

1 SPACE: A psychological model for use within cognitive behavioural coaching, therapy and stress management

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Abstract

This paper introduces 'SPACE', a comprehensive psychological model that can be used within cognitive behavioural coaching, therapy and stress management to aid assessment, explain the cognitive model to the client, and assist in the development of a coaching, therapeutic or training programme. Other models, coaching processes and acronyms will be briefly covered to put 'SPACE' into a coaching context. For illustrative purposes this paper will focus on coaching.

Over the past couple of decades a number of different coaching models, processes and associated acronyms have been developed by coaching practitioners to enhance and inform their practice, and provide a useful framework. These models are usually shared with the client in a transparent manner and help to facilitate the change and goal-focused process. The next section will highlight a number of the different models including the cognitive model. Then the SPACE model will be illustrated.

Original publication details: Edgerton, N., & Palmer, S. (2005, November). SPACE: A psychological model for use within cognitive behavioural coaching, therapy and stress management. *The Coaching Psychologist*, 2(2), 25–31. Reproduced with permission of The British Psychological Society.

GROW MODEL

The GROW model of coaching has been popularised by Sir John Whitmore (e.g. 1996) although according to the literature (see Boyle et al., 2005) it was developed by Graham Alexander. It is probably one of the most well used models of coaching.

Whitmore (2004, p.54) describes the sequence for GROW as follows:

- **GOAL** setting for the session as well as short and long term;
- **REALITY** checking to explore the current situation;
- **OPTIONS** and alternative strategies or courses of action;
- **WHAT** is to be done, **WHEN**, by **WHOM** and the **WILL** to do it.

The last stage is also known as **WRAP-UP** by some practitioners. The GROW model appears to be taught by many coaching training centres throughout the UK. It is relatively straight forward and would be at the behavioural end of the coaching spectrum.

ACHIEVE MODEL

The **ACHIEVE** model was developed by Sabine Dembkowski and Fiona Elridge (2003). They believe that it is a logical progression from the GROW model and follows the development of a coaching relationship in a systematic manner:

- Assess current situation;
- Creative brainstorming of alternative to current situation;
- Hone goals;
- Initiate options;
- Evaluative options;
- Valid action programme design;
- Encourage momentum.

The **ACHIEVE** model does allow for flexibility and individuality.

LASER: A COACHING PROCESS

Graham Lee (2003) describes **LASER**, a five-stage coaching process which provides a frame of reference for moving a manager through the journey of leadership coaching. According to Lee it is a flexible framework that indicates the core activities. The five stages are:

- Learning;
- Assessing;
- Story-making;

- Enabling;
- Reframing.

Unlike some of the other coaching models Lee does not conceive LASER as a rigid linear journey.

POSITIVE MODEL

Vincenzo Libri (2004) suggested the POSITIVE model developed from the GROW and ACHIEVE and influenced by psychological contributions that produce ‘an optimum coaching relationship’. Examples of key questions in each phase are provided below:

- Purpose, e.g. what is it you want to achieve?
- Observations, e.g. what have you tried so far?
- Strategy, e.g. what does success look like for you?
- Insight, e.g. how committed are you in achieving this goal on a scale of 1 – 10?
- Team, e.g. who will you share your goal with?
- Initiate, e.g. when will you start to act on this?
- Value, e.g. how will you celebrate your success?
- Encourage, e.g. how are you going with your goals?

Libri (2004) provides a useful list of key questions at each stage.

TRADITIONAL PROBLEM-SOLVING MODELS

Wasik (1984) proposed a seven-step problem-solving sequence and accompanying questions that practitioners and more importantly their clients can ask themselves at each step of the process as below.

<i>Steps</i>	<i>Questions/Actions</i>
1. Problem identification	What is the concern?
2. Goal selection	What do I want?
3. Generation of alternatives	What can I do?
4. Consideration of consequences	What might happen?
5. Decision making	What is my decision?
6. Implementation	Now do it!
7. Evaluation	Did it work?

