Ethics and Morals by using Coaching Skills for Responding to Emotion(s) Triggering Events: Noetic Leadership in Action

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Abstract

The end of the last millennium so major corporate collapses attributed to unethical and illegal conduct. These behaviours heralded a moral crisis for leadership and management. But how do we prevent such moral failures and develop more ethical and moral conduct? The answer is to develop values based leadership and management. As coaching is a key tool for preventing "derailment" it can be a powerful mechanism/medium for producing values based leadership. But, what do coaches do and when do they act?

Emotion(s) triggering events generate existential angst, a search for meaning and purpose which can only be resolved through values. Such events are also present a coaching opportunity. Hence, emotion(s) triggering events provide a context within which coaches can facilitate values based action. Therefore, this paper proposes skills coaches can use when responding to emotion(s) expressions of clients when those clients are responding to emotion(s) triggering events. The coaches' responses to client can facilitate a consideration of values by the client. The coaching techniques described in this paper are extracted from humanistic psychology presented in relation to emotion(s) triggering events theory and are presented in the form of a codified methodology.

Ethics and Morals through Coaching Skills for Responding to Affect: Noetic Leadership in Action

Introduction

To live without meaning is to suffer angst and the search for meaning is essential to fulfillment (Frankl, 1955, 1963, 1969 & 1973). This is as true for workplaces as it is for life (Ikehara, 1999, Butts 1999). Without meaning, there is no purpose and therefore there exists a greater likelihood of adopting 'values-less' behaviours that are detrimental to well-being (Frankl 1955, 1963, 1969 & 1973). This loss of meaning is evidenced by the major corporate collapses of the last millennium which have instigated a subsequent search for values based leadership that answers existential questions and helps employees fulfill their search for meaning (see Fairholm, 1996; Page, 2002; Terez, 2000). To address this loss of meaning and moral and ethical vacuum values-neutral behaviour, we need to awaken leaders to a new way of being which is linked to values (see Van Leeuwen, 2005) and to help them find meaning i.e. adopt ethical and moral behaviours, ethics and morals themselves being linked to values (see Kriel 2006).

Why Coaching

Why is coaching a tool for addressing ethical and moral failures?

Executive "derailment" (Webb 2006, p 68) can be prevented or corrected through a coaching process (Webb 2006) which can enable and foster self-reflection (see Kilburg 2000, Jackson 2003) and build a sense of identity and meaning (Lenhardt 2004). In fact, coaching can function with an internal "actualizing" tendency (Burke and Linley 2007) and this tendency is a fundamental human driver linked to values (Maslow 1962, 1968). This view is well supported in coaching circles (see Bachirova, 2004).

Ledgerwood (2003) proposes that coaching involves the ability to respond to affect and affect itself can lead to "self-noeticism" (Kibby & Hartel 2002, p18) which, it can be argued, achieves the peak values-driven human condition proposed by Maslow (1962, 1968) and enacts the "actualizing" tendency described by Burke and Linley (2007). Coaching also enables cognitive processing (Libri & Kemp 2006) and, as is discussed below, this is a fundamental and important aspect of a response to affect that can facilitate the formation of meaning through values. Thus, by enabling self-reflection through responses to affect, coaches are in a position to foster values driven responses to events. This is possible because emotions involve existential angst (Rimé et al., 1998) and [coaching] skills for responding to emotion can resolve this angst by creating meaning which, as proposed by Frankl (1963, 1969), is based on values.

The explanation of this contention is contained in this paper which examines the dynamics of emotions triggering events and subsequent response techniques that are consistent with:

- the psychology of emotion(s) triggering events and
- humanistic psychology.

In this paper I propose that the response techniques (see also Kibby & Hartel 2002, 2003 a&b; 2004 a&b and Kibby 2006 & 2007) which are described here are appropriate for coaches.

Why Emotions?

Emotions provide key opportunities around which coaches can engage with their clients and therefore they are the fertile ground for seeding ethical and moral thoughts. The following discussion explains why this is the case.

Human beings have a need to share emotions. Christophe & 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 emotion(s) sharing refers to situations in which the sharer talks about the circumstances, events and emotion(s) associated with these (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 as 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, Bouts, Delie, Manstead & Rimé, 2000; Pennebaker, 1997; Pennebaker, Kiecolt-Glaser & Glaser, 1988; Pennebaker, Zeck & Rimé, 2001; Rimé, Finkenauer, Luminet, Zech & Philippot, 1998) this paper proposes a methodology that can be used for facilitating emotional sharing.

