Reflective Practice for Coaches and Clients: An Integrated Model for Learning

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Abstract

The literature on reflection, awareness, and self-regulation provides theoretical and empirical fruit for understanding self-processing mechanisms that enhance learning, growth, and performance. A literature review was conducted to explore the potential of reflection, awareness, and self-regulation as developmental tools for coaches. From the review, an integrated Reflective Practice Model was created to help coaches understand these three self-processing mechanisms as an integrated skill set for facilitating personal and professional growth for both the coach and client. The model assumes that reflection and awareness are antecedents to self-regulation. Each term is conceptualized as a skill that can be learned. This model may be used for reflection inward (internal), awareness to personal actions or emotions, and enhanced self-regulation. Reflection upon past events is considered a generalized application, however, the model may also be used in the moment of a discussion. Similarly, the model may be used by a coach to influence client reflection, self-awareness and self-regulation. While others have written about these concepts, to date no one has compiled these elements into a single, integrated model.

Keywords: coaching, self-reflection, self-awareness, self-regulation, adult learning

Introduction

Researchers have looked at the concepts of reflection, awareness, and self-regulation as skills for enhancing personal and professional well-being,

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learning and change. These terms have been conceptualized by scholarly practitioners as states, traits, processes, and interventions (Vago & Silbersweig, 2012). Conceptualized separately and interrelatedly, the constructs are a combination of perceptual, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral neurological processes. Reflection is generally viewed as a thinking activity, whereas awareness broadly refers to insight. Self-regulation commonly encompasses the practice of control. In this work we will be referring to the three concepts as both processes and skills, where the process is when the individual is applying the particular skill.

The literature tends to separate out these skills but indicates that each activity is an important factor in a multitude of positive outcomes such as enhanced learning (Mamede & Schmidt, 2004), well-being (Branson, 2007), physical health (Richards, Campenni, & Muse-Burke, 2010), emotional intelligence (Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007), interpersonal relationships (Vohs & Baumeister, 2016), and goal attainment (Vohs & Baumeister, 2016). Extrapolating from research in the fields of adult education, psychotherapy, nursing, and management, these three skills have the potential to enhance a coach's efficacy and client outcomes.

Professional coaches often work in high stakes environments and with individuals who desire to maximize their potential. Organizations and individuals who hire coaches expect positive outcomes from their coaching. Researchers have been working to establish a foundation of empirical research to help coaches understand what factors contribute to positive outcomes for their clients and to help the field mature (e.g. de Haan, Duckworth, Birch, & Jones, 2013; Jones, Woods, & Guillaume, 2016; McKenna & Davis, 2009; Sonesh, Coultas, Marlow, Lacerenza, Reyes, & Salas, 2015; Theeboom, Beersma, & van Vianen, 2014). While empirical research has been used by the industry to set a benchmark for effective coaching practice, not much attention has been given to how coaches maintain their skills in order to achieve positive outcomes for their clients.

Professional associations in the field, including the European Mentoring & Coaching Council (EMCC, 2015) and International Coach Federation (ICF, n.d.), along with some researchers (Blumberg, 2014; Vandaveer, Lowman, Pearlman, & Brannick, 2016) have developed competency models to set a benchmark for effective coaching and to promote professionalization. One of the areas of overlap among these competency models for coaches is professional development of the coach. Whether it's a requirement or not, many

professional coaches go through training programs and earn continuing education credits to reach and maintain a certain level of proficiency.

The following research demonstrates the usefulness of reflection, awareness, and self-regulation concepts for the field of coaching. A literature review was conducted to explore the potential use of these skills as tools for coaches to maintain their coaching skills and to facilitate learning and growing opportunities for their clients. The existing literature was used to create an integrated Reflective Practice Model to help coaches understand how these three processes work together as a skill set for learning and change. The underlying philosophy of the model draws on adult learning theory (Merriam, 2011). The model provides a good framework for coaches to examine their self-development and how it can improve their relationship with others as well as be more effective at supporting clients in their learning.

In the model, reflection, awareness, and self-regulation skills are seen as separate but interconnected tools that can be used in the coaching process. The model is holistic in two ways. First, the model views each of the constructs as a single processing system of interaction. Second, the model accounts for both coach and client and their contexts. Applications for both coaches and clients are identified. This model is an attempt to shed light on a learning activity that is at the heart of coaching, for both coaches and clients alike, in a simple, explicit way. In doing so, the profession deepens its own awareness and holds that awareness in service to the client.

Reflection

Reflection has been of interest to scholars as a skill for improving learning outcomes. Different terms have been used to interpret the concept, such as reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action, self-monitoring, and self-regulation, all of which are used interchangeably (Moon, 2013). Studies on self-reflection have been conducted in the areas of nursing, teaching, education, mental health, and management. The literature can be broken down into definitions, benefits, coaching literature interpretation, and strategies for development of the term.

