Coaching and the Change Paradox:
A Heuristic Study

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Abstract

Research shows that a desired change, even when attempted, is not always sustained; this is the change paradox. Using a heuristic methodology this study focused on the experiences of six co-researchers as they explored their own change paradox within a coaching setting using the Immunity to Change process. The findings were fused into a synthesis of all the experiences where this dynamic "flow of change" incorporated the emergent themes: recognising the need for change; the familiarity of this change; methods of support needed for maintaining the change. The main conclusion drawn was that this understanding of the dynamic "flow of change" enhances the Immunity to Change process and is potentially a useful addition to the coach's toolkit.

Keywords: Immunity to Change, coaching; adaptive change; stubborn change

Introduction

Conscious awareness that a desirable change is needed in our thoughts or actions is not always enough to create sustained change. Kegan and Lahey (2009) cite research concerning patients who are informed by cardio-surgeons that if, for example, they do not stop smoking or lose weight then they will, quite simply, die. Only one in seven patients made the necessary change; this suggests that even in the face of death individuals will behave in ways that look, to an observer, illogical and even foolish. People very often do not effect a change that may save their life.

The changes required by most individuals may not be so crucial, but still this paradox remains. A change that is seen to be beneficial, and is even acknowledged as such by the individual themselves, may still not be made. Kegan and Lahey (2001a) talk of situations in business, education and medicine where although change is accepted as necessary, nothing actually changes. This change paradox seems ubiquitous; a part of the human condition, and raises questions of the nature of personal change and what it might be that encourages it and makes it possible, so overcoming the difficulties.

Coaching is an intervention specifically designed to create change by opening up a client to new perspectives or learning (Whitworth *et al*., 1998; Starr, 2003; Rogers, 2008). Within coaching the change paradox may be apparent when the need for a particular change keeps reappearing. This can be labelled as a stubborn change, which I define as change attempted many times, but the movements and adjustments in thinking or behaviour required appear elusive.

Literature around difficulty to effect change in coaching (Berger and Fitzgerald, 2002) or in therapeutic arenas (Engle and Arkowitz, 2006) exists as well as theoretical work on why it might be difficult (Kegan and Lahey, 2001a, 2001b, 2009). Kegan and Lahey (2009) propose that the difficulty in changing can be mitigated if the "immunity to change" is uncovered and worked through. The Immunity to Change process is described as "how to close the gap between what people genuinely

intend to do and what they are actually able to bring about" (Kegan and Lahey, 2009, p. ix); it cuts right to the heart of the change paradox that may leave clients frustrated and stuck. However, if the practical application of the Immunity to Change process can be used in coaching to successfully work through a stubborn change then it has the possibility, as Kegan and Lahey (2009, p.323) suggest, to "unleash capabilities" in our clients.

The concept of encountering the paradox of change has resonance for me. The difficulties of some obstacles have often left me frustrated when what feels like a straightforward decision to change my behaviours, or to act in a certain way, fails. The opportunities to explore the change paradox in depth and to gain a deeper understanding of my own difficulties in this area, and to make a desirable, sustainable change, were the fundamental roots for this study. In order to investigate this I chose to attempt to answer the following question: "What is the experience of individuals as they encounter their change paradox and work through a stubborn change in coaching using the Immunity to Change process?"

The Immunity to Change and the adaptive change process

The Immunity to Change process sits within constructive-developmental theory, as developed by Kegan (1982, 1994). Within this theory is the principle of adaptive adjustments which are required to create transformational change. As described by Kegan and Lahey (2009), adaptive adjustments don't just alter what someone does but how they know what to do; they demand change in mental complexity, which must grow to accomplish the required change. Kegan and Lahey (2009, p. 31) propose that the reason stubborn changes are difficult is because they are "challenges that bring us to the limit of our own mental growth" and so to the edges of our meaning-making system. In constructive-developmental terms the adaptive development is a subject to object shift in meaning-making (Kegan, 1994); "the development of the ability to take a perspective on something which you were formally fused with, to make the invisible visible" (Bachkirova, 2009, p. 14).

