

Introducing time perspective coaching: A new approach to improve time management and enhance well-being

Ilona Boniwell, Positran, rue de la Vallée Penaut, 78770 Goupillières, France.

Evgeny Osin, Psychology Department, NRU Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia.

Anna Sircova, Time Perspective Network, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Contact email: i.boniwell@gmail.com

Abstract

This article provides an overview of coaching methods and interventions that address different forms of imbalance in clients' time perspectives, proposing a fresh look on dealing with multiple time management issues. We selected different coaching intervention techniques according to the time perspective theory, which distinguishes between five different time perspectives: Past Negative, Past Positive, Present Fatalistic, Present Hedonistic and Future. The selection was made based on the literature review and expertise gained through practical experience of coaching. As a result, our paper offers a step-by-step guide for practitioners on how to start with time perspective coaching: from performing initial diagnostics, to distinguishing problems associated with excessive reliance on particular time frames and providing practical tools that can help individuals to overcome the negative consequences associated with them. This paper presents an alternative approach to working with time management related issues and to developing a healthier relationship with time in general. Research shows that having a balanced time perspective improves well-being and productivity on many levels: work-related, social and personal.

Key words: Time perspective coaching, interventions, balanced time perspective, temporal bias, coaching questions, time management coaching.

Introduction

Time plays a central role in our lives and many coaches notice that the number of clients with one or several temporal-related problems is on the increase (Boniwell, 2005). Issues vary from not meeting deadlines, not being able to complete a to-do-list or get to a zero-email inbox, living things up until the last minute, forgetting about important events of significant others, drifting to a more interesting task, etc. Not surprisingly, time management is never out of fashion in the self-help book section, it only gets more and more specialised: titles suggest that system administrators, entrepreneurs, salespeople, teachers, students, engineers, event planners, etc. have very different issues related to time management and strive to offer unique solutions.

With a multitude of time management programmes on offer, their evaluation remains very limited. Furthermore, the effects of such training on developing actual skills are rarely considered (Claessens,

The current issue and full text archive of this journal is available at
<http://business.brookes.ac.uk/ijebcm>

2004). The only meta-review of time management research to date (Claessens et al., 2007) identifies only 32 empirical studies (between 1982 and 2004) on time management. Claessens et al demonstrate that time management behaviours relate positively to perceived control of time, job satisfaction, and health, and negatively to stress. However, the relationship to performance at work is not clear. Time management training appears to improve time management skills according to self-report (Hanel, 1982; Hall & Hursch, 1982; Bost, 1984), but it does not automatically lead to better accomplishment. Studies focusing on the improvements in objective outcomes show that time management training has little or no effect on time management behaviours, job satisfaction or performance (Macan, 1994, 1996; Macan et al, 1990). This is notable, considering the financial and other resources invested by companies into time management training of their staff. It also raises an important question: how come time management training has such a limited impact?

One possible explanation may be in following the so-called “objective paradigm of time” and thus having an incorrect focus – on behaviour rather than the psychology of time, and on efficiency rather than overall balance and satisfaction. We would like to go as far as to suggest a prominence of an implicit notion that if we could just get really, really organized, we could turn ourselves into 24//7 productivity machines.

Secondly, time management advocates rather general strategies, often underpinned by the “one size fits all” principle. Most new research points towards interventions based on an understanding of an individual’s specific needs (Lyubomirsky, 2008). We believe that time perspective-based coaching offers an opportunity to develop interventions that are more personalised, because they take into account the complexity of individual time perspective (TP) profiles. These profiles can be determined by using the free Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI, Zimbardo and Boyd, 1999), which is considered one of the most comprehensive measures of time perspective available today (McGrath & Tschan, 2004) and validated across 24 different countries (Sircova et al, 2014).

Zimbardo & Boyd (1999, p. 1271). argue that “time perspective is a fundamental dimension in the construction of psychological time, emerges from cognitive processes partitioning human experience into past, present and future temporal frames” Some individuals are more oriented towards the future, other focus more on the present or on the past. ZTPI was developed based on Kurt Lewin’s life-space theory (1951), and it overcomes most of the limitations of other measures of TP by applying a multidimensional approach. The scale consists of 56 items with a five-point Likert scale and measuring five temporal frames: Past-Negative, Past-Positive, Present-Fatalistic, Present-Hedonistic, and Future. Two aspects of the past orientation include: negative past orientation, in which the past is predominantly seen as unpleasant and aversive, and positive thoughts about the past, in which past experiences are seen in a nostalgic, rosy, and pleasant way. The present can be perceived in a hedonistic way, as full of pleasure, enjoying the moment without remorse for later consequences of actual behaviour. Alternatively, one can have a fatalistic present orientation, strongly believing in fate and having a resigned attitude toward the present with the belief that neither present nor future events can be changed or influenced. The fifth factor is future orientation, characterised by having goals and making plans for the future, and behaving so as to increase the chances of carrying out one’s plans and realising their goals (Zimbardo, & Boyd, 1999). Carelli, Wiberg and Wiberg have introduced an additional dimension – Future Negative (Carelli, Wiberg, Wiberg, 2011) – elevated when thinking about future brings worries, anxiety and anticipation of negative outcomes.

Despite a vast array of studies on time perspective, there is a distinct lack of papers that address practical applications of this concept (Boniwell, 2005; Schmidt & Werner, 2007). To address this problem, this article will consider ways time perspective issues may be confronted in coaching, focusing on the interventions and questions targeting specific TP dimensions.

Methodology

To address the lack of empirical literature and taking into account the subjective nature of coaching interventions, we present our approach as both theory based and integrating years of personal experience of being a coach and teaching coaches (the first author). Guided by the theory of time perspective proposed by Kurt Lewin (1951) and further developed by Philip Zimbardo (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999; Zimbardo & Boyd, 2008; Zimbardo, Sword & Sword, 2012) we conducted an extensive review of evidence-based interventions that have been shown to enhance different aspects of well-functioning and can be used in one-to-one coaching. In addition, we compiled a list of questions that address different aspects of the multidimensional construct of time perspective. The resulting review is presented as a step-by-step guide of how to implement time perspective coaching in practice. We describe the method of time perspective diagnostics, explain how to “read” the ZTPI scores, provide an overview of problems that can arise if a client over relies on a particular time frame and suggest methods of dealing with them, discussing a range of possible interventions that can be used to address a particular issue when working with a client.

