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Coaching and Well-being: A Brief Review of Existing Evidence, Relevant Theory, and Implications for Practitioners

Gordon B. Spence and Anthony M. Grant

Oxford Handbook of Happiness
Edited by Ilona Boniwell, Susan A. David, and Amanda Conley Ayers

Print Publication Date: Jan 2013
Online Publication Date: Aug 2013

Subject: Psychology, Personality and Social Psychology
DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199557257.013.0075

Abstract and Keywords

Whilst scholarly interest in coaching has increased dramatically in the past decade, the further maturation of the field will continue to depend upon the degree to which knowledge is developed along both theoretical and empirical lines. In this chapter both domains are explored. After providing a brief introduction to coaching, the first section summarizes findings from the empirical coaching literature, which suggest that coaching can positively impact human functioning and well-being across several different contexts. Having reviewed evidence that supports the efficacy of coaching, the second section focuses on an important related question: Why does coaching work? To help answer this question, self-determination theory is introduced and presented as a useful theoretical lens for understanding how a coaching process might yield beneficial effects, for grounding coaching practice in firm foundations and also for generating highly valuable research questions.

Keywords: coaching research, self-determination theory, coaching practice, well-being, psychological needs, optimal functioning

THIS chapter is about coaching and its influence on human functioning and well-being. The chapter is presented in two sections. In the first section coaching is defined and accompanied by a brief description of its essential practices, along with a review of what is currently known empirically about its impact on human functioning and well-being. Having reviewed some evidence that supports the efficacy of coaching, the second section will focus on the important question: Why does coaching work? In proposing an answer to this question we will draw upon self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985), a metatheory of human functioning that we believe helps to theoretically ground the practice of coaching. We hope that this discussion will provide both a good general introduction to the field in its current state and stimulate an understanding of why coaching effectively contributes to well-being.

What is Coaching?

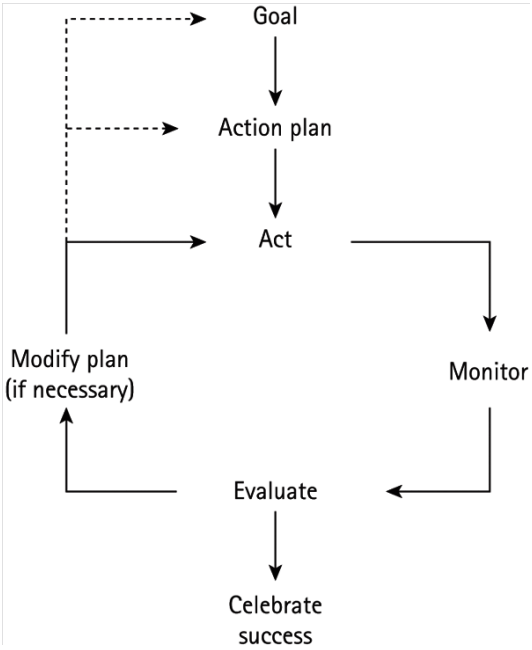

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Fig. 75.1 Generic cycle of self-regulation.

Coaching is an action-oriented, collaborative process that seeks to facilitate goal attainment, self-directed learning, and/or enhance performance in the coachee's personal or professional (p. 1010) life (Spence & Grant, 2007). The articulation of goals is central to the coaching process and these are generally set in a way that stretches an individual's current capacities or performance (Grant & Greene, 2001). In essence, the coaching process facilitates goal attainment by helping individuals to: (1) identify desired outcomes, (2) establish specific goals, (3) enhance motivation by identifying strengths and building self-efficacy, (4) identify resources and formulate action plans, (5) monitor and evaluate progress, and (6) modify action plans (where necessary). As shown in Fig. 75.1, this monitor–evaluate–modify process constitutes a cycle of self-regulated behavior that is key to creating intentional behavior change (Carver & Scheier, 1998). The role of the coach is to facilitate the coachee's movement through this self-regulatory cycle, by helping the coachee to develop specific action plans and then to monitor and to evaluate their progression toward those goals.

