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Book Review - Solution-Focused Group Coaching: A Practical Guide

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Solution-Focused Group Coaching: A Practical Guide

Dr Carin Mussamann and Cornelia Decher
2013. Self-published E-book.

E-book Review by Janine Waldman

Director, The Solutions Focus

Carin Mussamann and Cornelia Decher have written an interactive and practical guide to group coaching. 'Solutions Focused Group Coaching' provides a blend of solutions-focused and systemic approaches to facilitating group coaching sessions. Focusing mainly on the application of group coaching to coach supervision and the professional training environment, it offers several practical examples of how this can be applied in managerial and organisational settings, with the authors demonstrating that the processes and methods are easily transferable between contexts.

A concise 80-page overview covers the four steps of their group coaching process — Introduction/ issue identification and clarification; working method selection; solutions development; tangible first steps and feedback. The book is packed full of tips, examples and guidance notes.

This is obviously a tried-and-tested approach to group coaching. The authors explain that they have been collecting feedback on the process for five years, which they have used to develop useful recommendations about timing, structure and the role of the coach.

The structure of the book is practical, first presenting us with the concept, described through different methods, then brought to life with case studies. These show a broad application of the approach, with 'clients' ranging from the self-employed coach who is looking for support as he writes and submits a tender, to the HR manager seeking guidance as she manages a new project.

The authors have fully utilized the e-book format which lends itself to the inclusion of photographs and videos. The book is easy to navigate, with

excellent indexing and glossary of terms, and the electronic format allows the reader to use highlighting and note-taking functions.

I particularly enjoyed the chapter on ‘future perfect interviewing’, which is one of the methods recommended for solutions development. It is comprehensively covered, with a video example of Carin interviewing Muriel, a special needs teacher, about supporting a student in his move to another school. There are also example transcripts of how to go about the interview — making the concept fully accessible for the reader, enabling them to grasp and apply the ideas. Scaling is also neatly explained with sample questions.

Other methods mentioned are Empty Chair work and Role Play. As I’m less familiar with these concepts, I would have welcomed the same level of detail here, as these are covered in a more theoretical and less practical way.

I was less taken with the focus on problems in Chapter 2 — where the authors assume a need to identify the current situation and define the issue, so that everybody in the group has an understanding of it. They note this as a systemic approach (as are other processes in the book) thus fitting with the premise that the book is aimed at those with an interest in both SF and systemic approaches. Given this, there is still plenty of choice for the SF purist to put the guide to good use.

I like the authors’ creative and extensive use of multi-media, with videos and pictures of sessions and materials, though I should declare an interest here, as this is one of the few books I’ve read with pictures of me (taken at a recent SOL summer retreat). I also discovered myself in a video clip explaining how Solutions Focus helps people and organisations recover from failure.

Overall, this book is definitely a practitioners’ guide, and those with an interest in group coaching would likely benefit from exploring the many tips, tools and case examples. The tone is friendly and professional and it certainly meets the authors’ stated aim, which is ‘to present the Solutions Focus Group Coaching Concept in a practice oriented, transparent and understandable way that will allow coaches, supervisors, consultants and managers to easily apply and implement it’.

Ebook. 80 pages plus video. Available on the Apple iBooks store £8.49/AU\$12.99. Also available on CD from cornelia@decherlearning.com.

The reviewer

Janine Waldman has nearly two decades of experience in her specialisms of executive coaching, training and organisational development. As Director of coaching and change consultancy *The Solutions Focus*, she has introduced

Solutions-Focused approaches to individuals and organisations around the world. She is co-author of *Positively Speaking: The Art of Constructive Conversations with a Solutions Focus*.

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