Getting started with TP coaching

The first step is exploring the concept of TP together with the client, either by introducing the concept in a general fashion or by encouraging the client to complete a validated scale. The Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI) (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999) can be used to assess their individual TP profile. ZTPI is available for free on the Time Paradox website on its own¹ or as part of more comprehensive diagnostics tool (for a fee) for coaches and clients, such as the Time Intelligence Report², which also measures 10 other dimensions of structuring time and provides suggestions on improving personal time management.

The coach may choose an observation and/or questioning approach to gain an insight into the client’s TP. For instance, what stories a client is telling and re-telling to him/herself and how often? What is the tone of those stories – positive, neutral or negative? How often does the client find him/herself thinking about the past? How often, do what kinds of memories come to his or her mind (past TP, negative or positive)? Given a choice between an attractive ‘going out’ proposition vs. completing an important project, what is the likely response (potentially showing the difference between the present positive TP and future TP)? How far in the future does the client project their hopes and aspirations (future TP)? What does the client feel they need to stop, start and continue doing in their daily routine to achieve the goals they hope to achieve?

If the client completes ZTPI on-line, it is recommended that they bring a printout with their results to the next coaching session. The basic conversation about the results would be around helping the client to understand his/her profile (unless the coach has psychometric training, in which case they can take this conversation further):

a) Seeing if the client’s results on each of the TP dimensions are higher or lower than the 50th percentile, the 16th/84th percentiles, and 2nd/98th percentiles? It is important to explain to the client that the absolute values are not important in comparison to the relative values, and that being in the top percentile on one of the “negative” dimensions is not the same as a similar position on one of the “positive” ones.

¹ <http://www.thetimeparadox.com/zimbardo-time-perspective-inventory/>

² <http://www.timeintelligence.co.uk/>

b) Comparing the client's profile with the Balanced Time Perspective or so-called "Ideal Time Perspective" profile and exploring together to what extent the ideal profile appears relevant to the client (we should not necessarily assume that it always would).

The role of the coach is not so much to communicate and explain the ZTPI results to the client, but rather to accompany the client in trying to make sense of their own results, using emerging reactions as triggers for deepening the coaching conversation. It may also happen that the client would disagree with the outcomes of the test. This may be due to different factors, such as English being the second language, completing the test too fast, or without paying much attention to the questions. However, it may also indicate the lack of awareness or acceptance of the reality. The most helpful would be to explore both the reaction of the client and their current vision of themselves, probing as appropriate.

Subsequent coaching work can centre around raising awareness of some unproductive responses associated with habitual temporal orientations; devising strategies to develop under-used temporal zones; finding the links and connections between past, present and future temporal zones in order to develop continuity in the client's life narrative; questioning the dominance of the future TP in Western societies and evaluating its impact on the individual life (Boniwell, 2005).

In the following sections we will consider these avenues for each of the major five TPs, suggesting possible interventions and questions, and finally discussing tools and questions for increasing the balanced TP. These interventions are summarised in Table 1, but are discussed in detail below.

Coaching around the Past Negative TP

The Past Negative TP reflects a generally negative, pessimistic and aversive attitude towards the past, which may be based on actual traumatic life events or a negative reconstruction of past occurrences (Zimbardo & Boyd, 2008). If a client exhibits a strong Past Negative perspective and his or her coach does not have a background in counselling or psychotherapy, this might be a strong indicator for referring this client to a therapist. Otherwise, the coaching may proceed using the following evidence-based interventions: expressive writing, forgiveness exercises and positive portfolio.

The originator of the *expressive writing* Professor James Pennebaker (1997; 2004), has shown that writing can organise thoughts and emotions and help find meaning in tragic experiences. Depression, anxiety and rumination decrease dramatically after a series of corresponding exercises. If one has experienced a particular adversity, the coach may suggest that over the next few days the client tries writing about their deepest emotions and thoughts that influenced their life the most. In this writing, the client can really let go and explore the event and how it has affected him or her. This event might be explored in the context of their childhood, child-parent relationships, people they have loved or even their career. They should write for a minimum of 20 min over four consecutive days (although they may choose write for longer and over a longer period of time). However, if the tragedy is too raw, it is best to wait until one is emotionally ready to take such a step.

Forgiveness reduces anger, hostility, depression, anxiety and negative emotions. It is better for well-being than going through life harbouring grudges and contemplating revenge (Witvliet, Ludwig & Vander Laan, 2001). Forgiving people are happier, more agreeable and serene. Forgiveness is also linked to physical health benefits such as a reduction in blood pressure levels and it may aid in cardiovascular recovery from stress (Friedberg, Suchday & Shelov, 2007). We propose that forgiveness can be taught, and can be integrated into coaching sessions. Clients can be encouraged to read about various public figures who have practised forgiveness, such as Nelson Mandela or Mahatma Gandhi, imagining forgiving the wrongdoer or practising empathising in their daily life – avoiding jumping to conclusions if someone does something they don't understand well.