Much of a coach's skill lies in being able to accelerate goal attainment by helping individuals develop and implement solutions to the ongoing challenges faced during goal striving. Regardless of whether coaching occurs as brief, informal “on-the-fly” coaching (lasting, say, 10 minutes) or more lengthy, formal sessions (sometimes lasting up to 2 hours or more), considerable emphasis is placed on the coach to act as the facilitator (rather than the provider) of solutions. Increasingly this has led coaches to adopt the use of solution-focused and strengths-based techniques, which can assist coachees to tap into their personal strengths and resources (Berg & Szabo, 2005).

Is coaching effective? What the research says

The first appearance of coaching in the peer-reviewed literature occurs in Gorby's (1937) report of senior staff coaching junior employees on how to reduce waste, and Bigelow's (p. 1011) (1938) article on how best to implement a sales coaching program. Despite its long history, the coaching literature is still relatively small, although it has grown significantly in recent years.

According to Grant (2010), in the 62 years between 1937 and 1999 only 93 papers on coaching were published, compared to 542 since 2000. However, of the 616 papers published since 1980, the vast majority have been opinion pieces, descriptive articles or theoretical discussions. Furthermore, of the 179 empirical papers published in this period, many are surveys (e.g., Coutu & Kauffman, 2009; Douglas & McCauley, 1999), descriptive studies about executive coaching (e.g., Bono, Purvanova, Towler, & Peterson, 2009), or research into the characteristics of coach training schools (e.g., Grant & O’Hara, 2006). As such, most of the extant empirical coaching literature

comprises contextual or survey-based investigations, with little research focused on determining the efficacy of coaching as a methodology for creating purposeful positive change and enhancing well-being. Nevertheless, a brief overview of this literature follows and will be drawn from four areas: workplace/executive coaching; life coaching; health coaching and coaching within educational settings.

Workplace and executive coaching

Although coaching is widely used in the workplace, only two randomized controlled studies of workplace coaching have been reported. In the first, Deviney (1994) examined the efficacy of supervisors acting as internal workplace coaches and found no changes in supervisors' feedback skills following a multiple-rater feedback intervention and coaching from their managers over a 9-week period. In the other study, Duijts, Kant, van den Brandt, and Swaen (2008) examined the effectiveness of coaching as a means of reducing work absence due to psychosocial health complaints. Whilst no decrease in absenteeism was observed, there was significantly lower burnout along with improvements in health, life satisfaction, and psychological well-being. These results suggest that coaching might enhance employee well-being.

There have been some quasi-experimental studies in the workplace using pre-test and post-test comparisons and non-randomized allocation to an intervention or control group. For example, Gyllensten and Palmer (2005) found that coaching was associated with lower levels of anxiety and workplace stress (compared with a control group), whilst Evers, Brouwers, and Tomic (2006) reported that executive coaching enhanced participants' self-efficacy and self-perceived ability to set personal goals. In addition, Barrett (2007) found that group coaching was effective for reducing burnout but not for improving productivity.

Finally, one study reported on the effectiveness of executive coaching (using a randomized controlled design). In this, participants received 360-degree feedback followed by four sessions of executive coaching. Coaching was found to reduce stress and depression, improve goal attainment, and increase resilience (Grant, Curtayne, & Burton, 2009).

Life coaching

Given that commercial life coach training schools first emerged in the early 1990s, it is surprising that comparatively few outcome studies have been conducted on life coaching. In the first published study, Grant (2003a) used a within-subjects (pre–post) design to explore the efficacy of a group-based, solution-focused cognitive behavioral (SF-CB) life (p. 1012) coaching program (n = 20). The results indicated that life coaching was associated with enhanced mental health, quality of life, and goal attainment. In a partial replication of this study, Green, Oades, and Grant (2006) tested the same SF-CB coaching program using a randomized controlled (pre–post) design and found that group life coaching was associated with increases in goal striving, well-being and hope, with some gains maintained at 30 weeks.

Extending this line of research, Spence and Grant (2007) compared the efficacy of individualized professional one-to-one coaching to peer coaching with an adult community sample (n = 63) over a 10-week period. The results indicated that coachees of professional coaches were more engaged in the coaching process and reported greater goal commitment and goal progression compared to peer coachees and controls. Whilst these participants also reported greater levels of environmental mastery, other facets of well-being did not change.

