

Making something of myself?

Can you tweak a personality?

Why good coaching can do much more than just improve your career.

By Claus Peter Simon, GEO WISSEN,
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A coach is usually both consultant and motivator in one. Standard clients are not those in need of medical treatment but more likely those in full control of their lives. The majority are at junctions in their lives, perhaps professionally, and want to know which direction best matches their inner yearnings, their inner Self.

Coaching has for a long time been chiefly associated as an aid to managers no longer able to "function" correctly. Somewhat disrespectfully, the attitude was if you couldn't bring yourself to go to a psychiatrist, go for some private coaching. This generally involves the training of habits to boost personalities, to conceal weaknesses and to work out strategies to neatly dispose of unwanted staff. Training primarily focuses on goals and efficiency, to improve the functioning of a company's structures – a kind of oiling of the cogs of business (...)

Birgitt Morrien from Cologne has developed a special approach to holistic coaching that enables clients to discover a lot more about their Self. In addition to the better known Gestalt therapy or role playing, Birgitt Morrien also applies **DreamGuidance**. What might sound at first highly esoteric is on closer inspection a firmly rooted approach. The method is based on the belief that we consciously perceive only a tiny portion of reality. More might therefore be revealed by gaining access to our day dreams. According to Morrien, such dreams take us to our subconscious yearnings which we can then use to reconstruct our real lives.

The communications expert has recorded thousands of her dreams. The resulting diaries are an important source of information for her: *"I wrote down my first dream in 1973. In it, I'm using a ladder to fetch down a picture from high up on a shelf. The picture is of a man with a beard and the man's name is Sigmund Freud."*

But **DreamGuidance** isn't about the Freud's interpretation of night-time experiences. Birgitt Morrien performs a kind balancing act between consultancy and therapy sessions. Unlike conventional coaching, DreamGuidance does not differentiate between the professional and the private personality.

Clients use a couch only because it's comfortable, enabling them to stretch out their legs while they let their thoughts wander. Birgitt Morrien then talks in a monotone, redolent

voice taking her clients into a dream state in which consciousness recedes. But the client remains always in control and can halt the session if they feel uncomfortable.

For the majority of people, images eventually begin to appear before their closed eyes. Amazingly, the method seems to function for nearly everybody. Only the highly cerebral seem unsuited to **DreamGuidance**. Morrien tells the story of how a construction industry boss lay on the couch before her and after a quarter of an hour sat up and said: "No, this isn't my 'Baustelle'" [Translator's note: 'Baustelle' in German has a double meaning: 'building site' and 'a place where problems need solving']. You just have to accept that something like that can happen, says Morrien.

But the majority of her clients are open to day dreaming. The dreams can lead to the familiar being looked at anew. Linear ways of thinking can be transcended to enable new perspectives to develop.



Birgitt E. Morrien (Foto: Stefanie Biel, Köln)

Morrien ultimately endeavours to discover the life goals and dreams of her clients: *"I take clients to a future stage of their lives where they can recall special life events from the more relaxed perspective of an older person."*

The second stage of the exercise is for the older Self to give the younger Self advice in an attempt to open up new perspectives.

Birgitt Morrien interprets the dreams and attempts to integrate them into the real life situation of the client. "Having a new perspective towards the future often functions as a kind of mental beacon", she says. A very young client told how he saw himself years later as a 37 year old who takes a break from work to fetch his son from kindergarten (a son who in reality has not yet been born). Seven years later he sees himself as an employer with ten staff. On his 65th birthday, he sits with friends, family, and grandchildren at a long table outdoors surrounded by nature. Soon after the coaching session, the young man becomes convinced that working for a company is not for him. So he sees a career of self-employment as his path to happiness.

Birgitt Morrien has published dozens of actual cases on her website that demonstrate how clients have uncovered their hidden potentials. In many cases, defining career challenges and objectives are just a start. In the long run, it's about finding new paths of development that resonate with the Self.

This was the case for Stefanie Hennigfeld, born in 1962 and working as an administrative manager for a TV broadcaster. She'd had enough of work. She writes (excerpts): *"An Excel table flickers across the screen with yet another useless profitability plan. Useless because my associates had never really been interested in success, but were always creative enough in nipping in the bud any effort to improve broadcasting content to up viewing figures. ... My contact to Ms Morrien had come through one of my staff who had asked for an appointment with me about staff coaching. My only thought was why do staff need coaching? ..."*

A week later I was sitting before Birgitt Morrien in her coaching practice. She was very relaxed and I was very much trying to appear cool and in control. ... I hated my work but felt a huge responsibility to everything (my job, my career) and to everybody (associates, staff, myself). I had enjoyed years of good earnings but at the same was hugely fearful losing my financial security...

One of the most difficult tasks was for me to express what I actually wanted. If a career change was necessary, what was it and what was the goal? At this point it was a case of just feeling in the dark. I really wanted to experience a vision, to 'day dream' my ideal job – but what on earth was it? Birgitt Morrien helped me on the first part of the journey to discover it. It became clear to me that I needed to give up my current job straight away. A big surprise. As soon as I was able to express and internalise this, I went through a difficult phase which ended with me being able to part lucratively from a job that I had come to hate. A

teenage dream then came to fruition – I moved into a Spanish 'finca' on Majorca with my partner...

After two wonderful years and for a number of different reasons, we left the island and returned to Cologne. When I then began to think about what I wanted for the rest of my life, that dense, foggy NOTHINGNESS then returned ... And this is where Birgitt Morrien again played a role ... Similar exercises to six years previously – such as the imaginary journey to my 75th. birthday and looking back to the life I'd lived and the life ahead of me – gave me many insights about myself, about success and how I saw my future. It was almost as if the scales had fallen from my eyes giving me a clear view of what I wanted to achieve.

I now have a 'Sehzentrum' [Vision Center] for people who suffer through their sight (and who doesn't?), for children with literacy and hyperactivity problems, for sports people who want improved vision to gain competitive advantage, and for anyone wanting to maintain or improve their sight. I feel very balanced and the success and recognition I get makes me happy. I get enormous satisfaction from witnessing how my efforts really help people and how I positively affect their lives..."

Stefanie Hennigfeld has in a sense found herself and come some way to better understanding her personality and her yearnings. And she now knows more than ever what she wants for herself and from life.

In contrast to her coaching colleagues, Birgitt Morrien takes a scientific approach to her work and objectively tests its success. An 8-year long study involving 80 participants, performed in conjunction with the institute for business informatics at the university of Hanover, confirmed two important hypotheses:

DreamGuidance is indeed an aid to understanding in the decision-making process. Furthermore, it helps participants to develop methods of self-assessment and to increase confidence on matters of intuition and feelings. A coaching that focuses on individual development is the exception rather than the rule. But it is something that is increasingly in demand from clients, notices Christopher Rau, Chairman of the German Coaching Association (DBVC). (...)

SOURCE:
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Die Ich Formel – 15 Wege zu einem glücklichen Selbst
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