A shirtless man with his arms raised in triumph, standing on a beach looking out at the ocean. The man is seen from the back, with his arms raised high in the air, fists clenched. He is wearing dark blue shorts. The background is a vast, blue ocean under a clear sky. The lighting suggests a bright, sunny day.

The Peak Interview

- As used in coaching

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SUMMARY

The Peak Interview is a particularly effective method to make the unconscious human resources conscious to the person who has had a peak experience. This person (client) is interviewed about a self-selected experience of personal success. The coach (interviewer or therapist) inquires about the process that led to this success. Hereby a number of factors, which led to the success, are identified. The client will thereby get an awareness of the success, the conditions and context that gave rise to the success. This awareness can then be regarded as a new resource for the client to handle new challenges that the client wants to take up (new goals or new processes). This article describes what Peak Interview means, the theoretical foundation of the Peak Interview, and the methodology the coach uses to make a safe and effective Peak Interview.

Introduction

The world record in long jumping was improved by almost half a meter when Bob Beamon, USA, jumped a sensational 8.90 m in the long jump at the Olympics in Mexico, 1968. After the jump Bob was psychologically "shaken". He kept asking others: "What happened?" But no one he asked could explain it, so he continued to look for an explanation. Finally one day he found in Maslow (1968; 1970) the explanation he had sought for so long: he had had a Peak Experience!¹

Erik Jarlmaes who as a young man himself had achieved a Danish record in the 400 meters hurdle race and later had trained as a psychotherapist, was fascinated by such unique athletic boundary-expanding performances. This fascination led to the meeting with and interviewing of 25 different Olympic gold medalists and a few World Record holders, including 100 m winner Wilma Rudolph (ROME 1960) and long jumper Bob Beamon. Through interviews, Erik discovered that all these winners had Peak Experiences in connection with their performances. These Peak Experiences all had the same common features, which characterize a Peak Experience (detailed in Appendix 1). The athletes then felt as if they had a new Peak, having had the space and time to tell their Peak experience to Erik, who was especially present through listening, creating a very intense contact.

Through subsequent interviews with business people and a number of students with many different backgrounds, Erik discovered that not only winners as mentioned above have peak experiences, but also all the people interviewed had a peak experience. He then explored, whether it was possible for the clients to use their new self-awareness of their own peak experience² for a possible "repeat" of the peak – in a different setting. By noting which "elements" were present on the way toward the Peak – they perhaps could introduce these elements into everyday life – whether at work, at home or during leisure/ social time.

Here is an example from a management workshop, 1992, where Erik conducted peak interviews:

¹ Bob Beamon told his story to Erik Jarlmaes, in 1984 at the Olympics in Los Angeles, where Erik Jarlmaes researched in Peak Experience, eg. by interviewing 25 former Olympic gold medalists in athletics and swimming.

² This new awareness was created by *putting* the peak-experience into words and thus gaining a deeper understanding of what led to the experience (jf.r Wittgenstein, 1953)

A director of a state company related the following:

"I was at an exam in high school, where I sat in the gym at my little table and looked at the tasks assigned. The very moment the sun rose in through the large windows and enveloped me, I knew the answers to the questions. "

In this quotation "large windows" and "sun" are important conditions for the resulting Peak - and therefore it was natural to ask if he had these elements in play at work. No, was the answer, I have small windows facing north (i.e. no sun, only light). But you're the director, I said! "Aahh YES, I want to go home and look at it," he replied. At the next workshop, he came back and said he had changed his office to one with large windows facing west (i.e. afternoon sun) - and subsequently he was happier at work, the employees could feel it and that made them happier as well.

- So, the integration of some of the elements that led up to the peak, raised everyone's quality of life, and it also opened up opportunities for creating new peak-like conditions – a phenomenon described by Csikszentmihalyi as “FLOW conditions”. Namely, “flow” refers to the creation of positive feelings and better quality of life resulting from a balance between an individual’s knowledge and skills on the one hand, and the challenges the person can handle on the other - a perfect balance that allows FLOW modes (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

While the main approach to working with peak experiences remains, the “Peak Interview” is being adopted as a new tool in coaching, as it has been included, since 2010 in the “coaching subject” in Business Studies (Cand. Merc.) At the Southern Danish University (Warming-Rasmussen and Raalskov, 2010). In coaching, the starting point is the client as a human being without serious mental problems (Gjerde, 2006: 39), and the purpose is to make well-functioning people even better at managing the current problems in their lives.

When the Peak Interview is used like this we can theoretically support it by seeing it as being based on positive psychology, and thus it stands in contrast to previous methods of trying to help people. Previously (therapy) methods have focused on the client’s problems³ and possibly diseases⁴. The idea with these therapies was to lead the person back into situations of more or less repressed pain, because the underlying thought was that the client hereby would be able to release the pain-related grief or anger. More recent focus increasingly deviates from this idea, since the new focus embodies a more positive approach. This evolution officially started in 1988 where Martin Seligman, (who was appointed President of the American Psychological Association that same year) in his inaugural address argued that psychological research in the future should be more oriented toward uncovering what makes people happy. Based on an extensive literature review Seligman concluded that psychological research until then mainly has focused on mental disorders such as anger, anxiety and depression. The proportion of “positive” to “negative” focus was 1:51 (Lindskov A., 2007:7). The speech was an eye opener for a number of researchers, psychologists and therapists. By extension, a new line of research called Positive Psychology arose. This deals with the personal qualities that enable people to cope with adversity and live a meaningful life.

³ Understood as goals and processes that the client notoriously doesn’t believe he can handle - often because of past defeats, failures, etc.

⁴ Depression, anxiety, psychotic disorders and / or personality disorders (Gjerde, 2006:39)

Positive psychology also studies the effect of positive emotions, such as flow situations⁵ (Lindskov A., 2007:7). In this article, these “personal qualities” are called personal resources.

There seems to be two general approaches to discovering our personal resources in coaching / therapy - we call them “cognitive” and “physical”. Cognitive approaches tend to be mental (Gade, 2006: 98). This is illustrated in the example: “Cognitive resource-focused and appreciative pedagogy” (Metner & Storgård, 2008). Body approaches are mainly based on physical sensations as illustrated in the example “Bodily Intelligence” (Marcher & Fich, 2010; Kjær, 2009). The entry points are not mutually exclusive - they can easily be combined. The human can be seen as whole, making use of both physical sensation and thinking to grasp and understand. Metner & Storgaard belongs to the cognitive line, and they write as follows:

“In the 90’s, we in Denmark deeply felt the effects of the great upheavals which in some years had been ongoing in pedagogy and psychology ... an important element in the new paradigm is that we no longer believe that one single theory can be used to understand almost any problem or context.... today, instead we believe that it is necessary to use a number of more specific theories to understand the specific events we experience. ... Cognitive resource-focused appreciative pedagogy (ed. Note: invites) expansion and interconnections” (Metner & Storgaard, 2008: 9).

The message seems to be that positive psychology invites integration rather than separation of methods. Integration is not foreign to Kjær, who belongs to the physical line. Kjær writes: *“Although the body is the place where emotions, feelings, needs, intuition and experience of happiness arises, they only become “real” to us when they appear in our head”.* (Kjær, 2009:13). According to Kjær the bodily sensation comes before cognitive understanding, but he acknowledges that only when we understand with the head, it becomes “real” to us.

Perhaps it is this insight that underlay the Danish Queen Margrethe response to the challenging question, which concerned the Crown Prince, while he was still young and single: *“What does your Majesty think the Crown Prince should do when he chooses his future crown princess, should he follow his heart or follow his mind?” “I certainly hope that he uses both his heart and his mind!”* was the Queen's wise reply. A Peak Interview, as it is described in this article integrates both cognitive and physical methods to help people become aware of their personal resources. We will try to illustrate that cognitive and physical methods complement each other and thereby can make coaching more effective.

The Peak Interview - as a coaching tool

The coach interviews a client regarding his/her peak experience, focusing in particular on the resources / elements leading up to the peak experience - or successful experience, as we often call it in coaching. By “successful experience” we are not referring to a “result” because in a Peak Experience the experience of “being” is the most important thing, regardless of outcome achieved. This is the difference between a Peak Experience and a Peak Performance.

This difference was illustrated by one of the big names in Danish swimming, Mette Rasmussen, when 6-8 years ago, reporters asked her about her best result, and she mentioned

⁵ A situation wherein things seem to happen, almost by themselves. See, for example. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.

a World Cup race in which she placed fourth. The journalists protested, pointing out all the finals where she had won gold. But Mette persisted, saying that in those races she never used all her power, and the race where she had placed fourth, she had performed beyond her limits, and had an incredibly joyful experience - and therefore to her that was her best personal result even though she had not won!!