Finally, life coaching has also been found to be effective with young adults. Using a sample of 56 female high school students (mean age 16 years), Green, Grant, and Rynsaardt (2007) found that participation in SF-CB life coaching was associated with significant increases in levels of cognitive hardiness and hope, and significant decreases in depression.

Health coaching

The use of coaching in health-related settings is steadily increasing and may prove a useful way of enhancing patient self-management and better utilization of healthcare resources (for a discussion see Kreitzer et al., 2008). Health coaching is a patient-centered process that consists of setting health-related goals, identifying obstacles to change, and mobilizing support and resources to enable change (Palmer, Tubbs, & Whybrow, 2003). It is typically a multifaceted intervention incorporating cognitive, behavioral and lifestyle change strategies, and includes the

teaching of coping skills (Grey et al., 2009). A review of this literature reveals that health coaching is being used to address a variety of concerns in an array of settings. For example, Linden, Butterworth, and Prochaska (2010) provided chronically ill patients with telephone-based health coaching informed by motivational interviewing principles (Miller & Rollnick, 2002) and found that it increased their self-efficacy, lifestyle change scores and perceived health status.

In another study, Grey et al. (2009) explored the difference between general health education and coping skills-based health coaching with inner city youth at risk for type II diabetes. Results indicated that both groups showed some improvement in anthropometric measures, lipids, and depressive symptoms over 12 months, but students who received health coaching showed a greater improvement on indicators of metabolic risk than students who received education only. This confirmed earlier results reported by Spence, Cavanagh, and Grant (2008) who found that health goal attainment was greater when participants received coaching, compared to a directive, health education-only intervention.

Not all health coaching studies have reported such successes. Gorczynski, Morrow, and Irwin (2008) reported on the impact of coaching on physical activity participation, self-efficacy, social support, and perceived behavioral control among physically inactive youth. Whilst physical activity significantly increased for one participant, the other participants' activity levels remained unchanged. No significant changes were found across the other study variables. Similarly, an internet-based health coaching study conducted by Leveille et al. (2009) reported mixed findings. In investigating the efficacy of coaching aimed at (p. 1013) enhancing communication between patients and their primary care physician, results showed that while coached patients received more information from their physicians there was no difference in the detection or management of screened conditions, symptom ratings, and quality of life between the coaching and non-coaching groups.

It appears that whilst life coaching and organizational coaching tend to be effective, health coaching is less so. This is perhaps unsurprising given that such behaviors tend to be anchored by decades of habit. Furthermore, it is difficult to determine whether the health coaching reported in the literature accurately reflects coaching (i.e., a client-centered process aimed at facilitating self-directed learning), or whether it is being utilized as an alternative way to deliver expert information.

Although health coaching for health-related behavior change may not be consistently effective, the use of workplace or executive coaching in health settings to change non-health-related behaviors has been more successful. For example, Taylor (1997) found that solution-focused coaching enhanced resilience in medical students, whilst Gattellari et al. (2005) reported that peer coaching by general practitioners improved the coachees' ability to make informed decisions about prostate-specific antigen screening. Also, Miller, Yahbe, Moyers, Martinez, and Pirritanol (2004) used a coaching program to help clinicians learn motivational interviewing skills and found that coaching with feedback was superior to training-only. Finally, Yu, Collins, Cavanagh, White, and Fairbrother (2008) found coaching was associated with significantly greater proactivity, core performance, goal-attainment, self-insight, motivation, positive affect and autonomy for 17 managers in a large teaching hospital.

Coaching in educational settings

Whilst there is now a considerable amount of literature regarding coaching in educational settings much of it is student-focused and directed towards enhancing student learning, or overcoming literacy or learning difficulties (e.g., Merriman & Codding, 2008). We will not review this literature here, rather, we will focus on an emerging literature related to teacher-focused coaching (for a review see Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). It should be noted that the term "coaching" in educational settings refers to a very broad range of applications, indicating technical or instructional coaching to increase the instructional skills of teachers (e.g., Brown, Reumann-Moore, Hugh, Du Plessis, & Christman, 2006) and reflective practice coaching, which is "a process in which teachers explore the thinking behind their practices" (Garmston, Linder, & Whitaker, 1993, p. 57).