Time Perspective	Description	Coaching Methods and Interventions
Past Negative	Negative, pessimistic and aversive attitude towards the past; may be based on actual traumatic life events or a negative reconstruction of past events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressive writing • Forgiveness letter • Positive portfolio • Questions reflecting on regret
Past Positive	Focus on family, tradition, history and continuity of self over time. It reflects a warm, pleasurable, often sentimental view of one's past, with an emphasis on maintaining relationships with family and friends.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive portfolio • Positive reminiscence • "What went well" exercise • Gratitude visit • Family tree • Birthdays calendar • Involvement in community projects / events
Present Fatalistic	Helplessness, hopelessness and a belief that spiritual, governmental or other outside forces control one's life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing passive activities (e.g. TV watching) • Developing the capacity for choice, autonomy and responsibility • Motivational interviewing • Enhancing meaningfulness
Present Hedonistic	Live in and for the moment, pleasure seeking, high intensity activities, new sensations and disregard of future consequences.	<p>To decrease:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal setting • Financial planning • Enhancing meaningfulness <p>To increase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Savouring (sharing with others, memory building, self-congratulating, sharpening perceptions, absorption) • Playlist
Future	Delay of gratification, ability to postpone immediate pleasures for the sake of pursuing important goals. It involves active goal-setting and prioritizing, development of action plans and implementation of these plans in a step-by-step manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarification of life priorities • Clarification of personal goals • Future best self/best possible self • Funeral service/epitaph • Clarification of planning skills • Developing instrumental skills (i.e. prioritizing, self-regulation) • Worry reduction • Dealing with guilt
Balanced TP	Ability to balance the present-day enjoyment with sacrificing time to long-term goals; flexibility and switch-ability between different TPs depending on the situation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working on specific TPs • Developing cognitive flexibility • Mindfulness techniques • Other techniques promoting flexible self-regulation

Table 1: Coaching interventions for different time perspective profiles

An effective forgiveness exercise involves writing a *forgiveness letter* to a person a coachee believe had wronged them, being specific about the hurt, how this made them feel and what they have learnt from the experience (McCullough & Witvliet, 2002). The written letter can be read out and discussed during a coaching session. There is little evidence that actually sending the letter is helpful and may make things worse.

Frederickson (2009) recommends creating a personal *positive portfolio*, unique for each individual and derived from his or her previous experience of positive emotions. It is a collection of texts, poetry,

quotes, images, music or objects, anything that can remind the client of a positive emotion they would like to focus on, such as serenity, inspiration, awe, joy, love, gratitude, security, safety, pride, empowerment, ebullience, etc. Including work-related activities into portfolio would partially depend on the context - life or executive coaching. The portfolio can be created for one or several of these emotions, and can be utilised during the moments of depression or sadness to remind oneself of the good times in life. The coach can use the following general questions guidelines:

Consider your life as a whole and think about (one of the positive emotions here). Think about the times you felt it clearly and deeply. What were the triggers of those nourishing states?
When was the last time you felt this emotion?
Where were you?
What were you doing?
What was happening?
What objects or mementos would remind you of this emotion?
How could you assemble them together?
What could you do right now to cultivate this feeling?

Fredrickson (2009) suggests further questions for tapping into particular emotions, for example:

When have things truly gone your way, perhaps even better than you expected? (joy)
When do you feel the urge to replay a kindness? What inspires you to get creative about giving back? (gratitude)
When have you felt fully at peace and serene, truly content with where and who you are? (serenity)
When have you felt intensely open and alive, as though your own inner horizons were expanding before your eyes? (interest)
What do you notice first when you enter a bookstore or browse through your favourite magazines? (curiosity)
When faced with uncertainty, when you have feared the worst but still somehow believed that things could change for the good? (hope)
What makes you hold your head high and stand up tall? What makes you want to share your good news with others? (pride)
What makes you feel silly and fun-loving? (amusement)
When have you come across true human excellence or virtue? (inspiration)
When have you felt part of something much larger than yourself? (awe)
When have you felt close, safe, and secure within your relationship, trusting? (love)

Regret is another aspect of Past Negative TP that can also affect well-being negatively, since it is associated with depression and anxiety (Roese et al., 2009). It can be triggered by one's own actions, such as having made a mistake or missing a good opportunity. Getting caught up in regret is the inability to let go, to forgive oneself for what is seen as a mistake from the present situation perspective. Once again, if this tendency is particularly strong, it is better to refer the client to a therapist. A coach may help the client to turn regret into a learning experience by reflecting on the following questions together:

Was it possible to recognize that the choice you made was wrong at the moment you were making it?
Was there a valid reason for making the choice you made? (forgiving oneself)
Is there something you can learn from this experience? What advice would you give to a person who finds him/herself in the same situation? (learning from experience)
If you would ever encounter a similar situation in the future, how would you recognize it and what would you do?

Coaching interventions around the Past Positive TP

The Past Positive TP is associated with focus on family, tradition, history and continuity of self over time. It reflects a warm, pleasurable, often sentimental view of one's past, with an emphasis on maintaining relationships with family and friends. The Past Positive TP facilitates interaction in the course of meaningful activity, enables long-lasting social ties, contributes to creating a strong sense of community and increases well-being (Boyd & Zimbardo, 2005; Zimbardo & Boyd, 2008). It has the strongest association with well-being, making it the foundation on which well-being can be developed (Boniwell et al, 2010). Clients low on Past Positive are frequently over-focused on the future, and/or present, and may need help to reconnect with their past (if they desire to do so, of course).

The positive portfolio intervention would also serve well for the development of the Past Positive TP. Further work can be done to enhance so-called *positive reminiscence*. Sonia Lyubomirsky's studies (2008) show that analysing one's past does not necessarily enhance happiness, whilst replaying or reliving positive life events, as though rewinding videotape, enhances joy. In coaching sessions, positive reminiscence can be facilitated by asking questions such as:

What are some of the things from your past that bring a smile on your face?

Breaking your past into life stages (pre-school, primary school, teenage years, youth, etc.), what are the most memorable positive experiences that come to your mind?

How would you connect the dots of your life, in the words of Steve Jobs? What is the positive meaning of the events and choices of your past that didn't make sense at the time, but somehow make perfect sense now?

A variation of *what went well* exercise is one of the most effective coaching techniques (Seligman et al, 2005; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2004). It prompts to focus on the positive things of the recent past. Research demonstrates that it increases happiness and decreases depressive symptoms for up to six months (Seligman et al, 2005). The instructions should be given a week ahead of the next coaching session. For the duration of one week, the client is asked to look back at their day just before going to bed and to find three things that went well for them during the day. They need to write them down and reflect on why did the good thing happen, who or what they can be grateful to for this (their own role, as well as contribution made by other people). The results can then be discussed with the coach a week later.