Several key theorists have examined the processes of reflection (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Mezirow, 1990; Schön, 1983). This line of thinking is linked to the philosophies of Dewey (1933/1997), Freire (1970), and Habermas (1984). We see that reflection is for the adult learner (Boud et al, 1985; Dewey, 1933/1997; Mezirow, 1990), the practitioner (Schön, 1983), and the social

change agent (Habermas, 1984; Freire, 1970). The underlying principles of these emancipatory philosophies offer a means of reflection and critique of power in order to reframe the traditional view on the essence of being and doing. Coaching, as an evidence-based practice and social movement (Spence, 2007), builds upon and expands these principles in order to transform individuals, groups, organizations, communities, and society.

Definition

Definitions for reflection tend to cite John Dewey (1933/1997), Donald Schön (1983) and Boud et al. (1985). For Dewey, reflection referred to "assessing the grounds of one's beliefs," or the process by which an individual rationally examines their assumptions (p. 9). Schön (1983) distinguished between two types of reflection: reflection-*in*-action and reflection-*on*-action. Schön's distinction adds a temporal feature to the interpretation. Reflection-in-action takes place while a person is involved in a situation, during which they observe what they are thinking, feeling, and doing. In contrast, reflection-on-action involves a stepping back from the situation, meaning that it takes place after the experience has occurred. Boud et al. (1985) referred to reflection as "a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciation." (p. 19). From these definitions, reflection is an active, purposeful thinking process for learning and growing through experience.

It is important to note that reflection has taken on various interpretations. This means that conceptualizations emphasize different elements of reflection, including: self-conscious traits (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975), stages of reflection (Gibbs, 1988), types of reflection (Grant, Franklin, & Langford 2002), personal characteristics (Aukes, Geertsma, Cohen-Schotanus, Zwierstra, & Slaets, 2007), and constructive and counterproductive features of thinking (Trapnell & Campbell, 1999). While the interpretations may vary, scholars look at reflection as an important strategy for learning and change.

Drawing on both theory and practice, Moon (2013) suggests that reflection is a mental process with a purpose or an outcome. This means, reflection is an ongoing practice that takes time to cultivate. Taking time to reflect means revisiting experiences from multiple perspectives in order to identify past emotions and behaviors and to excavate underlying beliefs and assumptions. Returning to experiences without judgment (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, & Toney, 2006) allows a person to gain new insights to

help them grow. The process is one of engagement while the outcome is one of clarity.

Benefits

Self-reflection is thought to play an important role in learning outcomes (Argyris, 1991). The literature on nursing, education, and public health indicates that self-reflection brings about deeper understanding of self-concept, enrichment of learning outcomes, and enhancement of critical thinking skills (Mann, Gordon, & MacLeod, 2009; Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004). Self-knowledge gained through the reflective process, or digging deep to understand a situation, helps an individual gain clarity. What we see from this research is that reflection enhances the learning process.

Coaching literature

Scholar practitioners in the coaching world have theorized on the importance of reflection for the profession (Bachkirova, 2016; Passmore, McMahon, Brennan, Lee, Christian, & Tenzyk, 2011). Kilburg (2000) maintains that creating a reflective containment, or a safe place where both coach and client can go to process a situation reflectively, is one of the most valuable aspects of coaching. As Bennett & Rogers (2011) state: "It is through reflection that practitioners hone their intuitive skills, which is tied to self-awareness, which is tied to confidence and the liberation that comes with the…sense of "being" a coach." (p. 28). This means coaching is not only about the doing (the techniques, methods, approach, or model a coach uses) but also about the being, or the coach's presence by holding the space for the client to make the transformation. It seems that the scholars have borrowed "being" from Hargrove's (1995) assertion on the makings of a masterful coach in which a coach is something that you *be*. For Harvey (2015), "Being reflective on practice is the most empowering resource available for our professional development because the answers arrive inside-out as gifts of consciousness and give us the power of choice" (p. 3).

How to strategies

Reflection is a skill that can be learned. Developing reflection as a skill means enhancing an individual's capacity to engage in observation and asking critical questions (Boud et al., 1985). The literature has identified strategies that improve reflection. Practices that have been associated with developing reflection include journaling, storytelling, meditation, mindfulness, and case

studies (Gray, 2007; Guiffridda, 2015; Woods, 2011). Coaching supervision is another strategy for improving reflection skills (Bachkirova, Jackson, & Clutterbuck, 2011; Carroll, 2010; Hodge, 2016; McGivern, 2009). A coaching supervisor can help facilitate questions to prompt reflection for the supervisee.

In *People Skills*, Thompson (2015) suggests that there are six steps to reflection: read the situation to learn, ask others what they are doing and why, watch what is going on, feel internal emotions that come up, talk about views and experiences with others, and think about different situations. When done right, reflection is a constructive, creative, critical thinking strategy for growth.

These strategies require setting aside time to deeply reflect on an experience. Time spent on reflecting means focusing on professional or personal things that matter. Reflection starts by identifying a situation, a case study of the self, that can be used as a learning opportunity. Details are important when observing the experience in the process of reflection. This means taking a look at and being able to describe what happened, what behaviors and emotions were involved, what factors influenced the situation, and what assumptions were in place. Practicing self-reflection means systematically communicating with the self by taking time to ask questions of the self and thinking through issues.