As mentioned in the introduction, the Peak interview is a special form of interview grounded in positive psychology. This does not mean that the problem is something you sweep under the carpet or just talk around in order to deny or forget them. A problem may well be a challenge that can be positive when brought to the surface. The method of handling it need not to focus just on the negative (such as the client's perception of inadequacy), which requires connecting with old pain, sorrow or failure. Instead, the starting point may be the resources that the client already has, which has brought him / her far in life. The client must surely be in possession of a number of important resources, his / her current situation taken into account. Despite difficulties, the client has accomplished many great things in life: education, jobs, network, cohabitation partner, children, etc. The fact that these big things do not come easy gives evidence that the client must have a number of resources in his/her "backpack" to handle the current challenge called a "problem". Maybe the client simply needs to be made aware of these resources!

The Peak interview is an effective coaching technique, which can help the client become aware of his/her own resources. Awareness of these resources can help the client come to greater insight and courage to look ahead and act on goals and challenges.

The contents of a Peak Experience

A peak experience always includes a prelude and a peak. The prelude is the process that led the client to a joyous success experience, and the peak is the experience of the delight of the success. Think of the time you learned to ride a bike. It was a learning experience where you tested your limits - you wanted to learn to ride a bike, and at the same time, you were afraid you might fall over. Your father (or another person you trusted) ran next to you and steadied the bike. You needed confidence in your helper, and then suddenly you discovered that you could do it yourself - you mastered both balance and speed - it was a very special experience of joy (a peak). We all have a variety of experiences like this, which are great for us. Some of these experiences have been really important to us, and they have given us some skills that we use when dealing with other challenges. If you can learn to ride a bike, you can also learn to drive a moped, etc.

Which experiences can we call peak experiences? The answer is individual-dependent. What for one person is a peak, is not necessarily a peak for others. An analysis of 14 peak interviews (see Appendix 1)⁶ shows that the following 10 aspects are common to peak experiences:

a) The client hasn't shared much about his peak experience to other people, perhaps because the experience provides both depth and vulnerability, in which s/he thinks s/he is alone.

⁶ Plenary review of the 14 peak interviews took place at the Bodydynamic Education project day in Maribo, Denmark, 2007 under the supervision of workshop leader Bodydynamic Psychotherapist Erik Jarlnaes, Bodydynamic International. See Jarlnaes (1992).

- b) The Peak Experience is always associated with a diamond-sharp memory of a small part of the experience, no matter how many years have passed since it occurred.
- c) The experience of the moment feels very important and has a big impact (Kairos) - the chronological order (Kronos) is less important, because the experience of time is altered. For example, time seems "standing still" (See more about Kairos and Kronos in the subsequent section about Stern).
- d) The client has a feeling that "the space" in the experience expands (e.g. a hole on the golf course can suddenly be experienced as big as a bathtub or fills the entire field of view).
- e) The client experiences that all the senses feel sharpened.
- f) The experience includes a special kind of happiness, rejoice, awe, a sense of bliss, which is a little like when the heart opens.
- g) The body is participating in the experience in some way, e.g. you have been walking or moving in a certain way, perhaps your heart became hot, you got goose bumps or you sensed a pulling-in in your stomach.
- h) The experience is associated with a deeper conviction (something transpersonal / spiritual) or something religious (OAS, see Antonovsky in the following section). This is like sensing that if you died right NOW, it would be ok, or you experience an opening and contact with God, or there is an experience of being "carried" / floating.
- i) The activity that gave rise to the experience was purposeful and yet resulted in a sense of flow.
- j) The experience provides a sense of connectedness - a sense of Mutual Connection and a Message (SOC, see Antonovsky in the following section).

As illustrated by the points above, most aspects of a peak experience are associated with moments of specific awareness, and the clarity is perceived both cognitively and physically. The experience also affects something essential - deep aspects of the client's Dignity and Mutual Connection⁷. Furthermore, the Peak Experience touches something sensitive and private, and as mentioned in a), the client typically feels alone in the experience, and therefore does not speak much about it. This requires the coach to conduct the interview with appropriate respect and humility as prescribed by Kierkegaard (1859). The client's story about his Peak Experience can be regarded as a gift of trust to the coach, and in many cases this sharing becomes a new Peak Experience.

The prelude towards the peak (after this, called "the process") is often toned down or lies unconsciously in the client. Too bad, because it is indeed here that the explanation must be found as to why and how he succeeded in achieving his joyous success. Understanding this includes both conscious and unconscious resources. It is especially exciting to uncover these *unconscious* resources and make them aware and operational. For, conscious resources can be used to obtain new successes. In the previous example with sun and large windows in the

⁷ Dignity and Mutual Connection is seen in the Bodydynamic Psychotherapy System as our basic human drives www.bodydynamic.dk/20artikler.pdf, (Hvid, 2002:14), (Marcher, L & Fich, S., 2010:3) and www.bodydynamic.eu.

exam situation, these two elements were made conscious to the point where the client went back to work and found a way to integrate them - and thereby new successes arose (by the Directors joy spreading to his employees – thus raising the overall quality of life).

When we think of a success, such as when we learned to ride a bike, it probably still seems huge – you are likely to remember the experience as a big "Yes!" You can probably also feel something in your body, while you think of the experience - perhaps sensing a rising power in the chest and clarity in the head? However, what led to the mastery of the cycling? Your courage to overcome the fear, the support you received from others in the process, etc.? Are these resources some that you can benefit from in other contexts? The challenge is to uncover what happened just before you mastered it, because here is where unconscious resources often came into play! It is important to uncover a number of facts and interactions with others. Questions that are suitable for this are all kinds of open-ended and clarifying questions (see the discussion of possible issues in Stahlschmidt and Christensen, 2007: 49-62) such as:

- What time of day was it?
- What happened?
- What happened next?
- In which order?
- Who was present?
- What did he/she say or do?
- What did you sense in your body? (Noise, rest, warmth, hardening, etc.)
- How did you feel? (Anxiety, joy, comfort, etc.)
- Have you ever thought about it? - And
- Have you told anyone? What is holding you back?

Our experience with doing interviews show that the client as part of the interview naturally mentions many of the aspects. The coach just needs to listens actively. Other times, it may be very helpful to the client if the coach asks his way in.

In the peak moment and in the details unconscious or suppressed resources are hidden - these deserve to be uncovered, so you can enjoy them again and benefit from them to create new successes. The awareness of the details of your success can give you new hope and new strength. This awareness may enhance both your confidence⁸ and your self-esteem⁹, which in turn forms the basis of wanting and daring to take new steps toward realizing more of your potential. Finally, insights from peak experiences can help you to overcome your own internal

⁸ Confidence is the idea of "being able to do" whatever you decide to do, or "being able to learn it".

⁹ The awareness of being "good enough" with the skills and the appearance you happen to have.

resistance¹⁰ in situations, where it is not helpful - especially when your focus shifts from the negative (resistance) to the positive.

Theoretical Foundation of the Peak Interview

As mentioned in the introduction, the peak interview is supported by positive psychology and by the understanding that bodily and cognitive approaches can be usefully integrated. Theoretical support comes mainly from the following three works:

Daniel N. Stern: *The Present Moment*, 2004.

In his work, "The Present Moment (2004)" Stern, who is honorary professor of psychology at the University of Geneva and Professor of Psychiatry at Cornell University, New York, deals with the phenomenon of "fullness" in our consciousness - namely a moment of fullness. Stern demonstrates that experiences that are remembered can be played back either in a chronological context ("Kronos") or in the experience of its fullness ("Kairos") (Stern, 2004:25-26). Take, for example the very moment when your eyes first met with whom you fell in love. This moment, which lasted a few seconds¹¹, can be placed chronologically in relation to the calendar and time, but such a classification seems relatively unimportant. What matters in your mind, is rather "the fulfillment" of the moment - a fulfillment that has both a psychological and a physiological function. Psychologically, it provides a sense of consistency and commitment (or vulnerability and connectedness). It thus represents an implicit intention to assimilate or accommodate "the new" or solves the problem (Stern, 2004:31-38). Physiologically it contains changes in the body's chemistry, which Stern describes as "a sense of self" (Stern, 2004:39). The current moment's "fulfillment" ("Kairos") is often greater than everything else that happened during that month, if not years. Since many of our thoughts, choices and actions are based on our experience, the insight herein may be used positively and be resource-oriented to address new challenges. What matters is that we become aware of how the kairos-experiences affect us so that we can draw on these resources¹² from the experience while thinking more freely and more holistically in solving new problems.

The idea with the Peak Interview is to use both Kronos and Kairos to ask about the details of the client's success story. The present moment will often in such (positive) experiences be associated with a feeling of happiness, which the client would like to share, and thereby relive. But resources, which led to the success, often lie hidden in the preceding process.

