



Coaching individuals & teams using systemic mapping & constellations

Psychosynthesis Leadership Coaching
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t r a n s f o r m i n g l e a d e r s h i p e f f e c t i v e n e s s

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Me & systems

- I was excited to be facilitating this Symposium session.
- I discovered systemic constellations as a coaching approach relatively recently and I experience myself on a continual learning journey.
- I've always thought systemically, and coached systemically, without really realising it. I'm very kinaesthetic, and learn best through experience.
- As long as I can remember I've been fascinated by system dynamics.
- Many years ago I became interested in relationship dynamics and studied co-dependent relationships – the infinite push/pull that keeps people hooked.
- I used to facilitate relationship dynamic exercises in workshops.



An exercise to illustrate basic relationship system dynamics

- I asked the Psychosynthesis group to face someone next to them ...
- Then – one person leaned forward with their face very close to their partner's face – looking right at them ...
- I asked the recipients to share their responses – the experience was generally an instinctive strong desire to move away – to step back.
- We then reversed roles, and the group experienced similar results.
- Except for our Italian friends who's instincts were to move closer as they experienced the closeness as a message of desire to get to know them better – another relationship dynamic – perhaps influenced by cultural difference.
- A system dynamic is simply when something moves, something else moves as a balancing force.



Moving to the farm

- When I met my ex-husband, I had the opportunity to watch him working with horses. I saw a whole new level of the relationship system dynamics at play.
- I witnessed him mirroring the movement of the horse – each time the horse moved, he moved; each time the horse stopped, he stopped. This created a rapport, and a flow – the horse engaged in a willing partnership with the human.
- We moved to the countryside where he set up an environment for horses with problems to become balanced again by working with him, and by living naturally in a herd with other horses.
- In the herd I witnessed the power of a system correcting itself to create a healthier flow. Every movement had its place, its purpose, and resulted in a balancing movement until eventually the whole herd could relax and graze.
- Exactly the purpose of coaching constellations!



The farm – a place for leadership & team coaching intervention

- Big Tree Farm was a complex system – a family of farm cats, a pack of Rhodesian Ridgeback dogs, and the horses, all living together. The interspecies relationship dynamics were incredible. Prey and predator learned to co-exist along with the humans. The boundary of our system was the boundary of the farm. Everything changed the moment a new life form crossed the boundary.
- We frequently brought my clients (mostly senior managers and leadership teams) down to the farm individually, in teams, and several teams together. The animals became a mirror for the system dynamics my clients brought with them. Immersing my clients in the world of Big Tree Farm became a profound, memorable and transformational coaching intervention for most of them.
- And, unexpectedly but wonderfully – when my clients transformed, the horses they worked with were also changed for the better. (David's herd consisted of horses who came with problems to address.



Discovering coaching constellations

- Living and working at Big Tree Farm was a revelation on so many levels. Animals communicate via 'felt sense', and my own deep intuitive instincts were sharpened during the 10 years we were there.
- A number of years ago, soon after I moved back to London, I attended one of John Whittington's constellations workshops.
- My experience in that workshop made sense of how I had been working with clients on the farm and I discovered frameworks and methods that enabled me to coach systemically without the animals!
- I also became part of a constellations learning circle a group of us formed – we meet for a day every two months to practice, share ideas, and benefit from peer supervision.



Coaching Constellations

- Coaching constellations are a method to map invisible relationship dynamics (often unconscious) using representatives (people or objects) - to unlock a healthy flow.
- It can be the internal system dynamics inside a person, or the relational system dynamics they are part of.
- The stance of a systemic coach is to coach the system, rather than the person – whether coaching an individual or a team.
- One of the keys is acknowledging what is - everything has a place.



A few examples where I've used constellations

- Leadership team coaching - team members mapping complex systems together – using their felt sense to feel into different parts of the system (multiple perspectives), and then voicing 'what is' in a few words. Sometimes using floor markers, sometimes using people to represent different system elements.
- Groups of managers from different disciplines coming together to overcome issues such as silos, blame, stuck-ness, etc. I've asked them to identify different functions; individuals chose to represent a function other than their own; each person placed themselves in the room where it felt right, and then voiced 'what is' from their felt sense. Everyone gained empathy for others' challenges. Then everyone made a small movement towards better. This has been hugely transformational for my clients.
- Individual coaching & self-supervision: Table top mapping and constellating systems, questions, and issues using objects as representatives.



Felt sense experience

- I asked the Psychosynthesis group to close their eyes ...
- To scan their bodies, and become aware of sensation, posture, temperature, etc ...
- To feel into gut and heart for any emotions present ...
- To notice any thoughts / self-talk that was present ...
- To be aware of themselves sitting in a circle in a room with others ...
- I asked the group to voice out loud, in just a few words, what they were aware of.
- This served to practice voicing 'felt sense' to prepare for the next exercise.