Awareness

Self-awareness or self-knowledge has been a subject of inquiry of philosophers and psychologists alike. This line of inquiry explores how the brain, cognitive processes, and the social environment construct the *self*-concept (Fiske & Taylor, 2013). The self is an individual's mental picture of who they see themselves as in this world (Markus & Wurf, 1987). Attention focuses on the significance of self-knowledge in human fulfillment (Fiske & Taylor, 2013). The adage "*know thyself*" speaks to the significance of self-knowledge as being the foundation of knowledge itself.

Definition

In their groundbreaking book, *A Theory of Objective Self-Awareness*, psychologists Duval and Wicklund (1972) developed a theory for self-awareness, proposing that when an individual focuses their attention on themselves, they evaluate and compare their current behavior to their own internal standards and values. Meaning, we become self-conscious as objective evaluators of ourselves. Later on, Fenigstein (1987) proposed two factors of

self-awareness: private and public. Private self-awareness refers to an individual's understanding of their internal mental state which is invisible to others, such as thoughts and emotions (Fenigstein, 1987). In contrast, public self-awareness refers to an individual's awareness of their self as viewed by others, or their external state (Fenigstein, 1987).

Self-awareness has been heavily represented in the emotional intelligence literature (Bar-On, 1997; Goleman, 1995; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and control emotions and to understand that emotions can drive behavior and positively or negatively impact others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). According to this line of research, enhancing self-awareness means achieving higher emotional intelligence. Self-awareness is also a major mechanism of self-control (O'Donoghue & Rabin, 2003). Self-control is the ability to regulate the self in the face of temptations and impulses (O'Donoghue & Rabin, 2003). From these models, self-awareness is one of many factors that contribute to emotional intelligence and self-control (Ackley, 2016). In this current model, self-awareness is an important precursor to self-control.

Self-awareness is an appraisal process taking place in order to achieve insight on the self and others. An individual becomes aware, or gains insight, when they are able to make an accurate appraisal of their abilities and preferences and the implications of their behavior and impact on others (Eurich, 2017; Sutton, 2016). This internal-external awareness lens is an ongoing, iterative process of interaction similar to what is described as complex responsive processes of relating (Stacey & Griffin, 2006). This complexity science perspective emphasizes human interdependence and views individuals as thoroughly social selves that arise in human interaction (Stacey & Griffin, 2006). Relating between people produces patterns of human interaction which produce further patterns of interaction (Stacey & Griffin, 2006).

Engaging in deep reflection can lead to awareness. To become aware of the self means making an assessment of observations that are described in the reflection phase. The judgment-call in the awareness phase is a clear and *accurate* perception of both the internal self and external others. Awareness is about seeing more clearly. When a person makes an inaccurate assessment of their reflections, the person is not truly aware. Eurich (2017) refers to this as "delusional".

Benefits

Since the Korn Ferry Institute (Zes & Landis, 2013) reported a positive association between self-awareness and a company's rate of return, business and leadership gurus have been promoting self-awareness as a critical skill for professional development. This follows the trend for focusing on intrapersonal skills that followed the works of Mayer and Salovey (1993) and Goleman (1995) who have done extensive research on emotional intelligence. Researchers and practitioners have distilled the scholar's model into different factors that make up a person's emotional intelligence, including self-awareness (Bratton, Dodd, & Brown, 2011). Findings have then been used to make claims that it is *the* secret to leadership success (AMA, n.d.). Self-awareness has been associated with leadership and managerial performance (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Church, 1997; Tekleab, Sims, Yun, Tesluk, & Cox, 2008; Hall, 2004) and job performance in general in the workplace (Humphrey, O'Boyle, Pollack, Hawver, & Story, 2011; Sutton, Williams, & Allinson, 2015). Greater empathy and listening skills, improved critical-thinking skills, and better decision making are also associated with greater self-awareness (Eurich, 2017). Self-awareness contributes beneficially to psychological functioning, including creativity and confidence (Silvia & O'Brien, 2004). Research also shows that self-awareness can benefit those around us—those who are more self-aware report higher-quality relationships (Carlson, 2016).

Coaching literature

Coaching has taken up self-awareness as established in the emotional intelligence literature to support clients in developing resonant relationships that help them in the learning process (Boyatzis, Smith, Van Oosten, & Woolford, 2013). Gatling, Castelli, & Cole (2013) describe self-awareness as playing a significant role in coaching performance for helping clients obtain goals. Tekleab et al. (2008) look at the effect of self-awareness on affective and behavioral outcomes, showing that self-awareness is related to leader effectiveness and the team member's satisfaction of the supervisor. In *Coaching Skills: A Handbook*, Rogers (2012) uses case studies to show how awareness is an important tool in the coaching process for experienced and beginner coaches alike. Armstrong (2009) argues for an integral coaching that includes both internal and external awareness, or insight and outsight. She emphasizes the significance of outsight, or the ability to take into account the outward complexity of any situation that influences human interactions (Armstrong, 2009).

How to strategies

Practices associated with developing awareness include psychometric assessments, meditation, mindfulness, physical self-care, and feedback from others, such as self-monitoring, coaching supervision, mentoring, 360 surveys, and conversations with peers, followers, and superiors (Fogel, 2009; Lawrence & Whyte, 2014; Richards et al., 2010; Tekleab et al., 2008). The field of coaching has turned to research on mindfulness practice (e.g. Langer, 1989) as a strategy for developing awareness to lead to better outcomes (Kemp, 2016).