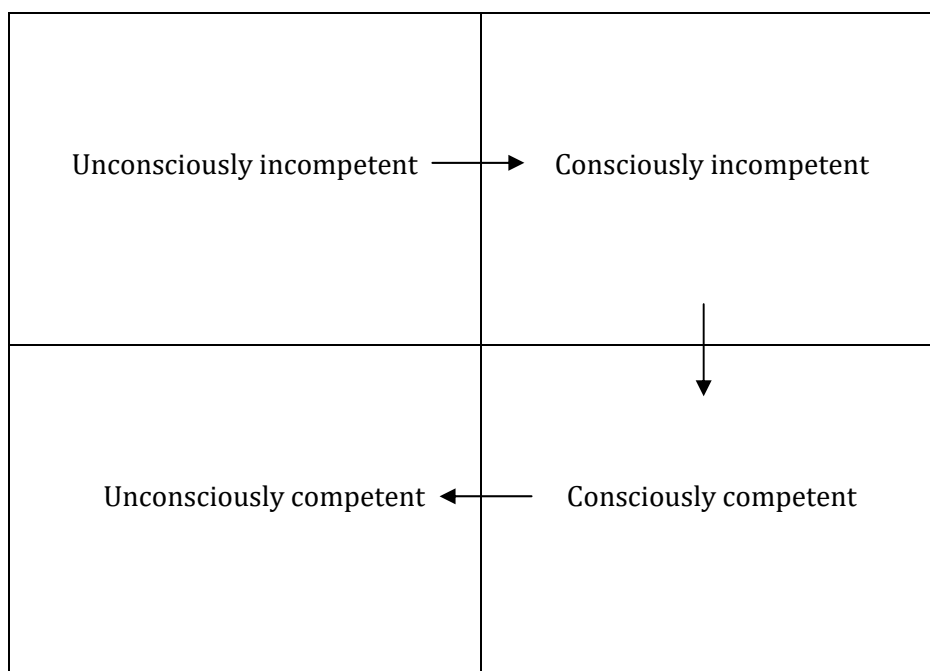
¹⁰ Internal resistance is often the worst opponent we face in life. Various authors have named this inner resistance: Gremling (Carson, 1983), Dommerstemmen (the Voice of the Judge)(Myers, 1989 and Den indre censor (the inner censor) (Gjerde, 2007: 79).

¹¹ Stern describes the present moment as having a short duration of maximum of 10 seconds (Stern, 2004:41-53).

¹² "By resources" we mean the individual's "capacity for constructive thinking, reasoning and problem solving" (Buelens et. al. 2006: 62), and it's ability to involve his fellow people's support (Brantbjerg and Ollars, 2006: 41).

Therefore, it is important to identify Kronos with questions, like: "When did you start this project? Well, so it is a two-week course? When did you get the inspiration?" And uncover Kairos with questions that expand the content from the timeline entries: "Where did you come from? Who was present in two-week course? Was someone with you when you got the inspiration? So you felt support from X and Y? But it is also important to ask questions that expand the experience of the "scene" - e.g. description of nature as part of the scene, or a description of family members, colleagues or friends who were part of the scene. Finally, it is important to return to the client and ask for his/her bodily sensations and emotions - all in the best possible balance. This shows what led to the success and the peak. During the interview an awareness of a number of conditions and coping strategies appears (Metner and Storgård, 2008: 79-89), which so far has remained in the client as a great tacit knowledge (Implicit Knowing¹³) (Stern, 2004:116; Gjerde, 2006:75). The new consciousness that the client obtains through the phrasing thereof (Kjær, 2009: 45), becomes a source of resources that can be used in the future to address new challenges. The client moves, as illustrated below, from "unconsciously incompetent" or "consciously incompetent" to the first level of consciously competent"¹⁴.

Figure 1: Degrees of competence.



Source: Broadwell (1969)

Aaron Antonovsky: Unraveling the Mystery of Health, 1987.

Antonovski was until his death professor of medical sociology at Gurion University, Israel. In his work "Unraveling the Mystery of Health" Antonovsky argues for the importance of having a "Sense of Coherence" (SOC).

¹³ Knowing instead of knowledge (Stern, 2004:116).

¹⁴ The next step to becoming unconsciously competent occurs only after the consciously competent step has been incorporated as a new habit.

SOC is defined as "the extent to which one has a continuous, permanent, but also dynamic feeling of confidence in the following three things (Antonovsky 1987:16-19):

- Comprehensibility: i.e. the stimuli that come from one's internal and external environment is structured, predictable and understandable (so that future stimuli will be predictable and explicable)
- Manageability: i.e. that adequate resources are available for one to cope with the demands that these stimuli make (they can be managed/one can cope) and
- Meaningfulness: i.e. these requirements are challenges that are worthwhile to engage in. (motivational element/ life makes sense emotionally)

Antonovsky came to the above realization, when he analyzed the reasons why a number of survivors of former prisoners from concentration camp could maintain very good mental health despite the unimaginable horrors they had endured in the camps (Antonovsky, 1987:16-18). Among those who did well, he saw that these three skills were present in a greater degree than in those who were mentally (and physically) broken. He therefore concluded that the higher the level of the SOC, the better the survivors demonstrated ability to maintain good mental health.

To illustrate Antonovsky's theory we include a summary¹⁵ of a dialogue with a former South Vietnamese pilot¹⁶. The North Vietnamese shut down the plane and prisoned the pilot in a POW camp. The person escaped and is today is living in exile in Kolding, Denmark.

Re. Comprehension/Comprehensibility:

Life in a POW camp is routine. We were regularly beaten and humiliated. You have a life in which you are living with pain, and you get deep knowledge of your mental and bodily reaction patterns in fearful situations.

Re. Manageability:

Soon you see that it is useless to think of yourself as a victim. Many of my fellow prisoners were crying over the injustice that their government had failed them or that their God had left them. Several of them died rather quickly. I found out that if I placed myself in the sunshine in the morning, and I lived in the moment, I could endure more. Consciously I stepped out into the sunlight in the morning and smiled at the sun. I also began to train my muscles, because it made my body stronger against the punches and the humiliation. I got some of my fellow prisoners to train with me, and seeing them perform better actually gave me moments of joy during all the misery. I am a Christian - and in my evening prayer, I thanked my God for every good hour I had during the day. My prayer to be freed gave me hope.

Re. Meaningfulness:

I was sure that we had been fighting for the right cause - freedom, democracy and freedom of religion. These values will win in the end. We had also done evil things, so I actually understood

¹⁵ The full dialogue had duration of 30 min. The dialogue is subsequently edited according to the SOC model, and therefore not reproduced verbatim. To ensure that the abridged version is similar to the client's mind and attitude, the client read the shorter version and edited it. The client accepts the shorter version.

¹⁶ Nguyen Quang Truong, Personal interview d.Aug.15.2010 in Kolding, Denmark.

why the guards hated us. In fact, some of them were sometimes amazingly good to us, and I tried to get closer to them. In a way, they were also "prisoners" - prisoners of hatred and cruelty by virtue of their positions. However, when we see each other as human beings behind the exterior facade, it brings us closer. Those, with whom I got closest, became less cruel to me and to some of the other prisoners. Hatred and war they are completely wrong methods to build a good society. We need understanding, trust, and forgiveness.

As we see from the above summaries, Nguyen Quang Troung largely possesses the SOC. This is perhaps the reason why he survived and that he, as a hot-dog vendor in Kolding, meets you with a smile - he is slim and toned despite his mature age, and he is easy to chat with. He seems happy despite his status-related degradation from a fighter pilot to a hot-dog vendor.

In this article, we will use the SOC as an analytical tool for the Peak Interview. During the process of a Peak Interview, we will have comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness in mind. During the analysis phase, we will also try to identify the client's resources. In the Peak interview, we thereby aim to coach the client to deeper comprehension, manageability and meaningfulness. These resources, which were unconscious or suppressed, become conscious to the client during the interview. When the client "relives" the process that led to the peak, there will be several "aha experiences" that can be applied prospectively to handle challenges. Meanwhile, pleasure and intensity will arise in the client.

Stein Bråten: Communication and Relations 1999 (and 2010):

Bråten deals intensively with the fundamental role emotions play in an interpersonal sense, including when decisions are made in ethical conflicts (Bråten, 1999: 80-89). This means that decisions are not only based on cognitively rational principles but also on emotional grounds and these emotional grounds (which are often not made explicit) are not only an internal matter in the client but also, interpersonal (and therefore largely contextual). Decisions in ethical conflicts based on emotional evaluations, are according to Bråten, based on interpersonal responsibility. According to Bråten this can't be called "irrational", but must be based on the premise of a so-called caring rationality (Bråten, 1999: 83), which often stands in sharp contrast to conventional logic and the ethics of justice. Think, for example, of the biblical parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15,11-32). The father's decision to greet the prodigal son with a "Welcome Back" celebration was hardly an expression of justice but rather, of caring rationality. Knowledge about the interpersonal sense of rationality is a key to understanding the dissonance between feelings and perceptions. This explains large portions of both intrapersonal conflict and of interpersonal dispute. Bråten illustrates how this knowledge can explain that the same person can argue for two different positions depending on whether the person focuses on conventional logic that points in the direction of justice-ethics, or caring rationality, based on emotional evaluations.