Whilst little has been reported on the use of coaching to directly increase the well-being or happiness of students or teachers, it has been applied to facilitating professional development and enhancing leadership within educational settings. Much of this work has been conducted using peer coaching with both novice (Jenkins, Garn, & Jenkins, 2005; Suleyman, 2006) and experienced educators (Johnson, 2009). However, as in commercial organizations, some senior management in educational settings also engage in developmental coaching of subordinates (MacKenzie & Marnik, 2008). These coaching interventions can be relatively sophisticated with senior

school leaders receiving coaching skills training within the context of a structured coaching program, and often incorporate ongoing supervision and impact evaluation (for an example see Simkins, Coldwell, Caillau, Finlayson, & Morgan, 2006). Globally, the use of professional coaches and consultants for leadership and (p. 1014) professional development within educational settings has been increasing, with some studies yielding encouraging results (Allan, 2007; Contreras, 2009).

On the basis of the findings presented, coaching appears to be a promising methodology for facilitating goal attainment and enhancing well-being across a variety of domains. Whilst some of this evidence has been generated through the use of robust scientific methods, there is a pressing need for more research in each of the domains outlined; research that seeks to understand (1) the specific impact of coaching across domains, and (2) what processes coaching activates to generate these effects.

How Does Coaching Impact Well-Being?

Using self-determination theory to understand coaching efficacy

As outlined in the previous section, a growing body of empirical evidence indicates that coaching impacts an array of positive psychological characteristics, including various dimensions of subjective and psychological well-being (e.g., positive affect and environmental mastery). Whilst such findings are encouraging, there are two reasons that this work should be interpreted cautiously. First, the empirical coaching literature is still relatively small with few replications and considerable methodological variability. Second, most of the coaching research conducted to date has lacked firm theoretical foundations and occurred in the absence of clearly articulated, coherent research agendas. As a result, the evidence-base for coaching would best be described as disparate, largely atheoretical, and primarily comprised of "one-off" findings. Clearly, it is not yet a mature field of study.

These observations are not intended as criticisms of the field or those working within it. Rather, they are brief reflections on the current state of coaching research and serve as a reminder that maturation takes time and occurs via the steady accumulation of rigorous empirical work. Whilst we hope that dedicating the remainder of this chapter to SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985) might provide a new perspective from which to formulate coaching research questions and so stimulate further empirical work, our primary aim is to introduce a well-researched theory of human motivation and goal-directed behavior that can both inform the practice of coaching and help to understand its beneficial effects.

Coaching and well-being

What makes coaching an intervention that can influence well-being and happiness? Numerous explanations could be proposed to answer this question. One might be that coaching enhances well-being simply because it focuses on the subjective concerns of individuals and provides a helpful collaborator (i.e., the coach) to assist with resolving those concerns. According to this view, coaching would enhance well-being via the experience of being genuinely supported. A second explanation might be that coaching enhances well-being by providing coachees with rare opportunities to reflect on and (re)discover their personal strengths and capacities. From this perspective, well-being is enhanced through (p. 1015) feelings of mastery that build over time. Alternatively, it could be argued that coaching enhances well-being by helping coachees to think deeply about their goals and encouraging them to use values and interests—rather than external inducements or introjects—as a basis for choosing commitments in life. According to this view, it is the developing sense of self-authorship and volition that would lead one to feel good.

Whilst these perspectives are intuitively appealing they provide only superficial explanations about how or why coaching might be expected to impact well-being. The potential value that SDT offers to coaches is that it can help to make sense of such "explanations" by providing a comprehensive account of human functioning and the processes that shape cognitive, emotional and behavioral self-regulation and development.

Self-determination theory

As practitioners we have continually found SDT to be highly relevant, conceptually coherent, and, as we will argue,

useful for understanding coaching practice at both macro and micro levels. At the macro level, SDT provides a metatheoretical account of growth tendencies, innate psychological needs, and environmental forces that shape human personality, behavioral self-regulation, and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Put more simply, the theory says much about what needs to happen if people are to "do well" and "feel good" throughout the course of their lives.

