

Book review

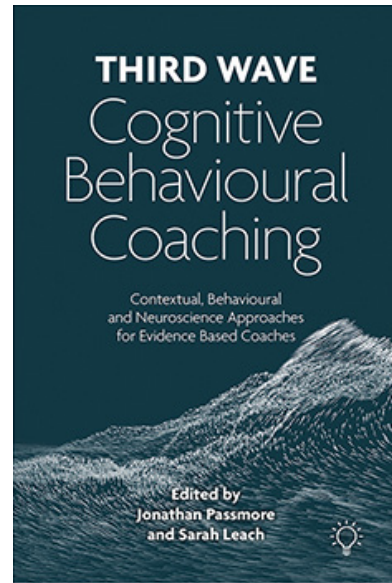
Third wave cognitive behavioural coaching: Contextual, behavioural and neuroscience approaches for evidence-based coaches

Edited by Jonathan Passmore & Sarah Leach

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Reviewed by Fiona Day

THE DECLARATION of the arrival of a new, third, wave of cognitive behavioural based interventions was made in 2004 by Steven Hayes, co-creator of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT, pronounced 'act'). A new wave, he proposed, was a *'set or formulation of dominant assumptions, methods, and goals, some implicit, that help organise research, theory, and practice'*, and that this third wave *'reformulates and synthesises previous generations of behavioral and cognitive therapy and carries them forward'*, thus *'chang(ing)...the entire field of mental health'*. Hayes' bold claim was considered to be highly controversial, yet over the last 20 years ACT and other third wave approaches have been extensively researched and are now widely used, including in a range of UK NICE guidance and by the WHO. A meta-analysis published in *Nature Human Behaviour* in 2021 into a range of Positive Psychology Interventions (PPIs) in clinical and non-clinical populations found mindfulness-based inter-



ventions to be consistently associated with positive findings, with ACT-based interventions having the largest (non-significant) effect on overall wellbeing compared with control groups in the general population. Compassion-focused approaches also had a positive effect.

According to Hayes, no single factor unites the methods referred to as third wave interventions; rather all include concepts such as acceptance, mindfulness, cognitive defusion, dialectics, values, spirituality and relationship. Methods are often experiential; and underlying philosophies are more contextualistic than mechanistic. The focus is less on delivering protocols (which became the hallmark of the 'second wave') and more on the use of evidence-based interventions to target specific transdiagnostic psychological processes. How evidence-based coaches can adapt and apply third wave approaches in their work is the theme of this new book. Given the breadth of these interventions and their established importance in clinical and non-clinical settings, as well as the lack of an agreed definition, this book is a valiant, skilled and much needed effort to increase awareness of the theory, research and practical applications of third wave approaches to behaviour change in a coaching context.

The majority of the chapters were excellent, particularly the summary of second wave (traditional) CBT which provided a thorough overview. The chapters on ACT and Compassion provided a great introduction to the theory and evidence base supporting these two approaches which have huge relevance to coaching, and are both easily translatable into a coaching setting. I enjoyed the chapter on Chairwork and it gave me confidence to experiment with using this approach more in my own practice. Stelter's final chapter on 'Third Generation Coaching', describing coaching as a 'collaborative meta-dialogue', was for me the most exciting chapter – repositioning coaching from its current facilitative, passive rhetoric – I even fist-pumped the air!

There were aspects of the book I was disappointed with. An introduction (and conclusion) would have helped to orientate the reader and to pull the book together, and could have explained the high degree of overlap between different third wave approaches and the way in which other methods (of CBT and beyond) are both transcended and included in third wave approaches. The content of the sections on first and second wave approaches could be

confusing for readers new to the subject as first, second and third-wave approaches were referred to without always making this clear. I would also have appreciated more practical examples such as case studies, resources which coaches could use, links to training opportunities, and I felt that a couple of chapters stepped too closely into therapy at times.

However, there is no doubt that this book is a significant contribution to the coaching profession. Hayes et al. stated in 2017 that the third wave of CBT would become defined by process-based approaches; he and colleagues have since been identifying core change processes (kernels) which can be learned and deployed by practitioners to affect change and subsequent outcomes in a predictable fashion. Hayes recently concluded that *'the most effective clinician will be the one who is able to combine these kernels in such a way that they optimally target the crucial processes in a given client in the given context'*. This approach is the future of coaching – and the start of that journey is in this book.

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