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The Mental Imagery of the Desired Future Picture as attributes of the Self Efficacy and Achievements through Systems Coaching.

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Abstract: This article addresses the function of the mental imagery, and its contribution to human coping with goals achievements and self actualization. The contemporary approaches to personal and organizational goals achievements are systemic. The starting point of that approaches toward coping with complex dilemmas is from a future vision. The Mental Imagery is powerful and creative way for enhancing the future vision, and gets more open and possible solutions for keeping ongoing high level of motivation. After the Desired Future Picture has been created, the client can anchor it in his consciousness for future coping when needed.

The writer claims, with a theoretical rationale, that the mental imagery has a crucial function in motivating the human behavior, and enlarges the coping ability in general, and especially, at enhancing goals through systems coaching.

Key words: Mental Imagery, Desired Future Picture, Self Efficacy, Systems Coaching

Introduction

The current paper explores the function of the mental imagery, and its contribution to human coping with goals achievements and self actualization. Due to the centrality of creativity, and openness toward possibilities, in the post- modern ever changing

world, interest has been increasingly taken in the concept of mental imagery and its applications in the fields of research, art, sports (Cumming & Shambrook, 2004), therapy (Ahsen, 1968), education (Aviram, 1999; Aviram et. al. 2008; Drake, 1996 Polanyi, 1981) and coaching (O'Connor & Aardema, 2005).

In Systems Coaching (Gordon, 2002), based on the systems thinking theories (Von Bertalanffy, 1998; Haines, 1998), starting point to cope with complex goals, is to create a *desired future picture*. The main way to create a full and vivid future picture is by guided imagery (Epstein, 1989). The writer, in her future research, would focus on the impact of systems coaching on enhancing self efficacy and goals achievements. The current article tries to focus on the theoretical rationale for creating the desired future picture as a mental imagery. This is the first part of the systems coaching model.

The coaching profession is viewed by the media as a major growth industry. More and more individuals and organizations tend to employ professional coaches to help them reach their personal and work related goals (Zeus & Skiffindton, 1998; Grant & Greene, 2001). The Systems Coaching Model facilitates creating the *desired future picture*, by using guided imagery and creating full vivid mental imagery (Haines, 2007; Gordon, 2002).

Ahsen (1977) attributes to the mental imagery a powerful therapeutic value, which can eliminate the resistances encountered in western therapy. Ahsen's writing describes the mental imagery's healing power, and its mode of implementation into therapy. The Eidetic Imagery, which is exact and live picture of a situation, allows re-connection of all traumatic memory's context (Ashen, 1968). Imagery implementation has been found effective in the context of learning and memory, coping with competitions for athletes (Cumming & Shambrook, 2004). The importance of mental imagery for future goals appears in Polanyi's approach too (1981). He places mental imagery at the core of the discourse, as a foundation for any achievement, be it thinking, technology, scientific, or artistic achievement, thereby rendering it future-oriented, channeled at searching solutions and innovations. Mental imagery fulfills a role in human future expectations. The nature of individuals' future expectations affects their quality of life and mental health. Mental Imagery is mostly a visual one, but can be experienced within any other sensory mode, often the image simultaneously combines various senses. The mental Imagery work by comparison to

a concept from a parallel field of meaning. As any visual means, image is commonly used for illustrating subjective emotions and feelings, or abstract concepts through a concrete imagery. Imagery involves thinking and imagining all that is non-existent, or not directly connected to current reality (Epstein, 1989). It is associative and can be free from the logical thinking control (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 1997, revised, 2010, Apr). In this sense, mental imagery emerges as an opening space for new sub-conscious and implicit knowledge and creates a path to creative rather than logical thinking, that can be used with many life coping situations like: childbirth preparation, exams, contests, and memory enhancement.

