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The impact of a Strength focus in Coaching

In Leadership Development

Strategic People Group.

Session Outline

- Theoretical background
- Background to research
- Method
- Results
- Conclusions

Leaders Coach

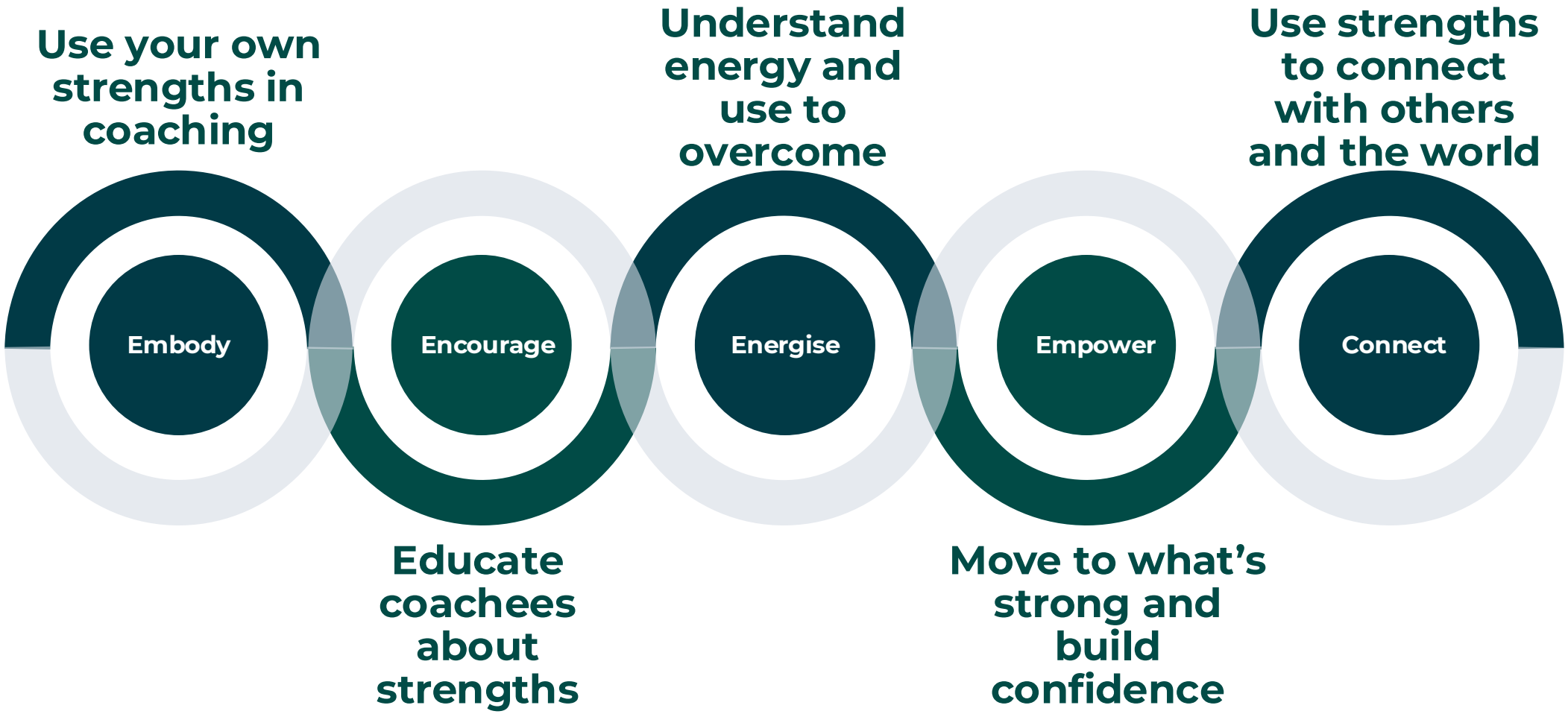
- **L**isten actively
- **E**stablish trust
- **A**sk questions
- **D**ream for the future
- **E**mpathy
- **R**atio of positives to negatives
- **S**trengths

- **C**larify the situation, expectations or goals
- **O**ptions to improve
- **A**gree on the way forward
- **C**reate a SMART objective
- **H**elp identify and remove road blocks

Leaders focus in coaching

Brim, B.J. (2019) How a Focus on People's Strengths Increases Their Work Engagement, Gallup.

