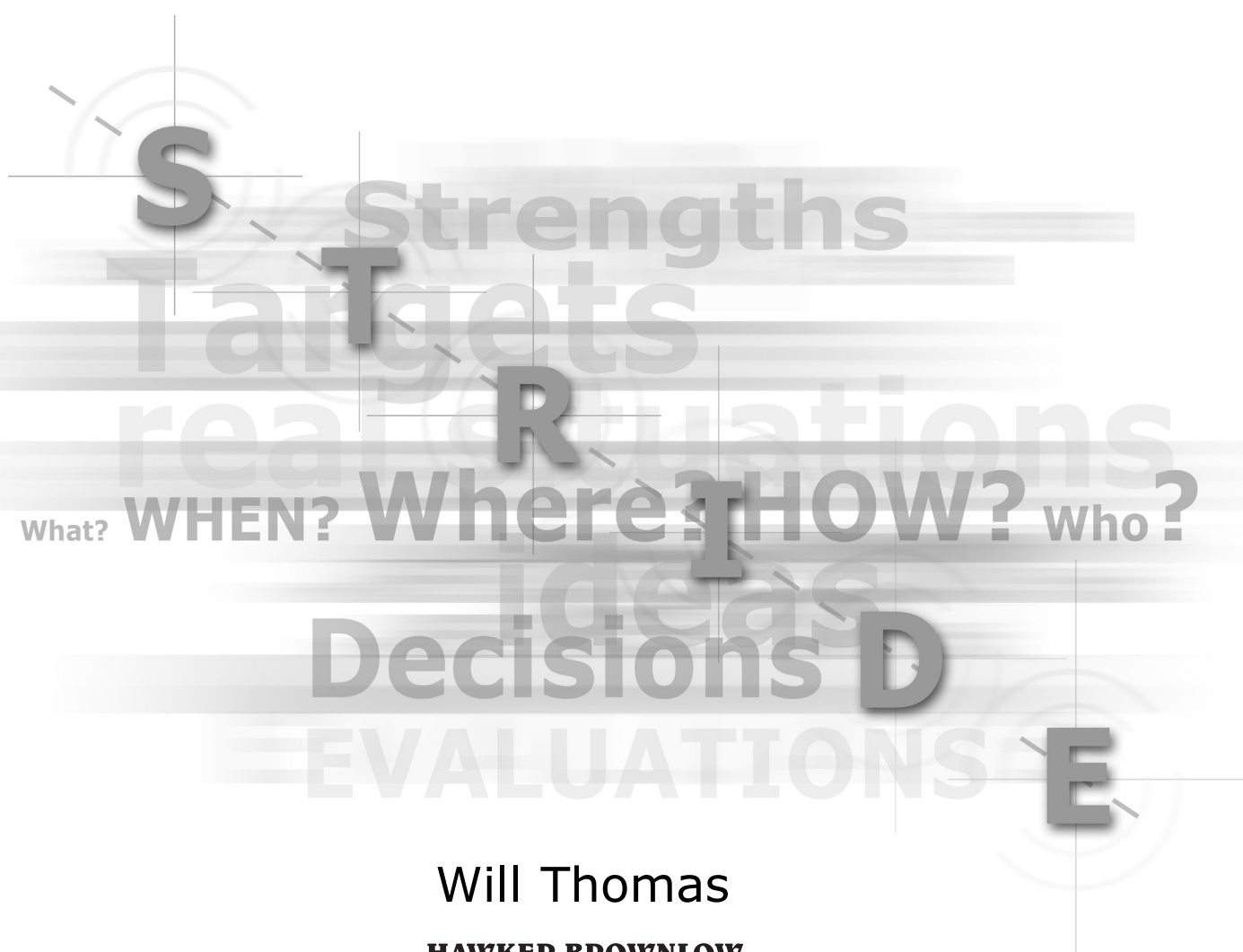


Coaching Solutions Resource Book



Will Thomas

HAWKER BROWNLOW
EDUCATION

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Foreword

The Accelerated Learning Series attempts to pull together new and innovative thinking about learning. The titles in the series offer contemporary solutions to old problems. The series is held together by the accelerated learning model, which, in turn, is underwritten by an informed theoretical understanding.

