

CASE STUDY 22: COACHING FOR WELLBEING

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Barry is a 49-year-old middle manager (operations) for a global manufacturing company. Barry, who has been with the company for 12 years, has recently been required to attend multiple professional development and leadership initiatives, due to his promotion to a management role two years earlier.

Barry refers to himself as ‘rational, realistic and pragmatic’, which in many ways has served him well with his previous roles in the manufacturing sector. Barry is married and has three secondary school-aged children. In the past twelve months Barry has stated that he has become very frustrated with his work roles, some of his work colleagues and the employer in general. He says that some of the restructuring and decisions make no sense, and at times he does not know why he bothers. He mentioned that he is starting to procrastinate on projects because things are changing too much. Barry also says he sits now for hours without even walking. He has started to feel resentful about getting home so late – and stated that whilst his wife is supportive, he knows that she does not like it either.

Barry has been offered six sessions of individual coaching for wellbeing, as part of the professional development and workplace wellbeing program. He is somewhat sceptical, but states that he is willing to ‘give it a go’ (see Chapter 14 for an account of what was covered in each session).

Initially Barry was quite ambivalent about the coaching session and whether he was wasting his time and the time of the coach. The first session explored the role of coaching, what it was and was not, particularly that it was not counselling. Several motivational interviewing approaches were used including decisional balance to help Barry explicate what could be useful around continuing. Once Barry was given practical tasks to do, including the Realise2 homework exercises his engagement increased significantly. Barry, being quite analytical and practical in nature, was able to embrace the discussion of

positive and negative emotions through their measurement, enabling further free flowing discussion later about his negative emotions about his employer and some work colleagues.

Barry embraced the concept of strengths, and it became clear that he had lost sight of several of his unrealised strengths. Barry was so keen on this instrument that he recommended it to the human resources manager. A noticeable change in Barry's demeanour became evident once he started exploring strengths use around some of his key challenges.

Barry described how recently he could see that he was having more negative emotions. It was an 'a-ha! moment' for Barry to realise that they were exactly that, emotions, which would come and go, and not permanent characteristics of his workplace or his colleagues.

Barry's coach challenged him on whether he was simply working too long hours. Upon reflection Barry stated that he thought this was what was required for management positions. Homework which Barry reluctantly completed focused on re-discussing work hours with his immediate boss, and also his wife. Barry was surprised by his boss who mentioned that Barry was reviewed on performance and not on hours. Barry negotiated some later afternoon re-arrangements with his wife, including an evening meal out each week and one late work night a week. Barry also committed to changing his email use patterns to allocated hours, and significantly improved use of filters.

Barry had recognised after reading a book entitled *Eat, Move, Sleep* that he was simply sitting too much. He committed to installing some self-regulatory software on his computer which prompted him to move and stretch regularly. After some technical difficulties, Barry persisted to install and commence using this software.

A major issue that had led to Barry feeling despondent and that work had lost its meaning was the speed of change, and increased uncertainty about his workplace, in terms of restructures and operational changes. Barry was able to recognise how his increased negative emotions were impacting on this and maintaining a stuck position. In addition to some brief cognitive restructuring, Barry was asked to explore what was meaningful to him about his work and do some planning regarding job-recrafting to better use his personal strengths at work. Barry mentioned that this would take some time, but he was committing to that journey beyond the coaching sessions.

During coaching Barry was increasingly engaged, and homework formed a central part of the sessions. Barry was more visual than verbal, and mind-mapping on his computer and drawing diagrams on whiteboards during the sessions proved to be very important.