Implementation of mental imagery is common in organizational team work with brainstorming technique, within the framework of searching new ideas and solving complex problems. Brain studies support the hypothesis which states that processes of action planning, action identification and action imagining are somewhat corresponding, and that mirror neurons also fire in behavior imagery situations, not only in action situations and while observing those actions (Solms & Tutnbull, 2005), It means that imagination of an action or situation has a power of learning and preparation toward task. That logic explains the function of mental imagery in systems coaching model as a means to create strong motivation and belief in the possibility to accomplish self goals. Self efficacy is the beliefs one holds about the ability to accomplish a specific goal. It also influences the way individuals interpret the results of their actions (Bandura, 1997).

The source of mental imagery's enhancing self efficacy is rooted in the systemic connection of emotions, feelings, cognition and images (Bandura, 1997). Almost each emotion and image is complemented by physical sensations. Whether intended or not, mental imagery may alter emotions and physical sensations, for better or for worse. In recent years, cognitive psychology has begun taking interest and investigating the world of mental imagery and its effect on cognition, particularly taking interest in various characteristics of the mental imagery, and their influence on several cognitive tasks, especially memory and stress management (David et al., 2006).

This paper relates to a starting phase of the systems coaching model, creating the *Desired Future Picture*. Figure 2 presents the triangle of the desired future, which comprises of Visions, Destination, Values and the feeling and sensation the being.

Figure 2: Drawing the Optimal Future Triangle (Gordon, 2002)

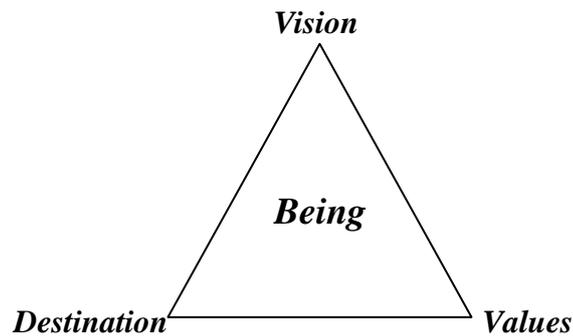


Figure 2 shows that vision as part of the desired future triangle are about possibilities. As such, it is an expression of optimism and hope (O'Connor & Aardema, 2005).

The Systems Coaching creates the vision picture for personal goals through imagination that is free of rational barriers and present doubts. The experience is promoting a scheme in the body feelings, as clear schemed memory, to be used as future powerful instrument. The desired future picture is a strong exciting experience because it comprises of the extensive significance of person's passion, his main values, and destination, and his inner voice (Frankel, 1970; Polanyi, 1981). An individual is invited to become totally immersed in his desired future image. "Desire is a conscious state, a complex mixture of images, thoughts, and expectations combined with positive and negative emotions" (Andrade & May, 2009, p.83). The desired future picture in systems coaching model is always a positive one. A vivid, strongly sensed future yields the belief that the imagined future is possible

Similar to Ahsen's (1968) therapeutic view, anchoring an optimal future in a positive view may create a positive conditioning, with a profound significance lying within. This may attract a positive and powerful energy, through conditioning of pleasant, exciting feelings, which an individual imagines time and time again and can sustain high self efficacy.

There is a tension between the imagined *desires future picture* and all that an individual may view as actualized. This gap may be abridged later on, after the mental imagery is built, by rational thinking, which is used for creating action plan from the present to the future. The *desired future picture* constitutes the core feelings (as seen

in Figure 1), as a guiding star which serves as an energizer when the individual displays the degree of risk at the action he wishes to take in order to fulfill his will.

Summary

The writer intends in her future research to enlarge the understanding of mental imagery function as is expressed in the *desired future picture*, as part of measuring the impact of the systems coaching on self efficacy and goals achievements. Self beliefs and self efficacy are critical forces in motivation and goals achievements. In agreement with Ashen and Polanyi and other researches, is suggested that mental imagery and practice with ability of meta- imagination can be a huge help for enhancing both self efficacy and goals achievements (Linder-Pelz S & Hall, M 2008).

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