

Coaching Skills for Responding to Affect

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Abstract

Affective-cognitive integration is a crucial skill for human development and therefore must also be a key enabler in coaching. This paper proposes coaching techniques that facilitate affective-cognitive integration in the light of theory related to emotions triggering. It also explores how emotional sharing, through language, enables an interaction between affect and cognition that assists the integration of both and therefore can be utilized for coaches for enabling self-awareness and development.

Key words: Affective-cognitive integration, coaching, emotion, empathy

Introduction

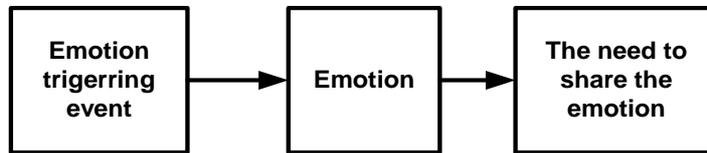
Coaching requires flexibility in approach and style in order to assist the attainment of outcomes and involves helping learners utilise skills associated with Multiple Intelligences (see Harding, 2006) as proposed by Gardner (1983, 1993). However, few writers address the emotional needs and drivers associated with the flexibility and change that are integral aspects of the coaching dynamic. Additionally, Ledgerwood (2003) proposes that a key element of coaching is the ability to respond to affect and Jackson (2003) proposes that coaching involves enabling self-reflection. Yet, what are the processes that enable self-reflection upon affect? The answer is to respond to affect so that there is self-reflection and the enablement of flexibility through the affect process.

To adduce what these techniques are this paper firstly examines the dynamic of emotions from the perspective of Emotions Triggering Events (Rimé, Mesquita, Philippot & Boca, 1991a; Rimé, Noël & Philippot, 1991b; Rimé, Philippot, Boca & Mesquita, 1992; Rimé & Zech, 2001) and then how interaction techniques can work with that dynamic principally through the need to share that is associated with emotions. In summary, this paper proposes models of interaction techniques that coaches can use for responding to affect.

Emotions Triggering Events

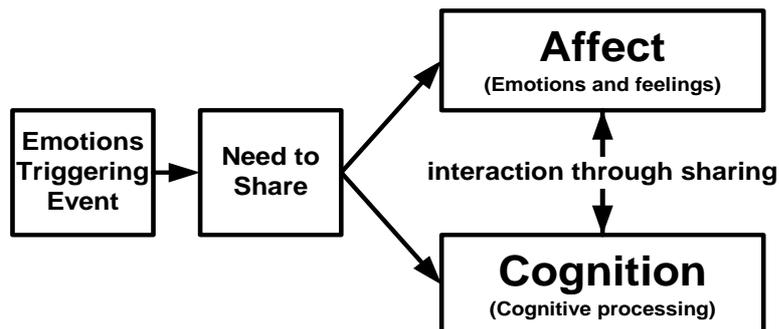
An emotions triggering event drives a number of needs, the need to seek out company (Schachter, 1959) and the need for the social sharing of emotions (Rimé, et al, 1991a; Rimé, et al, 1991b; Rimé, et al, 1992; Rimé & Zech, 2001). These needs exist across cultures and across divergent groups within cultures (Rimé & Zech, 2001). The motives for these needs seem to include affective components such as sharing emotional information and cognitive components such as cognitive processing (Luminet, *et al*, 2000, Martin & Tesser, 1989). The need to share is also associated with making meaning (Rimé et al., 1998), goal assessment and cognitive review (Luminet et al., 2000). This emotion and need to share relationship is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Emotion triggering event and the need to share.



A model of the most beneficial approach to sharing can be developed by expanding this to encompass the cognitive processing components of the emotions state as described by Luminet et al. (2000), Rimé (1999) and Martin and Tesser (1989), and the importance of feelings as indicated by Pennebaker and Beall (1986). As such, the most beneficial outcomes will involve feelings, hence affect, and cognitive processing, hence cognition. This expanded model of emotions, sharing and affective-cognitive components are depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Emotion triggering event, the need to share and affective-cognitive components.



A key idea from the preceding discussion regarding emotions and sharing emotions is that using language to share emotion enables cognitive reappraisal in order to make meaning (Luminet et al., 2000; Pennebaker, *et al*, 2003; Rimé, 1999; Rimé & Zech, 2001). This concept is akin to Kelly's (1997) claims regarding beneficial outcomes resulting from sharing feelings and associated thought and seems to be well supported by research such as that by Luminet et al. (2000), Rimé et al. (1991a & b), Rimé & Zech, (2001) and Finkenauer & Rimé (1998). These benefits include reduced health problems from emotion sharing (Pennebaker, 1997; Pennebaker & Beall, 1986; Pennebaker, Kiecolt & Glaser 1988). Figure 3 shows the progress towards beneficial outcomes that can flow from the process of sharing and affective-cognitive integration.

Figure 3: Depicting emotion triggering event, affective-cognitive processing and beneficial outcomes.