This movement to a new perspective is what distinguishes vertical and lateral development (Cook-Greuter, 2004). Lateral development is defined as where the meaning-making system stays the same but new skills are developed. Vertical or adaptive developments are where the transition to a new meaning-making stage is encountered and indicate a change in the "how" of understanding. Hawkins and Smith (2006, p. 10) discuss this in the context of second-order change which they say is "triggered when you start to challenge major assumptions within your world view". The Immunity to Change process is a method designed to make these unconsciously held assumptions (what Kegan and Lahey describe as Big Assumptions) explicit and to test their validity and meaning in the context of the current life of the client, with a view to enabling the client to let go of those that are found to be invalid and so create the climate for conquering the stubborn change. This would be an adaptive or vertical change and can take up to two years to complete fully (Bachkirova and Cox, 2007; Rooke, 1997).

The Immunity to Change process, as presented by Kegan and Lahey (2009), consists of a four column exercise to uncover the Big Assumption via the competing commitments that help explain why the desired goal is the basis of a stubborn change. On completing this exercise the client then carries out experiments in their world to test whether the Big Assumption holds true. The client then can choose to continue with the past belief and behaviour, based on the results of their experiment.

Methodology

The Heuristic method was used to carry out this research. The word 'heuristic' is derived from a Greek word, 'heuriskein', which means to find or to discover, in this case to discover the meaning of experience (Moustakas, 1990). The choice of research method was influenced by the data needed for a heuristic inquiry so data sources and ways of accessing that data were designed to accumulate as much as possible concerning the phenomenological experience of each co-researcher. The term co-researcher was particularly chosen as it reflects the equal importance of all the participants' experience alongside mine (as the primary researcher) in this research to determine the meaning of their encounter with the change paradox. This is what Blaikie (2000, p. 52) called the "insider view", where, in order to assess the experience and its impact, the key interest is in the meaning made and the perceptions formed by all those involved.

Selection of participants

I used an opportunistic sampling approach to create a sampling frame (Mason, 2002) of the delegates on a course I attended which required participants to reflect on their learning about themselves, the content of which endeavoured to challenge and stretch their thinking. Moustakas (1990) talks of a number of criteria for selecting co-researchers, two of which are interest and enthusiasm. My purposeful sampling took account of this, as participating on the course gave me access to keen people who, I felt, would have a greater chance of being interested in this study, and enthusiastic in approaching their own stubborn change.

Kjellstrom (2009) states that participants should volunteer for an Immunity to Change event, so only those who agreed to be part of the study were included in the second sampling frame (Bryman, 2008). During the enrolment meeting the co-researcher's enthusiasm for and understanding of the work involved in the Immunity to Change process was discussed. At these discussions five co-researchers were enrolled. The number of participants was set pragmatically at six, including myself, allowing time for the in-depth exploration of experience as required by the heuristic method.

Ethical dilemma of coaching and researching

Following the client agenda is important in coaching (Rogers, 2008; Whitmore, 2002) and this philosophy was borne in mind when enabling the co-researchers to pick for themselves an issue they felt was important to change. However, the experience necessitated taking part in a process that encouraged deep thinking around a stubborn change, so in this aspect my agenda, as primary researcher, did take a more focal point. The assuaging point is that the co-researchers all agreed to have the experience, knew what the process was before we began and could have left at any time if they chose, answering some of Kjellstrom's (2009) ethical concerns. In addition Bachkirova and Cox (2007) argue that most important thing in coaching is that the work helps the coachee fit in to, and have capacity to deal with, their world. By choosing their own topic, I argue that I balanced the coachee's agenda with the needs of this research and upheld Kegan and Lahey's (2009) tenet that all column one goals should be the client's choice and under their control.

Data gathering

The first phase of the research consisted of co-coaching between me and one other co-researcher so that I could experience the Immunity to Change process as described by Kegan and Lahey (2009) in a similar way to the other co-researchers. Following this, in the second phase, the other four co-researchers entered into coaching relationships with me to work through their own Immunity to Change process using the same format for each co-researcher over three coaching sessions.

