IT ALL BEGINS WITH THE BRAIN!

The human being is the most superior of all species because of his ability to think and distinguish. And we all know that among the many factors that impact and change a person's life, the primary factor is thought. Using perceptions of how the brain works, brain-based coaching is an innovative approach that balances and supports the practices of coaching to create powerful, encouraging, and transforming changes. **Marina Pascolo** tells us all in a chat with Viki Shah.

WHAT DOES COACHING HAVE TO DO WITH THE BRAIN?

There are several neuroscientific findings that can now explain how coaching works at the brain level. Thanks to new technologies such as Magnetic Resonance Imaging scans, neuroscientists have been able to conduct further research to understand how the brain works.

Our brain is shaped by the different experiences in our life. Whatever we learn, feel, hear, smell at any moment of the day or night create complex neurochemistry connections in the brain; billions of them. These circuits determine our behavior and contribute to building the essence of the person we are. Most importantly, we now know that brain neural connections keep rewiring during our whole life as we keep living new experiences.

LET'S TAKE THE EXAMPLE OF A PATH IN THE FOREST!

The more you use it, the deeper the marks of your footsteps will be. Now if you stop using this particular path, with time, the

marks of your footsteps will become weaker and weaker and eventually disappear. Something quite similar happens to our neural circuits in the brain when being restructured throughout a lifetime; the path being the neural connections that get stronger and stronger the more we use them or weaker and weaker when we stop using them. Coaching helps people create new habits which are the result of the development of "new paths in the forest of their brain".

WHAT IS BRAIN-BASED COACHING?

Brain-based coaching is a coaching approach that uses the latest insights from the contemporary neuroscience to complement and amplify the principles and practices of coaching.

From a physiological perspective, we now know that we need to come to our own answers and solutions because no two brains are alike, and everyone has a unique set of connections for how we think about things. Therefore, brainbased coaching is about helping people to think better, not telling them what to do, reconnecting you with your best thinking by drawing out what is already there!

HOW AND WHY DOES IT WORK?

Let's say that you have been trying to achieve the same goal repeatedly and you are discouraged but still willing to get there. What you will be working on during the coaching sessions is getting clarity about your perception, your way of thinking, the reason for your actions. From these insights you will then be able to think better and take the actions accordingly with a greater sense of purpose, satisfaction, and fulfillment.

Creating new paths will free the way to your goal and the first thing will be to build self-awareness as the power is the focus. Where we choose to put our attention changes our brain and changes how we see and interact with the world. The coach will help you to break out of the deeply hardwired autopilot the brain favors and move into more conscious thoughts and deliberate actions that will generate sustainable changes. The process starts with the source and allows self-solution which produces better results.

WHAT MAKES BRAIN BASED COACHING DIFFERENT FROM OTHER KINDS OF COACHING METHODS?

Unlike other coaching methods, brain-based coaching is special because of its very pragmatic approach where the coach uses a deep knowledge of neuroscience at every step, allowing self-directed learning for the person coached. The well-structured process helps to focus on setting goals and to avoid going in too many directions. From the neuroscience findings, it is proven now that the best way to help others to improve, to achieve and succeed, is to encourage them to think for themselves. Brain-based coaching is founded on this principle.

WHY SHOULD ONE OPT FOR THIS METHOD OF COACHING?

For its pragmatic approach, for the discovery and the learning experience that being coached with the brain in mind will bring. Most important the changes that such journey will generate are sustainable. Here are some questions that may help you reflect before embarking on a coaching journey:

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU?

What goals are you currently working on? What have you given up on in life? When were you happiest in your life? If you could have anything in the world, what would it be?

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

- Increased self-awareness
- •Getting to know and understand yourself better
- •Greater clarity for an improved sense of direction and focus
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- that will result from the self-directed coaching.
- A unique experience because all brains are unique!

WHAT SHOULD ONE EXPECT? WHAT IS A STANDARD SESSION LIKE?

Whether it is face to face, phone call, or Skype, a session

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lasts about one hour. In a safe and comfortable environment, the coach will be asking questions that will generate reflection, conversation, and sometimes even strong emotions. It is all about the agenda of the person being coached and the coach will make sure to focus on it.