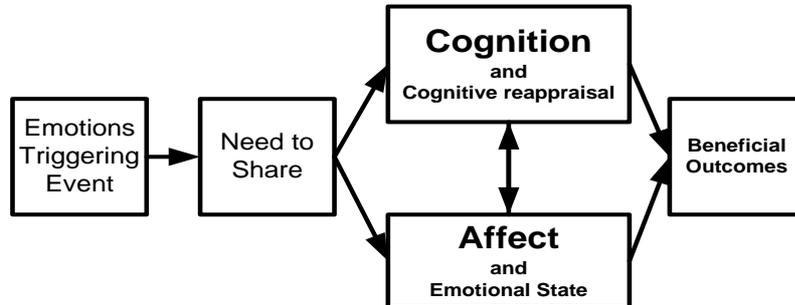
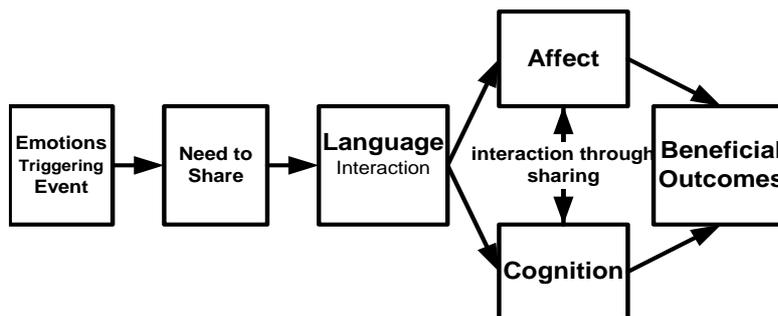


Figure 3 portrays the position of affect and cognition, and that both interact, yet the model does not fully depict the communication aspect associated with emotions and beneficial outcomes associated with sharing emotions (Pennebaker, 1997; Pennebaker & Beall, 1986; Pennebaker et al., 1988; Rimé, 1999).

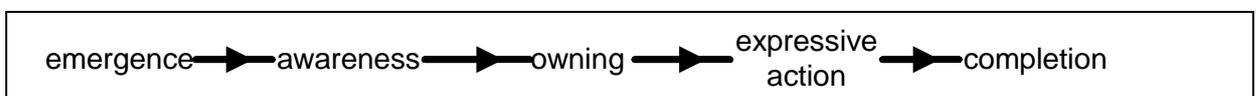
While there is some evidence suggesting that sharing emotions is *not* beneficial for all people (Bonanno, *et al*, 1995; Bonanno, *et al*, 1998), sharing is most beneficial when it facilitates cognitive processing, goal reappraisal and the creation of meaning (Luminet et al., 2000; Pennebaker et al., 2003; Rimé, 1999; Rimé & Zech, 2001). Therefore, sharing needs to involve affect (the feeling), cognition, (cognitive processing), and the creation of meaning through language, in order to enable beneficial outcomes. This mixture of elements is depicted in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Emotion triggering event, the need to share, affect and cognition and outcomes.



This need to share enables the fulfillment of the owning, expressive action and completion phases of the emotional cycle (Greenberg, 1996, p.316) depicted in Figure 5.

Figure 5: The emotional cycle.



From the above it can be seen that sharing that deals with affect (feelings) and cognition (cognitive processing) can impact the emotional cycle and, presumably, produce beneficial outcomes.

Sharing Emotions

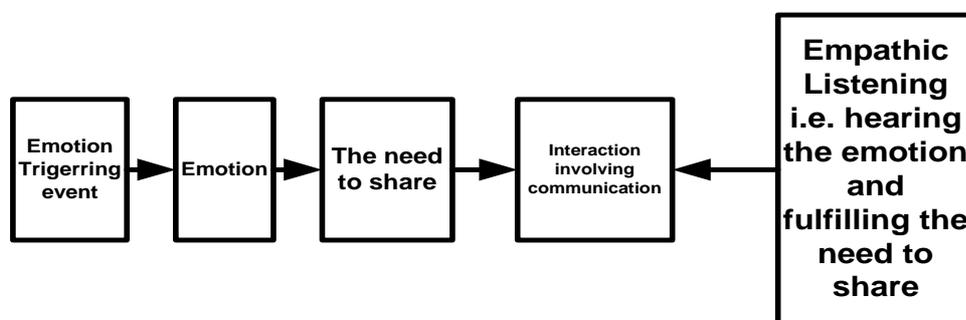
Human beings have a need to share emotions. Christophe and Rimé (1997) found that shared emotional episodes are not kept confidential, with 66% of participants acknowledging that they had talked about the shared episode to one or more persons. This sharing of emotion refers to events when individuals communicate openly with one or more others about the circumstances of the emotion-eliciting event, and about their own feelings and emotional reactions (Rimé & Zech, 2001). People desire to share their emotions in order to comprehend the emotional experience (Rimé, Finkenauer, Luminet, Zech, & Philippot, 1998), and to help them recover from the emotional experience (Zech, 2000, cited in Rimé & Zech, 2001).

