

Coaching and Systems Theory

By John C Goodman

Center for Internal Change

01/02/02

Introduction

There are many models of coaching that state that they use a systems approach in the coaching of executives and others. I myself use a systemic approach to coaching which I have coined CALM (Career and Life Management) Coaching. While executive coaching ultimately focuses on how to be a more effective executive, as defined by such factors as being self-aware, self-correcting, and self-generative (Flaherty 1999) these goals cannot be achieved without looking both inside and outside of the business setting, and also within the “person being coached” (pbc). While the coaching experience may exist within the workplace, with its primary focus on results, as defined by the pbc or those responsible for providing the coaching for the pbc, to be most effective, generative and lasting, executive coaching needs to be more than coaching an executive with the sole focus on the arena of the workplace and the behaviors and interactions of the pbc within that “black box.” The workplace is not a closed system. The Executive is a human being and as such, functions within a greater whole or larger system of which the workplace is but one area and being an executive is but one of the roles she/he will find their self-participating in. The executive functions within many systems, whether it is by choice or not. This paper will explore system theory and system models and show some of the ways they are useful in coaching. Then an example of some of the ways I have incorporated systems theory in my coaching practice will be given using a PowerPoint presentation.

Why Use A Systems Models In Coaching?

Systems Theory provides a model or a metaphor used to structure, organize, understand, interpret and communicate perceived reality. Marion (1999) wrote that because reality is subjective and elusive, models are necessary to approximate it. According to Haggett (1972), models are required to simplify reality. Thus using a systems theory model allows us to structure, organized, strategize around, communicate and more importantly in Executive or Business Coaching to track and measure changes or results of a whole or its parts with a set of parameters, instruments and measures.

In working with a systems model, Stein (1974) points out that the terms used in examining systems theory are contextual and have different meanings between disciplines. Terms such as energy, space, time, matter, and information will hold different meanings based on the particular theory or model of reality examined and assumptions of change and causality. Psychology and social sciences tend to deal with abstract systems, where as the natural sciences focus on concrete and more tangible systems and interacts. This is the same difference that is often seen between the OD perspective and the business or MBA perspective. I believe this is an important point, as coaches need to be able to communicate with their clients, whether it is the pbc, upper level manager or HR person in a manner which is understood by all parties.

Stein (1974) pointed out that when discussing systems in relation to their environment the distinction could be “conceptual and arbitrary,” based on the perspective of the observer. Stein quoted Grinker who stated that “ ‘a system is the whole complex of the organism and environment...both the organism and environment

are two parts of one system' (32, p.37)"(Stein, 1974, p.7) This relationship between the system and the environment is very significant, as it leads to the concept of a systems hierarchy and systems within systems. (Stein, 1974).

Systems, domains, realms and other distinguishing categories or sets, by their nature, are created with the bias of their creator and his/her structure of interpretation. They are developed, defined, and limit their focus determining what is relevant and what is not. It is this very point, which also becomes a limiting factor. They can show what is important and what is not. For example, if the coach holds the belief that good coaching needs to be about quality of life and life balance, while the client (client in this paper can refer to the pbc or the person the coach is accountable to) is seeking coaching to increase bottom-line results then there could be a major disconnect between what the client perceives as a useful and successful coaching program and what the coach believes defines a successful coaching engagement. In addition, if something is not defined or accounted for within a model, then it is often rationalized around, minimized or ignored. In other words, a model is limited by the structure of interpretation of its creator and those who use it. This can be seen within the various models of coaching, where there can be great variation as to what is important to focus on and in some cases, what is more important the techniques used or the results obtained. For example there are stories of where a coach will blame the pbc for "not getting it" and being beyond coaching, where in reality it may really be a limitation of the coach or coaching model.

What Is A System?

Many coaching models and OD models refer to using a systems approach. Here we will examine what is a system and what is systems theory. Haggett (1972), defined a system as “arbitrarily demarcated sections of the real world, which have some common functional connections”(p. 314). Stein (1974) defines a system “as a whole made up of interdependent and interacting parts”(p.3). This whole is greater than the aggregate of its parts. Contingent upon the type of relationship of these parts the whole has certain evolving characteristics or traits, define it (Stein, 1974).

