



Coaching Report

June 2016

Directors' Corner

Emotionally Intelligent Coaching

Greetings Institute of Coaching Members and Friends,

Nearly 20 years ago to this day, I had an experience that changed my life. I'd just returned home to South Africa after a two-year around-the-world backpacking trip and was invited to a 'meet the parents' dinner at my new boyfriend's house.

Over dinner, the discussion turned to a newly released book – Dan Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence*. The conversation was fascinating, and in that moment, I decided that this topic - emotions and their impact on life, wellbeing, and work, would become my career focus.

Fast-forward 20 years: the 'new boyfriend' and I got married, we have two young children and live in Boston. And I, now, get to introduce our upcoming webinar speaker, Marc Brackett, whom I met at Yale when we were both doing postdoctoral work on emotional skills.

Why the fascination with emotions? For me it is simply this: our clients' (and our) ability to navigate emotions is critical to lifelong success and fulfillment. This ability drives how clients bring themselves to their careers, relationships, health, parenting; everything. For example, do they let feelings of sadness, anger or shame hold them back? Are they able to put themselves forward effectively in what is an uncertain world? Can they come to interactions with clear-sightedness rather than being reactive?

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- **RESEARCH:**

*Unpacking Emotion
Differentiation: Transforming
Unpleasant Experience by
Perceiving Distinctions in
Negativity*

- **BOOK:**

*Handbook of Emotion
Regulation*

- **WEBINARS:**

**June 30th 2:00-3:15 p.m. ET
Emotionally Intelligent
Coaching: From Theory to
Practice**
*Marc A. Brackett, Director,
Yale Center for Emotional
Intelligence*

HARNISCH GRANTS:

Next Grant Deadlines: May 1st
and August 1st

Emotional skills are the crucial determinant of whether our good intentions remain as rhetoric or become reality.

I am excited, then, to announce that Dr. Marc Brackett -- who received outstanding ratings at our 2015 Harvard Coaching Conference -- will be presenting the June webinar on the science and practice of these emotional intelligence skills. Marc is one of the world's leading researchers on how emotional intelligence is measured, what it predicts, and how it practically impacts people's lives. Not only is Marc a brilliant scientist, he's also engaging and very funny. As a result of feedback on his conference talk (which had people quite literally laughing until they cried) he's now known around the Institute of Coaching as the "Seinfeld of Psychology". His webinar is not to be missed.

I hope you have a beautiful, fulfilling and productive month ahead of you, wherever in the world you are.



Susan David, Ph.D.
Co-director, Institute of Coaching

Research You Want to Know

[Unpacking Emotion Differentiation: Transforming Unpleasant Experience by Perceiving Distinctions in Negativity.](#) Kashdan, T. B., Barrett, L. F., & McKnight, P. E. (2015). *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 24(1), 10-16.

A fitting complement to Marc's webinar is this month's scientific article on a key aspect of emotional skills - the ability to accurately label emotional experiences and to differentiate among these.

The article describes how people:

- *high* in differentiation use a wide range of adjectives to describe the experience and intensity of their emotions.

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They have the ability, for example, to label the nuance between being nervous, embarrassed or confused.

- *low* in differentiation, in contrast, use fewer adjectives to describe their feeling states. They might, for example, put various unpleasant feelings under the umbrella of “I feel bad” or “I’m stressed”.

A large body of research is accruing on the importance of emotion differentiation to wellbeing and goal attainment. The article cites studies showing that this skill has been associated with:

- Fewer maladaptive behaviors (e.g. excessive drinking) when stressed.
- Lower levels of aggressive retaliation.
- Higher levels of psychological health.

There are a few reasons why this emotion differentiation skill is key. First, accurate labeling of what one is feeling can provide vital information on potential courses of action. In this context, labeling becomes a critical precursor to the ability to manage emotions effectively. Second, the act of labelling emotions diffuses the intensity of the emotional experience itself. That is, accurate labeling actually reduces the level of emotional charge that the experience holds. Third, and related, the cognitive resources that are freed up through the clarity of what one is truly feeling can be directed to pursuing other goals and bringing oneself more fully to interactions as a leader, parent, or partner.