The process started with the co-researcher completing the four column exercise, and each participant was also given an example to see what a completed version could look like. The first session ended by reviewing the Big Assumption that stood out most for them and around which an experiment could be devised that felt safe, was possible and positively tested the Big Assumption's basic premise. The results of this were reviewed during session two, where the things that hooked back to the old behaviours or the releases that they had devised to help them move on were discussed. Session three continued the coaching around sustainability of the new behaviours, and the possibility of experimental tests of other Big Assumptions, as well as closure of the coaching phase itself. This was followed by a semi–structured interview to review their experience. All coaching sessions and interviews were audio recorded, with permission.

Moustakas (1990, p. 46) states that most heuristic research data gathering is "through extended interviews that often take the form of dialogues with oneself and ones' research participants". Dialogue with oneself is a tenet of heuristic research and implies a reflective state to face one's own understanding and awareness; this is crucial within heuristic research as it begins with the primary researcher's self-discovery.

Also, heuristic research is often predicated only on the interview of co-researchers; the observed experience rather than the felt experience. In contrast, I decided this study needed two distinct elements; rather than just interviewing the co-researchers about their experiences in the Immunity to Change process (as reviewed from an observing standpoint), I added the coaching component, which allowed the co-researchers to be in the moment of the experience (lived and current). This dual approach to data generation means that the lived and previously unknowable experience is part of the richness of the findings alongside the artefact of the reflected experience, where the experience is given shape "after the fact" by the co-researcher.

My interviews were semi-structured as I agree with Mason (2002) that an unstructured interview is a misnomer; even if the interview is planned with only one question any specifics picked on for follow up questions or probing provide a structure. I chose to shape my interview dialogue with the questions outlined by Moustakas (1990) to help co-researchers to "respond comfortably, accurately, comprehensively and honestly in elucidating" (p. 48) their full experience of encountering their change paradox and experiencing the Immunity to Change process. Alongside this I encouraged free flow of dialogue in the interviews to counteract the more structured nature of the original questions using particularly the "anything else?" enquiry frequently. This creates "generative dialogue" (Gunnlaugson, 2007, p. 145) enabling flexibility to hear and honour the uniqueness in each co-researcher's experience.

I kept field notes of each session. These were simple coaching notes (Rogers, 2008) made during the sessions, enhanced by my reflections and thoughts about the session when incorporated in to the research diary. Mason (2002, p. 149) talks of field notes as data that are more reflexive, that is "locates you as part of the data you have generated". I consider my diaries to epitomise the type of data Mason is referring to here and strengthen my case to be able to make "Propositions about human experience" (Heron, 1996, p. 20) based on my experience. Being integral to the data is an important element in heuristic research so I felt it important to record these reflections at the time and use them in my data analysis. In using the observational techniques (Mason, 2002) of the reflective diary and field note observations alongside the recorded data of the coaching sessions I expected to gather further experientially rich, first hand and immediate data "that tells the story of each research participant" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 49) and so supplement the interview data that is usual in heuristic research, as Moustakas proposed.

Data Analysis

Data were subjected to the heuristic analysis process as outlined by Moustakas (1990) and Hiles (2001). Findings for this type of research come after a search for "qualities, conditions and relationships" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 11) that arise from "the power of revelation in tacit knowing" (1990, p. 20) during periods of immersion in and incubation of the data. The immersion in each co-researcher's data individually was through listening to the tapes of all sessions multiple times with concurrent note making and written recording of verbatim quotations. It also included reviewing the research diary/coaching notes for this co-researcher. This was followed by a period of incubation away from the data to allow intuition to work, and tacit to become explicit knowing, which is the illumination phase of heuristic research.

Phases of further incubation on all the data generated and collected resulted in entering the explication phase of the research as the individual and composite depictions were crafted. The individual depictions were written for each co-researcher. This "retains the language and includes examples drawn from the individual co-researcher's experience" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 51). I then reviewed the individual depictions visually and grouped themes and subthemes by highlighting using colour coding. Afterwards these colour coded depictions were used to create a composite depiction by theme and subtheme. My composite depiction was a single written piece that contained the core qualities integral to the experience of encountering change paradox by this group of co-researchers and by the group as a whole.

