

THE COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL COACHING POCKETBOOK

By Dorothy Spry

Drawings by Phil Hailstone

“A concise, informative and robust appraisal of CBC that captures the essential elements of theory, practice and research to present a most valuable contribution as to how CBC can be effectively applied. By incorporating emotional intelligence into the methodology of coaching techniques, Dorothy highlights its importance in the overall CBC coaching framework, adding a very practical and original dimension.”

Dr Barry Cripps, C. Psychol

CONTENTS



INTRODUCTION

The cognitive behavioural coaching (CBC) approach, definitions, aims of this book, benefits of CBC, CBC in detail, what CBC is not, how CBC differs from other coaching, origins of CBC, applications of CBC

5



BUILDING YOUR COACHING ARCHITECTURE

Second to third generation coaching, your coaching values, your coaching practice

17



SELF-AWARENESS

Where to start, emotions & thoughts, role of emotional intelligence, rude or preoccupied, low emotional intelligence, high emotional intelligence, case study, automatic thoughts

25



ABCDE MODEL

Centrepiece of CBC, the model, A: activating event, C: consequences, B: beliefs, D: disputing the belief, ten common thinking distortions, using Socratic questions, self-awareness, E: exchange negative beliefs & thoughts

39



COACH'S TOOLBOX

Introduction, behaviour change model, gauging stages of change, stage specific coaching tactics, motivation to change, setting goals – the research, SMART goals, six CBC tips

75



EVALUATION OF EFFECTIVENESS

Introduction, three CBC research studies, Matteo's result

97

INTRODUCTION

COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL COACHING APPROACH



This pocketbook is about a powerful and deceptively simple coaching approach, one that merges elements of psychology (cognitive behavioural therapy) with regular coaching practice. It is written both for coaches interested in incorporating a cognitive behavioural approach to their existing coaching toolkit and for managers and HR professionals who want to understand more about the way people's thoughts affect their decisions and actions.

CBC involves thinking about thinking, about the impact your thoughts can have on your life. To quote Epictetus, the Greek Stoic philosopher:

*'We are disturbed not by events,
but by the beliefs which we hold
about them.'*

The essence of this statement, that it is not events themselves that cause distress but the way that we interpret them and perceive them, is at the heart of cognitive behavioural approaches in coaching (CBC).

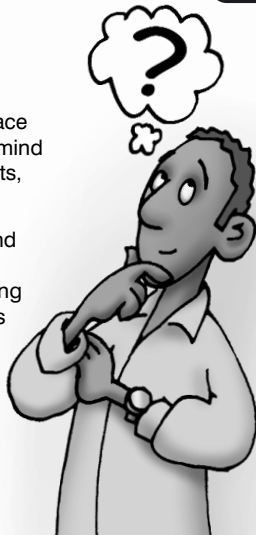
INTRODUCTION

DEFINITIONS



Before we go any further, we need to define some terms:

- **Cognitive** refers to the mental processes that take place when we are thinking, everything that goes on in the mind including daydreams, past memories, present thoughts, immediate perceptions and thoughts about the future
- **Behaviour** refers to everything we do, every action and practical step that we take including talking, writing, driving, holding meetings, playing, making love, making music, all our actions and, paradoxically, our inactions
- **Coaching** is the process of helping, advising, encouraging, empowering and supporting other people (clients) to enhance their performance, and be more effective both at work and at home



INTRODUCTION

AIMS OF THIS BOOK



This pocketbook gives sound and practical guidance based on the psychological theory surrounding cognitive behavioural therapy. It will help you facilitate change in yourself or your coaching clients in a systematic way that is both evidence-based and goal-focused. It will:

- Explain how emotions, feelings, thoughts and beliefs can cloud your judgement
- Explain how emotions, feelings, thoughts and beliefs can be used as the foundation stones for change
- Introduce you to CBC techniques
- Guide you through the ABCDE model
- Provide you with examples of real evidence-based coaching case studies
- Stimulate the importance of reflection in your own coaching practice

Note: The terms **coach** and **client** are used throughout the book as if the reader is a coach and actively engaged in the coaching process. The book can also serve, however, as a useful tool for reflecting on your own continuous professional development (CPD), whether or not you are a coach.

INTRODUCTION

BENEFITS OF CBC



By using a CBC approach, the coach can help a client to identify, examine and change unhealthy thoughts, feelings and beliefs, and start them thinking in ways that are more realistic, positive and workably effective.

As well as helping develop healthy and productive behaviours, CB coaching contributes to the individual's overall emotional development.

