

Whether we identify ourselves as evidence-based coaches or otherwise, almost every coach uses some tools or draws on some principles borrowed from models used in psychotherapy. Going to the source and reading research in that root discipline gives coaching practitioners a deeper understanding of the why and how of using a particular borrowed tool. Such is the case with the article which is the focus of this month's column: *Resilience and Rationality* by Windy Dryden.¹ Dryden's stated intention is to present an outline of six responses to adversity, present two rational resilience credos and explore the implications of these for coaching.

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Currents in Coaching Research: Thoughts Behind the Thinker

In her article, Dryden integrates the literature on resilience from several sources in the field of psychology to present six types of responses to adversity. Each of her response categories suggest avenues which coaches may want to explore with clients through the use of powerful questions, observation and active listening. The first category, which Dryden defines as a true disturbed response, a client is rigid and unyielding in adhering to one of three "extreme beliefs": awfulising beliefs, low frustration tolerance beliefs and depreciation beliefs.

Without further discussion, Dryden moves on to the next category of response, a feigned disturbed response. Dryden suggests that people may pretend to be more disturbed by adversity than they actually are. Her list of possible reasons imply that such pretending takes place either because the client finds some gain in doing so or avoids something unpleasant. Thus, a coach faced with a question about the authenticity of a client's disturbed reaction to adversity would do well to probe further and gain clarity about what might be behind the reaction.

The third category, feigned indifferent response consists of the client minimizing an adverse reaction. This may be a pattern for coping or due to a belief that indifference to challenges is healthy or culturally appropriate or normal. Again, this category suggests potential ground for a coach to explore by probing, observing, testing the client's statements.

The fourth category consists of true healthy response. This response type stands on flexibility in beliefs, non-extreme conclusions or interpretations and a general openness to addressing the real state of things. People may be inconsistent in their response types, shifting from rigid to flexible, but cannot hold both views simultaneously.

In discussing the fifth category, the feigned healthy response, Dryden notes that this is the most cognitive- i.e. individuals "say they are responding healthily to an adversity by claiming their beliefs are rational (flexible and non-extreme)." (p. 217) Testing the client's belief in the rationality of own beliefs adds an additional layer of complexity to the task of the coach. Dryden suggests that a truly healthy response to adversity comprises holding truly rational beliefs, emotions which are negative

but healthy, constructive behavior and realistic subsequent thinking (p. 217).

The final category of response is a mixed response: i.e. people first disturb themselves and then struggle to cope with their disturbed state. This state is characterized by a back and forth struggle to resist one's internal experience.

Dryden then presents two "resilience credos", one which is ideal and one which is realistic. Each credo is a statement, presented in full detail, which may be shared with clients as a model for reformulating their own way of thinking about adverse events. The statements provide a realistic perspective on adversity, affirm the client's ability to cope while acknowledging realistic boundaries about what the client can and cannot affect and acknowledge the flaws which arise in thinking about adversity.

What I found most helpful in Dryden's article is the categorization of responses and indicators of where an individual may be along the spectrum. The author suggests that coaches may wish to "assess their client's history of dealing with adversity" and determine which of the two credos might be offered as an appropriate model. Beyond the credos, understanding the spectrum and a client's view may be most helpful to coaches in establishing coaching goals and agreements and in assessing the extent to which coaching may be the most appropriate intervention with an individual. Being able to place a client within a range of rigidity/flexibility also offers coaches useful information about how far a client can be stretched before likely reaching a breaking point. Overall, the article offers coaches a straightforward picture of cognitive-behavioral theory and both explicit and implicit strategies for its application in a coaching context.

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