This was followed by some spells where I focused on the experience and the data analysis work done so far. I took time to approach the data in a meditative state and during this time I found the inspiration to produce the creative synthesis for this heuristic study. This creative synthesis is "an original integration of the material that reflects the [primary] researcher's intuition, imagination and personal knowledge of meanings and essences of the experience" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 50).

Validation of the data analysis was gained by ensuring findings presented (my meaning-making of data) were congruent with the meaning-making of the co-researchers. This was achieved by sending the co-researchers their individual depiction, the composite depiction and creative synthesis "seeking their assessment for comprehensiveness and accuracy" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 34). I agree with Prescott (2009) concerning his definition of accuracy; findings must resonate with the co-researchers and they should concur they have not been misrepresented.

Summary of Findings

When each co-researcher's data was analysed, based on Moustakas' (1990) framework as discussed above, three major themes arose that formed the composite depiction. These themes are defined below, alongside the subthemes for each:

1. "catching the wave" - concerning how co-researchers recognised the possibility of change;
   a. Noticing timing and context
   b. Seeing the experience as a catalyst
   c. Working on a significant issue deeply
   d. Creating clarity from prior confusion

2. "the old friend" - concerning their experience of this familiar stubborn change;
   a. I've seen this before…! "The old friend"
   b. "This is deep and difficult!"

c. Choice of stubborn change
d. What changes?

3. "surfing the wave" - concerning how the change was supported to help sustain it;
    a. What am I doing to help myself?
    b. Immunity to Change Process
    c. Coaching and environment
    d. Onward journey

Catching the wave

Key findings here were around critical timing of the experience and other life events that appeared to create a tipping point (Gladwell, 2000) for a personally significant change to be possible at this time. The Immunity to Change process (Kegan and Lahey, 2009) provided a catalyst that helped these other things coalesce and it also provided a framework that raised awareness of what the change needed to be by making the Big Assumption object not subject (Kegan, 1994) for the co-researchers. Importantly, this awareness helped defog the confusion that had been felt until that time, and started to move the frustration at failing to make the important stubborn change previously into some proactive behaviour modifications that now made it possible. In summary, when "catching the wave" the co-researchers displayed readiness to change (Prochaska *et al.*, 1992) and awareness of the need for change, demonstrating intent to make a desirable change (Boyatzis, 2006).

The old friend

The findings here showed that the co-researchers had previously struggled with their familiar stubborn change. These changes seemed to concern fundamental human anxieties and the whole experience appeared to help uncover and manage these. Co-researchers found the Immunity to Change process a helpful toolkit, but it was difficult mental work. The difficulty seems to come from facing an adaptive challenge (Heifetz, 1998) that is deep rooted and involves a change in the organising principles of meaning-making, which had some tell-tale signs in behaviour and thinking. During the experience co-researchers appeared to make a start on a journey to a full vertical development (Cook-Greuter, 2004) but by remaining at a level of "consciously released" (Kegan and Lahey, 2009) they still had work to do not to relapse and get hooked into the old behaviours. There was some tension between the "practitioner's hopes" (Kegan, 1982, p. 295) and the ethos of the client-led agenda in coaching (Rogers, 2008), as the framework of this research necessitated the use of the Immunity to Change process, but this tension was assuaged by the client selecting the stubborn change they wished to work through, and their choice to participate in the research.