In pursuing this contention, I examine a theory of emotion triggering events and the need to share factors, which accompany such events. I also explore how sharing, through language, enables an interaction between affect and cognition that assists the integration of both. I examine humanistic techniques enable the sharing of emotions and propose specific behaviours for enacting the principles for facilitating affective-cognitive interaction. The paper concludes with a summary of the key principles that govern behaviours facilitating the integration of affect and cognition, and a redefinition of affective-cognitive integration based on behavioral principles.

Emotions Triggering Events

An emotions triggering event drives a desire to seek others (Schachter, 1959) for the purpose of sharing (Rimé, Mesquita, Philippot & Boca, 1991a; Rimé, Noël & Philippot, 1991b; Rimé, Philipott, Boca & Mesquita, 1992; Rimé & Zech, 2001). This is true for various cultural groups (Rimé & Zech, 2001). The purpose of this drive is to express the emotion(s) and making meaning (Rimé et al., 1998).

This emotion and need to share relationship is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Emotion triggering even, the need to share and making meaning.
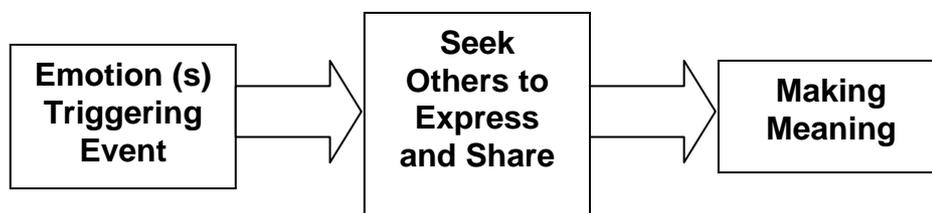
Feelings are important Pennebaker & Beall (1986) but Luminet et al. (2000), Martin & Tesser (1989) and Rimé (1999) indicate that cognitive processing is a crucial component in the emotions sharing process. Therefore, the emotions triggering event model needs to be amended to include this cognitive processing component. This expanded model of emotions, sharing and affective-cognitive components is depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Emotion triggering event, the need to share, cognitive processing and making meaning.
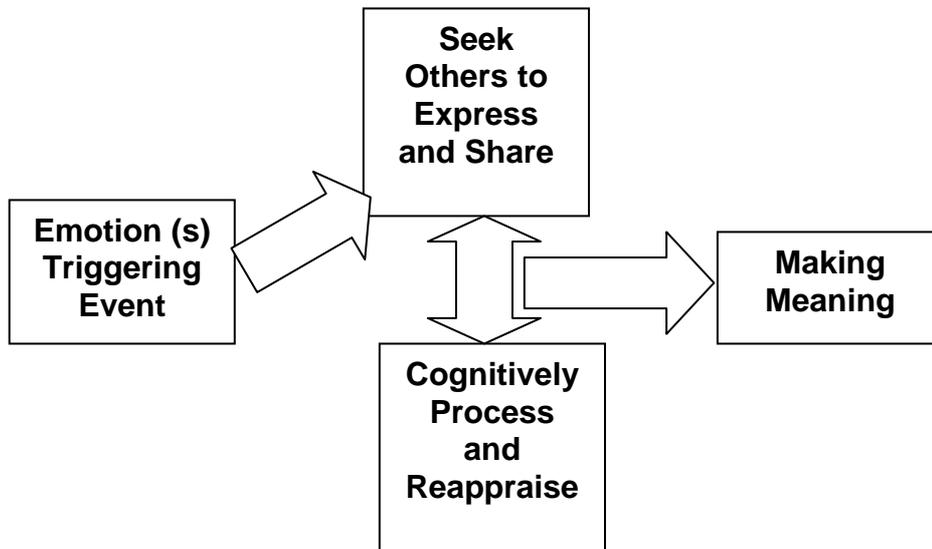
Although sharing emotions is *not* iniversally beneficial (Bonanno, Keltner, Holen & Horowitz, 1995; Bonanno, Notarius, Gunzerath, Keltner & Horowitz, 1998), sharing achieves the best benefit to individuals when it facilitates cognitive processing and goal reappraisal for the creation of meaning (Luminet et al., 2000; Pennebaker et al., 2003; Rimé, 1999; Rimé & Zech, 2001). Therefore, the three key elements essential to attaining beneficial outcomes from sharing emotions and emotional expression are:

1. enabling the need to share through emotion(s) expression
2. utilizing this expression to facilitate cognitive reappraisal and
3. the formation of meaning.

