

## 101 Coaching Strategies and Techniques : Review

They say to never judge a book by its cover; this one does actually live up to its name. Many counsellors wander – deliberately or not – into the area of coaching, and some may say there is a considerable overlap. I wanted to see if this book had anything to help counsellors as well as coaches.

The book describes itself as a ‘handy reference tool for busy coaches’, full of “bite-sized strategies”. I might quibble with the word “strategies” as few of the activities are long term. And it really is “just” a list – there is no introduction on coaching, or exploration about boundaries, referring etc.

There are a range of contributors and issues addressed. The techniques are organised into sections such as “Confidence Building” and “Developing Specific Skills and Strategies”. There’s also a group section, focused on team goals and performance more than creating dialogue between people. Each technique is described in sections titled Purpose, Description, Process, Pitfalls and Further Reading. The Pitfalls section often recognises that deeper issues could be triggered by some of the activities, but offering ideas on what to do about that is outside the scope of the book. There’s an occasional case study or example of it being applied. Some techniques are very (over?) structured, while others are not. I can see it being a rich toolkit for coaches who want help with a client, or simply some new ideas of how to work with someone.

Some activities promise a little too much. My attention was immediately grabbed by the very first technique which had as its purpose “this exercise is aimed at building a sense of self”. As it takes me years to do this with clients, I fell upon it hungrily, only of course to be disappointed by a fairly simplistic one-off activity which a coach could do with a client. Under the Pitfalls section, it did have the grace to admit that it might not be appropriate for clients with “very low self esteem”. I was reminded that it’s a coaching book not a therapy book!

Having said that, some techniques borrow therapeutic methods, eg there is an occasional Gestalt experiment (two chair being popular), some on noticing countertransference, being present and seeing the body as a resource; some mention psychosynthesis. Others are creative and suggest visioning exercises, or offer breathing exercises to encourage the client to be grounded. Being techniques they of course require the coach to lead the client and so are definitely more “I-It” than “I-Thou”.

The book is a great list of coaching techniques and suggestions, covering almost every imaginable issue and is a very helpful tool for people working as coaches who may be a little stuck with a client. The addition of therapeutic perspectives I think has a lot of potential for deepening the coaching process and so could provide long-lasting change for coaching clients. I expect the book to be very helpful for people working as coaches; counsellors working with EAPs or other short term counselling might also find some of the activities useful.