

# SAMENVATTING SCRIPTIE: THE IMPLICATIONS OF SELF-KINDNESS FOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COACHING

In 2014 is de NOBCO Thesisprijs gewonnen door Ljerka Redžep (UvA) met haar gedegen thesis: 'The Implications of Self-Kindness for the Effectiveness of Coaching: Self-Compassion Moderates the Impact of Solution- vs. Problem-Focused Coaching Questions on Action Planning'. De prijsuitreiking was het NOBCO symposium: 'Toepassen van wetenschappelijke kennis binnen coaching' waarbij Redžep een indrukwekkende presentatie gaf. Op veler verzoek heeft Redžep een korte samenvatting van haar thesis en presentatie gemaakt. Deze is hier te lezen:

The Implications of Self-Kindness for the Effectiveness of Coaching:

Self-Compassion Moderates the Impact of Solution- vs. Problem-Focused Coaching Questions on Action Planning

*Door: Ljerka Redžep*

Over the past decade, coaching has become a mainstream tool for individual and organizational development (Grant, Passmore, Cavanagh, & Parker, 2010). And while we know that coaching is effective (for a meta-analysis, see Theeboom, Beersma, & Van Vianen, 2013), the possibility that the degree of effectiveness of different coaching approaches might depend on coachees' individual resources has not yet been explored. Addressing this issue, we proposed that coachees' level of self-compassion plays a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of solution- vs. problem focused coaching approaches.

Self-compassion is about how people treat themselves during difficult times and it involves being caring, kind and understanding towards one's inadequacies and failures, and recognizing that one's own experience is a part of the common human experience (Neff, 2003a; p.224).

This personal resource has a positive influence on adaptive psychological functioning and well-being (Neff, 2003a; Neff, Rude, & Kirkpatrick, 2007), as well as positive change, growth, and learning, all of which can serve to facilitate the effectiveness of coaching. We have therefore proposed that coachees' with high self-compassion would be able to draw benefits from both solution- and problem-focused coaching, while those with low self-compassion would benefit more from solution- than the problem-focused coaching.

We have tested our predictions on a student sample (N=118) using an experimental 2 (coaching questions focus: solution- vs. problem-focus) X 2 (self-compassion: low vs. high) factorial design. The results indeed revealed that those with low self-compassion were more successful at action-planning (i.e., generating solutions to their problem) under solution- rather than problem-focused coaching questions, while those with high self-compassion benefited from both solution- and problem-focused coaching questions. Moreover, those with high self-compassion even benefited slightly more from the problem- than solution-focused coaching questions hereby exceeding our expectation about the importance of self-compassion as a buffer against the negative consequences of the problem-focus.

Our findings have several implications for coaches who have to decide what coaching approach they should use and with whom. First, to facilitate effective coaching, we suggest to coaches to assess the levels of their client's self-compassion at the onset of each coaching engagement. From that point on, coaches can make an informed decision about what coaching approach they should predominantly use. If the coachee's self-compassion is low, but there is perhaps not enough time to cultivate a more self-compassionate mindset, using a solution-focused coaching will prove to be most beneficial. In that case, a coach should also avoid asking problem- focused questions that can have a debilitating effect on coachees action-planning ability. Alternatively, if the coachee's self-compassion is high, a coach should guide the conversations towards problem-focused talk, as problem exploration seems to motivate them to find different ways to rectify their problem.

Second, we have also demonstrated that self-compassion is a "trainable" resource, and that even a short intervention (such as our experimental manipulation) can be sufficient to increase coachees' self-compassion. This opens up a whole new door for coaches who can encourage and teach their clients to think about their problem with self-kindness and patience, to perceive their failures and inadequacies as a part of a larger human experience, and to hold their painful feelings and thoughts in a balanced awareness (Neff, 2003a). By cultivating and nurturing self-compassionate mindsets, coaches can without fear move between these two coaching perspectives (problem- and solution focused coaching approaches) to meet their clients' needs and to allow them to take the best out of all that coaching has to offer.

Taken together, we conclude that coaching can benefit from the resource-based approach and that the personal resource of self-compassion plays an important role in determining the effectiveness of different coaching approaches. Facing problems and encountering roadblocks on the way to positive change can be scary and self-compassion can make this journey easier and more effective. Self-compassion aids psychological resiliency and well being, enables growth, exploration, change, and wise understanding of oneself and others (Neff, Rude, & Kirkpatrick, 2007; Neff, 2003b), all of which can not only aid the coaching process but represents what coaching is all about.

#### *References*

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