This has particular relevance in the Peak Interview because the sequence of events in these interviews often contain both 1) intrapersonal conflicts (such as we see between the impulse to stand-out and the taught morality, that require people not to put others in the shadows¹⁷) and 2) the interpersonal *feeling of* responsibility for the person or the *specific* persons, which was affected by the course of action. The peak is often unfolding in situations where these

¹⁷ This is e.g. seen in a mother's teachings about treating other people, as you want to be treated.

conflicts are solved and rise to a higher level. This helps create the happy experience. The client's subsequent awareness of what led to success can prove to be a resource for solving future intra-personal conflict and interpersonal discord. These insights from Bråten (mixed with positive psychology) therefore creates a learning and solution-oriented approach to future problems, focusing on what you in the intra-personal and interpersonal contact want to achieve, rather than focusing on what you want to avoid (see also Dalsgaard, 2006: 237 and Jarlmaes & Luytelaar, 2004:261).

Distinction between Peak Interview and Shock-Trauma Interview

The Peak Interview's focus can also be on how we use our human resources to cope with difficult life situations. Such life situations are often associated with high energy, such as stress. In principle the selection could be either a pleasant or a beautiful experience or a shock-trauma experience that the client mastered. Unconscious exciting resources are found in both. This article however focuses on the positive situations that give rise to the peak experiences. The reason for this is that interviews that focus on shock-trauma risk a re-traumatization for the client. Shock-trauma situations are often associated with high anxiety and in some cases with panic, thus special training of the coach is required (Brantbjerg and Marcher, 2004). This article about the Peak Interview narrows Peak Experiences to successful and joyful experiences where the field contains joy, pride and self-esteem. To the surprise of many, the field contains also strong elements of mutuality with others (Bråten, 1999: 83; and Jarlmaes & Luytelaar, 2004: 261).

The Peak Interview – how to do it!

The idea of a Peak Interview is to help the client to have a conscious understanding of his unconscious resources associated with a successful experience. Resources made conscious will help to increase both self-esteem and self-confidence. The way to raise awareness is by asking the client to verbalize the experiences that led to the successful experience. The client telling his own story and answering the interviewer's questions achieves this¹⁸.

Based on expert experience a peak interview can be conducted in approximately 45 minutes by a trained coach. For an inexperienced coach, the first attempt either takes longer or shorter time depending on the client's storytelling, and the coach's ability (or lack of it) to define or control. An inexperienced coach may fail to ask pertinent questions or lack the courage to interrupt the client so the client quickly reaches the end of the story - the success. Conversely, the inexperienced coach is in danger of not being able to keep the client on track, so he relates too much detail, so the track disappear which will make the overview disappears. Both situations are detrimental as the purpose of the interview is to determine key resources: in relation to comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness of the process.

The Peak Interview is divided into three phases:

- Approximately 20 minutes relating the process, leading up to the peak

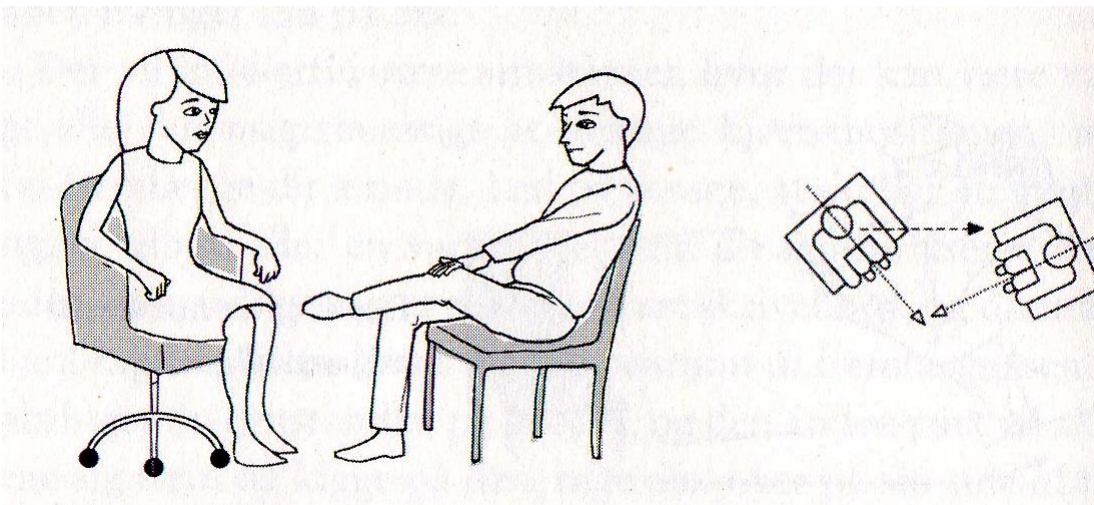
¹⁸ The language is a source of knowledge (and understanding) and there is a mutual dependence between language and thinking (Madsen, 1980: 410).

- About 10 minutes for the peak itself (just before, during and just after the peak)
- A minimum of 15 minutes for the analysis phase (the dialogue about the resources that the Peak Experience includes)

In the first 20 minutes, the interviewer should try to delay the peak by asking for the facts in the process, for example. What did you feel? Who was present? What happened prior to this? Where was it? Do you sense something in your body right now? The next 10 minutes (the peak itself) deserves space because it is pleasurable, joyful and immensely rewarding for the client. Here, the client often reaches a new experience of “the "Present Moment", which may be associated with tears of happiness. The analysis phase, a minimum of 15 minutes is important, because here the unconscious competence is made conscious and therefore useable as a resource. And most often it is useful to spend more time in this phase.

The Peak Interview is conducted in practice with the coach and the client sitting in two chairs, facing each other. Initially, the coach asks if the client feels good and whether the distance between the chairs is appropriate¹⁹. It can be significant to slightly angle the position of the chairs to ensure a relaxed atmosphere (Pease and Pease, 2007: 402).

Figure 2: Opening a conversation with a seat angle of 45 degrees for a relaxed atmosphere.



(Source: Pease and Pease, 2007: 402.)

If either the client or the interviewer does not like the distance or angle, then the seating angle or the distance is adjusted until it is suitable.

If the client seems a bit nervous about being interviewed, it may be appropriate to feel the earth, also called “grounding” (see a simple method in Appendix 2).

¹⁹ It is important for the client to have appropriate distance, as it helps counteract a feeling of pressure by giving a sense of having personal space. A suitable distance is approximately 1 to 1 1/2 yards, which corresponds to the limits of the personal space. (See Brantbjerg, 2003).

Once the client has found a comfortable position, the interviewer briefly tells the client what a Peak Interview contains and that a peak experience typically contains a realization that the time has come to a standstill, that all the senses are sharp, that there may be religious aspects, there is a high degree of bliss / heart opening, and that some of the aspects are still remembered even though it has been many years since you've had the experience, etc. This helps to direct the client to recall a successful situation (social, sporting, hobby, nature, etc.).

The client is then asked which successful experience he/she will share with the coach. Most people can relatively quickly recall a successful experience, otherwise the client can be helped a little through coaching or physical techniques such as standing up and raising the hands above the head as demonstrated in the cover photo of the article²⁰. Then the client is asked to tell about the experience. Most people will gladly tell the story, after all, this is a successful experience²¹, and they have a tendency to want to rush to the success (the Peak). You, as an interviewer/coach, have to try to delay finishing the story by constantly asking questions that deepen the experience, and by asking to what happened just before THE PEAK, who was present at this moment, how the weather was, etc. The goal is to get as much information as possible about the process itself and the conditions that led to the success, because it is often here that new insights arise for the client. The Peak experience is hereby staged again (and resulting in "feeling happy again" which sometimes leads to laughter or tears of emotions from the client). At the same time, several of the unconscious resources and values, which were part of achieving the peak, are identified.

Take for example the football player who intends to talk about the successful experience of scoring the decisive goal in the last ten seconds of the game. He can hardly wait to tell about the success and the joy that it brought to him, the team and the spectators. What is required now is the art of going back into the process and ask what led to the Peak. Now it is all about asking a series of questions of the client so he/she can recall the details of the process - the Kronos, Kairos and expanding questions (see the section on Stern). Here are some examples:

- When did you start your preparation for the game?
- When did you go to the stadium?
- Had you been thinking about the game prior to the game day?
- Were you involved from the start of the match?
- How did you feel when the first half was over?
- Were you with someone prior to the game, and how was it?
- What does this person mean to you?

²⁰ If the client does not remember a specific situation, both people can get up and stand in the position illustrated on the front cover image of this article. This activates bodily anchored memories of successes (Psychologie, 2010: 6).

