

# **CASE STUDY 1: COACHING USING CAREER THEORIES**

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Lydia was 30 years old and worked in Corporate HR for the oil sector. She was not fulfilled in her job however and spoke of doing it for the bonuses rather than for the meaning. She now wants to do something that gives her pleasure, such as opening a café. She was, however, aware that this was financially risky. She was in the contemplative stage of career change (Barclay et al., 2011) and has a kaleidoscope career (Maneiro and Sullivan cited in Yates, 2013). We agreed to have three sessions together and then review where we had reached. The GROW model (Whitmore, 2002) structured our sessions and was supplemented with the Careers-style Interview (Savickas, 1998) and Appreciative Coaching (Orem et al., 2007). These were chosen due to her wanting to identify options and her being in the process of constructing her 'dream' career (Savickas et al., 2009) and needing to reframe things more positively.

Planned Happenstance (Mitchell et al., 1999) theory was integrated into the coaching conversations, which was appropriate to Lydia as she said that she kept 'falling into one corporate job after another with no real planning'. She now wants to pursue her dream and construct her own career. This decision however comes with some anxiety. Therefore her anxiety needed to be normalised in the initial sessions as suggested by Planned Happenstance theory (Mitchell et al., 1999). The GROW model helped here as originally she was slightly overwhelmed with the big task ahead of her.

We acknowledged her partner's support in later sessions. I asked 'what does your partner think you should do?' She said 'just do it'. This confirms Brosseau's (2012) theory (as cited in Yates, 2013) that male partners encourage their partners to 'go for it!' What was interesting was that when I asked her what she did currently, she said 'I work in corporate HR...' which suggests that her professional and personal identity were not aligned (Pizzolato, 2006).

I wondered whether her not having high career wellbeing was affecting her overall wellbeing (Rath and Harter, 2010) as she spoke of often feeling quite low due to not pursuing her passion (Bronson, 2004).

The Career Style interview revealed that her 'hero' was 'Storme from X Men'. The qualities, 'independent, in control and strong' matched the coachee's ego ideals. She would, however need to sacrifice her career when she and her partner have children as her partner wants to continue progressing his career. In some respects this clashes with her ego ideals. I wondered whether this was why she wanted to pursue her dream now as Hakim (2006, cited in Yates, 2013) reported that only 20% of women want to go back to work compared with 80% of men or whether she was experiencing a quarter-life crisis (Robbins and Wilner, 2001). I noted there was no mention of her family.

Within the future sessions I used Appreciative Coaching in order for her to see her dream more positively. I also used storyboarding to help implement the change. I gave her some inter-sessional tasks to do along the way such as the strengths questionnaire (Peterson and Seligman, 2004) which identified her top strengths and how she can use those to actualise her dream. I also asked her to complete the 'approaches to work' questionnaire (Money et al., 2009) and found that she does not get any meaning or pleasure from her current job and the only engagement comes from her team (Roelen et al., 2008). She said that she was only in the job for the money and since the bonuses had been cut, she thought, 'what is the point? I may as well do something I'm passionate about!'

Her feedback since the three sessions was that she found them helpful and it confirmed to her to 'just do it!' When she began sessions with me, she was very much in the contemplative stages of career change. As the sessions progressed, she moved to the preparation stage and she is now planning to move abroad with the view to setting up a café over there.

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