The practice of gratitude is one of the dominant well-being levers (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). It prompts to step back and reflect upon what and whom people have in their life, as well as counteract complacency and 'taken-for-grantedness'. One of the most effective exercises to increase well-being is *the gratitude visit* (Seligman et al., 2005). It requires a client to write a letter to someone they never properly thanked. Ideally then they should read the letter out loud in person to this individual or mail it. However, the exercise works even if they don't send the letter (Lyubomirsky, Sousa, & Dickerhoof, 2006). This exercise can be integrated into a coaching session in several forms (for example, the letter can be first read out loud and discussed with the coach).

Being connected with people from the past, family, traditions, and community is a fundamental aspect of the Past Positive TP (Boyd & Zimbardo, 2005). Many coaching interventions can be directed towards these issues, ranging from creating *a family tree*, helping a client to embark on creating a *birthdays calendar* or encouraging them to participate in *community projects or events*. The following questions and prompts can be of assistance:

Tell me about your earliest memory of your best friend.

Who are the people from your past with whom you would like to reconnect? How would you like to proceed?

The current issue and full text archive of this journal is available at
<http://business.brookes.ac.uk/ijebcm>

[International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring](#)

Vol. 12, No. 2, August 2014

Page 30

How do you feel about traditions? Do you prefer to engage with existing traditions (which ones and why?) or create your own ones (how would you go about that?)?
What part of your neighbourhood environment you connect with the most? Why?

Coaching interventions around the Present Fatalistic TP

Helplessness, hopelessness and a belief that spiritual, governmental or other outside forces control one's life constitute the Present Fatalistic TP (Boyd & Zimbardo, 2005). This TP is negatively associated with well-being, thus it is generally recommended to work on its reduction (Boniwell et al, 2010). The coaching interventions should focus on reducing the passive activities, such as watching TV, and on developing autonomy and responsibility.

Watching TV is the king of time-wasters, but does not rate high in terms of pleasure (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). Already in 1990's nearly a third of all free time was reported as being spent in front of the television (Tyrrell, 1995). Currently, the average daily time spent in front of TV is 3 hours 32 minutes in France, 4 hours in the UK and 5 hours 11 minutes in the US, and accounting for 10 years of watching TV as opposed to 9 years of working in an average lifetime. TV viewing is associated with boredom, lack of concentration, thought clarity and flow, fewer social ties, poorer sleep, higher materialism, fear of death and obesity, and increase in upwards social comparison (Desmurget, 2012).

Coaching can help in identifying and challenging time spent on unproductive activities, which is especially relevant to clients whose Present Fatalistic TP is elevated. *Reduction of TV watching* would begin with raising the client's awareness of their TV watching habits and questioning whether this time is really satisfying to them. Provided the client is motivated to moderate this habit, possible solutions could be identified through joint brainstorming, which could include: not watching TV every night; not switching the TV on mindlessly upon arriving home from work; selecting the programmes one would like to watch in advance and sticking to the choices made; switching the TV off immediately after the end of a watched programme, thus preventing channel-hopping; taking up a new hobby to distract from habitual activities such as TV watching (the same can be applied to some forms of Internet-surfing).

Developing the *capacity for choice and autonomy* has a stronger effect than simply learning specific behaviours (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Autonomous people tend to work harder and persist longer in order to get what they want and to succeed. The coaching would first focus on recognising the fact that one always has a choice. Making no choice is also a choice, a choice to allow other people or events decide for them. It is important to identify and challenge their self-talk: "I have no choice" or "There's nothing I can do". Then, the task is to step back, remind oneself that one does have some degree of control, and it is their choice whether they exercise it or not.

Taking *responsibility* for one's time means adopting a proactive rather than reactive attitude in relation to it, preventing oneself from feeling over stressed. McFadden and Atchley quote a man in his eighties saying: "You become free of time when you realise that time is in you, not you in time" (2001, p. 168). It may require a shift in one's attitudes towards responsibility in general and should be carefully supported. This is standard practice in some types of psychotherapy (e.g. Motivational Interviewing), but to the authors' knowledge this has rarely made its way into time management programmes. The following questions may help to examine different life situations, guiding the client towards responsibility for the way they react to and deal with the situation:

What happened?
What can you learn?
What assumptions are you making?
How else can you think about this situation?
What is the other person thinking, feeling, needing, and wanting?

The current issue and full text archive of this journal is available at
<http://business.brookes.ac.uk/ijebcm>

What is possible?
What are you responsible for?
What are your choices?

A fatalistic attitude may be associated with lack of meaning (Steger, Kashdan, Sullivan & Lorentz, 2008), when it is difficult to make autonomous choices because a person does not see their value. The following questions could be used:

Why do you do this?
Do you really like doing this? Do you do it because you experience that this is good for you?
Do you feel like this activity is right for you? Are you happy with the way you use your time?
Will you be happy in several years with the way you spend your time at present?
What would be your best option, the best thing you could do in this situation? What specific steps you could take in that direction?

Coaching interventions around the Present Hedonistic TP

The Present Hedonistic person lives in and for the moment, is a pleasure seeker, and enjoys high intensity activities and new sensations. The Present Hedonistic TP is associated with the affective aspects of well-being; however, the down side is the lack of regard for future consequences (Zimbardo & Boyd, 2008). The coaching interventions might focus either on decreasing or increasing this TP, depending on the client's profile.

Decreasing the present-hedonic orientation might not be straightforward. Different addictions (cigarettes, drugs, sex, etc.) are rather common (Boyd & Zimbardo, 2005), thus a referral to specialist services might be necessary. Coaching interventions to *decrease* the Present Hedonistic TP would be similar to the ones used to *increase* the Future TP, focusing on goal setting, financial planning, finding a meaning in life or even identifying a higher (spiritual) calling. Some of the questions may include:

Where do you see yourself in five years time?
How do you plan to get there? How does your present relate to it?
What else can you do to achieve the same satisfaction as you experience through...?