For a comprehensive approach to developing or fine-tuning awareness, Eurich (2017) outlines thirty strategies for becoming more aware internally of the self and externally of others. For example, she suggests short, daily check-ins to look for patterns and observe what worked and what did not work for the day. For Eurich, seeking the right feedback is important for gaining insight. This means seeking out the right people, i.e. a loving critic, who is willing and able to be brutally honest. Again, working with a coaching supervisor, mentor, or peer can be a strategy for getting external feedback.

Practicing awareness means engaging all the senses and paying attention to what the body is doing, what the mind is thinking, and how the emotions are feeling. Awareness requires an open mind in order to see the good, the bad, and the ugly. Done properly, the practice of awareness cultivates insight in order to express the self with more clarity and purpose.

Self-Regulation

Much of the research in psychology investigates the association between the ability to regulate one's emotions and various aspects of mental health (Vohs & Baumeister, 2016). Emphasis tends to be on emotion regulation because emotions trigger fight or flight behavior. If emotions are in check, then behaviors align, according to this line of thinking. Theories have looked at the role of self-regulation on people's lives (Vohs and Baumeister, 2016). Our review of the literature suggests that there is an absence of both consistent, agreed-upon conceptualizations and comprehensive, adequate measures of emotion regulation in adults. For example, a broad use of the term includes research on goal-oriented action (Locke & Latham, 1990), control (Rotter, 1966), and behavior modification (Skinner, 1974).

Definition

Terms such as self-regulation, volition, will-power, and ego-strength have been used in the field of psychology to investigate self-processing mechanisms that control emotions and behaviors (Perrig & Grob, 2000). For Kuhl & Fuhrmann (1998), self-regulation is one of two primary modes of volitional competences, or skill of will. As a mode of volition, self-regulation supports the task for maintaining one's actions to be in line with one's integrated self, where self is a representation of experiences, beliefs, and needs.

Thompson (1994) defined emotion regulation as "the extrinsic and intrinsic processes responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and modifying emotional reactions, especially their intensive and temporal features, to accomplish one's goals" (pp. 27-28). Gross (2014) conceptualized emotion regulation as a set of strategies that responds to emotion generation. For Green & Grant (2003), the tasks involved in self-regulation include setting goals, planning, acting, monitoring, evaluating, and changing emotions or behavior. According to Gratz and Roemer (2004), self-regulation involves: emotional awareness, emotional clarity, emotional acceptance, impulse control, ability to engage in goal-directed behavior while experiencing negative emotions, and ability to use situationally appropriate emotion regulation strategies to moderate emotional responses (pp. 42-43). In these definitions we see a conflation of self-processing mechanisms for self-regulation.

The research on self-regulation is similar to Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle model. The experiential learning theory model functions on two levels: a four-stage cycle for learning and four learning styles. Learning starts with a concrete experience then cycles through reflective observation, abstract conceptualization (searching for meaning of experience), and active experimentation (doing things in a different way; Kolb, 1984). The four learning styles are based on how an individual perceives a task (feeling or thinking) and how they process a task (doing or watching; Kolb, 1984). Here, we can start to see the integration of self-processing mechanisms for change.

Goal-directed learning is also an important part of self-regulation processes (Corno & Kanfer, 1993). Self-regulation is a control mechanism that draws on goal setting and planning in order to react appropriately in a given situation, in a purposeful and meaningful way (Latham & Locke, 1991). Research shows that making a specific goal and plan increases the likelihood of the action to take place (Kolb & Boyatzis, 1971; Locke & Latham, 1990).

Self-regulation is the reason for all this work, it is the control mechanism for processing emotions and behaviors. When a person has taken the time to deeply reflect in order to become aware of who they are and how others perceive them, then there will be times when the person recognizes experiences where their emotions or behaviors were out of line with their values or the situation. Using this insight to self-regulate means exercising control or modifying present or future emotions or behavior in order to act in accordance with the situation.

Benefits

Self-regulation is an important factor in efficient social functioning and well-being (Markus & Wurf, 1987). The ability to regulate emotions and behavior is associated with long-term health benefits (Hall & Fong, 2007), enhanced relationships, improved interpersonal skills, and better conflict resolution (Vago & Silbersweig, 2012). Self-regulation has been associated with being more intellectually skilled, more responsible and dependable, and more attentive in the long-term (Goleman, 1995). Learning to control emotions and behaviors leads to greater success in life. The field of education has shown benefits of self-regulation on learning and performance (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2011).

Coaching literature

In the coaching literature, self-regulation is viewed from the client's perspective—how a coach can help facilitate self-regulation in a client. For Grant (2012), the self-regulation goal attainment model is a robust technique for coaches to use to facilitate changes in views and behaviors for their clients. As an iterative process, the approach includes setting a goal, developing an action plan, acting, monitoring, evaluating, and then making the appropriate change in perspective or behavior (Grant, 2012). Coaching is viewed as a tool for enhancing mental health, quality of life, and goal attainment (Grant, 2003; Green, Oades, & Grant, 2006). Research on coaching outcomes has shown that coaching has a positive effect on psychological variables, i.e., self-regulation, self-insight and solution-focused thinking (Theeboom et al., 2014).