The place where you live – I gave these instructions:

- Each person take a post-it and a Sharpie ... draw something on the post-it to represent where you live
- Silently, slowly, move to stand somewhere in the in the room in a place that feels right, facing a direction that feels right, that represents the place where you live ...
- Stick your post-it on the floor, and continue to stand ... experience your felt sense ... voice your felt sense out loud in just a few words
- Leaving your post-it where it is ... slowly, silently ... find another person's 'living space' and stand still there (it's ok for more than one person to be in the same area) ... experience your felt sense, voice it out loud in just a few words ... notice how it feels different here
- Slowly, silently, walk around the room and visit other people's 'living spaces', what do you feel? In just a few words ...
- Return to the post-it representing the place where you live ... once again, experience your felt sense, voice it in just a few words ... notice if anything has changed ...
- Respectfully, consciously, pick up the post its, shake it off – move around the room ... Share what that was like ...





Integration exercise part one: FELT SENSE

- Each person grab some post-its and a sharpie, get into pairs,
- 3 or 4 key jobs/careers since school (you can include higher education) – then write each one on a post-it (or draw a symbol to represent)
- Place each post-it half a metre apart in a line ...
- Slowly take your place in front of the one that came first – in a place that feels right, at a distance that feels right ... notice what feelings, sensations, memories emerge – then voice these as statements of ‘what is’ in just a few words
- Do the same with the other two
- Leave your post-its where they are - switch roles
- Partners - be a systemic coach - you are coaching the system dynamic - in this case supporting your coachee to voice, in just a few words, the ‘felt-sense’ the energetic response to the relationship with the marker
- Come back to the group - share ...

Integration exercise part two: EXCHANGE (systemic principal)

- As you stand in front of each marker firstly use words to express what is – ‘sentences of truth’ – you may find yourself using sentences like: ‘This was painful for me.’ ... ‘This was a great pleasure for me.’ ...
- Then, when you have acknowledged ‘what is’, start to explore the balance of giving and receiving ... allow short sentences to emerge in the moment ...
- You may find yourself using sentences of healthy balance of EXCHANGE ... ‘Thank you, I learned a lot.’ ... ‘What I learned here I will keep and use well. Thank you.’ ... ‘I remember you with great affection.’ ... ‘What I gave you you can keep.’
- Or you may find yourself using sentences acknowledging the imbalance of EXCHANGE ... ‘I’ stayed too long’ ... ‘It cost me too much to stay - I had to leave.’ ... ‘I’ll keep what was useful for me and leave the rest with you.’ ... ‘I gave too much. More than I had energy for.’ ... ‘I learned something important here. Thank you.’
- When ‘what is’ is acknowledged it opens up the system to flow
- Back to the group - share



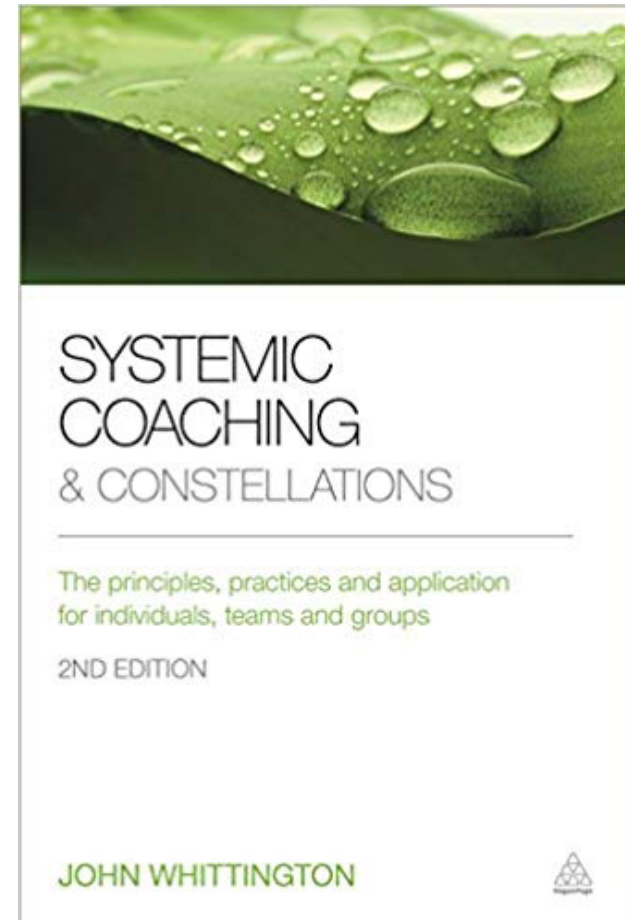


Comments at the end of the session

- I feel more balanced
- More grounded
- Greater trust that all is on track
- Experiencing the wholeness
- Surprisingly powerful self-awareness tools
- More love for groups and my place within them
- Feel more complete
- Energised
- At peace with what is
- Amazing what we knew
- Synchronicity, we instinctively grouped with others like us

Recommendations

- Read the book - available through Amazon
- Participate in a workshop with John and his team – see the Coaching Constellations website for details: www.coachingconstellations.com



NB The Integration Exercise was sourced from John's book