Figure 2 portrays the position of emotion(s) expression and cognition and that both interact, yet the model does not fully depict the communication aspect associated with emotions nor the beneficial outcomes that can evolve from associated sharing emotions (Pennebaker, 1997; Pennebaker & Beall, 1986; Pennebaker et al., 1988; Rimè, 1999).

Language is the mechanism of emotions sharing and the medium of facilitating cognitive reappraisal in order to make meaning (Luminet at al., 2000; Pennebaker, Zech & Rimé, 2003; Rimé, 1999; Rimé & Zech, 2001). In fact language alone enables the ability to think about complex issues (Kibby & Hartel 20023).

These claims about the role of language are aligned with Kelly's (1997) claims regarding humanistic psychology and are well supported by research of Luminet et al. (2000), Rimé et al. (1991a & b), Rimé & Zech, (2001), Finkenauer & Rimé (1998), Pennebaker, at al (1988), Pennebaker, (1989 and 1997) and Pennebaker, et al (2003). We can therefore modify figure 2 to include the role of language. Figure 3 is an amendment of Figure two depicting the role of language in the model.

Figure 3: Emotion triggering event, the need to share, cognitive processing, making meaning and the facilitative role of lanaguage.
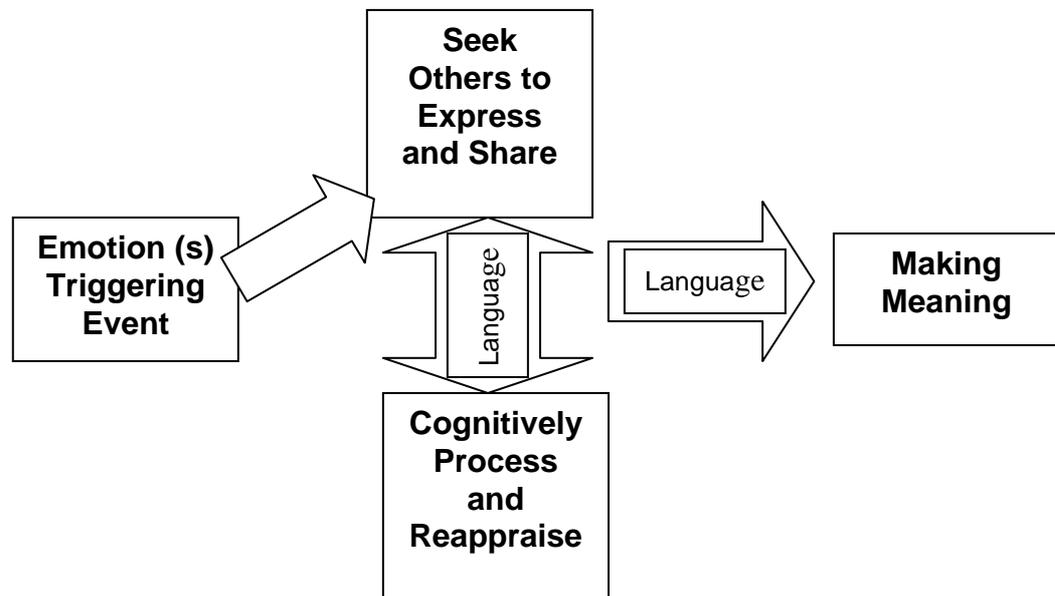
The field of psychotherapy, as per Kelly (1997) above, provides a strong case for this model. Also, Greenberg et al. (1993, p.9) concluded, "In our view, it was changes in the client's cognitive/affective processing [yielding changes in emotional meaning] that ultimately led to therapeutic change." Likewise, the 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. This need to share, when accompanied by a language interaction that provides for cognitive reappraisal and the formation of meaning, enables the fulfillment of the owning, expressive action and completion phases of the emotional cycle (Greenberg, 1996, p.316) as facilitated by a language based interaction, is depicted in Figure 4.

Figure 4: The emotional cycle.

These ideas suggest that emotion(s) management and responses to emotion(s) are achieved through language interactions that involve emotional sharing for cognitive reappraisal.