How to strategies

Self-regulation can be considered a strategy to foster positive interactions with self and others. For Grant, Franklin, & Langford (2002), self-reflection and insight are key factors to self-regulation. This means that strategies for self-

regulation start with reflection and awareness. A person needs to be in tune with who they are and their values in order to recognize which emotions and behaviors are out of line. Practices that have been associated with developing self-regulation include: goal-setting (Green, Oades, & Grant, 2006; Pintrich, 2000; Zimmerman, 2000), breathing exercises and mindfulness (Chambers, Gullone, & Allen, 2009), yoga (Gard, Noggle, Park, Vago, & Wilson, 2014), self-care (Bandura, 2005), and physical activity (Oaten & Cheng, 2006). As an important strategy for self-regulating, goal-setting theory claims that writing down concrete, specific goals and strategies can help individuals overcome obstacles and achieve positive outcomes (Locke & Latham, 1990).

Adult learning theory (Merriam, 2011) and the concepts of reflection, awareness, and self-regulation have been fruitful for the field of coaching (Cox, 2015). From an adult learning perspective, coaching is seen as a way to engage clients with change, or the learning and growth process (Cox, 2015; Pinkavova, 2010). In their work on personal and organizational change, Kegan & Lahey (2009) bring attention to the barriers to developing new learning, what they refer to as immunity to change. The scholars suggest that individuals have hidden mindsets that get in the way of new learning. The coaching process has been directed at facilitating learning and change in the client (Hargrove, 1995). In this article, we take the practice deeper by turning focus to the coach's professional development, in service to the client.

The coaching field has started to link theoretical knowledge to practice (Cox, Bachkirova, & Clutterbuck, 2014; Passmore, 2015; Stober & Grant, 2010), a sign of mastering the craft in order to make claims on the importance of reflection, awareness, and self-regulation in the coaching process. While these processes tend to be separated or conflated, we take previous conceptualizations a step further by integrating reflection, awareness and self-regulation into a simple, interactive model of self-processing mechanisms. A reflective practice can help dig into and understand deeply rooted and hidden mindsets that create a natural but enforcing immunity to change (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). The purpose of the model presented here is for the profession to reflect on the coach as practitioner, fine tuning themselves as an instrument (Bachikirova, 2016).

A Robust Reflective Practice Model

The Reflective Practice Model was developed to illustrate to both coaches and clients the mechanisms that foster learning and change. The model assumes that reflection and awareness are antecedents to self-regulation. Each term is

conceptualized as a skill that can be learned. This means that a person who does not have an innate ability to engage in one of the activities can learn and practice in order to develop the skill. The model is an interactive skill set for facilitating personal and professional development.

We dropped the word "self" from reflection and awareness to account for both the internal self and the external other. This is in line with integral theory that states that our emerging structure of consciousness is characterized by the ability to think and act from multiple worldviews (Wilber, 2000). For the regulation construct, the model accounts for the internal self and not for the external other. We have avoided the automatic and unconscious aspects of these self-processing mechanisms in order to emphasize the conscious actions that can be taken in order to develop an integrated skill set for a robust reflective practice.

From the research on reflection, awareness, and self-regulation, what we see is that the self-processing mechanisms are triggered by an experience as described by Kolb (1984) and Mezirow (1990). An individual may respond in an adaptive or maladaptive way. Since we are interested in positive outcomes, then we focus on the productive operationalization of these processing mechanisms. The model excludes maladaptive emotions and cognitions, such as rumination (Trapnell & Campbell, 1999) because these type of distortions, judgments, and biases are not going to result in positive self-regulation. Meaning, we emphasize how a person interprets an experience in a meaningful way by observing, questioning, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating in order to make a transformation.

Boyatzis' (2006) work on positive and negative emotional attractors can guide our focus on staying in the positive or shifting away from negative territory by trusting resonant relationships. This is because change needs more positivity than negativity (Boyatzis, 2006). Relationships that enable an individual to learn help steer them towards positive adaptations (Boyatzis, 2006). For Boyatzis (2006), *intentional* change is important to a person's adaptation, and resonant relationships encourage the intention to change. This is where an activity like mindfulness (Langer, 2014) supports being intentional (Boyatzis, 2006).