At the micro level, SDT can help practitioners to appreciate the importance of the client-coach relationship and understand that, through the process of *relating*, conditions can be created that are necessary for optimal growth and development. More specifically, the use of core micro-skills such as active listening, expressing empathy, exploring successes, identifying personal strengths, clarifying values, encouraging volitional acts and other supportive gestures help to enliven developmental processes that are central to (what is commonly referred to as) "human flourishing" (Keyes & Haidt, 2003).

Some self-determination theory basics

According to Deci and Ryan (2000), "it is part of the adaptive design features of the human organism to engage in interesting activities, to exercise capacities, to pursue connectedness in social groups, and to integrate intrapsychic and interpersonal experiences into a relative unity" (p. 229). This statement conveys several ideas that we believe make SDT a relevant theoretical backdrop for coaching.

First, SDT adopts a positive view of human nature. Consistent with the basic tenets of humanistic psychology (Rogers, 1961), people are seen as possessing innate growth tendencies and, provided supportive socio-contextual conditions exist, will naturally seek out experiences that promote growth and development. Whilst SDT explicitly acknowledges that these innate tendencies exist, it also acknowledges the *organismic-dialectic* of human experience (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Simply put, a dialectic is the juxtaposition of conflicting forces or ideas. In SDT the dialectic of interest is the conflict that exists between the inherent growth orientation of humans and the disruptive power of various socio-contextual forces (e.g., excessive parental control, peer pressure and restrictive legislation) that act to thwart or stall these positive developmental tendencies (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

(p. 1016) Second, SDT proposes that a person's level of functioning and well-being depends upon the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness. According to the theory, people do well and feel at their best when the socio-cultural *conditions* of their lives (i.e., family relationships, friendships, workplace culture, political system, and cultural norms) support the innate needs of freely engaging in interesting activities (autonomy), producing valued outcomes via the use of their capacities (competence), *and* feeling closely and securely connected to significant others (relatedness).

Third, SDT conceptualizes the self *not* as a fixed, rigid core (i.e., "self-as-object") residing somewhere deep within the person. Rather, it is viewed as an active processor of experience, a dynamic psychic structure that continuously seeks to make meaning of the myriad internal and external events that comprise a person's life (i.e., "self-as-process") and integrate them into a coherent, unified sense of self. Specifically, Deci and Ryan (1985) argue that this processor works best when the conditions of a person's life support satisfaction of the needs for autonomy, relatedness and competence.

Relevance to coaching

When an individual engages the services of a coach, they gain access to someone with the potential to facilitate basic need satisfaction via a relational process focused on the coachee's aspirations and salient concerns. In this way, the formation of a coaching relationship can represent a positive change in the sociocultural conditions of a coachee's life, provided that the relationship respects their core values and developing interests, acknowledges their capacities, and occurs against a backdrop of genuine caring, trust and honesty. From an SDT perspective, coaches who focus on the creation of these conditions help to create a platform for effective human action and the complex meaning-making process that represents the development of the self.

It should be noted that SDT is not a single theory. Rather, it is a set of four related mini-theories that have evolved over four decades (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Whilst each subtheory has its own specific focus (see Table 75.1), all address psychological processes that are interrelated and deemed to be important for psychological growth and development (for a comprehensive review see Deci & Ryan, 2000). As SDT views the satisfaction of basic needs

as a prerequisite for human development and growth, attempts to understand coaching from this perspective are best focused on the extent to which coaching can satisfy needs for relatedness, competence and autonomy. The remainder of the chapter is focused on the ways that coaching might help to meet these needs.

Coaching conversations: creating conditions for growth, development, and well-being

Relatedness

Coaching is generally considered to be founded upon Rogerian, person-centered principles (Stober & Grant, 2006) that are reinforced through the use of core micro-skills such as active listening, empathy, unconditional positive regard and attentive and responsive body language. From an SDT perspective the use of such skills creates an atmosphere conducive **(p. 1017)**