Other definitions used to identify a system include: Bertalanffy, who in 1956 provided the simple, but “classic” definition of a system as: “ ‘a set of units with relationships among them.’”(Stein, 1974, p.3) Later in Bertalanffy’s 1968 book on General System Theory, he defined systems as “sets of elements standing in interaction” (Bertalanffy, 1968, p.38). Bertalanffy’s use of the word “set” appears to imply that the units or elements contain similar characteristics and that each unit or element is controlled, influenced, or dependent upon the state of other units (Stein, 1974). When we look at the various domains of the pbc we can clearly see the interdependence and influence they have on each other.

Stern explained that a system can be viewed on the level of its structure or interrelated parts, or it could be viewed in relation to its performance or purpose, primarily its input and output functions. Lathrope (1969) examined how the basic systems formula of input plus processing equals output applies to social sciences, specifically social work [I believe this would also cover coaching and OD]. This is of interest because it relates systems theory to an abstract field of study and therefore is

applicable to the soft sciences e.g. the impact of external and internal stressors on the autonomic and sympathetic nervous systems as well as the belief and behavior systems of a human being, or the impact of downsizing, or restructuring within a corporation.

Gross integrated the structure/form and purpose/function, defining “a system as a set of interrelated elements with a capacity for certain kinds of performance” (Stein, 1974, pp. 3-4). This can relate to coaching as follows: When coaching performance the coach can assess the stability and effectiveness of the current client system and can explore openings within the system, whether it is the pbc or the environment, for coaching the pbc to find new ways or competencies in order to increase performance, efficiency and effectiveness. How can the pbc increase results, e.g. productivity, profitability, and production? In developmental coaching what needs to be added to or altered in the system, or what can be transferred from one system or subsystem into another, e.g. new beliefs, skills, competencies? In transformational coaching or coaching change, the coach can look at how the system adjusts to change and what can be done to facilitate change and transformation.

Ellis & Ludwig explained that describing a system required specifying the type of input and output as well as its system phase space and requires a descriptive model connecting inputs, outputs, and system states within time. Phase space is the instantaneous condition or state of a system as seen as a whole (Ellis, 1962). It is like a “snap shot” of a system in time. It also refers to a closed system. Gradual changes in the systems parameters cause gradual change in the system phase space. Usually these transformations are quite subtle and appear quite similar. Although at certain points in parameter space change can be dramatic, e.g. when a system exceeds its

boundary the attractor changes drastically. This creates a new area of parameter space where the new phase space repeats the pattern of gradual change. The new parameter space may differ greatly from its earlier form. The parameters continue to change in this new region of parameter space. The new attractors in this region gradually alter until, again, a bifurcation boundary is achieved and the phase space portraits change again, therefore, the pattern of relative consistency followed by bifurcation repeats as parameters change.

Stephen C. Pepper developed two major concepts or metaphors for differentiating systems; they were “contextualism” and “organicism” (Robert, 1978).

Contextualism

Contextualism referred to the metaphysics of the world in terms of a limitless complex of change and innovation, order and chaos. The observer chooses the context from which to observe. This context provides structure and organizing gestalts or patterns, which create meaning and scope for the vast range of details, which, without this structure of interpretation would have no meaning or be overlooked (Robert, 1978). In coaching, contextualism plays out as the coach’s structure of interpretation, meaning, beliefs, values, as well as the coach’s model of coaching, and design of a coaching program. It will influence the context and tools from which the coach chooses to assess or diagnose, define openings, explore possibilities, and develop an action plan. The context will also affect and define the coaching relationship. This is a danger as it may interfere with a coach’s ability to be present for the pbc and be open to the client’s internal systems, e.g. the client’s structure of interpretation and preferred way of being

coached. As these factors are often out of the coach's awareness they are not easily controlled for.