Even though it does not have a convenient acronym, this seven-step model has been adapted to coaching, therapy, training and stress management (Palmer & Burton, 1996; Palmer, 1997a, b; Neenan & Palmer, 2001a, b). Once the client becomes adept at using the seven-step model, Neenan and Palmer (2001a, b) suggest that the client may want to use a shorter model to quicken the problem-solving process. For example, STIR and PIE:

Select a problem
Target a solution
Implement a solution
Review outcome
Problem definition
Implement a solution
Evaluate outcome

They assert that shorter models of problem-solving are usually used for rapid processing of a problem in order to deal with a crisis or make a quick decision. However, with these shorter models, deliberation is exchanged for speed, so a less satisfactory outcome may be experienced by the client.

ABCDE COGNITIVE MODEL

The problem-solving models or frameworks described above form an integrated part of the cognitive or cognitive behavioural coaching approach. If the issue or problem can be addressed by focusing on the practical aspects of the problem then the problem solving models are sufficient. However, if the client experiences a psychological or emotional block largely caused by unhelpful, goal-blocking or performance interfering thoughts (PITs), then the practitioner uses the well known ABCDE model (Ellis *et al.*, 1997). Often this need becomes apparent when the client cannot successfully complete Step 5 of the seven-step problem-solving model:

- A** – Activating event – stops working on the solution chosen at step 5.
- B** – Beliefs or PITs, e.g. ‘I can’t stand all this hard work. I’ll never reach the deadline.’
- C** – Consequences: emotion – anxiety; behaviour – procrastinates; physiological palpitations.
- D** – Disputing – ‘I don’t like it but in reality I can stand it. If I start work NOW then I’m more likely to reach the deadline.’
- E** – Effective new approach – reduction in of anxiety. Starts to focus on the tasks involved which would assist in reaching the project deadline with the proposed solution at step 5. Cognitive Coaching or Cognitive Behavioural Coaching or Rational Emotive Behavioural Coaching can all be considered as dual systems approaches focusing on the practical and/or psychological aspects of a client’s problem or issue as and when required. Palmer (1997a, b) described the integration of the ABCDE and problem-solving models as ‘an intrinsically brief integrative approach’.

INTRODUCING THE SPACE MODEL – AN OVERVIEW

The SPACE model was developed in 2002 and is an attempt to portray the interactions involved in psychological process in a manner that is more graphical than the two or five column worksheets that are commonly used in cognitive behavioural approaches. It is also an easy to remember acronym:

Social context
Physiology
Action
Cognition
Emotion

The model has two further components which are also referred to when in use with clients:

Action	Physiology
Cognition	Action
Emotion	Cognition
	Emotion

The literature relating to cognitive behaviour coaching and therapy deals largely with the importance of the Cognitions as determinates of Emotional states and the resultant Behaviours or Actions (see Beck, 1995; Ellis *et al.*, 1997; Neenan & Palmer, 2001a, b). The 'ABCDE' model is one of the most widely used in cognitive behavioural approaches. Implicit in the model is the belief that Cognitions largely determine Emotions.

This can be depicted as:

C —————> E

As cognitions can lead to an emotional response, a person with anger provoking thoughts is likely to experience anger as an emotion. Cognitions include images or pictures a person may also experiences in their mind's eye. An example is provided below of a teacher in a specific situation:

C —————> E

This isn't right
He should not behave this way
He shouldn't be allowed
to get away with it
It has to be stopped
It's down to me
I've got to stop him
Pictures a successful outcome

Anger

However, if someone is already in an angry mood, a mood being a longer lasting emotional state, then the mood is likely to result in a tendency to have further angry cognitions in the next situation.

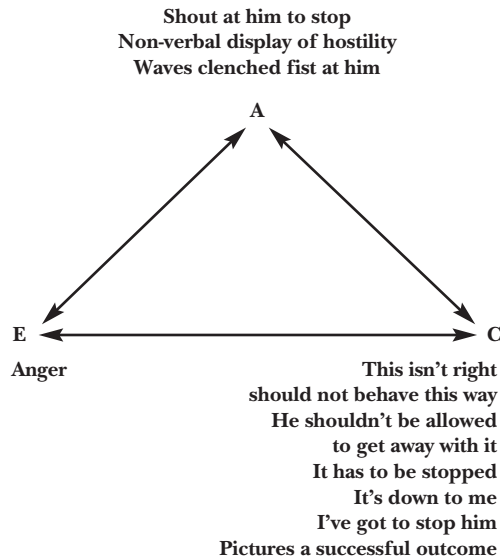


Since the angry cognitions will again result in anger as an emotion we could depict it better:

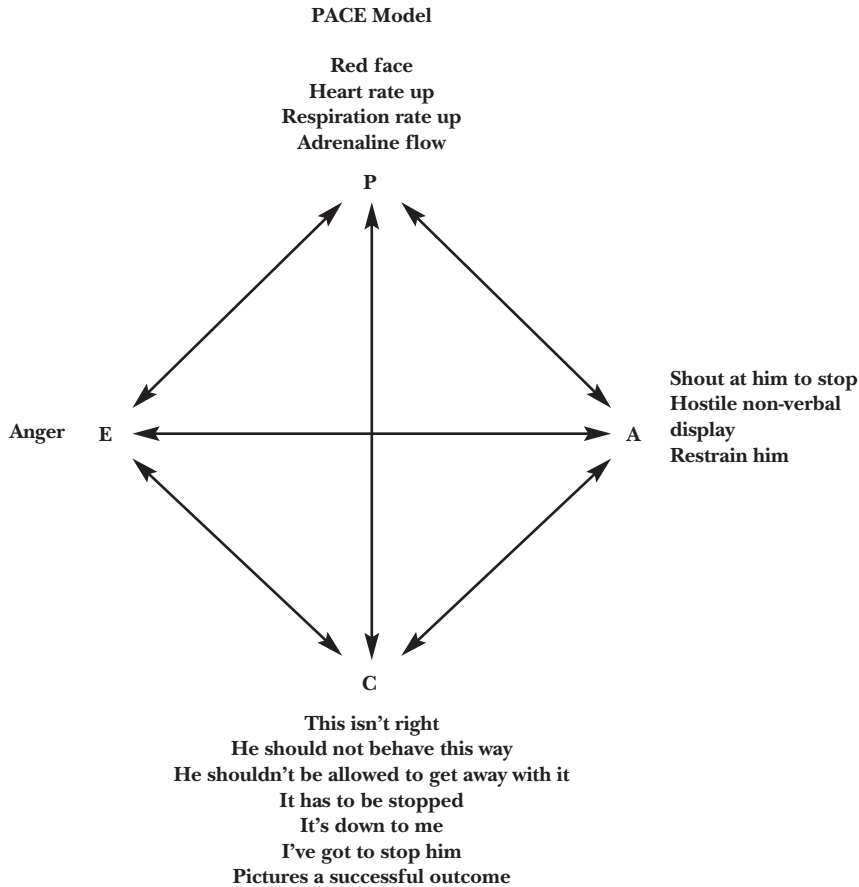


There is clearly an interaction between cognitions and emotions and this is indicated by the two-way arrow.

In the example above, the thought, 'I've got to stop him' clearly relates to potential Actions. Adding an A to the diagram would give us:



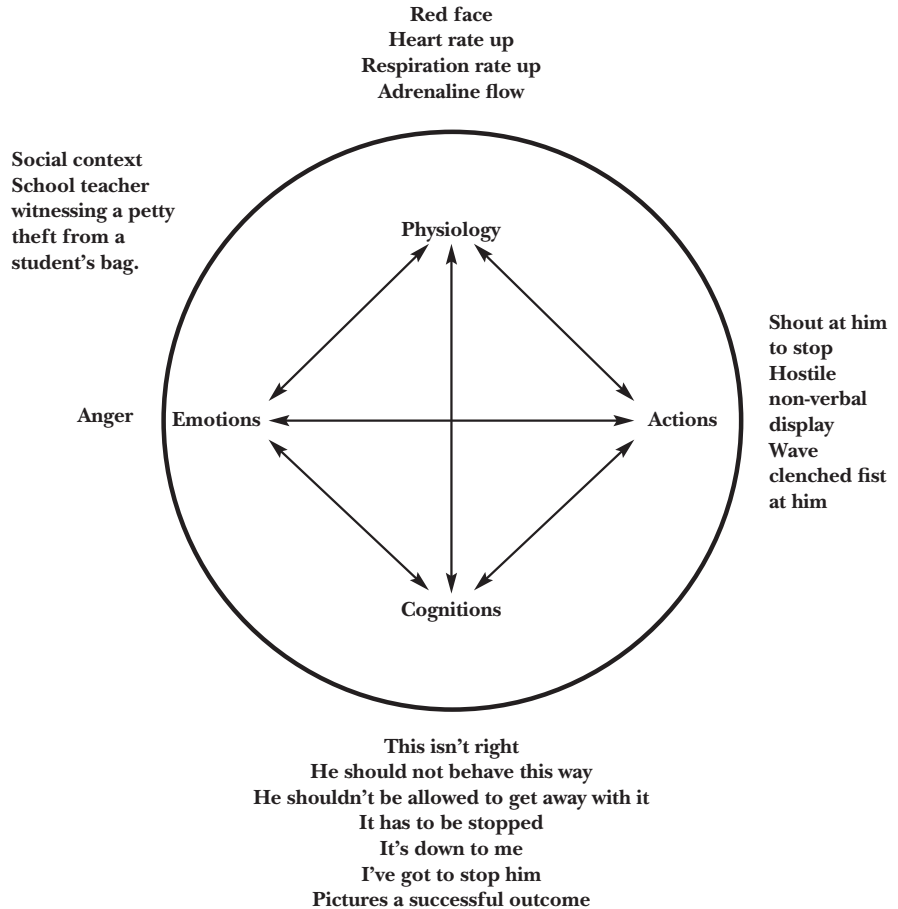
This ACE model can be seen as a basic psychological model depicting a three way interaction between Actions Cognitions and Emotions. A similar model ACE has also been described by Lee (2003). Taking our example a step further we can see that a person in this Emotional state with these Cognitions and Action tendencies would also experience sensations in their bodies relating to Physiological arousal.



Adding a 'P' for Physiological would give us a **PACE** model that (see below) would depict Biological/ Psychological interactions for an individual.

To further understand a person's reaction to a situation it is often helpful to understand the Social Context that the person is operating in. This can be displayed as a circle surrounding the PACE model.

With the addition of the Social Context to our model it becomes a Bio – Psycho – Social model that will help practitioners and their clients to understand a person's reaction in a Social Context. The Social Context can include sets of beliefs about social roles, customs and rules.



SPACE: FROM ASSESSMENT TO INTERVENTION

In the first or later session with a client, a particular situation, problem or mood can be analysed using the ACE, PACE and finally the SPACE models. This helps provide a quick assessment, illustrates to the client the interaction between the five key modalities, and provides an opening for possible interventions. For example, a client who experiences presentation nerves could consider modifying cognitions such as, 'I must perform well. It will be awful if I make a mistake', replacing catastrophic imagery with helpful coping imagery (C), stopping procrastinating behaviour and learning new presentation behavioural skills (A), using techniques such as relaxation to reduce stress and anxiety (P), feeling

identification to help the client identify anxiety (E), and increase the awareness of the social context and others' expectations of the client's performance e.g. they may want an acceptable performance, not 'perfect' performance (S). These possible interventions can also be inserted onto the SPACE diagram using a different colour ink. (Or a new SPACE diagram can be used instead.) Thus the SPACE diagram shifts from assessment tool into the coaching programme. SPACE is used in a similar way in counselling, psychotherapy and training settings.

USE OF TIME

Some clients experience difficulties remembering the very nature of cognitions. When using cognitive models including SPACE it is important that clients can recall what the 'C' stands for. Another aide memoire, TIME, can assist:

Thoughts
Images
Memories
Expectations

This helps clients complete the 'C' part of the SPACE diagram outside of the coaching session.

CONCLUSION

This article highlighted a number of different coaching models and introduced the comprehensive SPACE model that can be used within cognitive behavioural approaches. SPACE can also be used in parallel the other models such as GROW or POSITIVE described above, to aid clients understand how to overcome the psychological blocks that are sometimes associated with their problems or issues. So often with performance-related issues, cognitions, imagery, emotions and physiological reactions need to be addressed in coaching and SPACE provides the framework for both assessment and the subsequent development of an individual coaching programme.

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