The connection between coaching and emotions and personal development through self-reflection is well established (see Grant & Cavanagh 2004). Coaching also has a strong connection to values (Abbott & Rosinski 2007; Zeus & Skiffington 2000) and the search for meaning and purpose as proposed by humanistic psychology (see Harding 2006). Hence, the models discussed above closely match key considerations in the field of coaching psychology and are therefore well justified as being models applicable to coaching theory and practice.

Coaches therefore need to have the skill of responding to the need to share so that their responses facilitate the emotional cycle of development. To describe the skills for achieving this outcome, I now examine humanistic psychology as a source of information on such techniques.

Humanistic Psychology as a Response to Emotion(s)
In this paper it is proposed that humanistic psychology approaches provide a methodology for coaching techniques that will respond to emotions and lead to ethical reflection. This premise regarding coaching and humanistic psychology is well supported by discussion in the coaching arena (see Abbott and Rosinski, 2007).

Humanistic psychology is holistic (Child, 1973) and responds to emotional development (Patterson, 1973) through a process of cognitive (intellectual) reflection (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985). "Humanists are not as much concerned with a person's observable, measurable behavior as they are with his feelings, attitudes, beliefs, purposes, and values – with those 'inner behaviors' that make an individual person distinctively and uniquely human" (Kolesnik, 1975, p.32). In particular, the approach of Rogers (1961, 1966 & 1969) was person centric and, arguably, holistic (Kirschenbaum, & Henderson, 1990).

Humanistic approaches facilitate the creation of meaning within experience (May, 1961 & 1983), this internal integration being a focus of humanists such as Assiogoli (1971 & 1973), Perls (1969a & 1969b) and Perls & Stevens (1971) and the subject of the therapy of Ellis (1973, 1977 & 1996), Frankl (1963) Frankl, Crumbaugh, Gerz & Maholick (1967) and Rogers (1961, 1966 & 1969).

Humanistic approaches can claim some efficacy (Kelly 1997), Rimé (1999) and Rimé et al (1991, 1992, 1998) indicate that the existential angst and emotion(s) state are not resolved until meaning is formed. Hence, meaning is a crucial component of the emotions process. The humanistic pasychologist Victor Frankl (1955, 1963, 1969 & 1992) was a proponent of this belief and utilized to connection between values and meaning in psychotherapeutic interventions. 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).

Rather than considering the work of all humanistic psychologists, this paper focuses on the techniques of three humanistic psychologists, Rogers (1961, 1966 & 1969), Ellis (1973, 1977 & 1996) and Frankl (1955, 1963, 1969 & 1992) as these were the core humanistic psychologists whose ideas were utilized to develop the models presented in this paper.

Rogers (1961, 1966 & 1969) person-centred therapy used empathic, non-judgmental listening (see Kibby 2006, 2007), i.e. responding to the expression of emotion(s) i.e. the need to share, as its corner stone. Ellis (1973, 1977 & 1996) acknowledged affect but concentrated on facilitating cognitive reappraisal. Frankl's (1955, 1963, 1969 & 1992) paradigm and processes dealt with the creation of meaning through values.

Whilst emotions triggering events theory was not known at the time of developing the models described in this paper, there is a clear alignment and congruency between emotions triggering events psychology and the approaches of Rogers (1961, 1966 & 1969), Ellis (1973, 1977 & 1996) and Frankl (1955, 1963, 1969 & 1992) as each of these approaches address a component of emotions triggering event theory.

Based on the preceding discussion, and by utilizing information from humanistic psychology, the benefits of sharing emotion(s), it can be concluded that sharing emotions through a language interaction is beneficial if it is conducted so that emotion(s)/affect, cognition create meaning through values. Figure 5 depicts this notion.