On the other hand, coaching someone to live more in the 'here and now' can be achieved by helping them to accept and find the enjoyment in the present with questions such as:

What energises you in the present?
What gives you pleasure?
What brings you joy? What makes you smile so broadly, that you end up with a belly-laugh?
How can the others help you to enjoy the present?
What activity gives you the most satisfaction?

One effective exercise to develop the Present Hedonistic TP is *savouring*. According to Bryant and Veroff (2007, p.2) "people have capacities to attend, appreciate and enhance the positive experiences in their lives". Savouring is about really noticing, appreciating and enhancing the positive experiences in one's life. By savouring we slow down intentionally, consciously paying attention to all our senses (touch, taste, sight, sound, smell). We stretch out the experience, and concentrate on noticing what it is exactly that we enjoy (sipping a glass of wine, stroking a cat, or thinking of the time we scored a goal for the school rugby team). Depending on the type of activity, it is possible to engage physically (e.g. taking a warm bubble bath) or mentally (e.g. listening to a beautiful piece of music).

There are several techniques that promote savouring. *Sharing with others* involves seeking out others to share the experience, telling them how much one values the moment. A desire to share the

pleasure makes us more attentive to all the pleasurable details of the experience. *Memory building* involves taking mental photographs of the event to reminisce about it later. *Self-congratulation* is about not being afraid of pride and acknowledging the present achievement. *Sharpening perceptions* implicates focusing on certain elements of an immediate experience and blocking out others. *Absorption* is about letting oneself get totally immersed and trying not to think, but just sense. Importantly, savouring is different from mindfulness - it focuses solely on the stimuli that generate positive affect.

Another intervention, the *playlist*, comes from the Quality of Life Therapy (Frisch, 2005; Frisch, 1998; Frisch et al., 2005). It suggests that adults spend too little time “playing” in our lives; with a tendency to leave the fun stuff to children. However, recreational activities are essential ways to relax, have fun, forget worries, be creative and learn something new. A coachee can be asked to list the activities they enjoy as a recreational outlet, such as visiting one’s favourite (or new) sections of a book, video, or music store; playing board games, singing, dancing, visiting a museum, going to an antique sale, doing woodwork, hiking, bird or people watching, bowling, reading, baking, scrap booking, looking at pictures, cuddling and many others. Coaching may be used to both help generate ideas for activities, as well as making sure the playlist is put into practice.

Coaching interventions around the Future TP

The Future TP is associated with delay of gratification, ability to postpone immediate pleasures for the sake of pursuing important goals. It involves active goal setting and prioritising, development of action plans and the subsequent implementation of these plans in a step-by-step manner (Zimbardo & Boyd, 2008). The client needs to have or to work on the development of personality characteristics, such as perseverance, self-discipline, and self-regulation (impulse control), in order to make the new skills work.

Commitment to future plans can also be associated with anxiety, time pressure and frustration due to inability to cope with uncertainty and unexpected challenges (Zaleski, 1996). Commitment to goals that are not self-congruent (not aligned with true values or priorities) may lead to burnout (Längle, 2003). The future goals should be realistic and in line with the client’s true aspirations and life priorities. For some clients the interventions that aim at reducing Future TP should be applied.

Developing the future TP should commence with the clarification of one’s life priorities. They become the base for formulating meaningful personal goals. One possible intervention is *future best self*, or *best possible self* diary (Lyubomirsky, 2008). The client is asked to consider a desired future image of him/herself, imagining that everything has gone the way they hoped for, that they have achieved what they aimed for, and that their best potentials have come to be realised. The client is asked to write about this vision in a diary regularly, vividly imagining him/herself in the best possible future, for several weeks. Another intervention is based on Alfred Adler’s method of discovery of personal goals (Adler, 2013) and includes a sequence of questions to reflect upon:

What are your primary life priorities that are most important to you in your life?

If your situation was ideal and if you could do whatever you want, how would you prefer to spend the next three years?

Imagine that you found out you had only one year to live, starting from today. How would you spend this time and what would you do?

Based on your answer to the previous questions, how would you formulate your life priorities?

Other exercises are *funeral service* and *epitaph* (Frisch, 2005). The client is asked to imagine what they would want to be said about them in their eulogy or in a speech at their funeral service. What would they want to be written on their tombstone? A less radical approach is asking them to imagine

being 90, sitting in a rocking chair and remembering their life. What would they want to remember in order to experience fulfilment from a life well-lived? What would they be happy to be remembered for by others? These exercises help to formulate and visualise what they would like to leave behind, their possibility of making a unique and personal contribution to the world which provides a personally meaningful context for formulating specific goals.

Further a habit to formulate attainable goals and make specific, realistic short-term plans coordinated with life priorities should be developed. The following questions can help to explore the client's experience of planning:

- What is your experience of planning?
- What happened the last time you planned?
- What would happen if you planned?
- What would you advise your children about planning?

These questions help to reveal and work through the possible negative experiences associated with planning, such as sticking to plans that are too rigid, inability to cope with future anxiety that can paralyze, or with unexpected stressful circumstances (Baumgartner, Pieters & Bagozzi, 2008). Successful planning requires personality resources, for example, existential courage or hardiness (Maddi, 2013). As part of the hardiness training, situational reconstruction is used to help clients focus on stressful circumstances and to find ways towards transformational coping or compensation for the effects of stressors by means of taking a wider perspective, developing specific action plans and becoming more sensitive to positive feedback from one's actions.

In some cases the client needs instrumental skills, then the coach's role is in assisting with formulating the implementation intentions (e.g., 'Tomorrow I will have my first cigarette no sooner than 2 p.m.') instead of goal intentions ('I want to give up smoking tomorrow') (Gollwitzer, 1999), and to use time management interventions that facilitate prioritizing and setting aside time to work on goals perceived as important, but not urgent. Achieving goals and carrying out future plans also requires self-regulation and impulse control (Tice, Bratslavsky & Baumeister, 2001). Performing any activity diligently and regularly can develop these instrumental qualities. For instance, regular exercise contributes both to well-being and self-esteem by improving health and physical appearance (Penedo & Dahn, 2005), and also builds up a general capacity for self-regulation as a psychological resource (Muraven, Baumeister, & Tice, 1999).