Organicism

Organicism is another metaphor created by Pepper which holds that the, "integrating structures surrounding and extending through given events are more numerous, coherent, and real than the contextualist wants to admit" (Robert, 1978, p.3). As opposed to the chaos touted by contextualist, the organicist finds clear regularities of detail and consistency. For the contextualist the validity of an idea or theory is operational. It is never entirely established, but may at any time be altered by new facts. Therefore, the results of an executive coaching program may be altered by influences, which cannot be foreseen or planned for by the coach or the pbc or the rules could change midstream. On the other hand the organicist sees the same scientific theories of data and the upheaval of the scientific theory as a replacement or enhancement of a "relatively limited integrating form by a more comprehensive and more accurate form" (Robert, 1978, p.3), not the plunge into chaos, which the contextualist sees it as. For the organicist, each stage of integration resolves the contradictions and errors of the previous stage (Robert, 1978). Organicism has an evolutionary quality to it and leads itself to development, transformational, and performance coaching. An example of this would be biological or living systems, which include social systems, organizations and the individual human within them. Marion (1999) discussed the ability of biological systems to adapt and pass information about their past and their environment (both current and past). They are able to learn from their experiences and can alter their behavior based on their acquisition of information. They can also anticipate and

purposely alter their future. This would be consistent with Flaherty's model, which states that in an effective coaching relationship the pbc develops or enhances their ability to be self-aware, self-correcting, and self-generative.

Open & Closed Systems

Bertalanffy, having approached systems from a Biologist's perspective (or bias), developed the distinction between closed systems and open systems. Open systems are systems, which exchange matter or information with the environment. Close systems, on the other hand, have clear boundaries prohibiting the exchange of energy or information and are isolated from their environment. (Bertalanffy, 1968) In closed systems, the final state is the result of the initial situation. Any alteration in the original conditions or process will affect of outcome. This is not so in open systems. (Bertalanffy, 1968) So as opposed to strictly a direct cause and effect or "if/then" relationship there are many variables, which cannot be foreseen. This can be a challenge in a coaching relationship, where both parties must remain flexible and adaptive, and options must not be limited to "either/or" thinking, as this would limit potential outcomes.

Every living organism is essentially an open system. It maintains itself in a continuous inflow and outflow, a building up and breaking down of components, never being, so long as it is alive, in a state of chemical and thermodynamic equilibrium but maintained in a so-called steady state which is distinct from the latter. This is the very essence of that fundamental phenomenon of life, which is called metabolism, the chemical processes within living cells. (Bertalanffy, 1968, p39)

Thus, people, corporations, organizations, groups, families, and interpersonal relationships are all open, living systems and that is why coaching cannot be done in isolation.

Equifinality

Bertalanffy (1968) explains that in open systems a final state can be reached from various starting conditions and through different processes. This is important because coaches can work with their clients at various systemic levels and through multiple openings, created within the coaching relationship. It also shows that the desired results of coaching can be initiated and achieved by starting at various points or openings to the system and can focus on and follow numerous paths. I think this is very important for coaches to understand, as it indicates that there is no one “right way” to coach. There are many paths that lead to the same destination. This concept is known as equifinality.

Bertalanffy (1968) pointed out that equifinality is movement from chaos to stability and that it is this dynamic interaction which achieves the outcome of a system. This is achieved by a system of feedback, which observes, maintains, and adjusts to maintain a state of homeostasis*, the movement towards a desired outcome, through the circular flow of data gathering, processing, and adjustment. Clearly this feedback

* Walter B. Cannon, a physiologist proposed the concept of homeostasis in the late 1920's. He believed that equilibrium was being used too loosely, as a generic concept. He realized that the term “equilibrium” was created to describe isolated systems and was specific to these systems. Thus it was an inappropriate term to use with open systems or living systems. Cannon coined the term “homeostasis” to apply to the equilibrium-like phenomena appearing in open systems such as living organisms” (Bailey, 1994, p.107).

loop is essential in coaching. Feedback is used not only in the coaching relationship, but by the pbc in interactions with her/his system, e.g. peers, boss, family, as well as internally as measured by such things as stress and anxiety levels. Feedback can be informal as in conversation or formal as in a 360° assessment. In the coaching relationship it is very important for the coach to model good feedback for the pbc. The coaching relationship can be a safe place for the pbc to practice effective feedback skills.