We used the literature review to develop definitions for the three constructs. For heuristic purposes, we separated the self-processing mechanisms out into three parts (reflection, awareness, and self-regulation) as a

way to identify the key processes taking place. Figure 1 illustrates an internal use of the integrated skill set and Figure 2 an external use.
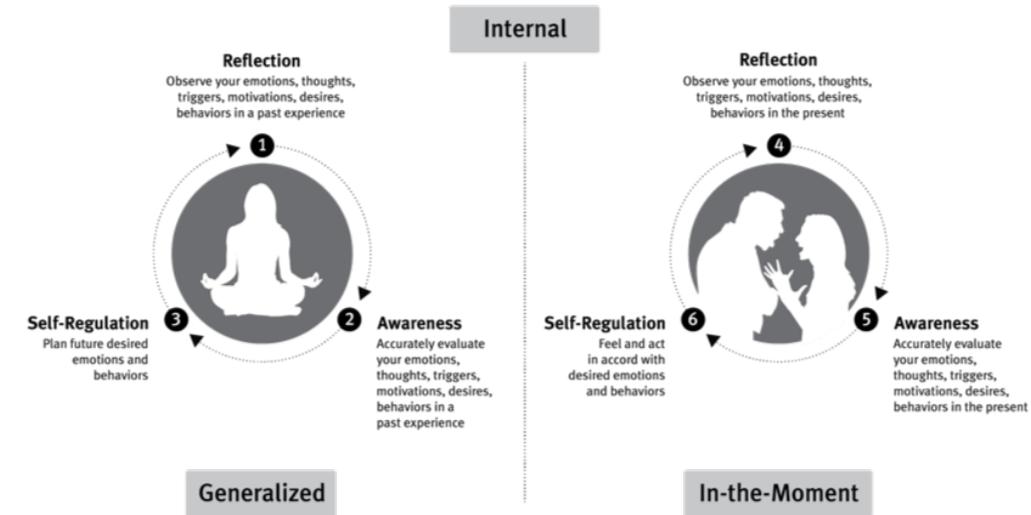

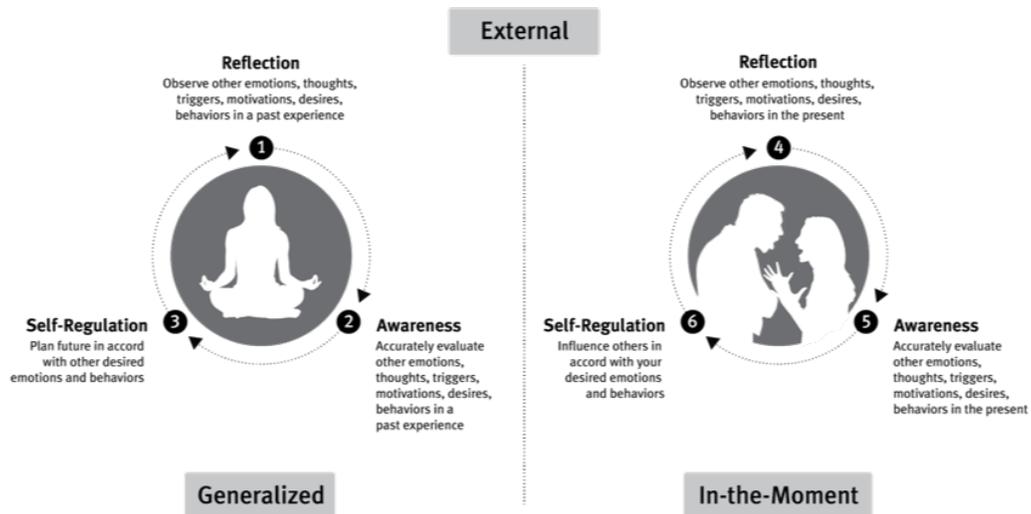Figure 1. An internal use of the Reflective Practice Model.

Figure 2. An external use of the Reflective Practice Model.

We included temporal (in-the-moment and generalized) and viewpoint (internal-self and external-other) features for each construct. In-the-Moment processing takes place during an experience related to the action of regulation,

whereas Generalized occurs in moments temporally separated from the moments related to the action of regulation. Internal processing focuses on the self, whereas external processing turns to others. An event, situation, or experience triggers the self-processing mechanisms.

Starting with reflection, the key actions taking place are contemplating, observing, inspecting, and questioning. Specifically, reflection means to contemplate, observe, inspect, and question without judgment one's past or present experiences to examine one's own character, thoughts, behavior, emotions, beliefs, motivations, and abilities and how others perceive the person. Reflection is primarily about the experience. During or after an experience or event, a person can critically think about a situation. Reflecting in a proactive way emphasizes a non-judgmental perspective. As a maladaptive process, the person may get stuck in reflection, i.e. rumination (Trapnell & Campbell, 1999). In rumination, they are stuck in their thinking because they start judging the situation and they are not able to move past a negative description of their experience. Rumination potentially prevents awareness, the second stage in the model.

Reflection is used to cultivate awareness—the next step in the model. Awareness is defined as a clear, accurate perception and appraisal of one's past or present character, thoughts, behavior, emotions, beliefs, motivations, abilities and their implications and how others perceive the person. This is primarily about appraisal, which is both a process and an outcome. Proactive awareness means a person assesses a situation and arrives at an accurate conclusion of the meaning of the experience.

Maladaptive awareness, or what Eurich (2017) refers to as delusional, is when someone is not able to make an accurate conclusion of the meaning of that experience—they just do not see any other perspective except their own self-view. Also, someone may stop at awareness, choosing to take no action toward self-regulation.