Surfing the wave

Having gone through this organic and protracted experience the findings show the co-researchers were better able to support themselves to sustain the change with greater self-awareness and more reflection. They took sensible small steps reiteratively, learning through activity and review throughout the dynamic change process, while appearing to stay at the edge of their understanding of themselves (Berger, 2004). There was unanimous support for doing this work within a safe and trusted coaching relationship, in preference to a workshop setting, as this allowed more "soul-baring" work and worked like a "magnifying glass" to provide challenge and support to the changes being made. Engagement with others was also valuable to support the changes being made. Having the process facilitated was important to the co-researchers, but there are concerns about the skill and ability of a coach or facilitator here to ensure the process is handled well. There are also questions concerning the universality of the Immunity to Change process as it appears to require post-conventional (Cook-Greuter, 1995) processing, although all the professionally-qualified co-researchers did engage and use it successfully. I suggest that the robust framework of the learning cycle (Kolb and Fry, 1975)

combined with the constructive-developmental approach, both inherent in the Immunity to Change process, created the possibility of transformational learning (Mezirow, 1990). In summary, this enabled the co-researchers to make a successful start to a vertical development (Cook - Greuter 2004) when facing their own adaptive challenge within the safety of a trusted coaching relationship

The stories of change

During the research I heard stories concerning a number of "old friends". One co-researcher uncovered a Big Assumption about her low self-worth that seemed to manifest itself whenever she wanted to stand up in meetings or contribute to this collective. She tested her Big Assumption that what she had to say was not valued, and found this to be untrue. She is now working on continuing to have her voice heard and allowing herself to contribute confidently.

Another co-researcher was on a journey of getting new clients and enhancing his business while dealing with a Big Assumption around "Am I good enough?" While we were in the coaching phase of the research he did test out the Big Assumption vigorously and followed it up by sending out marketing materials and creating a blog, so breaking through the assumed lack of ability.

A third was working with what she called "the grey area", which refers to ambiguity in situations and contexts she found herself in. Her Big Assumption revolved around her belief that the grey area must be eliminated – or that it could be. In the end, through our coaching, she realised that this was not possible, and she started to learn to tolerate ambiguity and therefore be less stressed about situations she found herself in.

Finally one co-researcher looked at her need to be in control of all aspects of her work and home life. The Big Assumption here was that if she lost control and let others be in charge then the danger that could mean to her reputation felt literally life threatening. This was because her reputation was fundamentally linked to her identity and belief in herself. During the interview for this research she told me that the awareness of this issue, and our coaching on the necessary changes, had been literally life changing in her ability to be more relaxed in devolving responsibility successfully.

Underpinning these stories there is a similarity in the basic need for change. It seems there are only so many basic fundamental human issues – issues with being a person - and these seem to revolve around ideas of self-worth, helplessness, being humiliated or being out of control. I feel privileged to hear and be able to help my fellow researchers with these issues.

Creative synthesis – the flow of change

The "flow of change" came about as a synthesis of the emerging themes from this heuristic study and contains the essence of the experiences of all the co-researchers. It forms the creative synthesis of this experience, which is the "aesthetic rendition of themes and essential meanings" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 52) coming from this research. This synthesis is the culmination of research with heuristic methodology at its heart.

Synthesis of experiences within this heuristic study

I created the synthesis of the data as an illumination of the experience. Moustakas (1990, p. 29) said this "occurs naturally when the researcher is open and receptive to tacit knowledge and intuition" and I found this possible due to a period of reflection where I was able to recognise the "the universal nature" (p. 90) of the experiences of overcoming stubborn changes. The synthesis of the experience relied on data from the unknowable experience (the coaching phases) and the reflected

experience (the research diary and the interviews). This planned multiple research methodology allowed for the creative synthesis to be richer, as discussed earlier. I found I was able to draw on the "rich and vivid" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 49) experiential data from the coaching to form the sub themes, but much of the knowledge concerning the overarching themes seemed to come from my research diary and the interviews. Without both sources of data I think this study would not have tapped as deep a vein as it did and so the creative synthesis, summed up in the "flow of change", would not have been possible.

The generated data for the composite depiction (that of all the co-researchers) was constructed into a narrative and this forms the "flow of change" journey, described below.

The "flow of change" journey

Each person's experience appeared to take a similar course and the following narrative encapsulates this journey in a composite story of all the co-researchers' experience as they encountered their change paradox and worked through their stubborn change in coaching. I chose to present this narrative in the first person plural because it represents a collectively recognised journey for all the co-researchers, underlying the fundamental similarities in undergoing this experience.

