

# How Coaches Conceptualise Self-Insight (IN): Implications for Coaching Practice

Dr Jocelyn Lowinger: Supervised by Prof AM Grant (Director, Coaching Psychology Unit, USYD)

Acknowledgments to Dr Be Pannell who provided support and guidance in the final stages of this work



## INTRODUCTION & AIM

- Self-insight historically recognised as important for self-development
- Used intuitively across multiple therapeutic traditions
- 2002 publication of Self-Reflection and Insight Scale (SRIS) that defined IN as: *“the clarity of understanding of one’s thoughts, feelings and behaviour”* (Grant, Franklin, & Langford, 2002, pp. 821-822).
- Differentiated IN from ‘aha’ moments
- 2018 literature review of 74 papers citing SRIS paper
  - ❑ Six coaching papers – 5 showed coaching related to increased IN, an additional paper showed correlation on sub-analysis
  - ❑ None looked at ideal coaching conditions for increasing coachee IN or how IN impacted on goals/wellbeing

Therefore the aim of the study was to investigate:

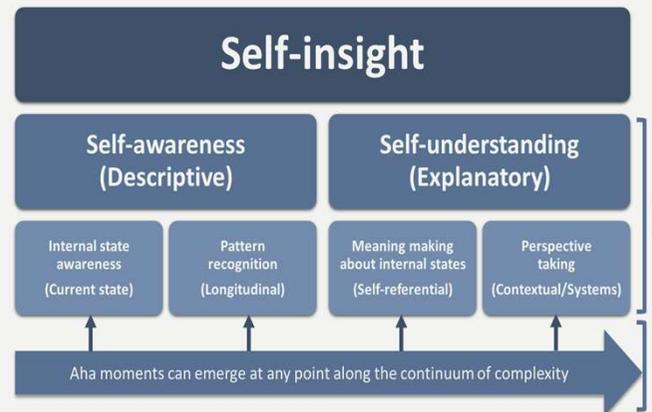
- How coaches understand and recognise IN
- The ideal conditions in coaching to promote IN
- How IN impacts on coaching outcomes

## METHODOLOGY

- This was a qualitative inquiry. – HREC approved
- Purposeful sampling was employed to recruit 10 coaches (6 women and 4 men) with Masters in coaching
- Semi-structured interviews lasting 30-45 minutes conducted via Zoom.
- Recordings were transcribed and coded using NVIVO software.
- Analysis was conducted using a constructionist stance looking for complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings to a few categories

## RESULTS

- A: Self-insight comprises a state and a process:**
- As a state: Self-insight is state of knowledge about the self that exists along a continuum of complexity comprising both descriptive and explanatory elements
  - As a process: Self-insight emerges through movement to a higher level of complexity of understanding and often manifests as an ‘aha’ moment



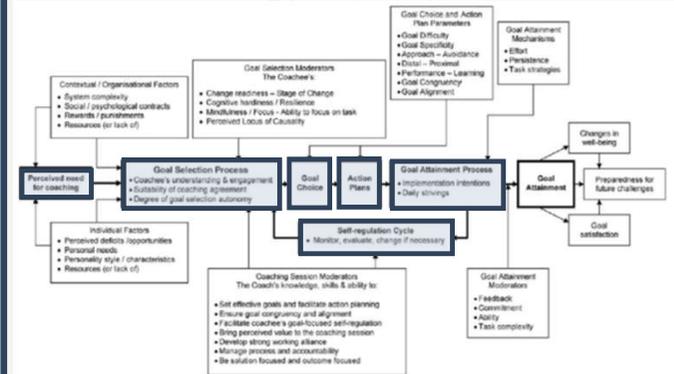
- B: The ideal conditions in coaching to promote IN**
- Self-reflection is necessary but not sufficient for the development of self-insight

*“Reflection combined with new perspectives and challenge is more effective than reflection by itself” (P8)*

- General elements of coaching that promote IN include: Trust, Use of case-conceptualisation, Coach reflective practice (supervision)
- Specific strategies coaches use to promote IN include: Promoting self-reflection, Reflection and feedback, Reframing, Challenge

## RESULTS (CONT)

- C: Self-insight is a key facilitator of goal directed change that works along multiple elements of the self-regulation cycle and other elements of the Integrated Model of Goal-Focused Coaching (Grant, 2012):**



Self-insight may have positive or negative impacts on wellbeing

*‘I’ve had clients who become mildly depressed or anxious afterwards because they go ‘Oh my God, I’ve been sabotaging myself my whole career’ (P3)*

## CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

- This qualitative study provides a unique window into how coaching works.
- A broader conceptualisation of IN emerged nuanced and complex multi-dimensional construct comprising a state and a process.
- Self-insight has been identified as a core driver of goal attainment and purposeful change.
- Coaches need a sound understanding of the self-regulation process, higher-order skills in case-conceptualisation, and engage in active reflective practice (supervision)