Entropy

Simply stated entropy is a measure of disorder. While negative entropy is a measure of order of an organization. Bertalanffy observed that in an open system there could be both evolution and entropy. In all irreversible processes, entropy must increase. Therefore, the change of entropy in closed systems is always positive and order is continuously destroyed. “Thus, living systems, maintaining themselves in a steady state, can avoid the increase of entropy, and may even develop towards states of increased order and organization (Bertalanffy, 1968, p.41)”. This can be seen in business organizations or management which resists change and external information and feedback, preferring to do things the way they have always been done (entropy) verses learning organizations and customer-based organizational models which welcome input, innovation and feedback from within and without. I suspect one of the reasons some executives are referred for coaching (or in rare cases seek out coaching) is that they are functioning as a closed system and are experiencing positive entropy. When coaching an executive who functions as a closed system the first challenge is

likely to be getting them to open up. This is why rapport and connection are so important at the beginning of the coaching relationship. The pbc needs to feel safe and needs to be able to establish trust. Without trust and safety the pbc will likely not be receptive to input of any type let alone feedback. The pbc likely will resist or even feel threatened by developing new necessary core competencies, experiencing change, or altering performance and behavior, adapting to innovation, etc....

Feedback

The concept of systems feedback was adopted from communication theory. Feedback occurs within a system, which has a receptor or sense organ within which information is received (inputted), reconfigured (processed) and transmitted to an effector (outputted). The functioning of the effector is observed and information is fed back to the receptor. The biological phenomenon of homeostasis parallels this feedback model (Bertalanffy, 1968). Thus we have a self-regulating system, which can direct its behavior and stabilize itself, e.g. be self-aware, self-correcting, and self-generating. Another way of describing this process, from a human perspective, is information is entered through some type of filter or input device, e.g. the human eyes or ears. The information is then processed and given meaning through our structure of interpretation and the information is acted upon externally, internally, consciously or unconsciously. For example: Input--Seeing a car speeding towards me. Process: The thought of danger this car is going to hit me, it could hurt or kill me. The feelings of fear, panic, or helplessness are triggered. Output: The autonomic and sympathetic nervous systems go into survival mode the body reactions and responds in one of three ways fight, flight,

or shuts down (becomes overwhelmed and freezes up like a deer caught in headlights). In this example, lets suppose the person seeing the car decides to move out of the way. Then there is feedback. Here are two brief examples: Case #1: The input is received, and processed and action is taken. There is enough time to receive and act or react to feedback. New input is received and processed to determine if the desired outcome is achieved, e.g. looking at the car, estimating its speed and direction, translating it and processing it, then determining if the action taken was effective or does additional action have to be take. Case #2: “Splat” –did not respond effectively, e.g. did not move fast enough, far enough, or misjudged appropriate action to take. Result: system has ceased to exist in its previous form and now exists in an altered state where the biological system may no longer be a functioning subsystem. This example may be over simplified as there were many systems at work here: the human being’s internal systems, e.g. autonomic and sympathetic nervous system; the subsystem, which included the human and the car as parts of a bigger whole; the mechanical system of the car; the relationship of how the mechanical system of the car could be influenced by the person driving the car or even other objects or influences outside the system of the car, but within the environment which includes the car. This example can go on from there and can be very complex or chaotic, or make total sense; depending on what perspective is being used.

Coaching from the concept of the feedback system focuses on one’s structure of interpretation or mental model and the ability to be self-regulating, self-aware, self-correcting, and self-generating. What if in the above example the person was an executive and the car was a conflict with a coworker, a direct report, an upper-level

manager, or the car was a corporate directive to downsize his department by 20%. This executive may need to be coached around his/her structure of interpretation and belief system, e.g. is the event truly a threat or is it an opportunity? Is it effective to go into a flight, fight or shutdown mode? Would it be more effective to remain neutral or be able to remain outside of one's emotional traps? Is this something that should be taken personally or is it only a function of the role he/she is in? What would be the most effective discussion-making process in this situation? When I coach a client we spend a lot of time in exploring this area and how to not over personalize receiving and giving feedback.