Once a person is aware of what needs to be improved, the next step is self-regulation. Specifically, self-regulation means to exercise control of or to modify one's present or future emotions and behavior in order to act in accordance with the situation and the person's desired goals and plan (Mischel & Ebbesen, 1970). Initially self-regulation is cognitive and forced but then the new emotions and behaviors become natural, fluid, and automatic. Resilience and flexibility become factors for individuals in this process (Waugh, Thompson, & Gotlib, 2011). Self-regulation is primarily about a control

process. Identifying one's values and goals requires awareness. Setting a plan to make the necessary change in emotions or behavior initiates self-regulation. Here we see overlap between awareness and self-regulation. A person needs to be aware of their own values along with the other person's values in order to align goals and to set a plan that will act in accordance with the situation.

We have looked at self-processing mechanisms from an adaptive perspective. The goal is to deepen reflection and awareness in a way that leads to positive and productive self-regulation. We see lots of moving parts in the process—the internal self is experiencing emotional impulses, thoughts, and feelings in relation to the other who is experiencing their own emotional impulses, thoughts, and feelings. The internal self and other are in a relationship together and with their environment (context) for what is happening in that very moment in addition to all the things from the past and hoped-for future, consciously or subconsciously, that have showed up to join the experience.

We have distilled the significant, overlapping literature into a working model that can be incorporated into the coaching process. The Reflective Practice Model is recursive. The features of the model include temporal (past, present, and future) and viewpoint (internal-self and external-other).

How the Model Works

Reflection is an engagement process for observing and questioning. Reflection evokes awareness; awareness activates self-regulation. Once self-regulation has occurred, a person can return to reflection by observing and questioning the changed behavior or emotion and new experience. The interactive process for reflecting, gaining awareness, and self-regulating is a learning experience that facilitates change.

As an example, after coaching a client, the coach takes time to sit down and intentionally reflect upon the session. They remember the emotions, thoughts, and triggers that came up during a key point in the coaching and internally ask questions about their experience (reflection). "Why did this emotion come up? Why was I triggered? Does it have to do with my past struggles with the same issue?" After exploring these emotions, thoughts, and triggers, they accurately evaluate them within the context of the session (awareness). Once a coach comes to a conclusion about these questions, the coach starts to plan on ways to regulate their emotions, thoughts, and triggers in the future (self-regulation). Perhaps a breathing technique can be used. This would be an example of a generalized, internal reflective practice.

A coach can introduce this model to their clients without explicitly showing them the figure. Probing questions and insightful observations can be communicated to the client in a way that enhances the client's reflection. For example, the coach can ask "what thoughts or emotions arise when you think about this situation?" Once the client reflects upon this, the coach can help the client draw accurate awareness about the situation. Questions that challenge the client's assumptions and biases could help ensure that a more accurate interpretation is reached: "What else could be true?" or "How might an outside observer see this situation?" Finally, the coach can help the client to act in response to the situation. This may involve reframing a belief or making a behavioral change: "How could you reframe that belief in a way that better serves you?" or "How can you bring about this change?" At the end of the session, the coach can ask the client to share the process they went through to arrive at their action plan.

Adhering to an integrated approach to professional development, the model can also be of value to coaching supervision. For clients, coaching is a "sanctuary in which people can take time to focus on themselves and gain insight into behaviors and actions" (Armstrong, 2009, p. 35). Similarly, coaching supervision provides coaches a safe space to support the coach in their own reflective practice. In turn, the Reflective Practice Model, provides a tool for "supervisor self-reflection" in which the supervisor attends to their own internal processes interacting with external relational processes (Hawkins, 2014). Hawkins (2014) suggests that coaching supervision is "a place of co-creative and generative thinking where new learning is being forged for clients, coach and supervisor and for the profession" (p. 402).

Understanding the Reflective Practice Model, coaching supervisors can facilitate growth within the coach at any stage of the process (i.e. reflection, awareness, self-regulation). This can help coaches develop a keener eye to notice subtle changes in emotion, thought, and behavior within themselves as well as their clients (reflection). Supervisors can challenge the coach's assumptions when evaluating these changes in order to arrive at a more accurate interpretation (awareness). And finally, they can help coaches create strategies to work with these changes in a way that best benefits the coach, and in turn, their client (self-regulation).

From our anecdotal experiences as practitioners, educators, and researchers, the model has emerged as a tool that we have applied in our everyday. We find ourselves saying, "let me reflect on that" in our conversations and, then, pausing to take time to observe our thoughts, feelings,

and behaviors. We have tapped into a deeper awareness, which has enriched our relationship as a unit, helping us to see where we each are coming from, what is important, what might be getting in the way, and acting accordingly. We hope the model can help coaches in their own reflective practice, and in turn, their clients.

Co-Creating a Robust Reflective Practice

Reflective practice creates the conditions for learning, growth, and performance for both coach and client alike. As an integrated skill set for learning and change, reflective practice can promote well-being for a coach, and consequently, for a client.