VIA Character Strengths in Coaching



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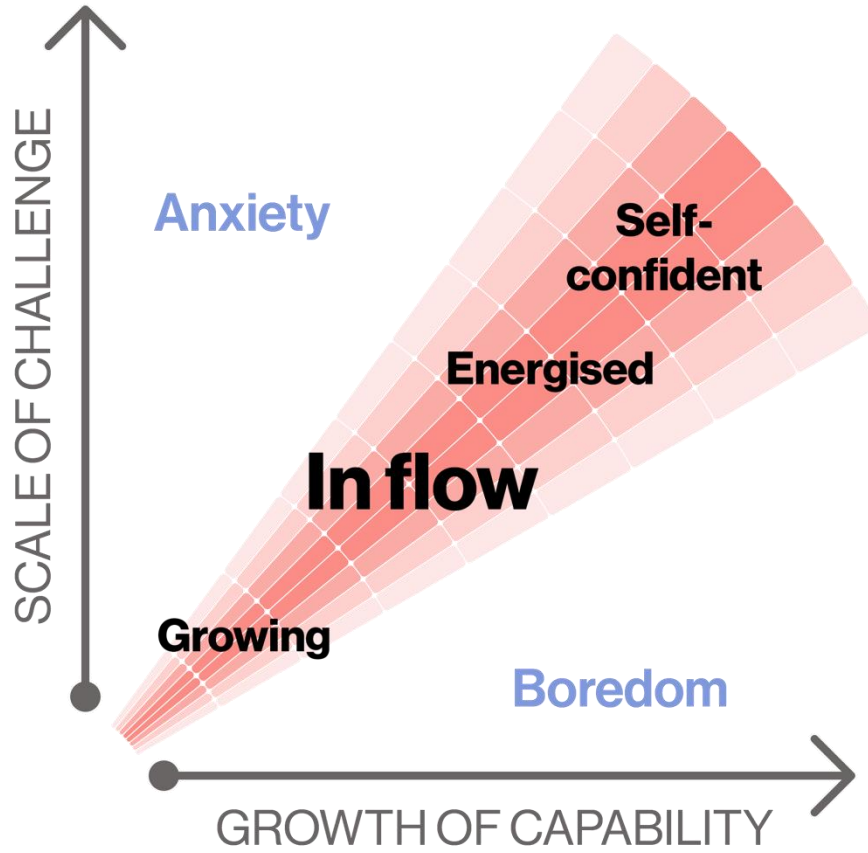
Hone et al., Being aware of strengths improves the chances of doing well mental health wise by 10x. Using them by 18x.

Naming a strength when delegating a task doubles the chance it will be done in one month's time.

Working on strengths increases confidence.



Coaching focus

Coaches ..

- Clarify the type of strength
- Empower with a measurement of strengths
- Bring strengths into every goal, aspiration and problem discussion
- Use your own character strengths in session
- Use character strengths interventions in sessions.

Niemiec, R. M., & Casioppo, D. (2024). Coaching and Character Strengths — An Essential, Inextricable Interconnection: Core Practices and New Science. *Journal of Positive Psychology Coaching* (JPPC), 1 , 1–24.

Background

Objective

How did the study come about?