Implications for Coaching

In sum, while it’s well recognized that that a client’s ability to manage emotions is critical to goal attainment, research shows that a key precursor to emotion management is the ability to be accurate and nuanced in describing the emotions that accompany a challenging or charged experience. Yet, often, both clinically and in coaching, people will devolve to the first word that comes to mind, “I’m stressed” or “I’m angry” is very broad brush-stroke. It reminds me a little of the Black Knight from the movie *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* who cries “Tis but a scratch!” or “Nothing but a flesh wound!” every time he loses a limb. There is a world of difference between ‘stressed’ (a common label used by clients in executive coaching) and disappointed, embarrassed, frustrated, concerned and so on. Without an accurate label, it becomes difficult to truly make sense of the emotional impact of a situation or how to match strategies to it.

From this perspective it can be useful as coaches to:

- Note when your client is using a stock-standard “I’m stressed” or “I’m busy” phrase to describe an experience

that likely has a greater level of depth or variation than is being captured by that phrase.

- Try to encourage greater levels of emotion differentiation by clients, both about their own and others' experiences. "You say that the team is angry with you. What else might they be feeling?" Depending on the context, it can be helpful to choose from emotions word lists. [Here is an example.](#)
- Recognize that not only is emotion differentiation a key aspect of goal attainment and well-being, but that studies with children and adults show it is learnable.

Book Important for Coaches

[Handbook of Emotion Regulation](#) Gross, J. J. (2014). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

If you're fascinated by the world of emotions and emotional skills, I highly recommend getting your hands on this book. It is a compilation of key themes and findings in emotions research by leading investigators. While not being directed on how to apply the knowledge, it is one of my go-to resources.

Offerings for members of the Institute of Coaching

Not a member? [Join us!](#) The Institute of Coaching provides the best tools (thousands of on-line resources, webinars, coaching reports/digests, a sell-out annual conference and more), thought leaders and community to advance your coaching practice. Join our growing international community.

[Learn more about IOC membership levels](#)

Live Webinars for IOC members:

[Emotionally Intelligent Coaching: From Theory to Practice](#)

with *Marc A. Brackett, Director, Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence*

Date: June 30th

Time: 2:00-3:15 p.m. ET

As a follow-up to his immensely popular keynote track at the Harvard Coaching Conference in 2015, we are excited to bring back Dr. Marc Brackett for a "deeper dive" workshop on the

science and practice of emotional intelligence. As coaches we all know the importance of supporting our clients in developing greater EI in order to attain optimal performance as leaders or professionals in today's complex world. In this presentation, Dr. Brackett will describe the theory of emotional intelligence (EI) developed at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, including how EI is best measured and what it predicts about people's lives. The five key EI skills: recognizing, understanding, labeling, expressing, and regulating emotion-- will be examined. The program will also include interactive learning activities, offering coaches new and innovative approaches to engage in this critical area with clients.

[View our Calendar section](#) for all our latest events and offerings.

2016 Coaching in Leadership and Healthcare Conference

September 16 – 17, 2016

Our annual Coaching in Leadership and Healthcare Conference is a world-class experience. It sets the stage for building your network and accelerating your practice whether you are a leader, physician, healthcare provider, executive coach, life coach or health and wellness coach.

Register Now!

Our ninth annual Coaching in Leadership and Healthcare Conference is offered by the Institute of Coaching, McLean Hospital, and Harvard Medical School. [Read more on our website.](#)

Call for Paper and Poster Submissions

We invite you to share your research on all aspects of coaching during our annual conference, described above! **Sept 16th – 17th 2016** at The Renaissance Boston Waterfront Hotel, Boston, MA. We invite submissions for proposals for:

- **Oral Paper Presentations:** Accepted papers will be presented in oral sessions according to topics.

- **Posters:** Accepted posters will be arranged in an exhibit during the poster session, with opportunities to interact with authors and audience.

The purpose of these sessions is to have a stimulating exchange of information and discussions about coaching theory, research and its relevance to practice, as well as to expand the network of coaching researchers. All poster applications invited to submit a full poster will be entered into a competition for Best Poster.

The deadline for the receipt of paper and poster applications is
June 13th, 2016

For more details, visit the [Conference website](#).
[Click here](#) to submit your paper or poster.