- CB coaching can help clients reframe the way they think, feel and behave to bring about positive changes at work and in their personal life
- It works by changing the negative way that we think and feel about ourselves and the challenges we face, and turning these negative feelings around to positive thoughts, feelings and actions
- CB coaching is solution-focused – based on resolving *here and now* issues and offering an action plan

INTRODUCTION

CBC IN DETAIL



CB coaching:

- Helps you support your client to control their emotions, thoughts and self-defeating beliefs
- Uses techniques that are supported by evidence-based psychological research
- Uses reason and reality testing to modify distorted and self-defeating ways of thinking
- Promotes a more flexible way of looking at personal and business related challenges
- Equips clients to tackle present problems as well as future challenges
- Can bring about enhanced feelings of well-being, as positive feedback is received from peers and management, thus reinforcing new behaviours
- Provides strategies to enable a client to become both emotionally aware and emotionally intelligent. By changing thoughts the client learns how to manage their emotions and feelings
- Has the goal of enabling the client to become their own coach

INTRODUCTION



WHAT CBC IS NOT

X Not just about positive thinking

CBC is about more than this; it is about the client having positive thoughts, feelings, behaviours and **healthy attitudes** which enable them to **see life through a more balanced and realistic lens**, to solve problems and set themselves very well-defined goals.

X Not just about unstructured goal setting

CBC is about more than this; it is about setting goals in a very structured SMART way: **S** (specific), **M** (measurable, observable by others), **A** (attainable), **R** (realistic) and **T** (time-based).

X Not about therapy, ie it's not a psychoanalytic approach that delves into repressed, past childhood memories

Instead it adopts a client-centred coaching approach, focusing very much on the *here, now and future*.

We look next at how CBC differs from other coaching approaches.

INTRODUCTION

HOW CBC DIFFERS FROM OTHER COACHING



There are many popular, highly practical coaching models around today. One good example is the **GROW** model, popularised by Sir John Whitmore. **G**oals, **R**eality, **O**ptions and **W**ill equip a coach to frame the coaching conversation by following an action plan, setting goals, and empowering the client to move towards goal attainment.

While the practical approach may be sufficient for clients wishing to focus on this aspect, it will not be enough if a client is experiencing a psychological or emotional barrier which is causing unhelpful goal blocking, or performance interfering emotions, thoughts, feelings and actions.



INTRODUCTION

HOW CBC DIFFERS FROM OTHER COACHING



CBC adopts a two-pronged approach, both **psychological** and **practical**, by tackling the self-defeating emotions, thoughts, feelings, philosophies and beliefs as well as using tried and tested practical and reflective techniques to help change behaviour.

In a nutshell, both these components of CBC make psychological ideas and techniques easily accessible to an experienced coach. They also help in building the bridge for the way the coaching industry is evolving – towards becoming a more psychologically evidence-based and scientist-practitioner approach.

INTRODUCTION

ORIGINS OF CBC



There are several theoretical models for understanding and tackling psychological blocks that inhibit performance at work. Two of these influences are taken from the work of Albert Ellis (rational emotive behavioural therapy, REBT) and Aaron Beck (cognitive behavioural therapy, CBT).

Since the early 1960s, when both these approaches came into prominence, an abundance of evidence has accumulated demonstrating how effective they are in the treatment of: anger management, assertiveness, anxiety, stress and depression, with cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) being the preferred choice, in the UK, of the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) and the National Health Service (NHS 2009 launch).

INTRODUCTION

ORIGINS OF CBC



Cognitive behavioural coaching focuses on the idea that how we react to events is largely determined by the **beliefs** we hold about them, not by the events themselves.

Through examining and re-evaluating some of our less helpful **thoughts** and **beliefs** we can develop and try out new and alternative viewpoints and behaviours that may be more effective. As we receive feedback from friends, peers and managers, it reinforces, if positive, our new behaviours until they are hardened into our 'new self'.

The work of leaders in the CBC field – Windy Dryden, Stephen Palmer, Gladeana McMahon and Michael Neenan – has allowed for the smooth transition of psychologically based approaches from the therapeutic community into the organisational landscape.

This pocketbook also considers the additional dimension of *emotional intelligence* and its importance in CB coaching.

INTRODUCTION

APPLICATIONS OF CBC



In the workplace, CBC may be used to resolve, for example:

- Anger management issues – unhealthy temper tantrums
- Anxiety over forthcoming events – such as giving a presentation
- Impatience – *'hurry up, hurry up! I wanted that job yesterday!'*
- Self-confidence – does a job well, but won't allow this to be true
- Indecisiveness – *'umm...what plan of action should I take?'*
- Procrastination – work avoidance behaviours
- Assertiveness – under or over assertiveness and its implications in the workplace
- Communication problems – interpersonal relationships and troublesome emotions resulting from poor emotional intelligence

In the next chapter we examine where the coaching profession stands today regarding the skill sets and standards of a good coach, and the reason why cognitive behavioural coaching is becoming increasingly influential as an approach.

About the Author

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Dorothy Spry is an award winning business psychologist, coach, trainer, researcher and author. She specialises in cognitive behavioural coaching to develop emotional intelligence for leaders, managers and employees in situations where their attitudes towards working with others is impairing performance, and leading to under or counter-productivity.

Dorothy offers individual or team coaching interventions and CIPD and ILM Certification training programmes in the foundations and advanced levels of cognitive behavioural coaching.

Dorothy has worked in the United Arab Emirates, Netherlands, Romania, Singapore and the United States in her various areas of expertise.

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