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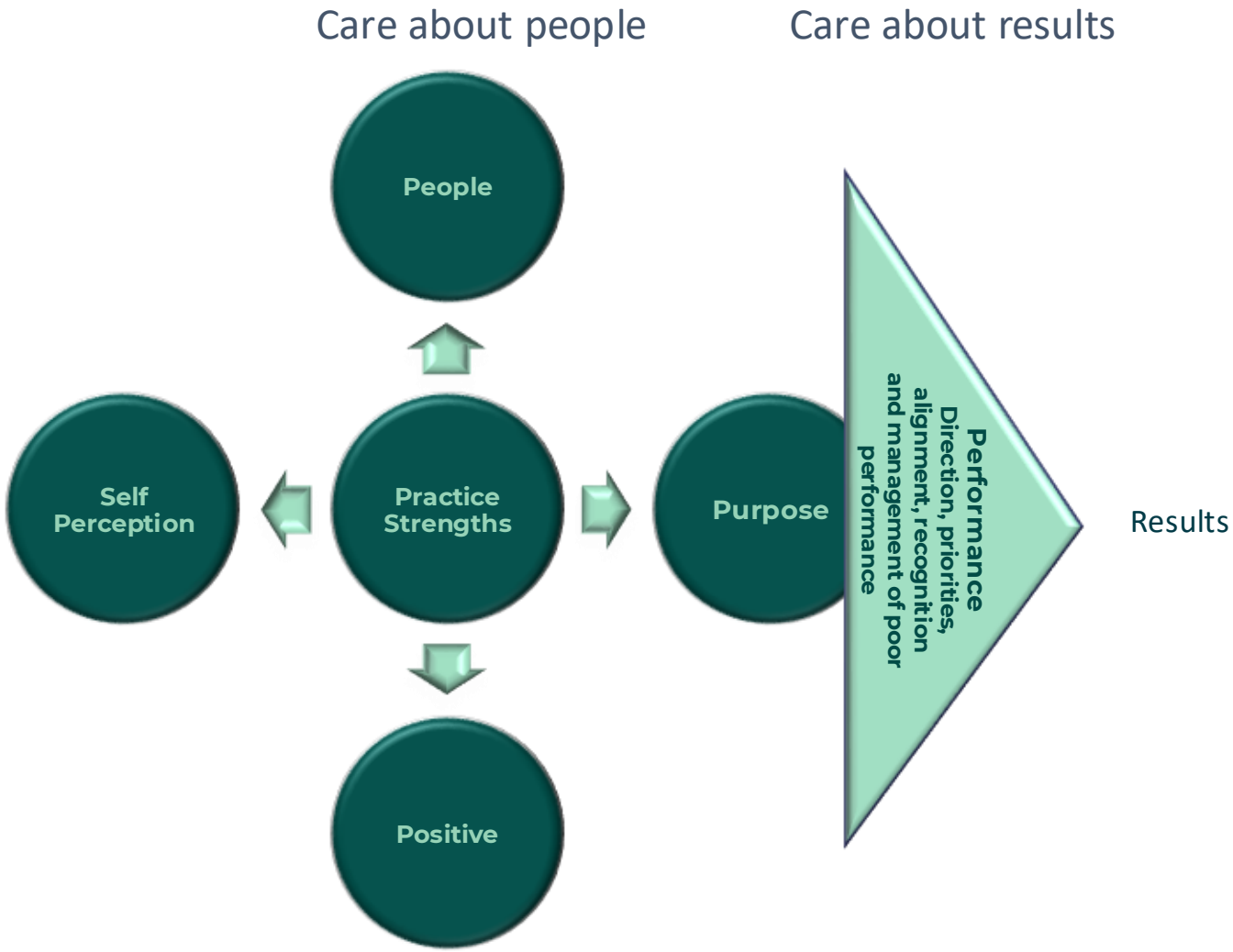
Does a strengths focus really add value?

Background

- MBA programme, Agile and Innovative Leadership Programme.
  - The first assignment is who they are and who do they want to be as a leader,
  - the second what do they want to do in the next three months to move towards what they want to be,
  - and the last is to evaluate the plan.
- Executive coaching is provided to help participants put a leadership development plan into place.
- Post the last assignment, participants are asked to rate the coaches on a number of dimensions. This was used to provide feedback for the coaches and quality control for the University.
- Six cohorts in the research, 28 responded in 2023, 37 in 2024 and 15 in 2025.
- Six executive coaches used through the programme. They were provided feedback each year.

Leadership Model Programme Based On



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Post Programme Survey

Evaluation measures

- I had a clear understanding of what to expect from my Coaching
- The coach asked good questions to challenge or reframe obstacles to my goals
- The coach created an environment of trust in our coaching sessions
- My coach helped me leverage and grow my 4-5 signature strengths.
- I felt that I was genuinely listened to during my coaching conversations
- My coach shared relevant tools or resources or frameworks to enhance my development
- My coach held me to account on actions I put in place
- My coaching was in person, mostly in person, half and half, mostly online, online

Three outcome measures were included in the survey;

- would participants recommend the coach,
- did they achieve more through coaching and
- did the coach help them progress their plan

Results

Objective

Did having a strengths focus impact the perceived effectiveness of coaching?