Based on the large body of research into the benefits of sharing and cognitively processing emotions and associated events (Luminet, *et al*, 2000; Pennebaker, 1997; Pennebaker, *et al*, 1988; Pennebaker, *et al*, 2003; Rimé, *et al*, 1998), this paper proposes a methodology that can be used for facilitating emotional sharing.

Responding to Affect

According to Rogers (1961 & 1966) empathic listening is listening to someone speak about feelings, or listening to a verbal expression of cognitive exploration associated with an emotions triggering event, in order to assist identify and label feelings and ideas surrounding those events. Thus, Rogerian based response techniques, namely empathic listening, (Rogers, 1961 & 1966) can be seen as a response to emotion that facilitates affective-cognitive integration. This contention that empathic listening fulfills the sharing need is depicted in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Emotion triggering event, emotion, need to share and the place of empathic listening.



According to Kirschenbaum & Henderson (1990) and others (Mearns & Thorne, 1988), Rogers' person-centered approach enabled the change accommodation process, the integration of emotion and thought, so that people could adapt. The means for this adaptation are pertinent here.

The benefits of the sharing of emotions and thought seem to be well supported by research such as that of Luminet et al. (2000), Rimé (1999), Rimé (1992), Rimé et al (1998), Finkenauer and Rimé (1998), Pennebaker (1989 & 1997), and Pennebaker et al (1988). Therefore, this paper adopts the position that emotion sharing is beneficial and that empathy, a tool for sharing emotion and cognition, is effectual and therefore a mechanism of affective-cognitive integration. Hence, it can be claimed that empathy, the core of Rogers' (1961, 1966 & 1989) relationship-centered coaching, facilitates affective-cognitive interaction.

Non-Judgment and Empathy

According to Rogers (1961, 1966 & 1969), the enablers of this adaptation are the creation of the facilitative environment which include:

- genuine, non-judgmental acceptance of the person;
- empathy where, according to Rogers (1961, 1966 & 1989), empathic listening required an ability to perceive, identify and label emotions so that a speaker could identify feelings that were associated with thoughts and so that a speaker could share both the emotions and thoughts associated with those emotions (i.e. affective-cognitive integration).

As discussed above, Rogers (1961, 1966 & 1969) espoused the idea that emotions management is enabled through non-judgmental, empathic listening that enables cognitive interaction with the emotion (i.e. listening that enables sharing of the emotion accompanied by language and communicative interactions). Yet, Rogers' (1961, 1966 & 1969) claim is open to question in that other considerations need to be addressed.

Greenberg *et al* (1993, p.9) state that: "In our view, it was changes in the client's cognitive/affective processing [yielding changes in emotional meaning] that ultimately led to therapeutic change." Likewise, this conclusion accords with Ellis's (2001, p.72) view of the limited value of empathic listening alone and Ellis's (1973, 1977 & 1996) focus on cognitive reappraisal and his creation of Rational Emotive Therapy.

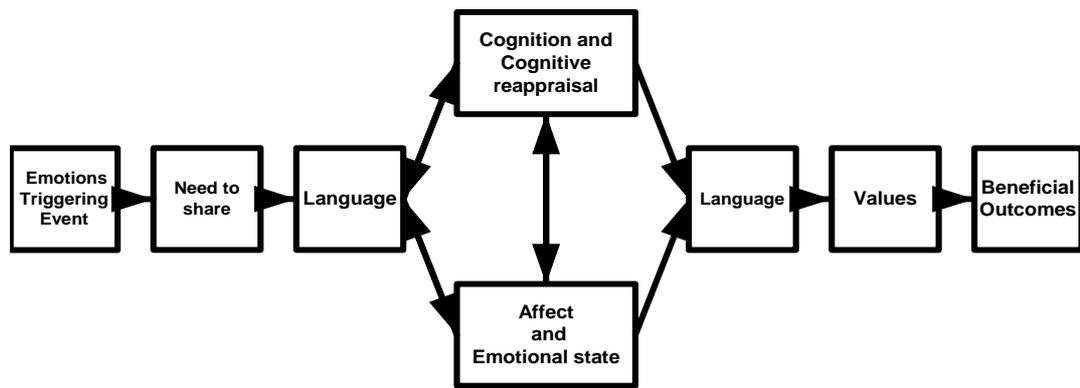
These arguments suggest that emotions management and affective-cognitive integration is achieved through language interactions that involve emotional sharing for cognitive reappraisal. Frankl (1955, 1963, 1969 & 1992) added value to the cognitive reappraisal element, expressing the importance of discussing values to form the purpose behind, or adding meaning to, action. The importance of meaning is also a key element associated with sharing emotions (Luminet et al., 2000; Martin & Tesser, 1989; Rime, 1999) and so this paper proposes that Frankl's (1955, 1963, 1969 & 1992) approach of using values to make meaning is a key element in affective-cognitive integration and may be crucial to determining whether the outcomes of sharing are beneficial.

