Submission for a 2-hour workshop for  
SGCP 5th European Coaching Psychology Conference 2015 - Breaking New Ground

Title: Clean Interviewing: keeping your stuff out and gathering their stuff in.

Authors:

Caitlin Walker, a practitioner, developer and researcher of Clean Language with over 15 years experience developing the tool for a wide range of coaching and organisational uses. Author of From Contempt To Curiosity: Creating the Conditions for Groups to Collaborate using Clean Language and Systemic Modelling

James Lawley, independent researcher, a coach for over over 20 years, honorary member of Association Of Coaching Supervisors, UKCP registered psychotherapist since 1993, co-author of Metaphors in Mind: Transformation through Symbolic Modelling.

References


ABSTRACT (250 words)

Context

Interview technique is important to coaching psychologists in a range of areas: Information gathering, evaluation, feedback, reflective practice, supervision, etc. The interviewer’s primary tool is the ability to direct attention to relevant information via a question.

Problem

The value of data gathered depends on the quality of questions asked and the attention paid to the answers (Rice, 1929). Empirical research shows that even a single word (especially a metaphor) or presupposition can materially ‘lead the witness’ (Loftus, 1975; Thibodeau, 2011). Data may then be subject to ‘acquiescence bias’ by the interviewee (Podsakoff, 2003) and/or ‘confirmation bias’ by the interviewer (Oswald, 2004), resulting in a low ‘signal to noise’ ratio at best, and compromised validity at worst.

Solution

Clean Interviewing, an application of Clean Language (Grove, 1989), reduces unintended interviewer bias and protects the integrity of interviewee information (Tosey, 2014). Clean questions keep interviewees focused on the research topic but not by restricting or leading them (Linder-Pelz, 2015).

Aims & Outcomes

The workshop will provide the research base and practical activities for participants to learn: (1) the ethical distinction between coaching and interviewing; (2) how bias is unintentionally introduced into an interview, (3) how to create ‘clean’ questions; (4) how to design and frame questions to maximise the provision of relevant information.

Skills & Activities

Participants will:
- Learn to distinguish between clean and leading questions based on real interview excerpts
- Practice interviewing using clean questions
- Experience the felt difference between answering clean questions and those containing leading presuppositions and metaphors.