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Relationship between outcome measures	I would recommend the coach to others	I achieved more through coaching
I achieved more through coaching	0.75	-
The coaching helped me progress my plan	0.60	0.59

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, n=90, $p<0.001$

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Did modality matter?

- Only statistically significant correlation with modality was face to face coaching was related to an increased perception of the coach sharing resources to help the persons development (0.17, $p<0.05$).
- If modality wasn't included in the regression, sharing resources was a significant predictor of the perceived outcomes of coaching.

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Quality Measures	Relationship to Outcome Measures
A clear understanding of what to expect	0.33**
Asked good questions to challenge or reframe obstacles to my goals	0.76*
Created an environment of trust	0.63*
Genuinely listened to	0.54*
Shared relevant tools or resources or frameworks to enhance my development	0.58*
Held me to account on actions I put in place	0.64*
Helped me leverage and grow my 4-5 signature strengths	0.65*

**Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, *** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$

Quality Dimensions cf a strengths focus

Did leveraging strengths underpin other results as Niemiec would suggest?

A strengths focus has shared variance with all the dimensions

- A clear understanding of what to expect (12.3%*)
- Asking good questions to challenge or reframe obstacles to my goals (29.2%*)
- Creating an environment of trust (18.5%*)
- Genuinely listened to (30.3%*)
- Relevant tools, resources or frameworks to enhance my development (10.9%**)
- Holding to account on actions I put in place (27.0%*)

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient squared to calculate shared variance, * $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$

Measure	Co-efficients	Standard Error	T Stat	P-Value
A clear understanding of what to expect	-0.03	0.12	-0.27	n.s.
Asked good questions to challenge or reframe obstacles to my goals	1.59	0.32	5.01	0.001
Created an environment of trust	0.47	0.44	1.08	n.s.
Helped me leverage and grow my 4-5 signature strengths.	0.38	0.12	3.08	0.005
I felt that I was genuinely listened to	-0.50	0.37	-1.38	n.s.
Shared relevant tools or resources or frameworks to enhance my development	0.46	0.21	2.18	0.050
Held me to account on actions I put in place	0.53	0.15	3.34	0.001

Multiple regression, $F(7, 75) = 34.47$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .76$, adjusted $R^2 = .74$

Embody

How do we use our own strengths in coaching

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What are your 4 – 5 signature strengths?

- From your strengths - think of how you use them in the work place.
- “When you have seen me make a special or important contribution, what distinctive strengths did I display?” Or, alternatively, “When you have seen me at my best, what unique value did I create?”
- What might it be like to be coached by you?

What strengths would you use in coaching?

Coaching Area	Strengths
Asked good questions to challenge or reframe obstacles to my goals	Curiosity, social intelligence, love of learning, bravery, Hope, perspective, judgement, creativity
Helped me leverage and grow my 4-5 signature strengths.	Social intelligence, Love of learning, humility
Shared relevant tools or resources or frameworks to enhance my development	Love of learning, kindness, love, fairness
Held me to account on actions I put in place	Bravery, honesty, self regulation, leadership, perseverance

Homework

- I will send you our strengths development guide
- Every day for one week, read about one of your strengths. Use that strength in a new, different, better or more frequent way.
- On page five you can print out some reminder cards
- In order to extend your signature strengths you will need to be active in your plan. Eg what tools and techniques can you use to get better at the strength?
- Once you are mindful of your strengths – consciously use them. Eg the mindful pause before a meeting or event – 4 diaphragmatic breaths and choose what strengths you will use.

Conclusions

What conclusions can be drawn?

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Coaching

- Face to face better for sharing resources
- Good questioning, holding to account, sharing resources significant predictors of perceived coaching outcomes
- Having a strengths focus correlated strongly with other measures but contributed unique variance to the perceived outcomes.
- Trust or being listened to weren't distinct predictors

- Having a strengths focus to your coaching is likely to impact the perceived quality
- Future research could explore how this works, eg is it through building confidence/efficacy?

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Thankyou

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