²¹ The desire to tell about a peak normally by far exceeds the urge to hide anything. The desire to keep something hidden is often greater in situations where the client is asked to talk about his problems such as in "traditional" psychotherapy (Wolf, A., 2010: 21).

- How did you feel after the warm up?
- Did anything specific happen before the last 5-10 minutes of the game?
- How did you feel at the time? What did you sense in the body?
- Describe the last 5 minutes and tell me how you managed to be in the right place 10 seconds before the end!
- How did you do it? And what did you feel?
- It almost sounds like you could NOT miss, is that right?

The purpose of the questions is to help the client to tell his/her story as openly and honestly as possible in details before the actual success (the decisive goal). It is therefore important that the questions invite reflection in the client, i.e. that they are open-ended or circular (Gjerde, 2006: 151). For example, "What feelings did you have when entering the playing field?" or "How did you perceive the situation when you were behind by one goal?" Some examples of closed questions are "Were you happy when you walked onto the field?" and "Did you think you would lose?" The closed questions prove or disprove the interviewer's own assumptions and are not likely to evoke new insights from the client. You can also limit the number of questions that start with "why" because those can put the client in a defensive position. There are other ways of getting to the causes that are less likely to elicit a defensive response (Gjerde, 2006: 152).

Table 1: Reformulation of "why phrases"

Why:	Reformulation:
Why did you do that?	What did you want to achieve?
Why didn't you accept the challenge?	What was holding you back?
Why did you set this goal?	What did you want to achieve with this goal?

Source: Gjerde (2006: 152).

For the client, it can be an eye-opener to put the experience into words, it verges on a revelation: as the famous philosopher Wittgenstein (1953) put it, you can't understand something until you can tell it with words. Through this process, the client's understanding of his/her resources, values and conditions that were associated with success, is enlarged. For the football player, the successful experience was to win a match by scoring a goal in the last 10 seconds, and it contained unconscious resources like discovering the sense of community with team members and what the support of the audience and the girlfriend meant, what the coach's advice or the new diet plan contributed to empowerment. These findings are now conscious resources that the client in the future can use when solving new challenges.

Bodily techniques

It is also imperative to include bodily sensations²² in the Peak Interview, as they are the key to deeper understanding and to discover bodily resources (Brantbjerg and Ollars, 2006). A body sensation in the client can be “a lump” in the throat, contraction/vibrations in the stomach (like butterflies in the stomach) or a stabbing pain in the heart, etc. These sensations often have links to basic emotions (see Figure 3) as joy, anger, disgust, fear, sadness, sexuality and shame (Jarlnæs, 2002: 141) (Kjær, 2009: 32)²³. So ask simply, “What do you sense in your body right now?” If the client answers: “Vibrations like butterflies in the stomach”, then give him/her a short break to go into this perception and add: “Which feeling do you connect with this right now.” The client may then answer “nervousness” or “delayed gratification”. When a dialogue about sensations and emotions is involved in the interview, the realization is made both physically and cognitively. Kjær explains this as follows:

- The Latin word for “feelings”, emotions means precisely *what moves me*. For the emotional and bodily intelligence, the ability to feel and sense the internal state is essential. The better we can feel this “streaming”; the better is our contact with “our inner” and our understanding of our feelings and ourselves. (Kjær, 2009: 32-33).

During the Peak Interview, it may happen that the interviewer senses his own bodily sensations. This is often due to a phenomenon known as “mirroring”. Mirroring is possible because we as humans are equipped with so-called “mirror neurons”, as popularly said, which ensures that we in our own body can sense and recognize what the client senses and to some extent can sense the clients feelings and intentions (Brodahl 2007: 348; Bauer, 2006). The client’s nervousness or joy can be sensed bodily in the interviewer (see figure 3, which shows bodily sensations along with trial subjects who observe different emotional situations²⁴). To ensure that you as an interviewer interpret correctly, it is a good idea to obtain feedback from the client (Wolf, 2010: 24).

The interviewer can, for example, say, “What you are saying right now gives me a sense of vibrations in the stomach like butterflies in the stomach, is that feeling something you recognize?” If the mirroring is confirmed, you can add: “I interpret it as nervousness?” The client may again provide feedback. By expressing their own body sensations and interpretations, they achieve “shared perceptions and emotions”, which can be very liberating for the client because it creates confidence and cohesion²⁵.

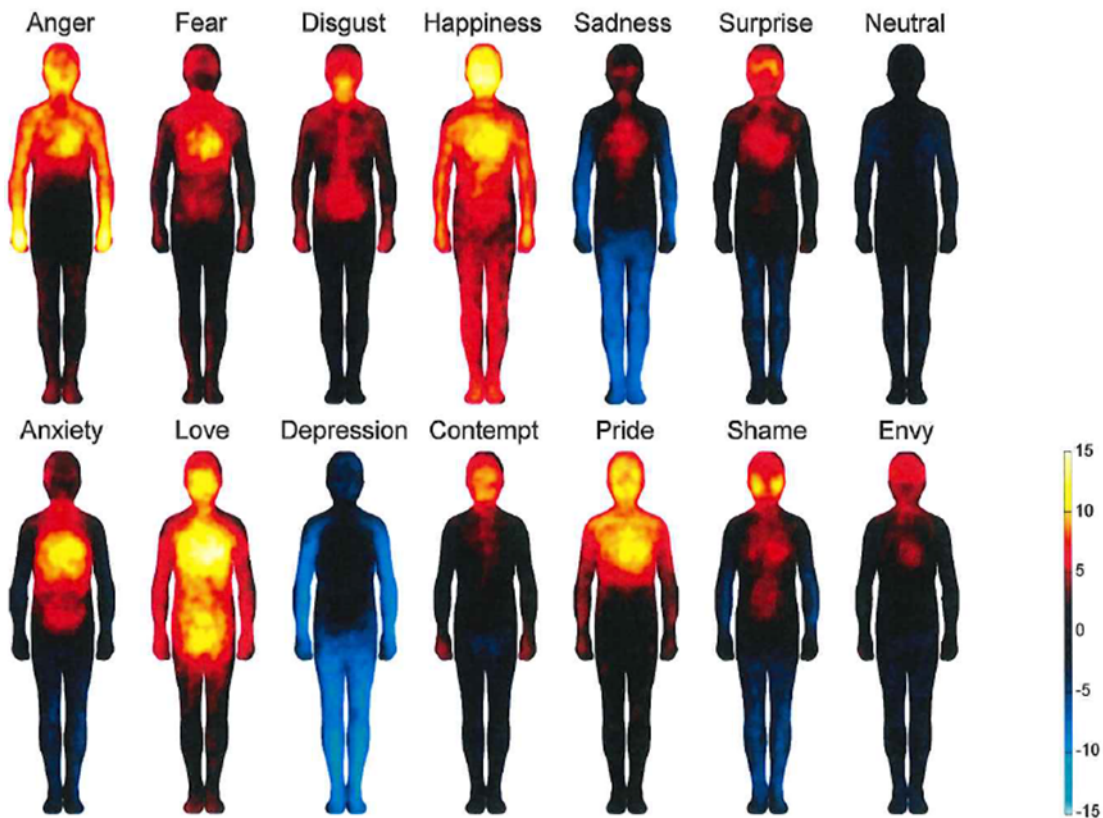
²² Also called the kinesthetic senses and the vestibular senses, which is the collective concept of receptors respectively in muscles, tendons, joints and the inner ear, which informs us of our skeletal movements etc. (Gade: 2006: 160-162) (The new Psychology handbook, 2004: 118-121).

²³ Note that an emotion can be a composite of several emotions. For example jealousy can be composed by 1) anger that his girlfriend notices a rival, 2) grief over losing his full attention and 3) fear of losing his love.

²⁴ Recent empirical research on “feelings” and “embodiment” illustrates the bodily sensation of emotions and thereby undermines the widespread reductionist view that the body is merely an “object”. In Nummenmaa et al. (2013) research he found that 6 basic emotions and 7 secondary emotions are found to have bodily anchoring. A total of 773 subjects were exposed to either visual or auditory stimuli in order to understand other people’s emotions. The result shows a reported high level of consistent body sensations from the respondents. Sense perception can be localized in specific body areas and with specific degree of intensity.

²⁵ See more about transparency of interpretations Jarlnæs, E. (2003): “The art of unknottting Knots”: The Bodyknot-model as a leadership and communication tool,” Or alternatively about “Giraffe Language” (also called Non-violent Communication) (Rosenberg, 2004).

Figure 3: Bodily mapping of emotions (Nummenmaa et al. 2013).