The term 'accelerated learning' can be misleading. The method is not for a specific group of learners, nor for a given age range, nor for a category of perceived ability. The method is not about doing the same things faster. It is not about fast-tracking or about hothousing. It is a considered, generic approach to learning based on research drawn from disparate disciplines and tested with different age groups and different ability levels in very different circumstances. As such, it can be adapted and applied to very different challenges.

The books in the Accelerated Learning Series build from the Accelerated Learning Cycle. *Coaching Solutions Resource Book* provides tools to support learning and personal growth at all levels. It is an obvious extension of its predecessor, *Coaching Solutions*, and, at the same time, is a book worth reading in its own right. Will Thomas is a skilled and committed advocate of the methods he outlines.

Making sense of it all

Shakespeare wrote in *Hamlet*, 'There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.' Was he right? Can you take the same experience and choose how you make sense of it? If so, is this something any individual can do? Is it possible for some, impossible for others? Can it only be done with assistance?

The fort at Al Hazm is 80 kilometres east of Muscat, the capital of Oman. It was built in the eighteenth century and was occupied until the 1970s. From the highest part of the fort it is just possible to see the shores of the Indian Ocean. Behind the fort rise the mountains. For most of the year the heat is baking. Rainfall occurs for a few days every other year. It is a harsh place in which to live.

The fort is now fully restored and is the perfect example of Arabic ingenuity and craftsmanship. Built on an escarpment of rock, the fort stands prominent, seen for miles around. Inside the walls, accommodation is ramped on three levels. It is eerily quiet and still, cool but not damp. The original wood for the massive studded doors was imported from North Africa. Water is stored in deep wells and channelled throughout. It is a self-contained community with areas for collecting date syrup, storing cereals and preparing food. Security systems allow the population of the fort to watch every movement outside and inside.

The fort is a complex of secret escape tunnels, security hatches, spy holes and listening devices. Each floor space is on a slightly different level so that the sound of footsteps change as a possible intruder moves from room to room. The ceilings are of different heights and layout so that echoes vary in each space. There are gun ports facing outwards but also some inside in case of intruders breaking in. Each sleeping space for a guard is on a level higher

than the access way he guards so that a clear view is guaranteed. Alongside each sleeping space there are escape routes for the guard that take him further into the building. Some escape routes are bogus, designed to deceive a pursuer and lead him to drop to his death. Above major doorways is a machicolation (opening) for pouring boiling date syrup onto attackers below.

Down in the deepest part of the fort is a room with an immense column at its centre. The room is roughly circular and can be darkened and soundproofed. The column at the centre is perfectly circular and is now smoothed by the thousands of pairs of hands that have traced its shape over the years. The room is a correction chamber.

Miscreants would be brought here and placed together in the dark. The only sounds were those of their own terrified voices, their shuffling feet and a high-pitched horn blown deliberately and constantly into the room through an acoustic channel. Walking clockwise in the dark for 36 hours, they would be terrified out of misbehaving.

Nearby in this the deepest part of Al Hazm fort is another darkened space. Here there is an area for a small bed, a place to sit and nothing else besides. This is where the imam would come to be alone, close to death and to God. Days on end spent in a confined space with no light and no sound reminded the holy man of his spiritual responsibilities.

Within 15 metres of each other, perhaps at the same time, one group is scared out of their wits by the dark and the confined space while, nearby, a man – alone in a black enclosed hollow – is close to spiritual peace.

Some individuals are surely better advantaged to resolve their own personal uncertainties than others. They may be blessed with an inner strength and surety that some theorists have attempted to label as a form of intelligence – intrapersonal, spiritual or emotional. Others are hopelessly adrift, their every move characterized by self-doubt and a need for validation. Some of us will oscillate between the two poles, certain in some arenas of everyday existence, at sea in others. We may have high efficacy in one context, little or none in another.