Through an integrated reflective practice, coaches can become more in tune with themselves, and in turn, with their clients. A robust reflective practice can help coaches truly tune into the client's agenda. By reflecting on a session (in the moment or generalized in the past) coaches can observe their own interactions and reactions to their clients—that is, their emotions, thoughts, triggers, motivations, desires, and behaviors. Observing the interactions between the self (coach) and the other (client) with a critical eye allows coaches to evaluate the situation. If the goal is to show up fully for the client, but coaches see and feel themselves wandering off, judging, or advising, then they know they are not in alignment with their goal—tuning into the client's agenda. Awareness is an accurate assessment of when interactions went astray from the coach's desire to be fully present for their client. Self-regulation is the disciplinary control mechanism that can help coaches return to their client in the moment or plan how to manage those wandering moments in the future. Reflective practice is an intentional monitoring and evaluation approach to learning and change.

Research on coaching outcomes indicates that the coach-client relationship is one of the most important factors for effective results (de Haan et al., 2013; Baron & Morin, 2009; Gan & Chong, 2015). Co-creating a relationship requires an open, flexible, and confident coaching presence, which requires being fully conscious, communicating effectively, and deep listening. A presence that exhibits unconditional positive regard towards a client, creates a safe space for the client to be vulnerable. Showing up and being fully available for the client, in turn, creates trust and intimacy—important factors for a quality relationship.

Engaging in reflective practice can help cultivate this quality coach-client relationship. Reflection enhances the ability to observe emotions and behaviors of the client. Observing in this way contributes to deep listening—picking up on all the meanings, verbally and non-verbally, coming into play in a coaching session. The integrated reflection skills translate to really listening and paying attention to the client. Noticing subtle movements and tones of the client, becoming fully aware of the client's perspective, being able to moderate any urges that may arise while the client is talking all help a coach to be actively listening.

By engaging in reflective practice, a coach models the way for transformation for their client. Coaches can also share this strategy to facilitate a client's learning and growth. Sharing with clients how the process works is an opportunity to create a space of safety and vulnerability. Letting clients know that coaches have off days too shows the reality of being human. Walking through the reflection, awareness, and self-regulation process with the client using metaphor or a personal example can help both coach and client learn and grow together.

One of the strategies cited across the literature for enhancing each self-processing mechanism is mindfulness. Research shows that regular mindfulness practices, such as meditation, have many mental health benefits, such as stress reduction, reduced levels of anxiety and depression, increased happiness and peace of mind, increased concentration, and greater self-acceptance (NIH, 2017; Salazar, 2018). Regular meditation also has many physical benefits, including better sleep, lower blood pressure, stronger immune system, and improved cardiovascular health (Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach 2004). A regular meditation or mindfulness practice can enhance reflection, awareness, and self-regulation.

Conclusion

This research explores the merits for three self-processing skills to enhance coaching effectiveness. A review of the literature indicates that while the terms reflection, awareness, and self-regulation have their own conceptualizations, definitions, scales, and measures, there is considerable overlap among the three skills. Consequently, these terms often have been conflated with one another. Despite the conceptualization chaos, the literature indicates that each of the concepts are important tools for both personal and professional development.

While all of the individual pieces of the model have been researched significantly, no one has put all of the pieces together until this article. We synthesized the literature to create an integrated model that accounts for the three self-processing mechanisms working together. For our model, we identified the key actions from the definitions that distinguishes each self-processing mechanism. Taking time to reflect means looking inward and seeing what is going on with the self and others. Reflection helps to build awareness and self-regulation, two components of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995). Having the ability to be aware means understanding personal values, motivations, goals, strengths, weaknesses, emotions, and behaviors while recognizing their impact on others. Self-regulation involves the ability to control or redirect disruptive emotions and impulses and adapt to circumstances and changes.

The research indicates that each of the three skills returns a range of benefits, including higher quality physical and mental health, improved job performance, and higher quality learning outcomes. Taken together, the self-processing mechanisms can be used to address life challenges and to achieve positive personal and professional outcomes. This skill set can be used to manage problems, accomplish goals, boost confidence, reduce stress, be happier, and strengthen relationships. We saw that practices, such as mindfulness, show up as strategies for improving each of the constructs. Also, coaching supervision is perhaps an underutilized professional development activity that has the potential to help the field engage in a comprehensive approach to a robust reflective practice that serves coaches and extends to their clients, having a ripple of influence.

Adult learning theory (Merriam, 2011) helps us examine professional development and see how adults can enhance their learning to bring about change. The fields of education, psychology, and management provide many concepts useful to understanding adult learning. With the observations presented here along with empirical research, we conclude that reflection, awareness, and self-regulation are important skills that have the potential to enhance the coaching process—for both coach and client alike.

For future research, a time-series experimental design can be used to identify the links and the disconnects among the three processes. Future considerations can also explore the implications the model may have on different cultural settings. Another area for future research is client outcomes to better understand to what extent a coach's reflective practice contributes to factors related to their clients.

Harnessing the self-processing mechanisms of reflection, awareness, and self-regulation can help both coaches and clients to learn about themselves, provide language for their internal and external experiences, and offer tools to navigate interactions in a positive way. As a strategy for learning and change, coaches can use reflective practice to ensure that they continue to strengthen their coaching practice throughout their career. Coaches can also share with clients the workings of a robust reflective practice to serve the client's agenda. Engaging in a robust reflective practice is important to both a coach's and client's learning along with their personal well-being and self-care. We are familiar with the common saying: "be the change that you want to see in the world." A robust reflective practice can help both coaches and clients be that change.

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