Source: Nummenmaa et al. (2013: 2)

The vertical scale as seen to the right of the image is viewed from above +15 down to -15 pictured with colors. Yellow indicates increased (stronger) or faster activity is sensed in the affected bodily area. While yellow means much higher activity, red means higher activity. The lower end of the range down to -15 shows the degree to which there is a sense of weaker or slower activity in the affected bodily area. Thus seen, joy (happiness) causes a sense of increased activity in virtually all of the body (but mostly in the head and chest), while depression conversely causes a sense of decreased activity, particular in the arms and legs²⁶. Note that there is a relationship between muscle activity in the face (illustrated in the following figure 4) and body sensations and that these are universal according to Gade (2006) and Nummenmaa (2013)

The ability to mirror accurately is part of being empathetic which is explained in the next section.

²⁶ People, who are depressed, often describe this as "feeling that they have no energy."

Empathy and Mirroring:

Empathy in this article means "the ability to emotionally empathize with the client's situation and feel involved in it" (Bråten, 1999: 85), (Brørup et al. 2004: 66)²⁷. The ability to empathize differs from person to person (Bråten, 1999:85). Empathy also varies with the knowledge of whom we are talking to (strangers, friends or family)²⁸ and our current mood (Golemann, 1997: 153). Daniel Golemann writes:

- *"Empathy requires enough calm and susceptibility, so that fine sense signals from another person can be perceived and imitated in the centers of emotions in one's own brain. ... There may exist only a low degree of/or no empathy when the brain's center of emotion exposes the body to a strong reaction, for example, an angry outburst."* (Golemann, 1997: 153).

Recent brain research by Biocypernautic Institute, California confirms this. In a stressful situation in which our brainwaves are at beta level, our empathy is lower than when we are in a state of inner peace and balance, where brain waves are alpha-level²⁹ (Hardt and Harris, 2007). Most people have a number of their own ways to bring about a state of inner peace and balance.

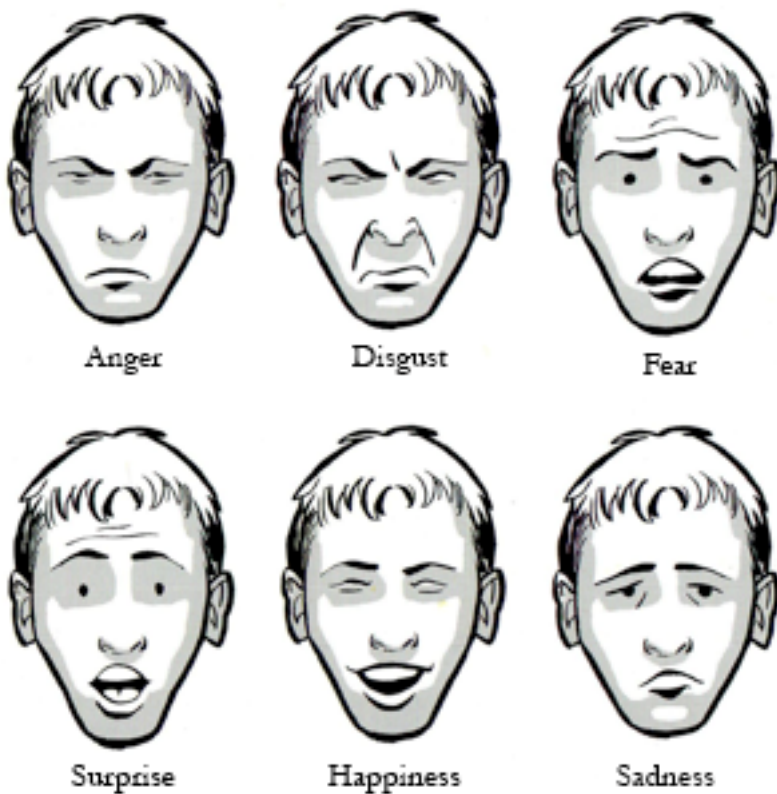
In order to optimize the Peak Interview it is helpful to use an appreciative resource-focused approach. One technique based on a resource-focused approach is to validate the nervousness of the client and support the client to use her/his own techniques for calming. Another is to guide the client to a sense of grounding such as those used by the Bodydynamic System (see Appendix 2) or Mindfulness.

²⁷ Bråten describes empathy as: "Empathy with how the other person is feeling emotionally." The word 'sympathy' is also related, and is the equivalent of "compassion". The common root of "empathy" and "sympathy" is "pati". It comes from the Greek word "pathos" which means both "suffering", "passion" and "feeling" (Bråten, 1999: 275)

²⁸ Experimental analyses of interactions between humans show that when it takes place between strangers, the interviewer archives an average of 20% accuracy in the assessment of the client's thoughts and emotions. When the same happens between friends or married people it increases the accuracy to an average of 35%. Virtually no one came through empathy to more than 60% accuracy (Wolf, 2010: 23). Communication is thereby the key to reconciliation of empathy-generated-performances.

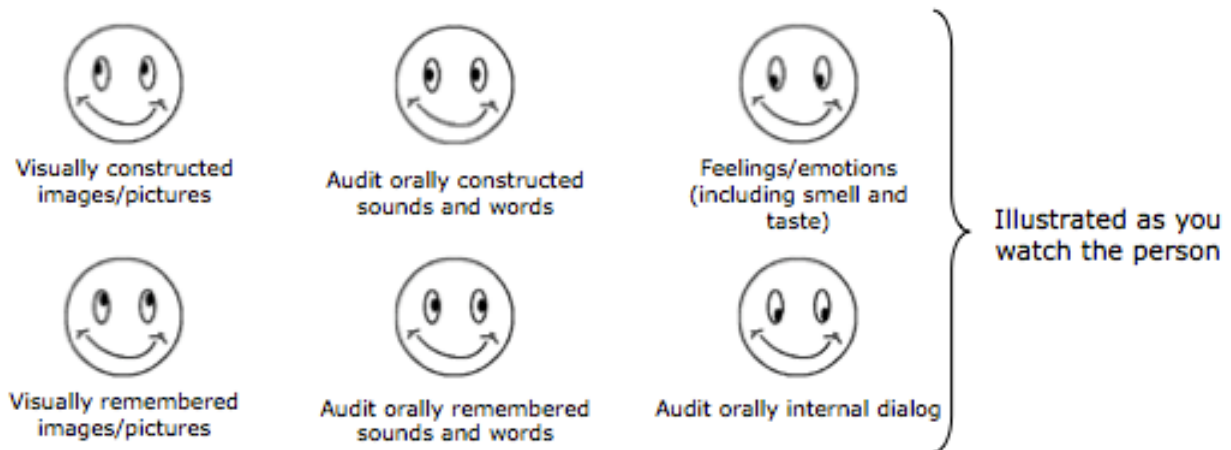
²⁹ When the brain waves are in Alpha, the mind is in harmony (normal arousal). When brain waves are in Beta, the mind is in readiness (high arousal). See Brodahl, (2007: 424) for more about the brain waves alpha and beta.

Figure 4: Facial expressions and emotions (Source: Kjær, 2009: 32; Gade, 2006: 350-354).



Cognitively, the ability to perceive and interpret another person's feelings and situation can be fostered by increasing the level of awareness of body language (See a more thorough review in Hvid (1990), Kjær (2009) and Pease and Pease (2007)). In this chapter body language is limited to face-language for the sake of simplification. Facial expression correlates strongly with the client's feelings. The reason is that even very small muscle movement around the eyes and mouth shows shifts in moods (see the drawings below which are simplified).

Figure 5: Eye movements and sensing. (Source: Metze and Nystrup, 2007: 78)



(Focused, non-moving eyes also indicate visual processing)

In order to ensure that the interpretation of these muscle movements is correct, the interviewer can verbalize both its observation and interpretation by making it explicit. Say simply, "I see a change in the corners of your mouth, it looks like a small smile - is that right?" If the client answers "yes", the interviewer can add: "I interpret it as you being happy?" and wait for the client's confirmation or rebuttal.

Similarly, eye contact is an important source for the interviewer to figure out if the client is auditory or visual. Eye movements can indicate this (see figure 5). Such insights give the interviewer a better chance of being able to "reach" the client. Try to use your auditory mode, when talking to an auditory person. And paint pictures with a visual person.

The eye movements can also detect whether the client is talking about something he / she remembers or if it is something he constructs in the present. Some NLP-therapists claim that you can detect lies by considering the eye movements of the client³⁰.

The rest of the client's body also has a language - the so-called body language (Hvid, 1990). If, for example, the client lets the shoulders sink in the middle of the conversation, it could mean that he/she shows despair; if he /she leans forward, it can indicate the client shows more interest or is bored and wants to end the conversation (Pease and Pease, 2007: 282).

The understanding of a client is nurtured by a series of body language signals. The ability to perceive and interpret the emotions behind these signals depends partly on these insights, and partly on empathy, as previously described.

During the Peak Interview, it may be a good idea for the interviewer to take notes. It's OK to say, "Wait a minute, I will note a few keywords!" This prevents the interviewer from losing eye contact with the client, while the client is talking.