Table 75.1 SDT subtheories

Subtheory	Scope
Basic needs theory	Ties optimal functioning and well-being to the joint satisfaction of 3 basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness.
Cognitive evaluation theory	Focuses on how intrinsic motivation (IM) is enhanced by social-cultural factors that lead people to feel effective (e.g., positive feedback) and is diminished by factors that constrain personal choice (e.g., threats) and lead people to *not* see themselves as the initiators of their own action
Organismic integration theory	Argues that extrinsically motivated behaviors can be regulated with differing levels of volition (i.e., external, introjected, identified, integrated) and proposes that these behaviors can, and usually do, become more self-endorsed over time (through internalization and integration processes)
Causality orientations theory	Describes three general motivational orientations; *autonomous orientation* (based on personal interests and self-endorsed values), *controlled orientation* (based on controls that govern how one should behave), and an *impersonal orientation* (based on the belief that one's efforts will be ineffectual)

to satisfying the need for relatedness, through the establishment of good rapport and the development of a warm, trusting and caring relationship that is squarely focused on addressing the coachee's salient concerns. Importantly, whilst the coachee may have close relationships outside coaching, they may not have been consistently felt heard, understood, valued, and/or genuinely supported within these. If so, such conditions are unlikely to satisfy relatedness needs and impel people to seek connection with others by acting in accordance with their preferences, rather than one's own (such as when an adolescent disengages from pursuing a hobby because of parental disapproval or disinterest). In situations like this, coaching may help an inadequately supported person to feel safe enough to explore and consider more self-concordant forms of action.

Competence

In keeping with the core assumptions of humanistic psychology (Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1961), coaching assumes that people are essentially capable and possess potential that can emerge in the presence of supportive conditions (Grant, 2003b). A key strategy to uncover latent potential is the solution-focused approach (Berg & Szabo, 2005), which assumes people are highly capable and already enacting desirable, target behaviors. As such, coaching tends to orient people towards what they are doing well, what is working, as well as their personal strengths and ways in which those strengths might be put into daily use (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). Given this focus, coaches are generally striving to create conditions that will help clients develop feelings of competence. Various psychometric tools (e.g., strengths inventories) or more informal methods (e.g., achievement journals) can help to raise awareness of personal strengths and talents that may have been long forgotten, **(p.**

(p. 1018) ignored or devalued, whilst also permitting the coachee to consider ways that these capacities might be better utilized within the context of their life.

Autonomy

Most coaching models and frameworks place the coachee at the centre of decision-making processes as a way of encouraging ownership of their development and growth (Grant, 2006). Whilst the coach will typically look to the coachee to provide impetus for any goals set throughout a coaching engagement, this principle is also applied within sessions. For example, the use of simple process models like GROW (Goal-Reality-Options-Wrap Up; Whitmore, 1996) encourage coachees to own their behavior change process by setting the agenda for each conversation. Oftentimes, however, clients can find the invitation to engage in the goal setting process uncomfortable. In our experience, this can occur because they are: (1) not clear on what they are striving for, (2) unfamiliar with being asked to take responsibility for their developmental agenda, or (3) fearful the process might not work (i.e., they might not attain their goals). Whatever the reason(s), when coaching is structured using models like GROW the implicit message is "you are free to choose what we work on and your choice will be respected and valued."

Self-determination theory and case formulation

Whilst psychotherapists and counselors have long used case formulations to understand client needs (Kuyken, Fothergill, Musa, & Chadwick, 2005), this practice appears less widely used in coaching (Corrie & Lane, 2010). SDT provides a practical perspective on human growth and development that makes it a useful lens through which to understand a coachee. Not surprisingly, an SDT-informed case formulation would begin with seeking to understand the degree to which the coachee has been able to satisfy their basic needs via their interactions with the world. For example, employees are often expected to direct energy and effort towards performance goals imposed by employers, and in this context it is not uncommon for them to feel controlled or coerced, with few options other than compliance. In such situations, a case formulation is likely to reveal a diminished sense of autonomy and indicate the potential usefulness of autonomy support strategies. This might include the coach assisting the coachee to try and understand what credible *rationale* might exist for such goals, genuinely *acknowledging* how the coachee might feel about the goals, and helping the coachee to make *choices* about how they engage in the goal striving process. Such strategies have been found to enhance autonomous need satisfaction in situations where personal choice is compromised (see Deci, Eghrari, Patrick, & Leone, 1994).

