

GAINING INSIGHTS

Psychologist Carl Jung refers to the psyche as having two complementary spheres: 'CONSCIOUSNESS' and the 'UNCONSCIOUS'. Consciousness, he said, is something we have access to, that we can bring to our awareness. The unconscious is everything about us that is, has been or could be, of which we are unaware.

Insights supported coaching looks at our conscious persona, or how we see ourselves; and our less conscious persona or how we may be perceived by others. The purpose of this is to give us an insight into our possible blind spots or instinctive self so that we may adapt our behaviour to connect better with people.

One of the reasons for a possible difference between our conscious and less conscious personas is because our environment (our jobs, families etc.) demand from us skills, attributes and ways of being that are less natural to us. We have to work at some things – being tidy, systematic, creative etc. – harder than others. So whilst we have a 'natural' way of being, with associated strengths and skills, our environment constantly requires us to develop in other areas too. This is a good thing on the whole, as it stretches us to approach things differently. However, if we are stretched too much, we can feel over-challenged, stressed, or perhaps as if we are leading multiple lives.

One question we're often asked when people answer the questions for the 'Insights' questionnaire, is "Should I answer as myself at work, or myself at home?" That question stems from exactly the fact that sometimes we recognize our different personas in different environments. The 'work' you, the 'home' you, the 'you' you etc.

Insights supported coaching involves answering a questionnaire that leads to mapping of your conscious and less conscious personas. This can be revealing and very useful, helping you to identify where you are over-stretched, under-stretched, and to consider how you can get from where you are to where you want to be.

Mini-case Study:

Andrew Thacker reports that he was coaching someone who described a feeling of being undervalued and left out at work, despite having a relatively senior position and a high degree of influence. After receiving the Insights report the subject explored whether there was any hard evidence for his feeling.

The subject was aware of his outgoing, extrovert personality and appreciated his need for involvement. He also identified that he had been heavily involved in building a business case for a large-scale project for the past few months. This required him to spend a lot of time poring over figures and meticulously detailing options and their advantages and disadvantages.

His reading of his less conscious persona, highlighted in the report, was that he had been stretched by this role and that despite a conscious effort to be himself he had 'leaked the truth'. That is, he had been of necessity, less talkative, more considerative and less visible at work. Others had appreciated that this was a stretch for him and had 'left him to get on with it'. So despite their best intentions, the actions of his colleagues had had the effect of making him feel less involved and that his work was unappreciated. Despite the fact that everyone at the company would be affected and that his colleagues just wanted to give him the space to do what they needed to do.

Insights is a great tool for looking at individual personalities and for examining the make-up of a team, providing a common language to help teams develop understanding of each other, and work together more effectively.