Figure 5: The role of the need to share, language, emotion(s) i.e. affect, cognition and values based action.
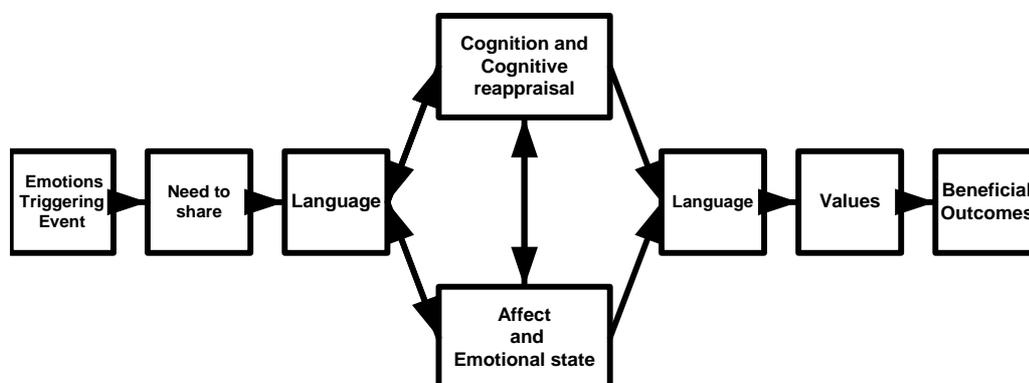
This model proposes that language that enables emotional sharing in the context of cognitive processing and values, will achieve a beneficial outcome.

From the above it is clear that the emotion(s) triggering event, when accompanied by appropriate language based techniques, can lead to ethics and morals through a discussion of values (re: the link between values, ethics and morals as proposed by Kriel 2006). Hence, a consideration of ethics and morals can develop from the sharing of emotion(s) i.e. responding to affect.

Is this meld of humanistic psychology and its application to coaching sound? Recent research proposes that it is.

Applying humanistic psychology approaches to coaching has recently become well supported in the coaching arena as evidenced by explorations of this nexus (see Abbott and Rosinski, 2007). In particular, this author's approach of adopting and adapting approaches of Rogers (1961, 1966 & 1969), Ellis (1973, 1977 & 1996) and Frankl (1955, 1963, 1969 & 1992) which began almost 20 years ago, are now fully encompassed in coaching psychology. Linley & Harrington (2006) and Joseph (2006) examine the use of Rogerian/Person-centred approaches in coaching. Burke & Linley (2007) address Rogers' (1964) "actualising tendency" (Burke & Linley, 2007, p63). Ellis's Rational Emotive Therapy (1973, 1977 & 1996) has been used in coaching (see Palmer & Whybrow, 2006) and Kaufman (2006) establishes the importance or meaning and purpose which is the realm of Frankl (1955, 1963, 1969 & 1992).

Hence, the evidence is strong that the approach described above is sound. Yet, although adoption of the principles of humanistic psychology are now well supported, what techniques from humanistic psychology can coaches use in order to respond to emotions and facilitate discussions based on ethics and morals? What are those *humanistic* techniques? This paper now proposes some options.

Responses to Emotions that facilitate a consideration of Values

As described in Kibby (2006 & 2007), I developed the following five coaching interaction technique which I believe provide codified techniques/methodologies that coaches can use. The techniques are linguistic responses to emotion(s) sharing and are called:

- 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 is that they enable emotion(s) sharing by the client which can then lead to action based on values (see Kibby 2006, 2007). In summary, these techniques have three 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 which led to
3. A values based phase that meant goals, beliefs, perceptions and actions were to be reviewed against values.

The following is a description of the interaction models named above.

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...."

Figures 6 to 10 depict ERA and the additional four initial interaction techniques.

Figure 9: The ERA model depicting the Affective-Cognitive- Values Phases
Affective Phase called Empathic
Cognitive Phase called Reflective