Some assessments and exercises can also be used to trigger reflection. Some actions to be taken by the person coached will be agreed upon for the benefit of the goal that has been set. It is also the role of the coach to stretch the person coached with powerful questions, digging further into the reflection, just like a fitness coach would do but with the body in mind!

CAN YOU GIVE US A FEW BRAIN-BASED INSIGHTS THAT ALLOW THIS COACHING TO WORK?

Here are excerpts from the 6 insights ref. David Rock, Quiet Leadership (New York: HarperCollins, 2006) about the brain that have helped shape brain-based coaching as a new coaching approach:

INSIGHT #1 THE BRAIN IS A CONNECTION MACHINE

The underlying function of the human brain is to find links, associations, connections, and relationships between whole concepts, often stored in many different regions of the brain. It does this non-stop, at the rate of a million new connections every second. These processes continually reshape our brain circuitry.

Brain-based coaching facilitates a new level of thinking; one that produces ever-more expansive connections.

INSIGHT #2 NO TWO BRAINS ARE WIRED THE SAME

The brain is hugely complex. To choose just one brain state: 300 trillion constantly changing connections. These connections are continually re-shaped by every thought, feeling and, experience we've ever had throughout our entire lives. The result: near-unlimited ways the brain can encode experience, learning, and information. At a distance our brains may look similar, but up close: no two brains are wired the same.

Brain-based coaching respects the substantial differences between people's brains, focusing on helping coaches think things through for themselves and make their own new connections.

INSIGHT #3 THE BRAIN SEES THE WORLD ACCORDING TO ITS OWN WIRING

Any idea or experience gets broadly the same treatment from our brains: lightning-quick comparison with our existing mental maps to see where the connections are.

This process of perceiving the world through our hardwiring is there out of necessity: it enables us to cope with the sheer volume of information we face throughout the day. But it can also come with consequences. For whilst known, familiar and expected inputs are neatly processed, when the data doesn't quite fit, we can sometimes go to extraordinary lengths to make a connection. »



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Such thinking can have significant drawbacks.Perceiving the world through our own hardwired filters means we can significantly improve performance simply by shifting ours and others thinking. Brain-based coaching offers this benefit by helping people break free of their autopilot.

INSIGHT #4 THE BRAIN HARDWIRES EVERYTHING IT CAN

With so much information to process, and with such a limited working memory, the brain must take any repetitive or otherwise important thought or activity and "hard code" it into our more capacious subcortex (the part that holds long-term memories and processes). Unsurprisingly then, lasting change takes effort and a whole new approach. Brain-based coaching provides that new approach.

INSIGHT #5 IT'S PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO DECONSTRUCT OUR HARDWIRING

It's practically impossible to deconstruct our hardwiring: those connections are just too deeply embedded to be "unwired". In addition, any attempt to understand the source of a habit just serves to deepen the very circuitry we're trying to undo!

Brain-based coaching transforms performance and results by maintaining a focus on solutions and creating whole new habits, backed-up by the attention.

INSIGHT #6 IT'S REALLY EASY TO CREATE NEW WIRING

Everything we think and do influences the connections and layout of our brain, continually fine-tuning its pathways. The upside of this is our extraordinary capacity for new connections.

Brain-based coaching focuses on moving coachee's from impasse to insight, to new and ingrained behavior. And quicker than other forms of self-improvement.*



MARINA was born in Switzerland and has lived in Canada, Singapore and in 2013 she moved to Dubai with her husband. She is fluent in French, English, Italian and Spanish. Since 2014, she works as a brain-based coach certified through the Neuroleadership group and the Professional Academic Life Coach for teens and young adults, Coach Training EDU. She is an Associate Certified

Coach (ACC) by the International Coach Federation and holds an EQ Practitioner Certification. She is also delivering different workshops on Mindfulness. She has developed her own program "Embrace your Authenticity", to help people empower their life by being true to themselves. Prior to her current career, she was mainly working in IT, in different positions, primarily in training and more recently in recruitment. She always enjoyed roles that required social and interpersonal skills. Moving to Dubai presented her with the opportunity to follow through on what she really wanted to do as a career; to work with people, to support them and enrich their lives. With strong interpersonal skills she is able to deeply connect with people, whether they are colleagues, friends or strangers.