Excessive commitment to future goals can also become an issue (Levine, 2008). Being busy is positive and can be encouraged, but to a degree. Freedman and Edwards (1988) showed an inverted-U relationship between time pressure and performance. An external viewpoint is often necessary to help recognise the point when time pressure begins to interfere with performance and well-being. The client may become caught up in a vicious circle where time pressure leads to decreased performance, more tasks accumulating, leading to increased time pressure.

Interventions such as *worry reduction* aimed at reducing time pressure may also be valuable. This exercise, part of Quality of Life Therapy (Frisch, 2005), is useful for those who feel that they spend too much time worrying. It allocates a limited period (e.g. a quarter or half-an-hour) every day for worrying. It should occur at the same time and in the same place, and any worrying should be postponed until then.

Time pressure can also produce guilt, which may accumulate in clients who find themselves unable to carry out all their plans and tasks. Guilt may lead to depression, undermining self-esteem and self-confidence (Gil-Monte, 2012). The coach may suggest that client tries to break the vicious circle by taking some time off in order to do absolutely nothing and restore their resources by participating only

in activities experienced as enjoyable. This pause may help the client to rediscover their priorities and realign their everyday activities with what is really important. Reflective questions can help to focus on the present:

- What is it about the present that does not serve the future?
- What is so uncomfortable about the present for you?
- What is currently missing/absent in your life? What are you missing out on?
- Imagine you have achieved all your goals... What then?
- What if all your plans failed?
- Is there something you might be trying to run away from?
- What if the unexpected happened?
- What if today was your last day, what would you do today?

Coaching interventions for Balanced TP

There are costs and sacrifices associated with emphasising any of the individual time perspectives, whether the focus is on achievement-oriented, “workaholic” future TP, on hedonistic present, or on nostalgic past. The *Balanced Time Perspective (BTP)* was proposed as a more positive and healthy variation: “In an optimally balanced time perspective, the past, present and future components blend and flexibly engage, depending on a situation’s demands and our needs and values” (Zimbardo, 2002, p.62). BTP is identified when an individual has elevated scores on the three positive temporal orientations – past positive, present hedonistic and future TP, and low scores on the past negative and present fatalistic orientations (Boniwell et al, 2010). Typical for people with BTP are positive emotional states, such as happiness, life satisfaction, psychological well-being, flow experiences, hope and optimism (Sircova & Mitina, 2008; Boniwell et al., 2010). These people also tend to have higher self-esteem, purpose in life, life goals, and sense of directedness (Sircova & Mitina, 2008). They are able to balance the present-day enjoyment with sacrificing their pleasure pursuits for the sake of long-term goals where necessary (Boniwell et al., 2010; Wiberg et al., 2012; Zhang et al., 2013). People with BTP consider that the best way to find something interesting and valuable for them is to be active in everything that is happening around them. They believe that if they struggle they can influence the consequences of the events and that the greatest satisfaction comes with wisdom, life experiences both positive and negative. Such life position helps reduce the ontological anxiety connected with future choice (Sircova & Mitina, 2008).

People with a BTP easily switch between different TPs, relevant to their current situation. When they are with their families and friends they are fully with them and value the opportunity to connect. When they take a day off work, they get involved in recreation rather than feel guilty about the work they haven’t done. When working and studying they engage in future perspective and work responsibly and productively (Boniwell & Zimbardo, 2004).

Coaching for BTP may begin with reviewing the clients’ TP profile and discovering specific aspects of TP that need to be worked on. The first possible strategy is to use interventions that give the client tools and develop skills specific to each of the TP dimensions (examples given above). The second strategy is to work on a few common traits that lower the negative TPs and simultaneously enhance positive ones, interventions that work towards the client finding his/her purpose in life, strengthening his/her hardiness and enhancing his/her overall satisfaction with life.

The third strategy is to concentrate on developing cognitive flexibility in shifting between the past, present and future mindsets. The aim is to enable the client to stay focused on one temporal dimension and to “switch off”, change their mindset when appropriate. The client needs to be aware and mindful of his/her needs and priorities, as well as of the characteristics of the situation. Meditation techniques can be of use in this case. There is a strong connection between being mindful and having a BTP profile

(Seema & Sircova, 2013). Mindfulness becomes a Holistic Time Perspective in this context, containing the past and the future (Zimbardo & Boyd, 2008). Mindfulness is usually defined as a receptive attention to, and awareness of, present events and experience (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Mindfulness meditation is a practice with long history (Kabat-Zinn, 2005; Neale, 2006). It entails the skills of paying attention purposefully, in the present moment and without judgement. As a result, clients can become more aware of both their life as a whole and of every specific situation with its possibilities and limitations. They become more present in life by making more sound decisions that integrate situational and personal context (see Neale, 2006, for a review of different mindfulness meditation models).

Mindfulness is not a single skill, and there is a variety of meditation techniques aimed at developing different components. Traditional mindfulness training begins with working on attentional stability and receptive awareness. Different aspects of experience are subsequently observed: body and physical sensations, mental states, and mind objects. As a result, the effortless insight of a non-attached self emerges that allows one to choose a so-called “middle way” (Goleman, 1988). Attentional stability and receptive awareness create the basis for cognitive flexibility, which refers to the mental ability to adjust thinking or attention by consciously managing one’s awareness and attentional focus. One possible procedure is the traditional focus phrase methodology (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). For instance, focusing on the phrase “I feel the air flowing in and out of my nose” can turn one’s attention toward the sensory experience in the present moment, whereas focusing on the phrase “I am ready to experience the feelings in my heart” facilitates non-judgmental attention towards emotional experience.

Time perspective is essentially a subjective tendency to focus on specific aspects of experience (memories, plans, pleasant feeling) (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). Mindfulness meditation interventions promote flexible self-regulation. The following questions can be used with clients:

- What are you experiencing right now?
- Why are you experiencing this feeling?
- What does this feeling tell you about what’s really important to you in your life?
- What do you really want to do right now, in this situation?
- Given your overall experience of yourself as a person, what is the best thing you could do now? What is the best way that you could choose for today?
- How can you make good use of your past experiences in what I want to achieve?
- What is the best way for you to allocate your time today?