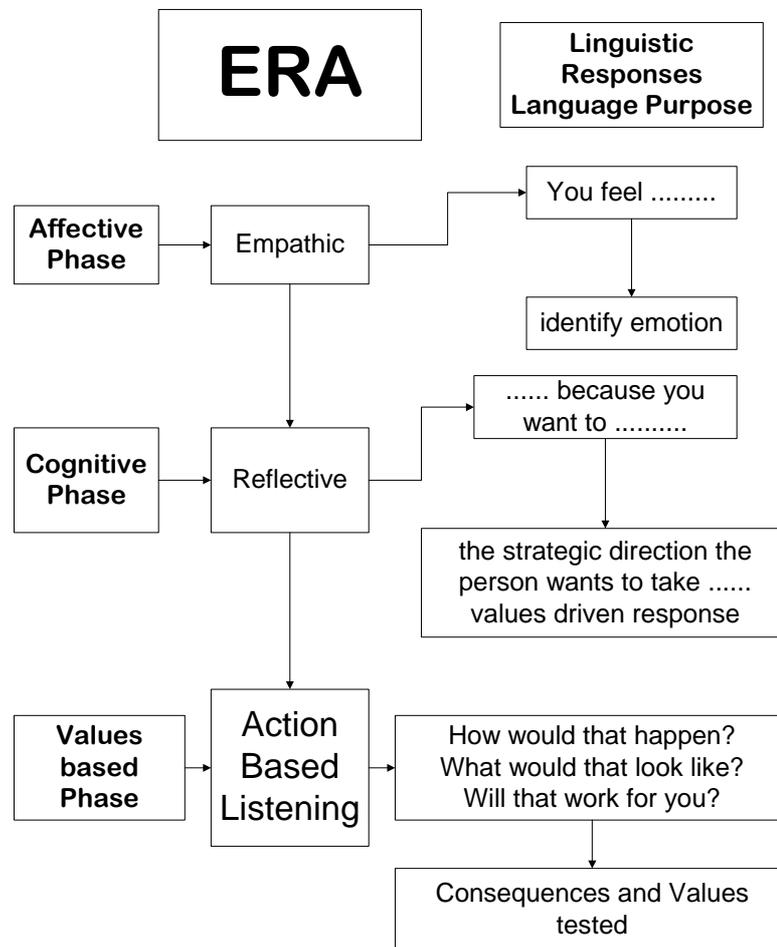**Values based Phase called Action Based Listening**

Figure 7: The EBB model depicting the Affective-Cognitive-Values based Phases
Affective Phase called Empathic
Cognitive Phase called Belief

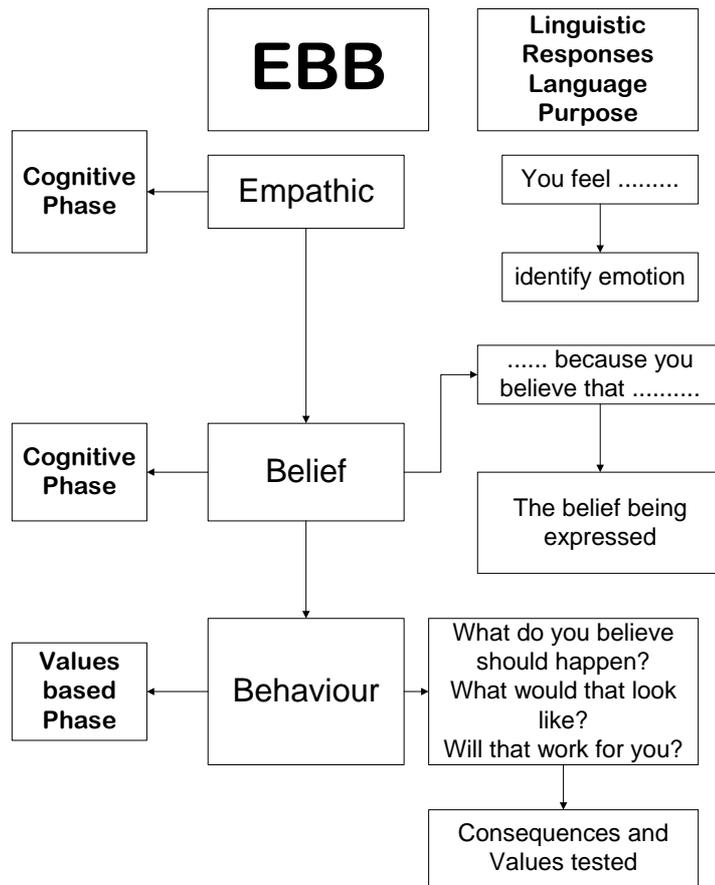**Values based Phase called Behavior**

Figure 8: The APT model depicting the Affective-Cognitive-Values based Phases
Affective Phase called Affect State
Cognitive Phase called Perception

Values based Phase called Testing

APT	Linguistic Responses Language Purpose

Affective Phase	←	Affect State	→	You feel ....

identify emotion

Cognitive Phase	←	Perception	→	...... because you perceive that ....

The perception

Values based Phase	←	Testing	→	How can you be sure about that? How could you test that? Does that belief align with your values?