We start with an experience of "catching the wave" that happens in the context of life as we approach our stubborn change this time. Making this change means a lot to us and will make a significant difference. The Immunity to Change process itself is a catalyst to help the change to happen and the awareness it brought, as the competing commitments and Big Assumptions were brought into consciousness, sharply focus the need for this change to happen and release us from confusion.

We then turn to an exploration of what this "old friend" is about. Its consequences are something we are very familiar with and it is important we made the choice and did our own significant work in uncovering the issues that it brought. The essence of it is a deeply fundamental human concern. The changes made possible are a "new grassy path" establishing new behaviours based on our wider understanding of ourselves. We experience a greater sense of awareness and more grounded sense of self than before, where we now know we can change deep rooted feelings and manage ourselves better. We have managed to sustain that change so far and as the new behaviour feels more familiar we feel more certain of staying on this new grassy path.

We can now "surf the wave" we have caught, defining goals that mean success is in our hands, and we are reflecting more on each step taken. We feel like we have been through a therapeutic experience that allowed us to process and make sense of the stubborn change, although this was difficult at times. We have further support from people around us and have really benefited from the private and safe environment of the coaching, and the support and challenges this has given us. Continuing the work we have started and taking it further, we feel ready to face the world and the future!

The "flow of change" starts with the existence of a desirable change and the first task is to recognise the change paradox and "catch the wave" of change. This leads to awareness that change is needed. The second task describes the way that the stubborn change is experienced and begins the process of change - doing the work required to meet and tame this "old friend". The third task is to support the new behaviours and beliefs through different aspects of the experience, including the process, coaching and support from self and others – "surfing the wave". All this leads to the possibility of a sustainable adaptive change.

From the generated data I drew out this journey, shown in Figure 1, as a pictorial creative synthesis of the "how" of change as experienced by my fellow co-researchers and me, which seemed to form a natural flow.

The "flow of change" shows the joining up of each of the themes and their emergent subthemes into one dynamic process. It creates a simple journey that represents the experience of the co-researchers in this heuristic study of the experience of coaching and the change paradox. I validated this narrative and flow with the co-researchers and they concurred with my view that it represented the "essence of their experience" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 34). They could all see how their journey fitted in to this overarching story.

The flow of change – discussion

The "flow of change" follows the pattern of other dynamic models of change (Higginson and Mansell, 2008; Boyatzis, 2006; Prochaska *et al*., 1992) as awareness of the necessary change precedes any possibility of change occurring. It then differs from those models as they do not explicitly examine the background to the change, but look to move through evaluation of behaviour to a state of being ready to change. In considering the final tasks in "surfing the wave" the job is to create environmental and intrapersonal supports to maintain the change and prevent relapse. Here the Transtheoretical Model of Change (Prochaska *et al*., 1992) is specifically mirrored as behavioural processes of change are heavily used in the Action stages. The limits of the scope of this study mean that further discussion of these supports is not possible, but I would suggest these are areas ripe for further study.