The importance that Frankl (1955, 1963, 1969 & 1992) placed on meaning formation through values accords with more recent work regarding meaning in trauma (Frazier, Conlon, Tashiro & Sass, 2000), resilience and meaning (Taylor, 2000), coping and stress management (Halama, 2000), hope (Fratzke, 2000) and meaning-centered coaching (Wong, 2000 & 2002).

Additionally, the establishment of values based action through dialogue accords with theories of emotional intelligence and the role of values (Blatner, 2000).

Based on the preceding discussion regarding the benefits of sharing emotions and empathic, non-judgmental responses that discuss values, it can be concluded that sharing emotions through a language interaction is beneficial if it is conducted so that affective-cognitive integration creates meaning through values. Figure 7 depicts this notion.

Figure 7: The role of the need to share, language, affect, cognition and values based action in beneficial outcomes.



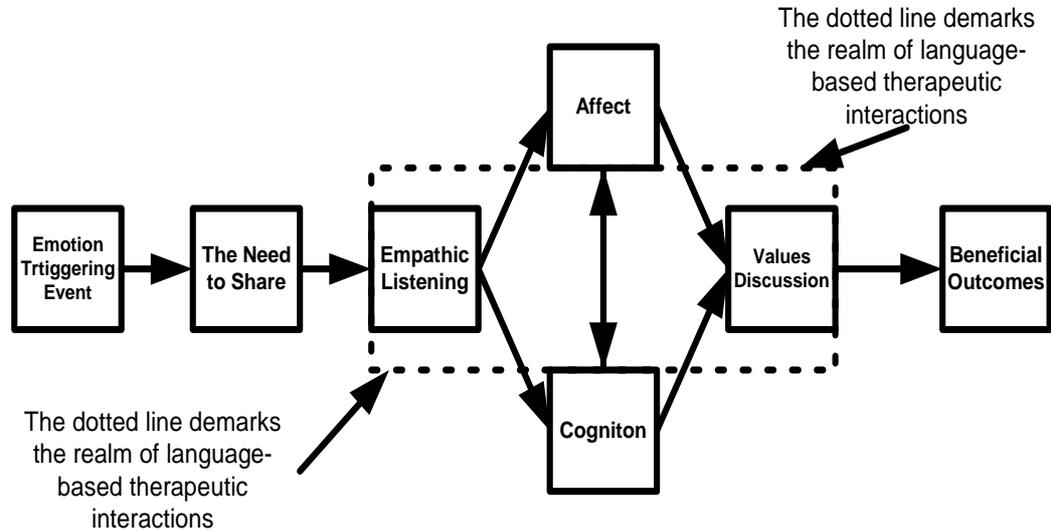
This model asserts that facilitating and enacting all the elements essential to the beneficial sharing of emotions, namely language that enables emotional sharing in the context of cognitive processing and values, will achieve a beneficial outcome. Thus, the paper contends that there are three key humanistic therapeutic approaches, these being:

1. Rogers (1961 & 1966), whose empathic listening fulfilled a listening requirement that responded to the need to share that is stimulated by emotions triggering events.
2. Ellis (1973, 1977 & 1996) whose focus on cognitive reappraisal and goal outcomes fulfilled these components of the response pattern that the need to share emotions triggering events created.
3. Frankl (1955, 1963, 1969 & 1992) whose use of values to enable psychological completion through the creation of meaning completes the psychological processes associated with the need to share that is initiated and driven by emotions triggering events.

This paper therefore contends that, when used in unison, the approaches of Rogers (1961 & 1966), Ellis (1973, 1977 & 1996) and Frankl (1955, 1963, 1969 & 1992) can be the most effective for facilitating affective-cognitive integration.

Figure 8 depicts the model of emotion triggering event, the need to share, affect, cognition, values and interaction techniques based on the ideas of Rogers (1961 & 1966), Ellis (1973, 1977 & 1996) and Frankl (1955, 1963, 1969 & 1992).

Figure 8: Emotion triggering event, the need to share, affect, cognition and language-based therapeutic interactions.



Behaviors facilitating affective-cognitive interaction: Affective-Cognitive Integration Techniques

In 1988, I trained as a counselor, a skill I practice to this day. However, I found that the counselling approach I was taught involved:

- restating both affect and cognition on behalf of the client
- identifying the feeling, or affective state, and
- defining, for the client associated thoughts and ideas.

This counselling approach meant that I, as the counselor, was undertaking on behalf of the client, the integration of the client's affect and cognition. Additionally, the probing questions and counselor led interpretations, which often came from my cognitive framework, seemed to control the interaction and determine the affect and cognitions which were expressed or explored. Likewise, because my toolset involved re-interpretations and probing questions, the client was often following my cognitive exploration rather than facilitating his/her own. Clearly, this approach was not suited to coaching where self-awareness was crucial (Harding, 2006).