Goleman's (1995) work on emotional intelligence (EI) reveals the importance of being able to be self-aware and of being able to monitor both mood and thoughts about mood. He has been able to show the relationship of one's ability to manage emotions and her/his success in the business world. He found that an inability to manage emotions effectively had a direct correlation to a lack of success. This is an example of the direct relationship between one's internal system and their work system. Within one's internal systems Goldman (1995), Childre (1994), and Childre & Martin (1999) were able to show the direct relationships between thoughts, feelings, and reactions. They were also able to show that these systems directly impact behavior, success, and satisfaction within external systems, such as the workplace. Childre and his colleagues at the Institute of HeartMath have developed techniques and programs to teach executives and others how to access, in real-time, ways of bring themselves back into balance, by moving their attention out of interfering emotions or feelings and thoughts, which may interfere with optimal decision making, communication, creativity, and over all

effectiveness and into a more resourceful, intuitive and creative state. Childre has developed methods of mentally focusing on the heart region of the body as well as eliciting the internal states associated with feeling love, appreciation, happiness or joy. This establishes what is referred to as entrainment, which researchers indicate can improve one's ability to make better decisions, increase creativity, enhance communication and improve organizational and personal productivity and effectiveness. These approaches have been shown to have positive impact on both the internal and external systems and environment of individual and their systems. The Institute of HeartMath offers biofeedback software as a tool for providing instant feedback to show one when their internal system is in a state of entrainment. I have used this with many coaching clients as a way of providing them with concrete, objective feedback as to when their system is in this state. Once they know what it feels like to be in entrainment then they can self-regulate, self-correct and balance their internal system. A coaching program is one way of working with the pbc to improve their EI, success and effectiveness within the work system, as well as all their other systems.

In my own practice and my own life I have learned that the ability or lack of ability to regulate stress has far reaching consequences on all systems. It is negative stress and other negative emotional reactions that can quickly move a system out of balance, equilibrium and homeostasis. It is also possible to create stress in a coaching relationship to have positive results and create motivation or a sense of urgency.

The concept of feedback and the transmission of information were further developed in the theory of cybernetics.

Cybernetics

Cybernetics, which was developed by Norbert Wiener, deals with communication, primarily in the form of feedback and the transfer of information. Bertalanffy (1968) refers to cybernetics as a “theory of control systems based on communication (transfer of information) between systems and environment and within the system, and control (feedback) of the system’s function in regard to environment” (p.21). Wiener’s intent was to explain how various forms of feedback were used by both organic, artificial mechanical systems, and social systems, in order to direct purposeful behavior. These insights fit well into coaching as they provide information relevant for diagnosis or assessment, intervention or action planning. Although Bertalanffy pointed out that cybernetics focused only on the formal structure and not the workings within the formal structure, I would suggest that the coach and pbc brake down these formal structures into ever smaller “formal structures.”

In cybernetics the system of the formal structure is referred to as a “black box,” and in this context is understood by input and output rather than its internal workings and framework. The system is described in terms of input and output and the transfer from one state to the other. In most cases this occurs in a linear process. Bertalanffy (1968) pointed out that the feedback model is limited. It ignores instances where the order is not linear and is altered by dynamic interplay of process. This is also a limitation of some coaches and coaching models, which are too linear in their approach or design. Bertalanffy believed it was dynamic interaction that regulates organic systems. This is because living organisms, as open systems, work towards sustaining or maintaining a “steady state.” The system operates following a set of rules, which are

checked and rechecked using feedback, which maintains the integrity of the system. When coaching the pbc and assessing the situation even before coaching starts it is important to understand the dynamics of the clients system, looking at such things as triangulations and hidden agendas which may be in place to maintain the current homeostasis or situation. Are there reasons for the pbc, their system or environment for not wanting to change?