Figure 9: The ETA model depicting the Affective-Cognitive-Values based Phases
Affective Phase called Empathic

Cognitive Phase called Thoughts
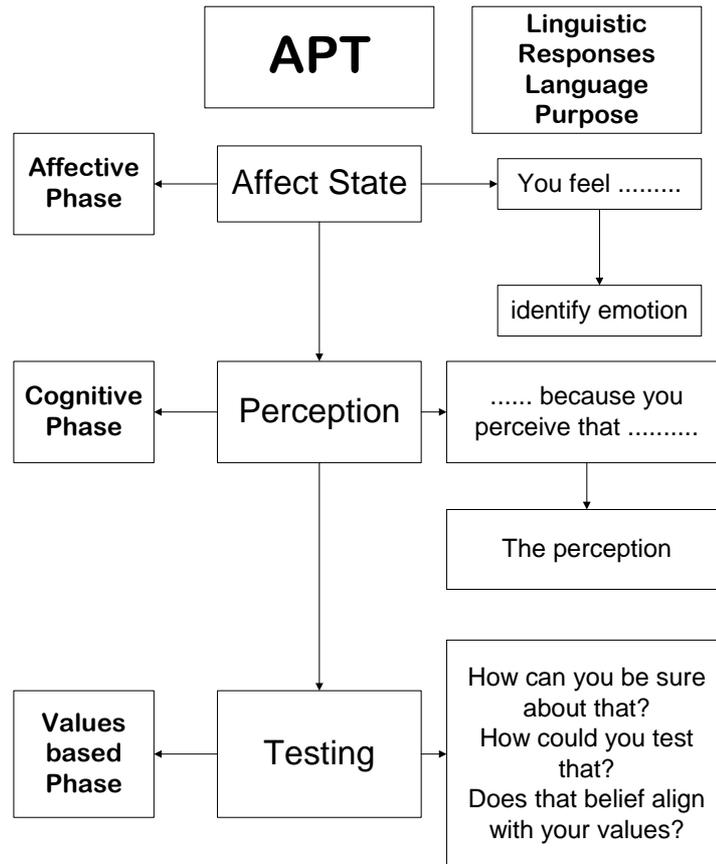**Values based Phase called Action**

	ETA		Linguistic Responses Language Purpose

Affective Phase ← Empathic

You feel ....

↓

identify emotion

Cognitive Phase ← Thoughts → ...... because you believe that you should ....

