of his or her flock. Psychotherapists have a unified body of psychological work from which they can draw their insights and strategies when digging into the more spiritual and epistemological regions of the client's experience.

Coaches are on their own. The only guidebook the coach has is the client's own experience, values, beliefs, and the vision and goals that clients set for themselves. If the client's concerns are entirely secular, and if the client only wishes to focus on practical issues and material goals, then that will be the level where the coaching remains. If, however (perhaps after a gentle nudge from the coach) the client does want to explore more transpersonal issues about the meaning of their life and the nature of their soul and the universe, then the coach does not become a spiritual leader, pointing the way. Rather he or she follows the lead of the client, as they wander into this new territory of inquiry and self-discovery.

In the future, the coaching profession has a lot to contribute to pastors, rabbis, priests, clerics and other religious and spiritual counselors and teachers on how to incorporate inquiry into their spiritual counseling. This guidance-from-within approach could potentially meld with the more traditional guidance-from-above.

Conclusions

We wish to conclude by coming full circle and turning one more time to social neurobiology – for this field yields one additional challenge that should be addressed by all practitioners and teachers of personal and life coaching. Apparently, the neurochemistry associated with formation of intimate relationships is quite different from the neurochemistry associated with formation of friendships. In both cases, powerful, chemically-based bonds are formed and these bonds are reinforced whenever our intimate or our friend appears before us. But those bonds differ in nature. Our body literally "lights up" with one set of neuro-chemical responses when the other person is considered a friend, and a completely different set of neuro-chemical responses when the other person is an intimate.

It seems that the neuro-chemical reactions of a patient in psychotherapy (especially when it is long-term and depth oriented) more closely resemble the neuro-chemical responses of an intimate relationship rather than that of a friendship—and these neuro-chemicals are released in both the patient and therapist. The processes called "transference" and "counter-transference" may be something more than the replication of patterns and images from previous intimate relationships (including parents). These processes may involve the release of neuro-chemicals that are the same as those released in our intimate relationships.

What about the personal and life coaching relationship—is that more like a friendship than an intimate relationship? What if this form of coaching, like therapy, releases neuro-chemicals that replicate intimate relationships? What if coaching differs from psychotherapy by lighting up the friendship set of responses? Does coaching in an organizational setting light up the brains of coach and client in the same way as personal and life coaching (which can involve more intimate issues)? What about coaching that touches upon the spiritual dimensions of life—how does the brain light up when these issues are addressed? Stay tuned. We suspect that there is much to be learned over the coming decade about these matters – and predict that personal and life coaching will never quite be the same once we gain a clearer sense of how our clients (and we as coaches) operate and construct life over many years and in very complex, unpredictable and turbulent time.

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