Wisdom and Creativity: Insights from the Institute of Coaching Conference 2024 Transcript

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Conference Introduction and Talk Overview

Hi, it's Chrissy. I have just completed this amazing two-day Institute of Coaching Conference 2024. It was on the theme of wisdom and it has just been mind-blowingly good.

And one of the ways I process is by encapsulating and distilling the information. So I'm going to make a series of videos to share with you some of my takeaways from these talks.

officially was Gabriella Kellerman, Rosen Kellermann, who recently published the book Tomorrow Mind along with Dr. Martin Seligman. And this talk was entitled, Coaching in the Whitewater World of Work.

So she drew on this metaphor that previously work was like a steamship heading across the ocean.

Whitewater World of Work Metaphor

You would board the steam ship, it was very steady and stable, and you would ride it into the sunset. Then it became more like sailboat, perhaps a large sail boat.

There would be some tipping, some shoring up, to respond to these waters. And now it's more like being in a white water raft where you've recently been through some major rapids, you're in some rapides, and you see the rapeds coming up without any chance to return to baseline in between.

So I thought that was such an apt metaphor, especially for life in medicine. So many gauntlets, and that this is actually very signaling to our nervous system that we are in danger, perhaps life-threatening danger.

Which we can't really sustain that level of activation, of course. In Tomorrowmind, they propose this five-letter acronym, PRISM. which are five essential meta skills for high performance so that we can achieve even more than we thought possible.

PRISM Meta-Skills for Performance

So here's the acronym. Prospection, a foresight that allows us to imagine and prepare for what's coming. Resilience, the cognitive and emotional agility to grow stronger through challenges.

Innovation, creativity that turns challenge into opportunity, social connection, the ability to build rapid rapport for trust with colleagues and clients, and mattering, a connection to why our work matters, our essential why, so that we can continue to refuel each chapter of rebuilding after each of these gauntlets.

She shared a lot about the neuroscience of creativity. It was such an exciting, mind-blowing moment. I think on a meta level, our creative brains actually listening to that talk, if we were in functional MRIs would have been lit up like rainbows.

So she showed us functional, MRI brain images of the brain using different neural networks. For example, the default mode network, which is for imagination and daydreaming.

Neuroscience of Creativity and Brain Networks

It's like a symphonic synergistic activation of multiple pathways, which I loved. It works best when we're doing something that requires just enough of our conscious mind, like we are preparing food, for example, or doing a

puzzle or coloring.

Meditation is too stimulating. Scrolling on social media is not what we were talking about. So that was imagination daydreaming default mode network. Second was awareness, which she called the salience network, scanning the environment for relevant ideas, especially for dangerous relevant idea.

So we're not preoccupied. Acute stress is okay. And then there's the Focus Executive Control Network, which is calling to mind important ideas, facts, and data.

This helps when we are well-rested. Um, this is helped by us being well rested. It's not when are multitasking. We can't be doing that. And sleep is very important to support this function in particular.

In this area, meditation is an amazing tool. And this is where meditation serves creativity and helps the mind to stay flexible and focused on the task at hand.

Here are some practices that she shared for maintaining flexibility and creativity in our mind. Number one, seek novelty. So the primary function of the direct mode network is to tap into ideas in surprising ways, right?

So, the principle is go broader, do things that you're not expecting, take a different route home from work, order something different from a menu that normally do, meet a new person, go into a store, just interact in novel ways.

Practical Ways to Support Creativity

I think this is a beautiful place to insert a word about travel because we immediately go novelty land when we're traveling, which you might experience as pleasure or threat, I imagine.

More to say about that. but seeking novelty and enjoying novelty. Two, dial in immersion. So the kind of thing that we were talking about a moment ago, doing puzzles, coloring, assembling or preparing food, using enough conscious attention that you can get immersed in flow.

And then the brain begins to daydream and generate creative relationships. Three, embrace ambiguity. Going from divergent to convergent phase in the idea creation phase.

Don't rush that part. Accentuate the exploration and the brainstorm rather than picking and discerning too early. Letting that discovery phase stay open or living in the question, letting it sort of unfurl and ripen so you don't pick the fruit before it's ripe.

Number four, build creative self-advocacy. Practice believing that you are creative, because in fact every single human has these networks and has creative capacity.

And if you ever doubt this, I recommend the book The Creative Act by Rick Rubin, who brings to light how everything can be a creative act. It's so insightful.

When we are building creative self advocacy, we can help others build up that confidence to, to call out when we see somebody doing something creative, and we're not talking about just art making, right.

But to see it in ourselves, see in others, I'm thinking about encouraging many of my medical colleagues to their differential diagnosis as a creative aspect, or how they do a workaround for that prior auth as creative act.

Number five, broaden the realm of the possible. So especially in positions of leadership, allow wackiness and absurdity into the room, generate a container where absurd ideas are welcome because that is often where innovation happens.

We don't need to stay safe with our ideas to maintain psychological safety. Number six was celebrate smart risks, including failures, love on the effort and the idea, even if the intended goal is not achieved.

And number seven, treat everyone as creative. As I said, everyone is creative, So those kind of draw on individual team and organizational levels in order.

Individual being the first three, team being next two, and organization being last two.

Types of Creativity and Closing Takeaways

And last I'll share that Gabriel Kullerman shared these four types of creativity, and you'll recognize these because we all do them. One is integration, where you are noticing how two apparently different things are the same.

This calls to mind fractals and patterns and echoes and harmonics, like finding the relationship between two, apparently disparate things. Distal thinking, so imagining things that are radically different than the here and now.

Figure ground reversal, realizing what's in the foreground is not the most important, but what is in background actually is. And then finally splitting, seeing how things look the same are actually different.

So enjoy those concepts. When we bring metacognition to the creative process, it's helpful, and if we know more about the the way we're creating relationships and patterns out of apparently different or apparently same things, we get more free association.

As an aside, I learned in a course last year that one of the ways that psychedelics work is putting our mind back into the mind of a child where we have more capacity for free association.

So I'm curious about how that might relate to this material in tomorrow mind. In short, creativity is a whole person, whole brain pursuit, and we can do specific behaviors to harness and optimize our creative output.

And use sense making and finally she shared a Maya Angelou quote You can't use up creativity the more you use the way you have. I hope you enjoyed this quick quick summary It was amazing tomorrow mind is Totally gonna be an amazing book if you haven't read it already.

See you in the next video