After a few years of practice, I concluded that it was beneficial to help a learner/client to:

- identify his/her affective (feeling) state because it enabled self-awareness and some cognitive reflection;
- identify the goals that were associated with the feeling, especially because this facilitate additional cognitive reappraisal of feeling and goal;
- consider various actions that will fulfill those goals;

- assess actions, and the consequences of those actions, against internally held values, especially because that review either stimulated a further series of affective-cognitive interactions or a cessation due to satisfaction through the establishment of personal meaning i.e. resolving an (existential) angst that was associated with the feeling.

I also concluded that it was less beneficial, and possibly detrimental, to clients to:

- ask what feelings the client was having because this involved the client cognitively engaging with the therapist's question rather than freely and uninhibitedly expressing feelings
- restate the context and content of the client's utterance, especially when that restatement was provided through the filter of the therapists reality
- enable ongoing dialogue that did not focus on goals which would resolve the underlying emotion/feeling and
- fail to review all actions and their consequences through values because values were imperative for creating personal meaning and testing whether the affect and feeling states were in harmony i.e. integrated.

Additionally, I concluded that expressing emotions was helpful for the client if it led to cognitive reflection and values based action and that this process of emotional expression and cognitive reflection was effectively a process of affective-cognitive integration. Hence, I developed the following five interaction types:

- Empathic-Reflective-Action Based (ERA)
- Emotions, Belief, Behavior (EBB)
- Affect, Perception, Testing (APT)
- Emotion, Thought, Action (ETA)
- Emotion, Values, Action (EVA)

The predominant premise of these techniques (discussed in more detail below) is that some elements of therapeutic coaching techniques, by aim and nature, facilitate a process of affective-cognitive integration in another by enabling narrative expression by the client which can lead to action based on values. The narrative expression itself is facilitated by interaction techniques consistent with Rogers (1961 & 1966), Ellis (1973, 1977 & 1996) and Frankl (1955, 1963, 1969 & 1992). The approaches were designed such that language was the facilitative tool where language would enable an interaction between, and subsequent integration of, affect and cognition within the client. Sharing affect was enabled through stating the emotion, and cognitive reappraisal was facilitated through a verbal identification of thoughts, goals, beliefs, values and ideas associated with that affect state. The strategy of this phase is consistent with the importance of hearing the speaker's point of view (Buzan, 1999) and linking emotions to problem solving (Isen, 1984).

Finally, in concord with Frankl's (1955, 1963 & 1969) notions regarding values and the concept of making meaning, the final phase of the interaction was the exploration of actions and the alignment of these with personal values.

It should be noted here that this use of language is highly consistent with language theories and thought word connections proposed by both Vygotsky (1971) and Freire (1972 & 1985).

In summary, this coaching interaction pattern had three distinct phases:

1. An affect focused stage that involved the identification of the feeling/emotions state, the emotion being linked to.
2. A cognitive phase where cognitive processing took place with regard to goals associated with the feelings, exploration of beliefs and reappraisal of thoughts and perceptions.
3. A values based phase that meant goals, beliefs, perceptions and actions were to be reviewed against values.

Descriptions of the Interaction Models Designed to Facilitate Affective-Cognitive Integration (ERA, EBB, APT, ETA, EVA)

The first technique I developed was called ERA (see figure 9 below) for Empathic, Reflection, Action-based listening. Whilst the wording of ERA is identical to some of the words I learnt in my training to become a counsellor, the usage in coaching would be fundamentally different to their usage in a counselling context. A counsellor would accompany these words with the counsellor's own labelling or dialogue which often involved interpretation of the context, desire, feeling state, feeling context etc, or appraisal from the counsellor's cognitions or interpretation of desire, goal or affect, not that of the client. I am proposing that a coach ought not reinterpret nor make statements about context, circumstances nor goals. Instead, I am advocating that a coach would only state "You feel..." and, at most, identify the affective state/feeling, with one word only and preferably a word used by the client him/herself. The coach would then remain silent so that the client could then conduct his/her own dialogue, through internal thought or externally expressed in language, thereby facilitating an affective-cognitive interaction for him/herself. I am also proposing that the words, 'because you want to' be used in a limited and specific way that do not involve 'coach cognition' led actions. Again, at most, the coach would provide a restatement of the goal of the client as expressed by the client. This was to be undertaken using identical words to those used by the client or words as close as possible to those used by the client and not wordage created by the coach as interpreted through his /her own cognitions nor as deduced by the intellectualisation/interpretation of the coach.

This change in process involved significantly less dialogue by the coach and so was an evolution of the techniques I was taught as a trainee counsellor. For me, this was a reversal of the typical counsellor-client interaction where the counsellor surmises, restates or explores affect and cognition on behalf of the client thus putting the client in the position of having to accommodate, assimilate or agree with the affective-cognitive interaction as expressed by the counsellor from within the counsellor's affective-cognitive framework.

