



Coaching Report

July/August 2015

Directors' Corner

A few years ago I sat with Richard Boyatzis in his office at Case Western. Richard presented at our 2011 and 2012 conferences; our members can access the video of his terrific 2011 presentation. We discussed how coaches might approach the topic of neuroscience and coaching. Richard's wisdom has endured:

Neuroscience discoveries are flooding in and yet our understanding of how the brain works is in its infancy. For example, the main scanning tools that show brain activity do not distinguish between pathways of up-regulation and down-regulation. The state of neuroscientific tools and studies is primitive relative to the richness, complexity, diversity, and messiness of human experience and change.

When the media reports on a cool, new brain science study, we forget that the results are preliminary, haven't been replicated and could easily be overturned in the future.

Neuroscience is one scientific domain that can inform and inspire coaches, and it is one of many. Beware of over-emphasizing its impact. Seek insights from a wide array of human endeavors.

Don't get attached to a particular coaching model and it's underpinnings. Get curious about new scientific discoveries. Be ever ready to let go of coaching models that you relied upon. Invent and adopt new ones when new discoveries emerge.

What I love about the impact of neuroscience today is that it evokes intense curiosity. How the heck DOES my brain work? What is my mind? Where is my mind right now? How do I change my mind or mindset? What do my emotions do to my mind and brain? What most

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UPCOMING LIVE WEBINARS FOR IOC MEMBERS:

- Promoting Brain Health Across the Life Span

REGISTRATION IS OPEN:

Coaching in Leadership and Healthcare Conference: September 25 – 26, 2015

HARNISCH GRANTS:

Next Grant Deadline: August 1st

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enhances my creativity? What gives me more brain energy? It also offers lots of new ideas and metaphors around topics like attention, focus, mindfulness, agility, self-regulation, impulsivity and neuroplasticity.

In case you missed it, Vago and Silbersweig at Brigham and Women's Hospital published an interesting framework for mindfulness in 2012 relevant to coaching titled *Self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-transcendence (S-ART): a framework for understanding the neurobiological mechanisms of mindfulness*. The S-ART model aligns nicely with the coaching process – raising awareness, self-regulating a change process of mindset and behavior in order to transcend current limitations.

What are your favorite neuroscience resources and studies? Please share! And don't forget to enjoy the Institute's resources summarized below.



Margaret Moore, MBA
Co-Founder and Co-Director

Research You Need to Know

Coaching the brain: Neuro-science or Neuro-nonsense? By Anthony Grant, *The Coaching Psychologist*

Special thanks to Brody Gregory, PhD translating this article from scientific research to practical applications in coaching .

Looking for a little more hard science in your coaching practice? In his June 2015 article in *The Coaching Psychologist*, Anthony Grant draws thought-provoking connections between coaching and neuroscience.

It's easy to assume he means concepts like the "amygdalahijack" – when coaches help their clients understand how their brain is hardwired to respond to threats and how this can impact their ability to perform effectively. But Grant takes a different approach – focusing instead on how coaching may be able to inform neuroscience.

For instance, he suggests that solution-focused cognitive-behavioral coaching can lead to notable changes in behavior and cognition, which, theoretically, could result in changes in brain structure or brain activity. Such an intervention has meaningful implications for neuroscience. If targeted coaching leads to observable and lasting behavior change, which results in corresponding changes in the brain, Grant notes that this could yield convincing evidence for concepts such as neuroplasticity and brain-region function-specificity.

- The big challenge? We need more evidence. Grant makes a great case for the intersection of coaching and neuroscience, but is also quick to point out the need for much more research and empirical data to support these ideas.
- Are you a researcher? Here you go – a great chance to make a big impact.
- Are you a practitioner? How often do you consider the actual biological basis of your clients' behaviors? How can you begin to pay more attention?

Books Important for Coaches

Thinking Fast and Slow by Daniel Kahneman

In the international bestseller, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Daniel Kahneman, the renowned psychologist and winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics, takes us on a groundbreaking tour of the mind and explains the two systems that drive the way we think. System 1 is fast, intuitive, and emotional; System 2 is slower, more deliberative, and more logical. The impact of overconfidence on corporate strategies, the difficulties of predicting what will make us happy in the future, the profound effect of cognitive biases on everything from playing the stock market to planning our next vacation--each of these can be understood only by knowing how the two systems shape our judgments and decisions.

Engaging the reader in a lively conversation about how we think, Kahneman reveals where we can and cannot trust our intuitions and how we can tap into the benefits of slow thinking. He offers practical and enlightening insights into how choices are made in both our business and our personal lives--and how we can use different techniques to guard against the mental glitches that often get us into trouble. Winner of the National Academy of Sciences Best Book Award and the Los Angeles Times Book Prize and selected by *The New York Times Book Review* as one of the ten best books of 2011, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* is destined to be a classic.

Neuroscience for Coaches: How to Use the Latest Insights for the Benefit of Your Clients by Amy Brann

This book was published in late 2014 and provides a rich tour of key concepts in neuroscience alongside coaching examples and application. The first section introduces the key brain regions of interest, followed by a section on the roles of important neurochemicals. Then there is an overview of the main biological systems in the brain. The most relevant section introduces coaches to the state of neuroscientific understanding of coaching topics such as mindfulness, beliefs, expectations, self-regulation, habits, motivation, goals, and decision-making.

Ms. Brann quotes research psychiatrist Jeff Schwartz, describing coaches as experts in facilitating self-directed neuroplasticity. This book offers many insights on coaching tools and competencies that make this happen for clients.

Offerings for members of the Institute of Coaching

The Institute offers a member-donor association designed to be your bridge from scientific research and theory to best practices in leadership, health / wellness, and personal coaching. Learn more [here](#).

Live Webinar for IOC members:

Promoting Brain Health Across the Life Span with Dr. Alvaro Pascual-Leone, Moderated by Margaret Moore

Date: Monday, July 27, 2015

Time: 2:00 PM – 3:15 PM EST

This webinar will review the state of knowledge in the evolving field of brain health and performance, its importance to healthcare, business, and life, and how coaches are in the ideal position to adopt this knowledge to enhance their practice. Innovative approaches will be offered to illustrate ways in which brain health and performance is currently being screened, assessed, addressed, and monitored in the clinical and mainstream arenas.