The coaching process: supporting more self-determined living

The working alliance is key to the attainment of successful outcomes in coaching (Peltier, 2001). This is because the establishment of a warm, encouraging, affirming relationship has much to do with how much hope, courage, and resilience can be mustered to support goal striving and behavior change in the broader context of one's life. Consistent with the research on subjective vitality (see Ryan & Deci, 2008), it is expected that whenever a coaching (p. 1019) relationship is supportive of basic psychological needs (as outlined earlier), a coachee is likely to feel a renewed sense of energy and a greater capacity to act in accordance with core aspects of the developing self.

Typically individuals come to coaching seeking help to attain personal and professional goals. Whilst for some these goals are clear and obvious, for many they are not, and a coach can help to resolve a variety of concerns such as not knowing what goals to set, struggling to strive towards goals set by others, and/or managing fluctuations in goal-related motivation. Fortunately, SDT has focused closely on goal striving processes (e.g., Sheldon & Elliot, 1998, 1999) and has yielded useful frameworks for helping individuals resolve such challenges.

Goal ownership: a developmental trajectory

The developmental processes described in SDT are helpful for understanding how coaching might enhance well-being. According to the theory, whilst the organismic-dialectic makes most behavior extrinsically motivated (as opposed to intrinsically motivated) people adopt goals for a variety of reasons that can be plotted along a continuum of self-regulation varying from extrinsic regulation to intrinsic regulation (see Table 75.2). Furthermore, it argues that these motivational underpinnings greatly impact how much energy people direct towards goal striving

and how much satisfaction is gained from their attainment. More specifically, SDT contends that externally regulated or controlled goals (those adopted primarily for money, praise, etc.) tend to be associated with feelings of pressure and tension and result in poorer continuity of effort. In contrast, more integrated or autonomous goals

Table 75.2 Varying levels of goal ownership associated with extrinsic motivation[a]

Reason	Type	Motivation
External	Controlled	Striving because somebody else wants you to or thinks you ought to, or because you'll get some kind of reward, praise, or approval for it.
Introjected	Controlled	Striving because you would feel ashamed, guilty, or anxious if you didn't. Rather than striving because someone else thinks you ought to, you feel this is a goal that you should strive for.
Identified	Autonomous	Striving because you really believe in the importance of the goal. Although this goal may once have been taught to you by others, now you endorse it freely and value it wholeheartedly.
Integrated	Autonomous	Striving because of the fun and enjoyment the goal provides you. While there may be good reasons to adopt the goal, the primary reason is simply your interest in the experience itself.

(a) Adapted from The "What" and "Why" of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self-Determination of Behavior, Edward L. Deci, Richard M. Ryan, *Psychological Inquiry*, © Taylor & Francis, 2000, reprinted by permission of the publisher (Taylor & Francis Ltd, http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals).

(p. 1020) (those aligned with one's values and interests) tend to be associated with feelings of congruence and greater long term effort (Sheldon & Elliot, 1998).

Most importantly, the theory proposes that people can (and do) move towards more autonomous action over time, via processes of internalization and integration (or assimilation) (Deci & Ryan, 1985). It further proposes that this developmental progression can be catalyzed by the presence of conditions that support the satisfaction of basic needs (as discussed earlier)—a proposition that has received considerable empirical support (e.g., Deci, et al., 1994; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999; Sheldon, Kasser, Smith, & Share, 2002).

Implications for coaches

These findings have importance for coaches because they suggest it is possible to facilitate helpful shifts in goal motivation. This is particularly relevant when individuals are faced with the challenge of working towards goals that are not self-selected (as often occurs in organizational settings or health contexts) and over which they feel a diminished sense of ownership. In such situations a coach can potentially be helpful in one of two ways. First, they may be helpful by providing the person with the opportunity to reflect on the nature of the imposed goal and explore (positive and negative) implications of striving towards it. Having done so the coach can then encourage the coachee to make a choice about what s/he will do. In the event that s/he decides not to pursue such a goal, ongoing support may be required to manage the implications of that decision. If, on the other hand, s/he decides to pursue the goal and does so in a way that indicates a lack of subjective ownership (i.e., for external or introjected reasons), the coach may utilize an autonomy support strategy (e.g., the *rationale–acknowledgement–choice* framework) to help the coachee find ways of identifying with the goal and aligning it to their core values and developing interests. For example, Bob is prescribed an exercise program by his doctor and, with the help of his health coach, is able to develop ways of making the goal fun or more challenging (thereby increasing intrinsic motivation). In this case, a shift in the locus of causality would have occurred, away from external inducements (external motivation) and towards the person's values and developing interests (identified motivation). As indicated in Fig. 75.2, such a movement represents a shift towards core aspects of the person.