By reflecting on these questions regularly, the client can gain a better integration of his/her past, present, and future into a meaningful and congruent whole. It is important to encourage the client to work with these questions outside of the coaching sessions as well.

Conclusion

The present paper intended to outline a strategy for coaches to work with time related issues often masked as time management problems. We introduced an integrative approach that draws upon a theory of time perspective, based on sound empirical evidence for the presence of the construct across multiple cultures. We discussed various potential issues that can be raised by the clients with different time perspective profiles. Subsequently, we provided a systemic overview of possible coaching techniques and interventions that could be used to address the abovementioned issues. We briefly addressed the relationship between a personal time perspective profile and the overall subjective well-being of an individual, highlighting the importance of working towards the development of the Balanced Time Perspective. Finally, we detailed specific steps on how to achieve this optimally healthy profile.

Taken together, this integrative review holds substantive and methodological implications for those exploring issues relevant to time management, time perspective and well-being in the field of coaching,

as well as teaching content implications for those teaching and training new coaches. Finally, the elements of the proposed coaching approach presented in this review may be used to guide future research on the effectiveness of specific coaching interventions on time related issues in a variety of settings.

References

- Adler, A. (2013). *Understanding human nature*. London: Routledge.
- Baumgartner, H., Pieters, R., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2008). Future-oriented emotions: conceptualization and behavioral effects. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 38*(4), 685-696.
- Boniwell, I. (2005). Beyond time management: How the latest research on time perspective and perceived time use can assist clients with time-related concerns. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring, 3*(2), 61-74.
- Boniwell, I., Osin, E., Linley, P.A. & Ivanchenko, G. (2010). A question of balance: Examining relationships between time perspective and measures of well-being in the British and Russian student samples. *Journal of Positive Psychology, 5*(1), 24-40.
- Boniwell, I., & Zimbardo, P. (2004). Balancing time perspective in pursuit of optimal functioning. In P.A. Linley and S. Joseph (Eds.) *Positive psychology in practice* (pp. 165-179). New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.
- Bost, J.M. (1984). Retaining students on academic probation: Effects of time management peer counseling on students' grades. *Journal of Learning Skills, 3*, 38-43.
- Boyd, J. N., & Zimbardo, P. G. (2005). Time perspective, health, and risk taking. In Strathman, A., Joireman, J. (Eds) *Understanding behavior in the context of time: Theory, research, and application*, 85-107. Mahwah, NJ, US: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Brown, K. & Ryan, R. (2003). The benefits of being present: mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84*, 822-848.
- Bryant, F. B. & Veroff, J. (2007). *Savouring: A new model of positive experiences*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Carelli, M. G., Wiberg, B. & Wiberg, M. (2011). Development and construct validation of the Swedish Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment, 27*(4), 220.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1992). *Flow: The psychology of happiness*. London: Rider.
- Claessens, B.J.C. (2004). *Perceived control of time: Time management and personal effectiveness at work*. Unpublished PhD dissertation, Technische Universiteit Eindhoven, Netherlands.
- Claessens, B.J.C., van Eerde, W., Rutte, C.G. & Roe, R.A. (2007). A review of the time management literature, *Personnel Review, 36*(2), 255 – 276.
- Desmurget, M., 2012. *TV Lobotomie*. Paris: Max Milo Éditions.
- Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2003). Counting blessings versus burdens: an experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84*(2), 377.
- Frederickson, B. (2009). *Positivity: Groundbreaking research reveals how to embrace the hidden strength of positive emotions, overcome negativity, and thrive*. Crown Archetype, New York.
- Freedman, J. L., & Edwards, D. R. (1988). Time pressure, task performance, and enjoyment. In J.E. McGrath, (Ed), *The social psychology of time: New perspectives*. Sage focus editions, Vol. 91, 113-133. Sage Publications, Inc.

- Frisch, M. B. (1998). Quality of life therapy and assessment in health care. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 5(1), 19-40.
- Frisch, M. B. (2005). *Quality of life therapy: Applying a life satisfaction approach to positive psychology and cognitive therapy*. New Jersey: Wiley.
- Frisch, M. B., Clark, M. P., Rouse, S. V., Rudd, M. D., Paweleck, J. K., Greenstone, A. & Kopplin, D. A. (2005). Predictive and treatment validity of life satisfaction and the Quality of Life Inventory. *Assessment*, 12(1), 66-78.
- Friedberg, J.P., Suchday, S. & Shelov, D.V. (2007). The impact of forgiveness on cardiovascular reactivity and recovery. *International Journal of Psychophysiology*, 65(2), 87-94.
- Gil-Monte, P. R. (2012). The influence of guilt on the relationship between burnout and depression. *European Psychologist*, 17(3), 231.
- Goleman, D. (1988). *The meditative mind*. Los Angeles: J.P. Tarcher.
- Gollwitzer, P. M. (1999). Implementation intentions: Strong effects of simple plans. *American Psychologist*, 54, 493-503.
- Hall, B.L., & Hursch, D.E. (1982). An evaluation of the effects of a time management training program on work efficiency. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour Management*, 3, 73-96.
- Hanel, F.J. (1982). Field testing the effectiveness of a self-instruction time management manual with managerial staff in an institutional setting. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 42(8-B), 3400.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2005). *Wherever you go, there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life*. Hyperion Books.
- Länge, A. (2003). Burnout–Existential meaning and possibilities of prevention. *European Psychotherapy*, 4(1), 107-121.
- Levine, R. N. (2008). *A geography of time: On tempo, culture, and the pace of life*. Basic Books.
- Lewin, K. (1951). *Field theory in social science*. New York: Harper
- Lyubomirsky, S. (2008). *The how of happiness: A practical guide to getting the life you want*. London: Sphere.
- Lyubomirsky, S., Sousa, L. & Dickerhoof, R. (2006). The costs and benefits of writing, talking, and thinking about life's triumphs and defeats. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90(4), 692.
- Macan, T.H. (1994). Time management: Test of a process model. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 79, 381-391.
- Macan, T.H. (1996). Time-management training: effects on time behaviors, attitudes, and job performance. *Journal of Psychology*, 130, 229-237.
- Macan, T.H., Shahani, C., Dipboye, R.L. & Phillips, A.P. (1990). College students' time management: Correlations with academic performance and stress. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 82, 760-768.
- Maddi, S.R. (2013). *Hardiness: Turning stressful circumstances into resilient growth*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- McCullough, M.E. & Witvliet, C.V. (2002). The psychology of forgiveness.; In: Snyder, C. R.; Lopez, Shane J(Eds) *Handbook of positive psychology*. New York, NY, US: Oxford University Press, pp 446-458.
- McGrath, J. E., & Tschan, F. (2004). *Temporal matters in social psychology: Examining the role of time in the lives of groups and individuals*. American Psychological Association.
- McFadden, S. H., & Atchley, R. C. (2001). *Aging and the meaning of time: A multidisciplinary exploration*. New York: Springer.