The Immunity to Change process is at the heart of this experience and it is designed to create an environment for adaptive change (Kegan and Lahey, 2009; Kjellstrom, 2009). The "flow of change" illuminated through this study does appear to have begun this journey for all the co-researchers, although, as already discussed, its conclusion is still to be reached. Sustainability of change is an area that could be followed up when using this approach in future research.
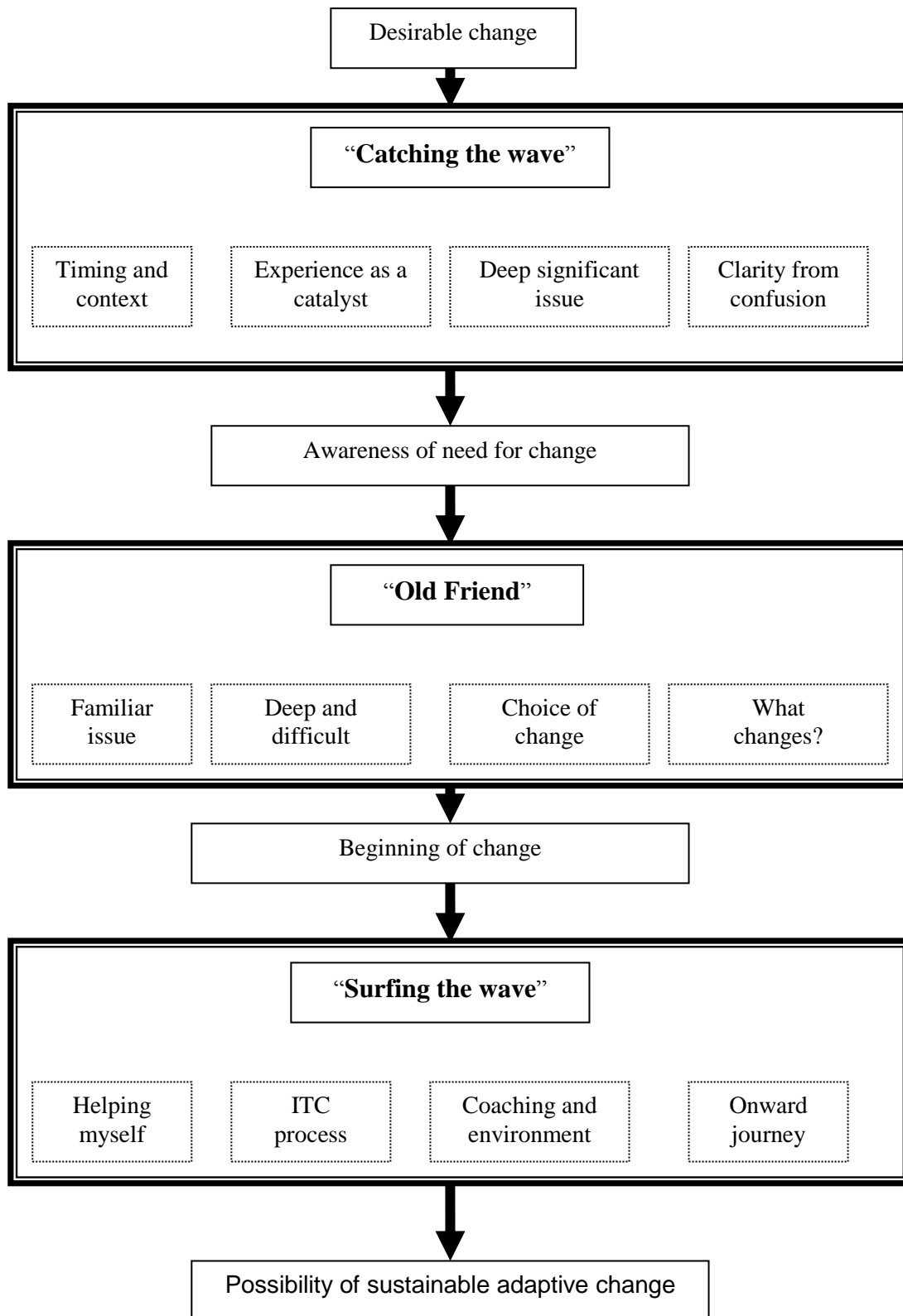
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FIGURE 1 Synthesis of findings in the emergent "flow of change"

I felt that the change paradox was certainly something I had struggled with as well as being more universal, and this was kept in mind during all phases of the research. I saw from the six people whose experiences I synthesised here that there was something "transpersonal" (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 70) and this leads to the "flow of change", which answers Moustakas' assertion that the research should lead not only to personal illumination but also to a wider understanding of the world – in this case that the change paradox is a part of the human condition. The "flow of change" appears an appropriate representation of the journey of the co-researchers here, however it may have wider implications that "resonates deeper agreement within the observer" (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 69) of this study. The "flow of change", therefore, is a dynamic model that would benefit from further research to assess this assertion and test out its ubiquity.