Second, a coach may help an individual to reframe the goal by exploring alternative perspectives and seeking to attach an alternative meaning to it. For example, Christine is told by her boss that she must raise the profile of her department and this goal is written into her performance agreement. Being an introvert this is not a goal she would have chosen for herself. However, rather than being stoic and enduring the discomfort associated with striving towards this goal (e.g., social networking and public presentations), an executive coach could help Christine to take a different perspective on the goal that results in her seeing that building the skills needed to attain this goal might be transferable to other areas of interest (e.g., organizing fundraisers for a charitable organization). If so, she would be in a position to *choose* what the goal would mean to her (an autonomous act) and more likely to be positively energized towards it (Ryan & Deci, 2008).

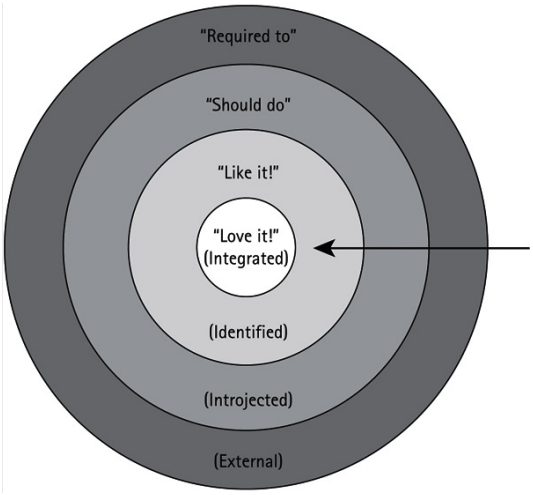

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Fig. 75.2 Simple spatial representation of differing degrees of extrinsically motivated action.

In summary, coaching can enhance more autonomous, self-determined living by helping individuals to make more conscious, intentional decisions about what goals they commit to (or not) in the context of their life or, in situations where there is little perceived choice, by choosing what these goals will mean to them. (p. 1021)

Recommendations for practitioners

As has already been stated, we believe that SDT is a relevant and practically useful theory for coaching. For those readers who are practicing coaches we offer the following suggestions:

- Consider using SDT for case formulations, either as the primary theoretical framework or as just one perspective for developing client understanding and possible interventions.
- Explore underlying goal motivation with your clients by referring to the different types of regulation described in Table 75.2 and graphically represented in Fig. 75.2.
- Seek out information about SDT across different domains of interest. The University of Rochester web site (http://www.psych.rochester.edu/SDT/) is a good place to start and is helpful because it organizes publications by a variety of research and application topics.
- As coaching is still not a mature field of study, care should be taken not to overstate what is known about it from the extant literature. Rather, if validation of one's practice is important (and cannot be gained from the existing knowledge base), the SDT literature may prove to be a useful resource to draw upon.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have reviewed evidence from the peer-reviewed academic literature that is generally supportive of coaching as an intervention that enhances human functioning and (p. 1022) well-being. We have also acknowledged that whilst this evidence-base is growing steadily, the field of coaching is still maturing and lacks empirical work that is firmly grounded in theory. There have been relatively few attempts to provide a detailed theoretical account of what happens in coaching, or to build our understanding about why coaching works in the

way that it seems to. Through our brief overview of SDT and sketching out some implications for coaching, we hope this chapter will help practitioners to develop new or alternative perspectives on their work, and stimulate researchers to formulate their hypotheses against the backdrop of a well established, coherent, and relevant theory of human functioning and well-being.

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Gordon B. Spence

Gordon B. Spence, Coaching Psychology Unit, School of Psychology, University of Sydney

Anthony M. Grant

Anthony M. Grant, Coaching Psychology Unit, School of Psychology, University of Sydney, NSW, Australia