

## BOOK REVIEW    **The Coach's Mind Manual**



Syed Azmatullah  
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This book combines recent thinking in psychology, neuroscience and mindfulness to raise awareness of how the mind works and to enhance the work of coaches and other human resources professionals and more broadly anyone engaged in adult development. It was written out of the author's conviction that, despite the diversity of coaching approaches – and many will say those of counselling and psychotherapy, too – 'the mind is the target for coaching interventions'. He observes that the brain and the mind are not synonymous, the latter being more encompassing and involving the interplay of brain, body and environment.

This book is an original approach to coaching literature with an obvious emphasis on executive coaching, due to the way he's structured the book, but with much to say to integrative coach-therapists too. It will possibly be of more relevance to readers with some experience rather than coach-therapists starting out, who may be somewhat daunted by its sheer, exuberant scope.

He divides his book into five parts, structured to facilitate him making analogies between the functions of the parts of the brain and a complex organisation, which allows him to contain his ideas within a logical framework. The result is both a theoretical and practical read.

Part 1 explains the functions of the cerebral cortex, where higher-level thinking is done. Part 2 reviews the role of the limbic system in integrating top-down higher cognitive functions with bottom-up demands of embodied emotions and bodily needs: the 'middle-management level'. Part 3 delves into philosophy, neuro-psychology, psychodynamic therapy and many other related areas in an extraordinarily rich and rapid consideration of how the mind develops through time and the plasticity of our thinking in response to key life events. In contrast, Part 4 considers our relationship to the outside world through interpersonal connections and dynamic teamwork. Part 5 brings out the underlying theme of this book – how a better understanding of the mind can unlock its potential for creativity and problem-solving. He wonders if coaching will develop such that there will be a system of 'General Practice' coaches with broad training, who would refer to specialist 'Consultant Coaches' for specific expertise, and he ends by exhorting his readers to consider examples of where 'the human spirit has achieved amazing levels of performance', and then liberate that spirit in their clients.

This book brims with information. Whether or not you agree with all of it, it will get you thinking, whatever your professional orientation. The clear substantive structure of the book is supported by an attractive visual presentation, with index, glossary and bibliography. If you want to get the most out of it put it on your coffee table, only because you will want it nearby to reflect on for a long time to come.

### **Esther Cavett**

*Executive coach trained in psychological coaching, with an interest in counselling and psychotherapy and with a professional background in law, education and music*