Conclusion

I argue that using the Immunity to Change process within a coaching environment has proved to be useful to the co-researchers here in successfully starting their adaptive change, so further research would add more data to this sparsely populated literature. Enhancing it with the "flow of change" as an overlaid process could add an extra fruitful dimension to the work. Together these processes could form the basis of a simple approach to coaching individuals who find themselves facing their own change paradox and needing to make a stubborn change. Adding data to this field would extend the evidence-base for making this a robust approach to take within a coaching assignment.

Ethically the coach needs to fit any intervention to the client's agenda (Rogers, 2008), the meaning-making available to the client, and the demands of the client's life (Berger and Atkins, 2009). Having more data would also assist in making explicit decisions about when the Immunity to Change process and the "flow of change" are appropriate interventions for a coaching client. However, given the assertions that much of modern life demands meaning-making at post- conventional levels (Cook-Greuter, 1995) and that most people are only at conventional levels (Kegan, 1994), then my "flow of change" (which incorporates the Immunity to Change process) could be a way to help people make the subject to object shifts that Berger and Fitzgerald (2002) argue make up a significant amount of executive coaching. Further research on the potential of the "flow of change" as a universally applicable method to support these shifts by studying the progress of individuals from diverse backgrounds would enable more informed decisions on appropriate application.

The most suitable Immunity to Change process delivery environment has been debated (Kjellstrom, 2009). This study found that coaching (rather than a workshop) was overwhelmingly approved of as a suitable environment. Further research data from studying the process delivered in coaching settings would help clarify this point. The quality of facilitation has also been discussed (Reams, 2009; Kjellstrom, 2009) and if these processes are to be considered viable as efficacious coaching tools then more knowledge about the successful how and where of delivery is important. Therefore I conclude that the necessary capabilities of any facilitator or coach must be further defined.

For clients it is helpful to know that becoming aware of an issue will be the first, very positive step to making a change. The "flow of change" makes explicit an awareness of the deep significance of being able to make this change and so enriches the awareness of the competing commitments and Big Assumptions made conscious through the Immunity to Change process. This enables the client to manage their work and the agenda, and have more clarity about what they are actually doing and what can be expected to be the result. The difficult nature of the change to be made is also an element in the "flow of change" model. I argue that a client will feel empowered to understand that being at the edge of their knowing can be tricky but ultimately successful in creating change. Further research on the

actual states and tell-tale somatic or bodily states that exist when at this edge would be helpful for both coach and client to know where they are in the change process.

The illumination of the change paradox using the "flow of change" alongside the Immunity to Change process could inform coach training programmes. The "flow of change" increases the understanding of the "how" of change and given that a tenet of coaching is it concerns client change (Rogers, 2008; Flaherty, 2005) then a means to understand this, while providing a toolkit with the embedded Immunity to Change process, would be a useful piece of learning and development for coaches.

A major conclusion from this study is that the full adaptive change is not seen within the four month timeframe that this research took. For the sponsors of coaching programmes this is a significant issue as expectation of the pace of change in coaching needs to be realistic. The executive coach, the client and the sponsor need to be aware that if this is the required outcome it will be no "quick fix", with all the subsequent consequences on budgeting and finance. Longitudinal studies using my research method could confirm more explicitly when desired change was reported to be sustained, and give more assurance to sponsors when the changes may be embedded. Another cost implication for sponsors is that the workshop method of delivery for adaptive change using this process may not be the most productive, given that sharing deep work may not be considered appropriate by clients. A finding from this study was that coaching one to one was felt to be more advantageous to this work, but this does incur more financial resources and time commitment than workshop methods. Further research into the most efficacious delivery method would help here.

This study has led to the beginnings of adaptive change by the six co-researchers here, and illuminated the "flow of change" as an enhancement to the Immunity to Change process. As a model to help explain the "how" of change and a potential addition to the coaching toolkit it does appear to have merit. I personally have benefited from successfully making a stubborn change as part of this research, and extended my coaching practice by formulating this approach. My hope for the future is that others can do the same, and that this research can be built on to enhance the possibility that the change paradox can be overcome effectively, so desirable change can both be made and sustained by many people.

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