

Book review

Passmore, J. (2021). *The Coaches' Handbook: The Complete Practitioner Guide for Professional Coaches*

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Edited by Jonathan Passmore and mostly aimed at new coaches who may be undertaking credentials or accreditation, *The Coaches Handbook* is organised in seven sections: coaching context, understanding yourself and your clients, core coaching skill, coaching approaches, coaching issues, continuing coach development, tools and techniques for coaches.

It provides a stimulating addition to other published compendia on coaching. For those wanting to expand their understanding of different ways of coaching, the book includes 15 approaches. Behavioural coaching (GROW) and neuroscience-based coaching (GROWS) are particularly versatile approaches. Firstly, if GROW is regularly described as linear although cyclical in nature, it can be enriched during a session with well-chosen tools and techniques to the extent of forming an expandable 'accordion', which the coach can play depending on the time available and the topic. This traditional model provides the foundation for GROWS where S stands for self-efficacy. Examples given in the book include neuroplasticity, growth mindset, calibrating emotions and empathy.

Other approaches include the universal eclectic model, which is intentionally inclusive; the narrative coaching approach, which is qualified as mindful, experiential and holistic, and the integrated approach, which involves bringing together in a considered and planned way the different approaches and models used by the coach.

The chapters on these coaching approaches are written using the same structure, which helps the reader to draw comparisons between approaches. A useful feature of these chapters was the 'Ten Useful Questions', specifically applicable for each approach. In addition, the handbook also addresses core coaching skills, with dedicated chapters on goal-setting, listening, affirmations/reflections/summaries, tools and techniques, silence, using emotions, balancing challenge and support. In terms of new developments in coaching, a whole chapter is devoted to artificial intelligence (AI), in which the author suggests approaching coaching and AI as a 'three-way partnership', as in client-coach-AI.

In addition to coaching theories and models, the handbook includes a vast array of tools, including a selection of 15 traditional and creative techniques ranging from the wheel of life to an example from improvised comedy. The book highlights the importance of professional practice, addressing topics such as the boundaries of coaching, its future as a profession and a leadership style are covered across several sections and chapters. At the beginning of the book, readers are invited to complete a thought-provoking comparison table between coaching and other types of goal-setting interventions. There is a strong emphasis on promoting coaching as a successful evidence-based practice. Authors argue that not only is coaching an effective learning and development approach, able to generate a range of individual and collective benefits, but it also helps deliver changes for organisations at a strategic level.

In terms of professional practice, a practical approach to contracting is offered in a dedicated chapter that reminds readers of the ABC mnemonic (Always Be Contracting). The chapter also shares several practical tips, processes and summary tables to help with contracting, including multi-stakeholder arrangements. Furthermore, ethics and continuing professional development (CPD) are described as key components when it comes to the professionalisation of coaching. A chapter on what a truly ethical coaching practice entails, explains how to maintain it with regular diverse learning activities and an even richer understanding of one's own personal and professional values. While referring coaches to the guidance provided by the professional associations' codes of ethics and conduct, this challenging chapter encourages coaches to appreciate the context in which their interventions are undertaken, for example business or healthcare. This will help coaches become more able to identify and navigate ethical situations and make ethical decisions, supported by supervision and reflective practice, both topics are fully covered in the section of the book devoted to CPD.

The learning gained from reading and reflecting on the content of *The Coaches' Handbook* led me to contemplate the concept of professional identity in coaching. New and more experienced coaches will appreciate the evidence-based and practical approaches shared in an accessible way by a diverse panel of devoted coaching academics and practitioners.