³⁰ Training in such characteristics would be beneficial for a number of professions, for example accountants, bankers and lawyers, when they are interviewing business leaders as part of their job. Auditors already use interviewing and observation as two common sources of gathering evidence about whether the accounts are true and fair.

The analysis phase

After the client has reached the Peak and lingered for a moment in his happiness and perhaps also pride, it is the intention of the Peak Interview to coach the client to learn from this successful experience, and if possible get a sense of SOC. An obvious technique is the following:

The coach: "It was a beautiful story. I'm sensing heat in my abdomen and feel touched by your story. Thank you for sharing. The goal of the Peak story is of course, to identify your resources. Therefore, I would like to talk to you about the possible connections that have come up in your peak story. Perhaps there is a relationship between the peak and what you sense led you to your success?"

The client will of course try to see such contexts and thereby inevitably touch on Antonovsky's SOC-concepts (comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness). Sometimes it is beneficial to ask about these three concepts in the reverse order, as experience shows that this order gives the overview before the details. The interviewer may begin by asking, what is the meaning of the peak. After this, the interviewer can ask about what resources the client sees himself possessing and what was decisive for him/her in reaching the peak (manageability), and finally what external and internal stimuli initiated the various actions in the process (comprehensibility). The newly discovered correlations can be defined as resources to cope with future challenges.

In conclusion, you should ask the client if he/she could imagine how he/she can use the newly discovered resources in everyday life. In addition, it is obvious to use the so-called bridging question: "If you were to build on what we have discovered/highlighted, what would you suggest?" (Gørtz and Prehn, 2008:56).

Briefly outlined below, is the essence of two Peak Interviews, in which the analysis phase gave the client valuable insights into their own resources, including values, motivations and defenses. In the two interviews it turns out that particular insight into more or less unconscious values and drives softens their almost automatic defenses.

The analysis phase can be summarized in the so-called DISC frame of reference (Marston, 1928), which is a mandatory part of this Business Study (Cand. Merc.), in the course, Coaching, at University of Southern Denmark in Kolding. DISC is a simplified approach to archetypes and their defense (see Appendix 3). During the Peak Interview, the client is led to see behind the blocks of her own archetypes in a particular defense.

The first client who by a personality test has been determined to be compliant, i.e. "C" (see below), discovers through the interview that she appreciates the "S" values, whereby the suppressed "S" skills become conscious resources. The second client who by a personality test has been determined to be dominant, i.e. "D", discovers through the interview that he appreciates "S" and "I" values, whereby these suppressed competences become conscious resources (see fig. 1). Conversely, "S" types and "I" types often discover themselves having "D" and "C" skills³¹. This leads us to the realization that we as individuals do not have to be bound

³¹ This rests on experience through practice in Bent Warming-Rasmussen and Jesper Raalskov's use of peak-interviews as a coaching tool.

by rigid archetype-defenses, but can be more flexible and dynamic through coaching including Peak Interviews.

DISC (see the discussion in Appendix 3) is the acronym for:

- **Dominance** - relating to control, power and assertiveness
- **Influence** - relating to social situations and communication
- **Steadiness** (submission in Marston's time) - relating to patience, persistence, and thoughtfulness
- **Compliance** - relating to caution, structure and organization

Comparable divisions of personality types are drawn up by Jung and Myers & Briggs (see Buelens et al., 2006: 53-59).

Peak Interview 1:

A student who according to a DISC-personality test scored high on C (meaning that she has high demands for structure, to follow the rules and the organization) had chosen to tell a Peak experience about when she gave birth to her first child. During her story in the Peak Interview, she relived what a profound and beautiful experience it was for her to deliver her child. During the analysis phase, it dawned on her that during the process (the preconditions for the Peak) she had experienced a feeling of closeness and connectedness with her husband, who had given her the power to be able to stand the great physical pain in an unexpectedly good way. During all the pain, she had several glimpses of time standing still, and that she had felt intensity, deep love and gratitude (peaks). Now where she during the Peak Interview recognized this, a warm and quiet feeling began to spread in her chest from the abdomen and up to his neck. In addition, she knew that without this support the birth would not have been the same. This strong and now conscious insight made it clear to her that she missed this support in everyday life, but also that she had the opportunity to ask for more closeness. It would be a great relief in dealing with large emotional challenges in her life. The insight grew even stronger by the fact that the interviewer made her see the connections between the experiences and her knowledge of DISC. She was suddenly in possession of two resources 1) C's need for structure and organization including her need for perfection in the details and 2) the ability to invest in trust to receive closeness and support (who are mainly archetype S's skills).

With regard to SOC the following can be said:

Re: Meaningfulness: Giving birth to the child was a physically and mentally tough task and doing it in connection with her husband gave deep meaningfulness. Together they created the child and together they brought it into the world.

Re: Manageability: From the interview it was clear that she was accustomed to planning all the details, to follow rules and to maintaining control. Several times during the birth, this was

not possible. She had to give herself over to nature. Here she discovered a flow, which was beautiful, not the least because her husband was present and lovingly supportive. The realization that such support could also be found in everyday life was a great resource.

Re: Comprehensibility: The Peak Interview also gave a number of realizations of the external and internal stimuli that initiated the various actions in the process. For example that during a contraction she had reached out to her husband's hand, and he tenderly accepted it. By squeezing his hand her pain had been more bearable. Also the fact that he voluntarily had supported her neck during a contraction had had a major effect on her. Finally, it was important that she felt competent support from the midwife.

Overall, it was a breakthrough for her to be aware that, when you want to master big challenges, essential support can be obtained from both a competent person and from her husband. Further she realized that detailed planning and following rules cannot always be maintained, and that trust and devotion to the process may be necessary and can lead to success.

Peak interview 2:

A student at the business school (Cand. Merc.) (ML)³², as a result of the DISC analysis had particularly high scores on D (which means he goes for dominance by achieving results and competing in his focus areas) told a Peak experience about football. The young man and his football team won against a competing team and the surprising thing was that they won despite the fact that he and two other players had been at a disco the night before. The preparations for winning had been so poor, and yet they had won. During the process of the Peak Interview, it became clear that he had woken early that morning; his friend and teammate came as promised to pick him up. On the way to the stadium they had met some of the girls from the school; they went with the boys to cheer for them. In the locker room there had been a lot of fun and exhilarating teasing between him and some of the other players - the interaction had "just worked". He remembered several glimpses of happy faces throughout the process, and the girl's enthusiastic shouts had been great for him and the boys. They had managed to play a good game and in the last minutes, he managed to score the decisive goal. During the analysis phase, it dawned on him that the good atmosphere he and his friend had had in the morning was what had started the success. The girls joining in and the fresh tone in the locker room had started a kind of flow that made the game on the field very fun. While telling the story he was touched by the many happy smiles between him, the various spectators and the players. It was now clear to him that it was the interaction between him, his friends and the audience that really mattered. It had been "really cool" (in his words). The interviewer made him correlate D-archetype resources (dominance and competing) with the new insights about the interaction with his teammates and friends as something essential and joyful. He realized here that he could also have used his S-resources (community and caring). Finally, he realized that he also had the skill to be encouraging and teasing, and to let him be charmed by the girls' cheers, which in general is the archetype I's resources (management via charm and relationships). He could easily relate all these findings to tackle future challenges.

³² (ML) is an acronym for "Management and Leadership".

With regard to SOC the following can be indicated:

Re: Meaningfulness: It gave deep meaningfulness to the young man that the process wasn't only good for building the power toward a victory, but the process itself was joyous. Being together with the others, the interactions, the attention and the joyful teasing had been "awesome". It occurred to the boy that this was at least as important as victory.

Re: Manageability: The young man had been at the disco the night before and got up early, so he had cognitively to prepare for a bad game. He realized, however, that against all odds he was able to fight on the field, because he was picked up by a comrade, was cheered on by the girls and was teased kindly by his teammates about his night out. It was possible to win because there was positive interaction. But even if they had not won, it would have been a good experience of mutuality.

Re: Comprehensibility: The Peak Interview also gave a number of realizations of external and internal stimuli that initiated the various actions in the process. It meant something that his friend had kept his promise and picked him up, despite the fact that they had been at the disco the night before. He had looked into a happy teasing smile when he opened the door for his friend. He had felt very tired, but the girls' cheering had given him strength to fight. The interaction on the field had worked amazingly well, and it gave a feeling of flow during the match.

Overall, it was a breakthrough for the young man to become aware that the process means as much as the result. It was possible to win, even if the conditions weren't looking too bright. The interaction with his teammates and the girls' cheering in the process meant so much - he was important to the flow on the field, despite his night out.

As shown in the above two examples, a Peak interview often leads to two wonderful things: 1) The story telling phase leads him/her to relive the joy of its success (peak) – (in the two examples, giving birth to a child and to win a football game despite weakness of a night out). 2) During the analysis phase there often arises a new joy in raising awareness of the resources of SOC. Overall, this often gives rise to the desire and courage to use the now conscious resources to deal with other current and future challenges.

