

# Mid life / late career reinvention – what are the main features of coaching for these clients?

## 1. Introduction – A growing trend

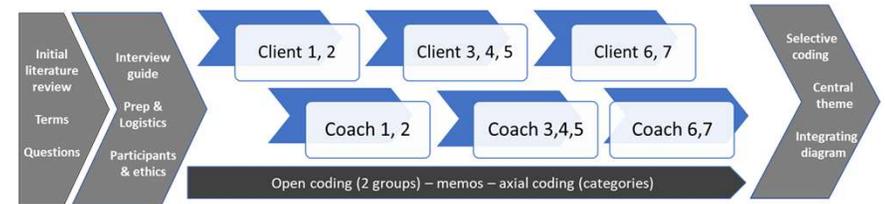
- Most of us will be living & working longer – economists claim the 100 year life is already upon us
- Psychologists have long argued that mid life is a time of questioning and re-evaluation
- Practitioners are seeing more clients wanting or needing to change work in late 40s or 50s. These are people who have 15-20 years of work left, are not ready to retire, and need help to work out what or how to transition
- Some writers argue there are unique career and psychosocial issues in mid life and late career - but there is very limited empirical research particularly within coaching
- The purpose of the study was to contribute to the limited body of knowledge for coach practitioners.

## 2. Late career reinvention

- For this research:
- **'Late career'** - is the point after which individuals believe they are moving into the final chapter(s) of their working lives
  - **'Reinvention'** - assumed to involve a significant occupation change and a psychological transition
  - **'Coaching'** during late career reinvention could be any approach (i.e. not just career coaching)
- An association with age was not assumed – but in practice all were over 45.

## 3. Research methodology – Grounded theory

- Social constructionist paradigm, - using a qualitative and inductive research strategy
- Grounded theory methodology (Corbin & Strauss, 2015)
- 14 participants
  - 7 who had reinvented their late career
  - 7 coaches with extensive experience with this coaching
- Data was gathered through semi structured telephone interviews to be location agnostic
- Appropriate measures were taken to ensure confidentiality and data security.



## 4. Findings – three main features

Late career reinvention is a multi-layered, non-linear process with people who are far from blank pages. Three main features emerged. They were consistent for both coaches and clients.

### 1. Discovering – journeying to be more of me

Rather than hoping to become someone else, or making career decisions, they are wanting to be more of themselves. The coaching is in service of this dis-covering by helping clients to think differently and holistically about themselves. Conversations are wide ranging and can be challenging to navigate. The value of the coach is as an unbiased, challenging supporter.

*"The journey was an excuse for me to be who I was meant to be"*

### 2. Systemic readiness

Systemic readiness refers to a wide range of factors about the individual or their wider context that affect their wiliness or ability to reinvent. Readiness featured most at the start and the end. Sufficient dissatisfaction is a key part of readiness - for some there is a gradual increase whilst for others there is a trigger. Coaches help clients to consider a breadth of risks and actions.

*"I had a lot of weighing up – I was leaving 18 years of stability"*

### 3. Dancing with fear and self-confidence

An interplay between fear and self-confidence emerged that was dynamic and changing. The relationship wasn't direct as they can grow or decline at different paces and both could be a driver (affect) and a response (effect) – hence the dance. There can be many different fears at different times. Confidence can be more generalised or specific.

*"It's terrifying and exciting at the same time"*

## 5. A practitioner model

In this model the three main features are clearly shown. 'Discovering' is in the centre – illustrated by a compass for navigating the wide ranging conversations. The coloured gears symbolise the variety and pacing of fear and self-confidence. Typical emotional states are across the top.