Coaching at the Edge of Chaos

The Edge of Chaos refers to the critical point of the system, where a small change could either set the system into chaotic behavior or secure the system into a set behavior. This is referred to as a phase change. A phase change is the point at which the system shifts abruptly. An example would be the change from solid to liquid. Usually a system exists in one of three phases. If the system displays a set behavior then it is considered being in the solid realm, if the behavior is chaotic then it is regarded as being in the gas realm. Systems on the “Edge of Chaos” have characteristics similar to those of liquid, with the potential for going either way (Lucas, 1999). It is here that systems tend to settle given the opportunity to do so, only to change again, settle, change again, etc.. These changes are referred to as transient perturbations or disturbances and can vary in length from infinite to minuet and can cover an entire system or just a very small part of it. In most cases effects are local or short term. The system can be seen as dynamically unstable to some perturbations, yet stable to others. Most living systems are understood to operate within in this region (Lucas, 1999). It is this region, which Marion (1999) believed could be best understood

through Complexity Theory (this paper will not explore Complexity Theory). In coaching it can be powerful to work at the “edge of chaos” it is a high leverage point where maximum change can occur with minimal effort. Many times clients come to or are referred for coaching because they are either “stuck” and appear unable to change (in the solid realm) or are out of control, in a state of internal or external chaos, having trouble adapting, developing, growing or changing (in the gas realm). It can be through an effective coaching program that these individuals get back into balance with their systems and as a result achieve greater bottom-line results for every aspect of their system.

Using an “edge of chaos” perspective, the coach can use effective questioning and other resources to help the pbc become self-empowered to be more self-aware, self-correcting, and self-generating. When a coach finds the pbc stuck or chaotic the coach may use double-loop questions, explore blind spots, respectfully pushback at the client to create the necessary perturbation or create an imbalance, which the pbc can then purposely bring back into balance.

Conclusion

We are all systems within systems and as with all systems are influenced by, or are the influencer of all of these systems and the constant changes within them. The executive affects every system he/she impinges on and every system that that system impinges on and so on. As executive coaches any time we influence or enter the environment we impact their system and so on, and so on.

To look at the (pbc) in isolation is to ignore or discount the systemic reality of being part of a living system.

Within modern day organizations, there is a constant and rapid flow of information and change. With constant paradigm shifts, reorganizations, downsizing, resizing, rightsizing, reengineering, benchmarking, layoff, cutbacks, and e-commerce organizational models, structures, and systems are rapidly being redefined. Models of management are being replaced by style of leadership. Yet within the black box called the "Organization" are smaller systems, the employees. What is the impact on these organic human systems? What is the impact in the systems they reside within outside the workplace (e.g. family, relationships, social)?

In order to facilitate change, as the coach, there must be a connection or relationship between the coach and the pbc. This connection/relationship is often measured by the degree and quality of rapport. The quality of the coaches connect with the pbc's system promotes a positive or successful coaching relationship. In many coaching models and writings, much emphasis is placed on the coaching relationship. I suggest that there is a more important relationship that will have an even more profound and lasting impact on the individual being coached. That is the pbc's own internal relationship with the self. The self, being defined as the emotional, intellectual or cognitive, physical and sensory selves. This includes the parts of the self, which create and sustain learning, meaning, purpose and reason. The parts of the self when out of alignment and not in balance create stress, anxiety and emotional and physical distress, and cognitive dissonance.

The effective coach needs to provide a safe and trusting environment and relationship for the pbc to explore, learn and embrace change. Once this trust is developed and the best interest of the pbc is understood, the coach has an opportunity if not an obligation to create appropriate discomfort or dissonance (or bring to light the dissonance, which is already present in the system). Causing enough distress or discomfort (in systems terms a perturbation) will efficiently facilitate change and create movement towards the desired outcome and a new sense of balance. It is the coaching relationship that often provides the leverage needed by the pbc to create change internally and facilitates the development of self-empowerment in the form of self-correcting and self-generative thinking, beliefs, and behavior.

Before change can be welcomed and embraced by the pbc, that person needs to be in a place of receptivity, in a state of motivation, of wanting or needing to change. Leverage to change externally can best come from being in an internal state of receptivity, balance and congruent alignment, plus if a sense of urgency can be added to the mix I believe change will be more rapid and welcome.

Executive coaching is different than other forms of personal coaching. Executive coaching needs to be more focused on bottom-line, measurable results often at a pace quicker than other forms of coaching. The relationship between coaching and positive, measurable results needs to be more tangible, concrete, and objective than other forms of coaching. Therefore, the coach needs to work with the pbc in a way that will not only maximize results but where results are tangible.