The Peak interview may give the client a desire for follow-up coaching on how he/she can actually involve the now conscious resources in specific relationships in everyday life. This can hardly be reached during the Peak interview, but can be offered in a new coaching session or even in a longer coaching series, depending on the scale of the challenge.

Conclusion/summary

This article about the Peak interview describes a form of interview, supported by positive psychology, which has a resource-focused and appreciative approach. The interview includes both cognitive and physical techniques that are particularly effective in reliving the joy of a successful experience with the client. The Peak interview stands out in particular by examining the process that led to the successful experience. In the process there often lie a number of unconscious resources, of which the client can be made aware. These resources are

often complementary to the archetype resources, which the client normally uses when handling challenges. Taking ownership of them opens new opportunities for action and development for the client.

The authors of this article wish you joy and success in using the Peak interview in the future – in your personal as well as professional life.

Bent Warming-Rasmussen, Erik Jarlmaes and Jesper Raalskov.

Postscript

After Bob Beamon had set his world record, he never jumped again. Later, after the insight that he had had a Peak Experience, the next question came to him: "How to overcome this limitation and be able to jump again, once more?"

Jarlmaes' reply was that he had experienced a shock because he was afraid of the peak experience - it appeared to come "out of the blue", and not by his own efforts.

In other words, he could not accommodate the powerful energy that was in the Peak experience - it scared him instead.

Had he been forced to process the resulting shock, release the strong energy and learn to contain this energy, he could have jumped again - if he wanted to.

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Appendix 1: Words the client expresses about the Peak experience

The basis of the point's a-j, in the chapter "Peak Experience" is a summary of 14 peak interviews. The 14 peak interviews took place at the Bodydynamic Education project day in Maribo, 2007, under the supervision of the course instructor, Bodydynamic therapist Erik Jarlnæs, Bodydynamic International. In the following table, the left column shows the point's a-j, which describe the elements that appear to be repeated in most Peak experiences. The right column describes the client's words that relate to these points.

Table 2: Elements and *Words in the Peak Experience (own design)

a-j	Elements of the Peak experience:	The client's words:
a	The client hasn't told much about the* Peak experience to others, perhaps because the experience contains both depth and vulnerability.	"Special experience", "private", "sensitive", "intimate"
b	The Peak experience is associated with a sharpened mind (images, sensations and	"Remembered, even though many years have passed", "clarity", "overview of complexity",

	emotions are sharp for the client)	"presence"
c	The experience of the moment feels very important (Kairos) - the chronological order (Kronos) is less important	"Time stopped", "being in the moment", "timelessness"
d	The client has a feeling that "the space" in the experience expands (e.g. the hole on the golf course suddenly fill the entire field of view).	"Expansion of space", "the air felt so close you could cut a piece out of it", "feel at home", "the right place", "high ceiling", "boundary expansion", "feeling one with nature"
e	The client experiences that the senses were sharpened. (A run in a forest in the winter can for example suddenly elicit the scent of * trees as if it were summer)	"Looking clearer", "hear the silence", "life", "surreal", "beauty", "openness upwards"
f	The experience includes a kind of happiness / joy / bliss.	"Heart Opening", "ease", "gratitude", "movement", "humor", "calmness", "happiness", "love", "intensity", "high", "play", "freedom", "humility", "ecstasy", "silence the noise", "euphoric"
g	The body was part of the experience, such as happiness, or having* goose bumps or *a sinking feeling.	"A quivering", "a bodily rhythm ", "rush", "having physical balance", "hot", "microgravity", "gravity", "oscillations", "heart resonance", "bodily straightness", "balance"
h	The experience is connected with a deeper conviction or religiousness.	"To die there/now would be ok," "driven", "riding a wave", "love", "hear the angels sing", "synchronicity", "inner conviction"
i	The client felt purposefulness and/or a flow.	"A flow", "something drives you forward", "like riding on a wave", "at a glance"
j	The experience provides a sense of connectedness - sometimes interpersonally.	"Contact", "unity", "water and fire", "to be able to do anything", "be yourself with others", "interconnectedness"

Appendix 2: Techniques for lowering nervousness

In situations where a client seems nervous, it may be advantageous to practice so-called “grounding”, which means mentally lowering the high energy (stress) by physically relaxing the muscles. There are a variety of techniques to do so. Honoring the resource-focused approach used in this chapter, it may be appropriate to start with the client's own technique to reduce nervousness. Alternatively, a simple grounding technique from the Bodydynamic system can be used, which is illustrated below.

The client's own techniques

To access the client's own techniques, the dialogue can be shaped as follows:

The coach: I see that you are sitting uneasily in the chair and there is sweat on your forehead - I'm guessing that you are feeling a little nervous right now?

The client: Yes, it's unusual for me to talk to you this way, so I'm a little nervous!

The coach: I would like you to use your own techniques to help you relax a little; would that be OK with you?

The client: Oh, yes, that would be nice! - (After a small break) I usually take a deep breath and shake my arms slightly!

The coach: OK, I would like to follow you, so will you guide us both with words, while we use your techniques?

The client: Yes!

Subsequently, the client guides and a sense of both peace and trust are created.

Grounding using a simple Bodydynamic Technique

If the client can't come up with something, the following technique may be helpful. The coach asks the client to stand with him/her and physically ground him/herself, i.e. to sense the ground with the feet (Brantbjerg and Ollars 2006: 75). This act draws attention to the soles of the feet, and then some movements of the foot can be made (can be carried out with or without shoes on). Grounding can be implemented in the following sequence:

- 1) Sense the soles of your feet against the ground by a) stomping on the floor and b) then feel what happens! (Often a sense of tingling in the soles of the feet, which is caused by increased blood flow).
- 2) Then carry out points 3-5, one by one, while you sense the soles of the feet on the ground. It is important to “dose” your movements according to the principle: *How little is needed* before it feels comfortable for you. The trick here is dosing. The better the dosing, the better you can connect the (physical) sensation with the (psychological) feeling. If you push too hard, the effect is slowed, some people can't sense anything even under pressure.
- 3) Roll back and forth on the entire sole of the foot (feet parallel)!

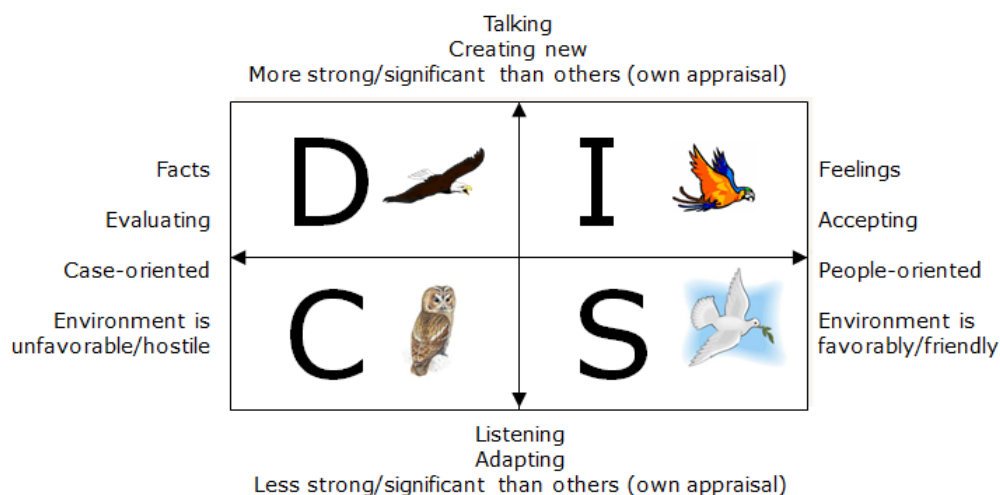
- 4) Then roll on the outside of the foot!
- 5) Now roll on the inside of the foot (as if you had flat feet)!
- 6) Stand a little on tiptoe and move your feet from side to side - then do the same while standing slightly on your heels!
- 7) Stand in normal position and feel/sense yourself - how is your nervousness right now?

After this physical exercise (grounding) most people feel a little surprised that nervousness has transformed itself into a state of calm. Both the interviewer and the client can now sit down, and the Peak interview can start.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the client's own techniques can be combined with both the specified Bodydynamic technique and/or many other techniques. The idea of these techniques are about activating the parasympathetic nervous system and thereby counteracting the perception of stress and nervousness (Brodahl 2007: 458).

Appendix 3: DISC Frame of Reference

William Moulton Marston developed the DISC frame of reference. The DISC model excels by simplifying human types into four archetypes associated with type-specific practices when handling the challenges summarized in appendix 3.



Source: Own production starting from Deviney et al (2011) and Marston (1928)

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³³ Bodydynamic International is a Danish Body Psychotherapy System, which since 1985 is widespread among* 15 countries (including Japan, Russia, Europe, Brazil and the United States).