

Deconstructing and Reconstructing Emotions

A Practical Coaching Tool
Informed by Dr. Feldman-
Barrett's Groundbreaking
Emotion Research

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A paradigm shift

The mainstream conceptualization of emotion in the coaching field is dominated by the notion of a “triune brain”: Emotions residing in supposedly “ancient” layers of the brain are thought to be triggered automatically and then experienced and displayed following fundamentally universal patterns. A multitude of coaching tools have been developed from this model, often positioning “emotions” and “reason” as competing forces that pull clients in different directions requiring them to learn how best to reconcile them.

Recent breakthroughs in neuroscience suggest that these approaches are based on a flawed understanding of the mind. Championed by the pioneering work of Professor Lisa Feldman-Barrett, a new perspective known as the Theory of Constructed Emotions is emerging and profoundly reshaping the conversation. This opens the way to developing novel approaches and tools that may usefully complement and enrich our current arsenal when it comes to helping clients process and utilize their emotions in support of their goals.

What you have in your hands is among the first of such novel coaching tools.



A New Approach to Emotion Work in Coaching

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The tool at a glance

This tool involves a series of questions that can help a client become aware of an emotion and progressively deconstruct it.

Coach and client explore from a place of curiosity to peel away the layers of emotion-meaning and function until the client reaches the level of emotion-related body sensations.

At that level, the coach then helps the client widen the singularity of awareness to a more multidimensional space where the reality of the client's emotionality is appreciated in its complexity, in its changing landscape and in its dialectic nature.

From there, coach and client travel the journey back, reconstructing a given emotional state.

Here, the client is guided toward aligning body sensations, emotion function, meaning, and label so as to unlock new energy toward action.

Stage 1 – DECONSTRUCTION

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Coaching questions:

- What is the topic you would like to work on today?
- What are you hoping for, that we could reasonably achieve today?
- What emotions does this topic bring up for you?
- Let's explore this ____ further:
 - What does it mean for you to feel ____ in this situation?
 - What do you sense that this ____ is trying to do for you?
 - If you fully step into that ____, what kind of things do you expect to happen?
 - Does this resemble any experience you carry from your past?

Stage 2 –

LANDING IN THE BODY

Coaching questions:

- I invite you to continue to be preset to that ____, and notice how it's showing up in your body right now.
- As you're observing your ____ in your body, this time let me know if you notice any changes in the pattern of body sensations.
- This time I encourage you to widen your perspective on other body sensations you may be having.

Stage 3 – RECONSTRUCTION

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Coaching questions:

- As you stay in touch with the whole of your experience, share with me: what is your vision of success?
- How could the body sensations you explored help you achieve that success? What could they do for you? (referred to any of the body sensations the client uncovered, in any of the three steps of “Landing in the body”)
- What emotions could those sensations be a sign of, when you look at them as part of your path to success?
- Let's explore this further:
 - What would it mean for you to feel ____ in this situation?
 - What do you sense that this ____ could do for you?
 - If you fully step into that ____, what kind of things do you expect to happen?
- Does this resemble any experience you carry from your past?
- Knowing this, what is one action step you could take to get closer to what you were hoping?
- What did you discover during this session?

**Space for
your notes**