In summary, the techniques described above would be enacted through specific word usage in three distinct phases, the affective, cognitive and values-based phase.

The word selection utilized in each phase was based on a notion that language is consistent with Shoemaker's (1996) premise that language alone can enable self-reflection. Based on the affective and cognitive components of language (see the LET model in Kibby and Hartel, 2002), language usage should be kept to a minimum to avoid applying any affective or cognitive connotations external to that of the speaker. In this regard, word usage in the response techniques was deemed as:

- the minimum needed in order to facilitate the relevant phase of the narrative
- the minimum needed in order to ensure that the narrative continued
- the maximum that ought be used in order to avoid affective or cognitive connotations external to the speaker
- the maximum that ought to be used in order to ensure that the speaker controlled the narrative.

Following establishing and trialling ERA, I trialled identical phases – affect-based, cognitive-based and values-based, utilising different wordage. This different wordage created the variation in models. Figures 9 to 13 depict ERA and the additional four initial interaction techniques. The five techniques are called the ERA, EBB, APT, ETA & EVA approaches. The words used in these approaches are listed below, the spaces indicating silence by a coach.

- Empathic-Reflective-Action Based (ERA) using the words “You feel.....because you want to....”
- Emotions, Belief, Behavior (EBB) using the words “You feel.....because you believe that....”
- Affect, Perception, Testing (APT) using the words “You feel.....because you perceive that....”
- Emotion, Thought, Action (ETA) using the words “You feel.....because you believe that you should...”
- Emotion, Values, Action (EVA) using the words “You feel.....because you value....”

**Figure 9: The ERA model depicting the Affective-Cognitive-Values Phases
(Affective Phase called Empathic; Cognitive Phase called Reflective; Values based Phase called Action Based Listening)**

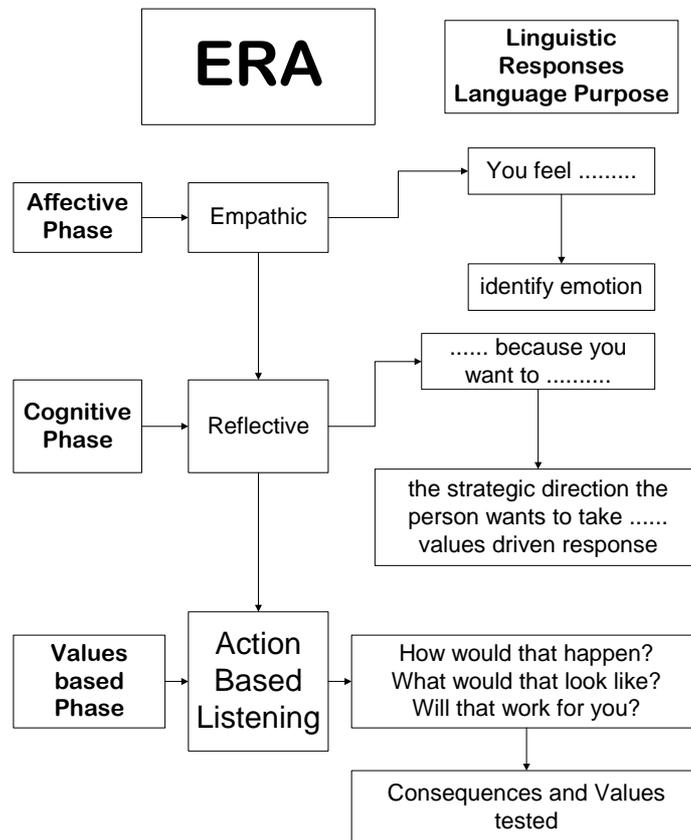


Figure 10: The EBB model depicting the Affective-Cognitive-Values based Phases (Affective Phase called Empathic; Cognitive Phase called Belief; Values based Phase called Behavior)