I believe a major aspect of having an efficient and effective coaching relationship is to minimize the negative stressor and non-useful distractions. These are the

stressors, which create distress, but also deplete energy, motivation, and the ability to focus or care. They have detrimental affects not only on the pbc's job performance, but on their environment as well as their internal systems, neurological, immune, psychological, emotion, and physiological.

In exploring and assessing (diagnosing) the pbc's presenting issue or reason for being coached the coach needs to assess the pbc's other systems. The coach and the pbc may get more impact or leverage on effecting the desired result of the coaching program by working with a system other than the one being presented as the issue, e.g. you may need to have the pbc implement some changes in their relationships or belief system to improve performance in their job. There is also the opportunity to learn what has been effective (behaviors or beliefs) in one system and then transferring it into another system. Other times it may be necessary to stabilize or enhance one system, which will then have a positive impact on the other systems. So two strategies are to compensate for weakness, stress, or defect in one area by receiving energy or mental or emotional gains in another and the other is to actually transfer what works in one area and bring it into another area.

A system theory model allows us to structure, organize, strategize around, communicate, and more importantly in Executive or Business Coaching to track and measure changes or results as a whole or its parts with a set of parameters, instruments and measures. However, one must recognize that there is someone who defines the system or model, and what it intends to measure, so there will always be inherent biases limiting any model.

The appendix of this paper has a portion of a PowerPoint presentation I use with clients to educate them about systems, life balance, and the importance of managing negative stress within and on these various systems. Decreasing and managing stress has the benefit of increasing the pbc's receptivity and openness to the coaching process, their work and other systems in their life. Thus increasing the quality of their life in general, and generating the desired outcome of improved functioning within the work environment, which was the reason for implementing coaching in the first place.

Click on tag to see PowerPoint Presentation. 

Bibliography

Bertalanffy, L. (1968). *General system theory: Foundation, development, applications*. London: Allen Lane.

Boulding, K. E. (1956). *General systems theory-the skeleton of science*. *Management Science*, *2*(3), 197.

Childre, D. (1998) Freeze-Frame®: A scientifically proven technique for clear decision making and improved health. California: Planetary Publications

Childre, D. & Martin, H. (1999) The heartmath solution. California: HarperCollins

Claessen, M. J. A. (1999, 2/10/97). A Soft-Computational Theory of Conceptual Categorization: Whorf's hypothesis of linguistic relativity. Computer Based Learning Unit, University of Leeds. Available: www.ex.ac.uk/~mjaclaes/thesis/lit4/node32.html [1999, 12/7].

Ellis, D. O. & Ludwig, F. J. (1962). Systems Philosophy. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Flaherty, J. (1999). Coaching: Evoking Excellence in others. Maryland: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Goleman, D. (1995). Emotional intelligence. New York: Bantam Books

Haggett, P. (1972). On systems and models. (2nd ed.). New York: The Open University Press.

Harris, R. (1995, 12/1/99). Inuit and "snow words", [World Wide Web]. Available: <http://www.rwsh.dircon.co.uk/inuit/> [1999, December, 7].

Lucas, C. (1999). Self-organizing systems(SOS), Section Two, [World Wide Web]. Available: <http://platon.ee.duth.gr/~soeist7t/Lessons/lesson4.htm> [1998, November, 5].

Marion, R. (1999). *The edge of organization : chaos and complexity theories of formal social systems*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Meiss, J. (1999, May 1999). Frequently asked questions about nonlinear science, chaos, and dynamical systems (1.3.1), [World Wide Web]. James D. Meiss. Available: www-chaos.engr.utk.edu/faq-Contents.html [1999, October 15].

Rapoport, A. (1986). General System Theory: Essential Concepts & Applications. (Vol. 10). Cambridge: Abacus Press.

Robert, L. (1978). The rise of systems theory. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Stein, I. (1974). Systems theory, science , and social work. New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

John C Goodman, MSOD, LCSW is the president and CEO of Center for Internal Change Inc.. He is certified in the DiSC Profile and Extended DISC. John is also the creator of CALM Coaching. His websites include:

www.onlinediscprofile.com

www.internalchange.com

www.professionalchange.com

www.epiccredits.com

where he provides consulting and coaching on disc and Inscape Publishing products.