- Muraven, M., Baumeister, R. F. & Tice, D. M. (1999). Longitudinal improvement of self-regulation through practice: Building self-control strength through repeated exercise. *Journal of social psychology*, 139(4), 446-457.
- Neale, M. I. (2006). *Mindfulness meditation: An integration of perspectives from Buddhism, science, and clinical psychology*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. San-Francisco, CA: California Institute of Integral Studies.
- Penedo, F. J., & Dahn, J. R. (2005). Exercise and well-being: a review of mental and physical health benefits associated with physical activity. *Current Opinion in Psychiatry*, 18(2), 189.
- Pennebaker, J. W. (1997). Writing about emotional experiences as a therapeutic process. *Psychological Science*, 8(3), 162-166.
- Pennebaker, J. W. (2004). Expressive writing and the regulation of emotion over time. *Psychophysiology*, 41, S23-S23.
- Roose, N. J., Epstude, K., Fessel, F., Morrison, M., Smallman, R., Summerville, A., Galinsky, A.D. & Segerstrom, S. (2009). Repetitive regret, depression, and anxiety: Findings from a nationally representative survey. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 28(6), 671-688.
- Ryan, R.M., & Deci, E.L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-78.
- Schmidt, J. T. & Werner, C. H. (2007). Designing online instruction for success: Future oriented motivation and self-regulation. *The Electronic Journal of e-Learning* 5(1), 69 -78.
- Seema, R., & Sircova, A. (2013). Mindfulness-a time perspective? Estonian study. *Baltic Journal of Psychology*, 14 (1-2), 4-21.
- Seligman, M.E. P., Steen, T., Park, N., Peterson, P. (2005). Positive Psychology Progress, Empirical Validation of Interventions. *American Psychologist*, 60(5), 410-421.
- Sheldon, K. M., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2004). Achieving sustainable new happiness: Prospects, practices, and prescriptions. In P. A. Linley & S. Joseph (Eds.), *Positive psychology in practice* (pp. 127-145). New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Sircova, A., van de Vijver, F.J.R., Osin, E., Milfont, T.L., Fieulaine, N., Kislali-Erginbilgic, A., Zimbardo, P.G. et al. (2014). A Global Look at Time A 24-Country Study of the Equivalence of the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory. *SAGE Open*, 4(1), 2158244013515686.
- Sircova, A., & Mitina, O.V. (2008). Developmental dynamics of time orientations. *Voprosi Psikhologii*, 2, 41-55.
- Steger, M. F., Kashdan, T. B., Sullivan, B. A., & Lorentz, D. (2008). Understanding the search for meaning in life: Personality, cognitive style, and the dynamic between seeking and experiencing meaning. *Journal of personality*, 76(2), 199-228.
- Tice, D. M., Bratslavsky, E., & Baumeister, R. F. (2001). Emotional distress regulation takes precedence over impulse control: if you feel bad, do it!. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 80(1), 53.
- Tyrrell, B. (1995). Time in our lives: facts and analysis on the 90s, *Demos*, 5, 23-25.
- Wiberg, B., Wiberg, M., Carelli, M. G., & Sircova, A. (2012). A qualitative and quantitative study of seven persons with balanced time perspective (BTP) according to S-ZTPI. In *1st international conference on time perspective and research: converging paths in psychology time theory and research* (pp. 120-120). ESPACOBANCO.
- Witvliet, C. V, Ludwig, T.E. & Vander Laan, K.L (2001). Granting forgiveness or harboring grudges: Implications for emotion, physiology, and health. *Psychological Science*, 12(2), 117-123.
- Zaleski, Z. (1996). Future anxiety: Concept, measurement, and preliminary research. *Personality and individual differences*, 21(2), 165-174.

- Zhang, J. W., Howell, R. T., & Stolarski, M. (2013). Comparing three methods to measure a balanced time perspective: The relationship between a balanced time perspective and subjective well-being. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 14(1), 169-184.
- Zimbardo, P. G. (2002). Just think about it: Time to take our time. *Psychology Today*, 35, 62.
- Zimbardo, P. G., & Boyd, J. N. (1999). Putting time in perspective: A valid, reliable individual-differences metric. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 77(6), 1271.
- Zimbardo, P.G., & Boyd, J. (2008). *The time paradox: The new psychology of time that will change your life*. New York. NY: Free Press.
- Zimbardo, P., Sword, R., & Sword, R. (2012). *The time cure: Overcoming PTPS with the new psychology of time perspective therapy*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Dr Ilona Boniwell – leader of the first International MSc in Applied Positive Psychology at Anglia Ruskin University (Cambridge and Paris), teaches at l’Ecole Centrale Paris and consults leaders, businesses and educational institutions as a Director of Positran.

Dr Evgeny Osin - Associate Professor, Senior Research Fellow of the Positive Psychology and Life Quality research lab at the Psychology Department of NRU Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia.

Dr Anna Sircova - Independent researcher and photographer currently based in Copenhagen, Denmark; founder of International Research Network on Time Perspective.