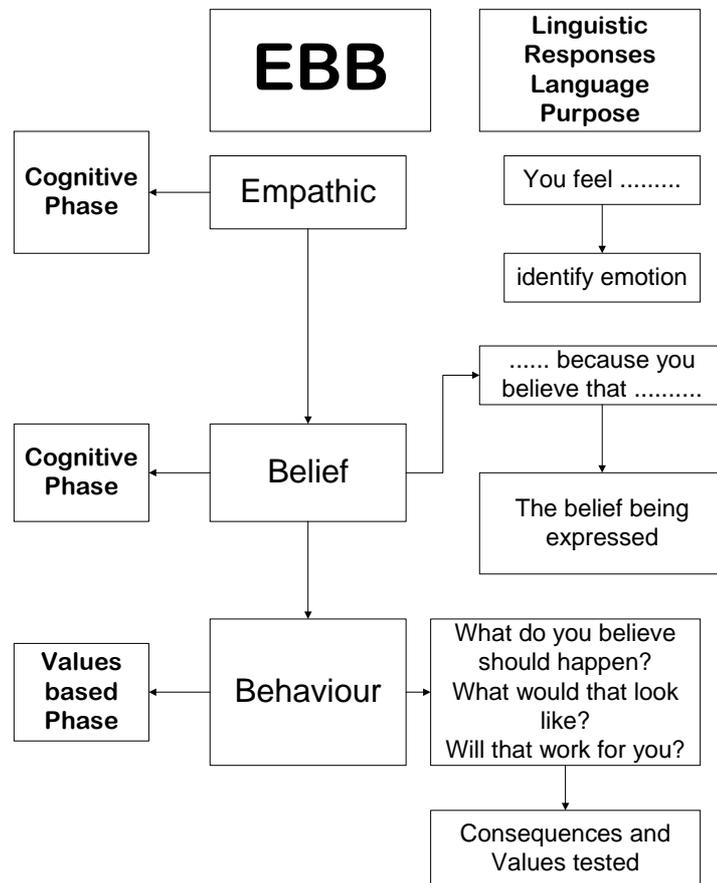


Figure 11: The APT model depicting the Affective-Cognitive-Values based Phases (Affective Phase called Affect State; Cognitive Phase called Perception; Values based Phase called Testing)

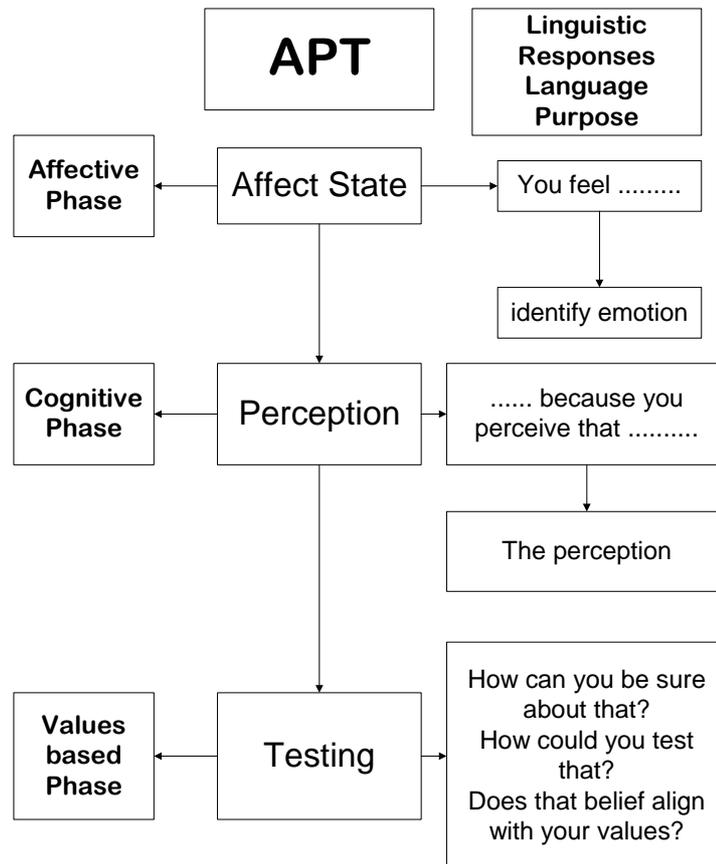


Figure 12: The ETA model depicting the Affective-Cognitive-Values based Phases (Affective Phase called Empathic; Cognitive Phase called Thoughts; Values based Phase called Action)

