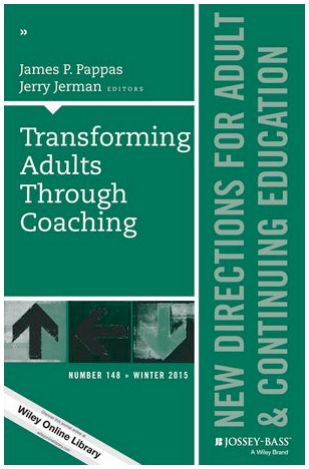


Transforming Adults Through Coaching (New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, Number 148)

Pappas, James P.; Jerman, Jerry
Jossey-Bass Wiley, 2015

Book Review

Tags: adult education | adult learners | transformative teaching

Reviewed by:
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Coaching has grown exponentially as a professional practice and as a discipline in recent years. According to the International Coach Federation (ICF), the number of coaches worldwide increased from some 30,000 in 2008 to 47,000 in 2012. Coaches assist individuals with a variety of vocational and personal issues in both public and private sector organizations. As a result, many clients have become better prepared to reach their workplace and life goals.

The field of adult coaching as a discipline has matured considerably alongside the practice itself. For example, studies of best coaching practices and analysis of coaching models abound. Professional organizations have formed and have begun to address such critical issues as training, certification, and ethical standards.

Transforming Adults Through Coaching, edited by Pappas and Jerman, provides an introduction to the history, current practices, and possible future of coaching. Each chapter in this compact overview includes material that will benefit scholars, practitioners, and their clients. In particular, there is a solid review of adult development and learning theory with illustrative case studies and pertinent bibliographies.

Pappas and Jerman acknowledge in their introduction that clarity is needed when considering what coaching is and is not. It is, they say, neither psychotherapy nor advice giving. Coaching is relational. It is ordinarily practiced with individuals and not groups. And, they underscore, the coaching relationship typically proceeds with a combination of questions and attentive listening. The results, they contend, can be transformative for clients.

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The first three chapters sketch the parameters for the field of adult coaching. The initial essay by Rachel Ciporen is “The Emerging Field of Executive and Organizational Coaching: An Overview.” Ciporen provides the reader with essential definitions and perspectives on coaching as well as a valuable list of resources for further study. She also notes some of the most common critiques of coaching, such as a frequent reliance on an “overly simplistic view of the learning and change process” (12).

Carolyn Coughlin explores a major goal of adult coaching in “Development Coaching to Support the Transition to Self-Authorship.” Her essay describes how coaches, using their knowledge of adult development – especially body and mind theory and practice – can facilitate their client’s movement toward self-authorship.

Adult learning theory provides a vital foundation for coaching. Elaine Cox’s contribution, “Coaching and Adult Learning: Theory and Practice,” identifies links between andragogy and transformative learning and how each connects with the practice of coaching. In addition, Cox addresses practical applications of these theories. Brief illustrative dialogues are included to show how the theories can impact actual adult coaching.

“Coaching as a Strategy for Helping Adults” by Dorothy M. Wax and Judith Westheim focuses on the kind of issues adult learners bring to the learning environment and how coaching strategies can help them deal with professional and personal obstacles to success.

Pappas and Jerman’s closing essay, “The Future of Coaching among Adult Populations,” outlines major directions and critical issues that lie ahead for the field. They underscore not only continued growth for coaching, but also the need for further refinements, including more specialization.

These are some of the essays that make this brief collection valuable, not only for coaches and their clients, but for a range of helping professionals and researchers.

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