It is an interesting question as to whether one's capacity to make sense of the most uncertain of personal experiences is something you are born with, or learn, or find through a personal faith or maybe even acquire as a consequence of necessity. Would the imam, for example, have been able to 'coach' the miscreants through their terror? Or, confronting their terror on their own, would they have found an inner resource, had their faith restored or simply been unable to do anything other than be terrified out of their wits? Is there something about solitude that forces a response one way or the other? Is being among others more difficult when trying to make individual sense of – seemingly overwhelming – uncertainty?

It may be that the difference between the terrified miscreant and the holy man – leaving aside the strong likelihood that one is of a criminal disposition and the other is not – is that the holy man has got more coping strategies at his disposal. How he got them is another question. For the reader of *Coaching Solutions Resource Book*, spending days and nights in the darkened confines of an Arab fort is probably not a workable option for developing coping strategies. Practising the tools described in this book is cheaper and less traumatic. The use of these tools, underpinned by the theory described in the earlier book, *Coaching Solutions*, may go some way to equipping those of us who have not been born with the gifts of the

Foreword

holy man with some of the insights with which he was no doubt blessed. Use the tools on yourself and on others, experiment with them, adapt them for your own context. Do not be incarcerated by them: they should be part of a regime that begins to set you, and those with whom you use them, free!

The *Coaching Solutions Resource Book* provides a large choice of well-considered tools for developing solutions to problems large and small. They are of no use in themselves. Their value is in their skilled application. In assembling them together, the author, Will Thomas, is more holy man than miscreant. Walk freely.

Alistair Smith
June 2005

How to use this book

The *Coaching Solutions Resource Book (CSRB)* is designed as the companion to *Coaching Solutions: Practical Ways to Improve Performance in Education* (Thomas and Smith 2004). *Coaching Solutions* explored non-directive approaches to facilitating the growth and development of others. In *CSRB* you will find over 50 tools and techniques for use in your institution with adults and young people. The tools are designed for the coachee to use with the support of a coach. The tools have a variety of purposes underneath the umbrella of enhancing performance, including:

- recognizing strengths
- setting targets
- problem solving
- developing self-awareness
- generating creative solutions
- making decisions
- evaluating progress.

There are a number of ways to approach this book:

- 1 Read it from cover to cover and try out the tools on yourself before you use them with those you coach.
- 2 Read the introduction to review the core elements of coaching, then dip into sections 2 and 3 as you see fit, using the map at the beginning of each chapter to identify the core uses of each of the tools:
 - Overview and purpose: about the tool and its purpose
 - Who to use it with: adults, young people or both
 - Instructions for use: what to do to get the best from it
 - How it works: the technical processes underlying the tool and its language
 - Examples: examples of situations where the author has used the tool
 - Suggested follow-up work: what the coach can do next to further enhance a person's learning.
- 3 Flick through the book to get the overview and dip into the tools at your leisure. Use them with those you coach.
- 4 Use the chapter maps to identify the core purposes of the tools and match them to what you are looking for.

Points of view

Overview and purpose

This activity is very powerful for gaining insight into situations involving other people. If you want someone to gain a deeper understanding of their behaviour and that of others in a relationship, use this tool. It brings new understanding to complex relationships. It involves the coachee imagining themselves in three situations and drawing on the insights they gain.

Who to use it with

For both adults and young people.

Instructions for use

The coach needs to take their coachee through this process allowing good time for them to respond deeply to the questions. The stronger the coachee associates with each situation, the more insight they will gain. Using the cycle on the tool, work through the steps in order. Instructions and questions to be read by the coach are in italics.

How it works

By encouraging full association of the person in their own perceptions, the perceptions of another individual or group of people and as a third party looking at the problem, they gain greater awareness of a situation from the others' perspectives. They also gain an objective view of themselves and their behaviour.

Example

Bernard is aware that the relationship with his second in department, Fiona, is strained. Using points of view he realizes that he has not been supporting Fiona through some changes to exam entry processes. It comes as a shock to him through the points of view tool and he takes action to restore the relationship.

Suggested follow-up work

Move individuals swiftly to create ideas for resolution once they have completed this activity.

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Points of view

Take your coachee through the process using the cycle below.

Feel free to adapt the language to make it age appropriate.