↓

The belief being expressed

Values based Phase ← Action → What do you believe should happen? What would that look like? Will that work for you?
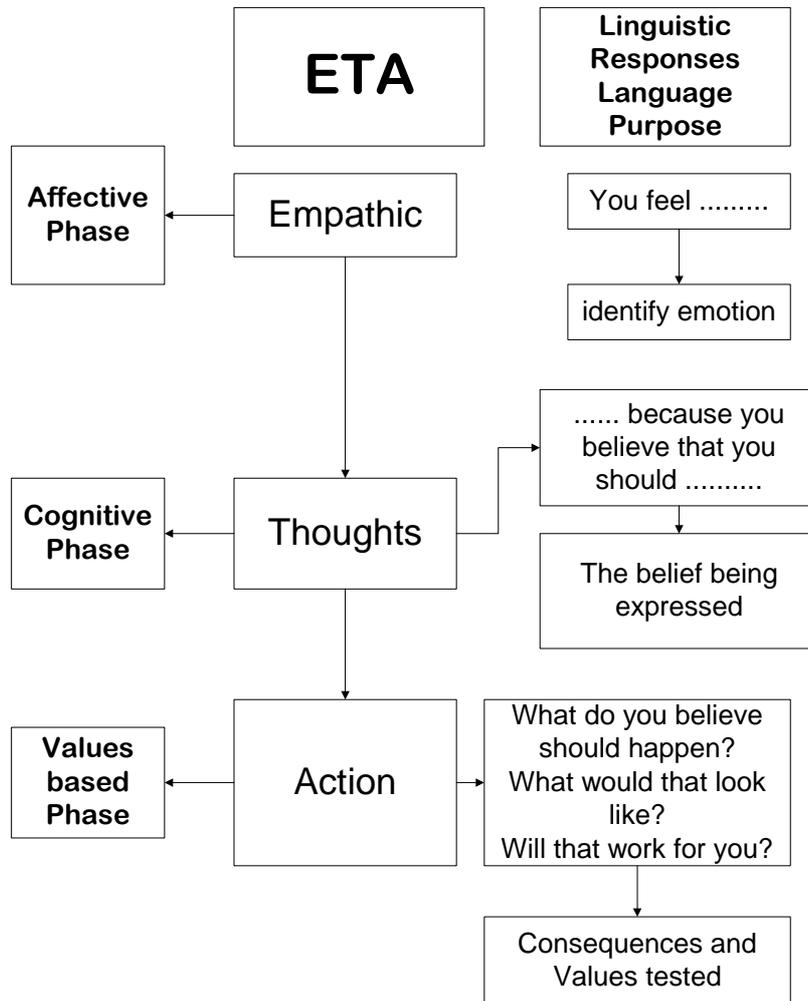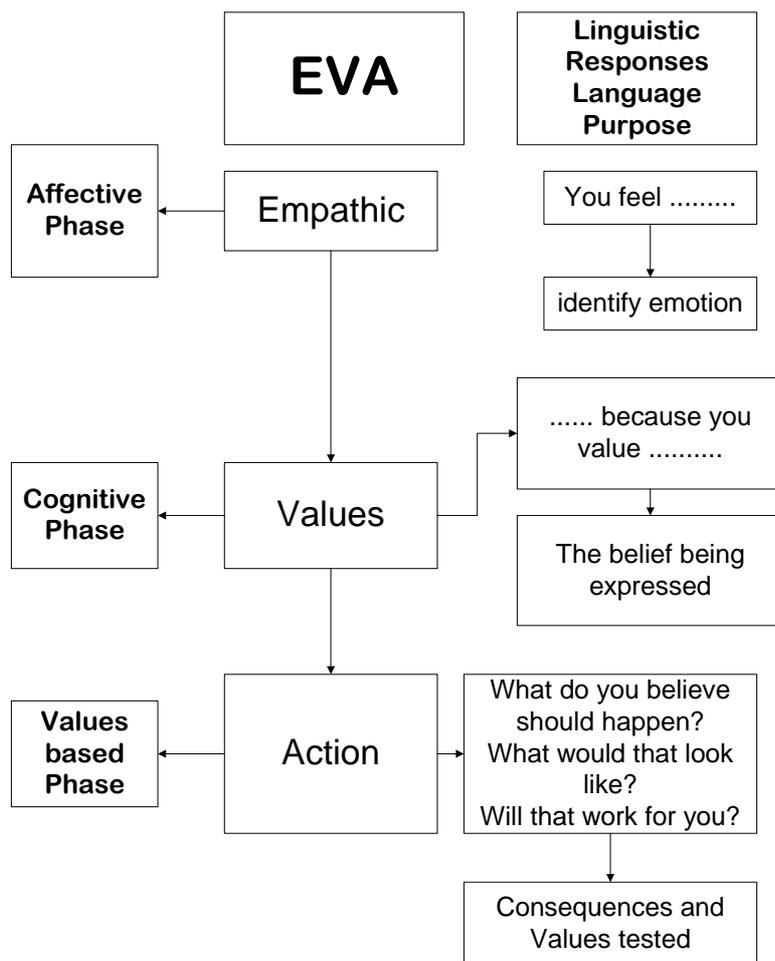
↓

Consequences and Values tested

Figure 10: **The EVA model depicting the Affective-Cognitive-Values based Phases**
Affective Phase called Empathic
Cognitive Phase called Values
Values based Phase called Action

	EVA	Linguistic Responses Language Purpose
Affective Phase	Empathic	You feel .... → identify emotion
Cognitive Phase	Values	...... because you value .... → The belief being expressed
Values based Phase	Action	What do you believe should happen? What would that look like? Will that work for you? → Consequences and Values tested

As can be seen from the above models, each leads to a consideration of values, and as such moves from emotion(s) expression and the associated existential angst

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into ethics and morals through a consideration of values. This movement to a consideration of values accords with Russell's (2001) premise that values are the foundation for decision-making and Frankl's (1955, 1963, 1969 & 1992) beliefs about values, personal coping and human development.

These approaches are also based on the Language-Emotion-Thought model (Kibby & Hartel 2002) that showed a profound relationship between affect, cognition and behaviour.

Summary responding to Emotion(s) Triggering Events

This paper presents coaching techniques that fulfill the imperatives proposed by Ledgerwood (2003) and Jackson (2003) and provide tools that coaches can use to ensure clients consider values, ethics and morals. They are Noetic (spiritual) skills (see Kibby and Hartel 2003a and 2004a) of the new millennium which provide an opportunity to address the moral and ethical crisis that leadership and management found itself in during the last millennium.

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