

Executive Digest

From the Executive Coaching Centre



The synergy between executive coaching and mindfulness

Executive coaching is a one-on-one individualised programme that helps people develop critical skills to better manage individuals and teams, communicate powerfully, develop sound strategic thinking, and deliver effectively.

Mindfulness is a state of open attention on the present. It involves observing thoughts and feelings from a distance, without judging them as good or bad. Mindfulness helps people to live in the moment and to be awake to the full range of human experience. Executives are increasingly using mindfulness to build self awareness, to manage anxiety, to improve attention and focus and to improve interpersonal relationships.

Bringing the two approaches together is compelling. When an executive is in a quiet, receptive mindful state he or she is much more likely to be able to change mindsets, such as feeling more comfortable in conflict situations. The state of mindful relaxation enables changes without the usual avalanche of thoughts interfering with the process. Regular mindful meditation also enables executives to practice building and reinforce new mindsets and attitudes outside the coaching environment.

In a recent example, a successful Partner in a law firm was able to manage his frustration and anger in a very effective way using the combination of approaches. Executive coaching focused on identifying frustration building up as early possible so that he still had as much voluntary control over the situation as possible. He used simple techniques of challenging his own thinking to keep the situation and his reaction within helpful limits. He also worked to focus on the other person's needs rather than his own indignation. The mindset change was reinforced through regular mindfulness sessions in which he practiced these approaches for about 15 minutes four or five times a week. The mindfulness helped him to re-live difficult situations and to quietly let go of the residual emotion and to anticipate upcoming challenges and shift his mindset before the situation arose.

For a useful summary of the combined approach see the article by David Brendel and Emmie Roe Stamell - <https://hbr.org/2016/01/how-mindfulness-improves-executive-coaching>

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