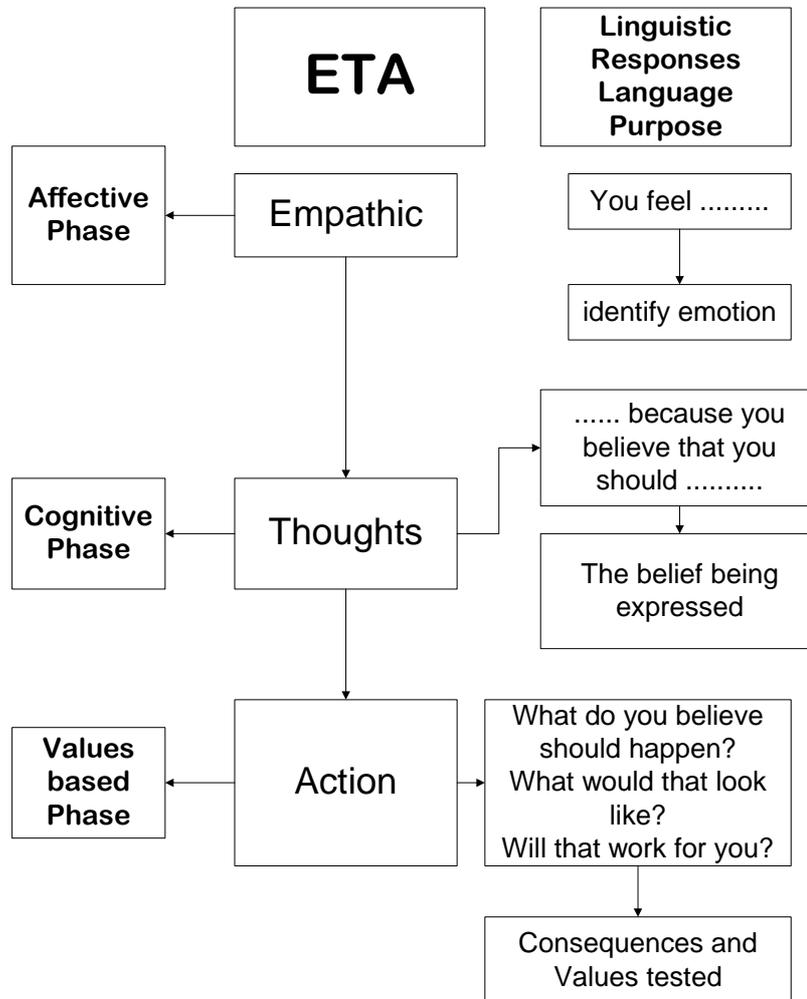
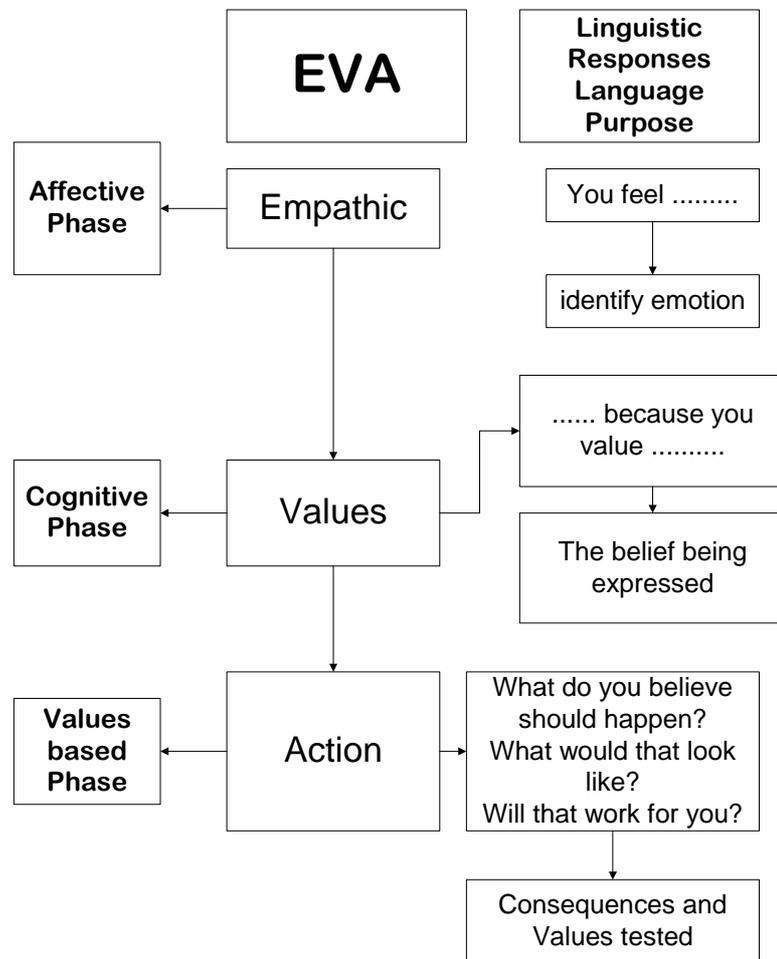


Figure 13: The EVA model depicting the Affective-Cognitive-Values based Phases (Affective Phase called Empathic; Cognitive Phase called Values; Values based Phase called Action)



As can be seen from the above models, each type of affective-cognitive integration response technique would involve use of different language labelling an emotion and different cognitive associations with the emotion, therefore different cognitive attention and processing. The action-based phases, by focusing on values, shifts the dialogue from listening alone into the noetic realm suggested by Frankl (1955, 1963 & 1969), which means exploration in terms of values congruence thereby creating meaning and resolving the existential dilemma and issue that evoked the need to seek assistance via dialogue with another. This accords with Russell's (2001) premise that values are the foundation for decision-making and therefore, according to the contention of this paper, are fundamental elements in the integration of affect, cognition through the creation of meaning.

Summary Coaching Skills for Responding to Affect

This paper has presented an argument that emotions are associated with a need to share and that such sharing, if based on the principles of empathy and non-judgment, can facilitate reflection upon, and the integration of, affect and cognition specifically if the sharing is

accompanied by a dialogue regarding values. In providing the above models, this paper presents interaction techniques that integrate the coaching imperatives described by Ledgerwood (2003) and Jackson (2003) and so offers new techniques that can be used in the field of coaching.

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