



Deconstruct

What to know about Deconstruction

All beliefs and all mental models are grounded in the perception of reality that has been created by the limited point of perspective that a person uses to create their interpretation of reality. Human beings tend to be prisoners of an incomplete, inaccurate or inadequate sense of reality that may not serve in their desires or life/ work experience.

They then live their lives through the stories these beliefs, mental models and perceptions create even though they may know on some level that their view of reality is hindering their ability to take effective action. They simply don't know how to get out of the construct and world view they have generated and reinforced over time.

Some clients often report being stuck in a fog of negative thoughts and beliefs -- Coaches are no different. However, once mastered, the coach can use this powerful strategy to challenge not only their own limitations or 'stuckness', but also their client's self-destructive self-perceptions and limiting beliefs.

What is it?

Deconstruction: a psycho-spiritual transmutation; reprogramming negative behavior patterns through almost alchemical like processes; turning the lead of limitation into pure gold of new possibility.

Deconstruction as a form of transmutation which can be defined as,

'The act of changing or the state of being changed into another form.'

In the dictionary the word is defined as, Deconstruct...

- a. To analyze (a text or a linguistic or conceptual system) by deconstruction, typically in order to expose its hidden internal assumptions and contradictions and subvert its apparent significance or unity.
- b. To reduce (something) to its constituent parts in order to reinterpret it.

The heart of the Deconstruct Tool is a complete expression of the Core Competencies 'Coaching Presence, Active Listening and 'Powerful Questions' It has the distinct flavor of Socratic Questioning.

"Socratic questioning is disciplined questioning that can be used to pursue thought in many directions and for many purposes, including: to explore complex ideas, to get to the truth of things, to open up issues and problems, to uncover assumptions, to analyze concepts, to distinguish what we know from what we don't know, to follow out logical implications of thought or to control the discussion.

The key to distinguishing Socratic questioning from questioning per se is that Socratic questioning is systematic, deep and usually focuses on fundamental concepts, principles, theories, issues or problems." (Wikipedia)

As part of the process, clients learn by osmosis, how to ask themselves questions in order to develop new perspectives and solutions on their own. This is an aspect of what the coach models for the client. This process also creates not only new awareness but a shift in being who they are with what they're facing.

Premise #1 - Recognize/accept that every belief is a construction. When we were born, we came into the world with no beliefs, mental models, fixed perspectives, or sense of limitations. All of that is therefore something we took on. We synthesized, adopted or had programmed by others, our observations, others' input and our experiences. Basically, we made stories of how the world is, and/or took on those that others made up before us and either completely adopted them or adapted them for ourselves. They are not truths, they are perceptions and stories that we use as 'truth' to operate from.

Our beliefs stay in place because we don't challenge/examine them. "It is historical continuity that keeps our assumptions in place, not a repeated assessment of their value." Edward de Bono.

Many of our beliefs were embedded into us at a young age, an age where our ability to discern the truth and/or nuance of reality is minimal. Yet, we took them on.

We validate/support our beliefs by selected evidence. This is called "confirmation bias." Physics tells us that the observer changes that which they are observing. When one goes to measure the motion of an electron and sets it up to see if it behaves as a wave, it behaves as a wave. When the experiment is set up to measure its behavior as a particle, it behaves as a particle.

Therefore, we seek to find evidence that our Construct is right and will selectively edit out (in fact may not even see) anything that disagrees/challenges it because it is too threatening. It normally requires an extinction level event of input or "dramatic" piece of evidence to "shake" our belief.

We are therefore, not our Constructs, they are something we have. If this is true, then we can change them with some work, and employ new evidence to anchor the new awareness into action.

What's important to know about this Technique is that it begins with the 'Peace' Process. It's important that the coach be coming from a state of Peace (neutrality), so as not to unduly influence the client in a direction that the coach thinks should be taken. It is also in this state that the coach will access 'Reveal', in order to ask the questions that will be of most use for the client.

Deconstruction operates on the basic principle that a person's emotions and sense of self are intimately linked with their thoughts, and that recognizing dysfunctional thought patterns and having people challenge and replace them with healthier ones can lead to improvements in state of being.

The long term effect of Deconstruction is that the client begins to learn this method for themselves. While it's not a blanket solution they can still apply it on most anything that is holding them back.

Clients learn this process of asking themselves questions and being skeptical of their own negative thoughts. They will experience more freedom to be in the world in the way they wish to and take actions that are more congruent with their desires than with the constructs they've been living in.

A coach might use the following line of questioning with a client who is upset and struggling with feelings of frustration and futility in a work situation in which they are seeking a promotion.

Below is an example in which the coach walks the client, an African American woman, through Stage 1 of 'Deconstruct'. (For all three stages see "How to Use Deconstruct") This has stated, "Everyone around here is trying to hold me back. It's a white culture and they stab me in the back so I can't get ahead. It's all because I'm black." She is convinced she is the victim in an untenable situation.

Sample Deconstruction Exchange (After the Peace Process has been done):

Comments about process in parentheses

Coach: What is it that you want to use our coaching time together? (This begins the Clarify part of the process)

Client: I want to find a way out of what looks like an impossible situation that is frustrating me and making my life hell on a daily basis.

Coach: What exactly is it that you want a way out of? (More clarity is required)

Client: I chose you as a coach because as a white male I thought you could help me understand how white males think.

Coach: What's important about that? (More clarity is sought)

Client: Well as a black woman in this company, unless you're white they stab you in the back to keep you from getting ahead.

Coach: Now what makes you say that? (The Deconstruct Process begins here with a challenge to the perception)

Client: Well, the white males are the only ones who get a promotion. And it's all because I'm black. They just stab me in the back at the first opportunity

Coach: Hmmm. Have you ever seen any females get stabbed in the back? (Challenging the assumption)

Client: Oh yes, all the time.

Coach: And is it only the men who do the backstabbing? (Seeking accuracy of the perception)

Client: Well, no. The women do it too.

Coach: What does that feel like to be around? (Seeking clarity about the impact and connecting client with that feeling)

Client: It makes me feel unsafe.

Coach: What is unsafe about that for you? (Diving deeper into the impact)

Client: I don't know who I can trust.

Coach: Do you ever notice any of the white men stabbing each other in the back to get ahead? (Returning to seeking clarity for accuracy's sake)

Client: OH yes, they do it to each other. Everybody does it. Except me.

Coach: So what you're saying is that the white males stab each other in the back, they stab women in the back, and the women also stab each other in the back, all to get ahead in this company? (Sharing what has been said to establish foundational clarity)

Client: Yes, that's the only way it seems to get a promotion.

Coach: So, your reasoning for not being promoted is not about being African American, or a woman, isn't really what's going on. Since they all do it to each other. What does that tell you about the culture you're in? (Challenging the assumption and seeking new perceptual clarity)

Client: Well, I guess I was not thinking about it this way. I guess it says it's a "stab you in the back if you want to get ahead" culture and merit is either irrelevant or secondary.

Coach: What would you like to do with this new information? (Deconstructing the 'victim' experience by asserting client's ability to take action)

Client: When I look at the bigger picture, I guess I have to decide if this is a company I want to stay in for the long run or look for a company that is more human friendly, one that rewards merit regardless of race or gender.

Coach: How does it feel to have this new awareness? (Seeking clarity of whether or not shift is beyond merely intellectual understanding)

Client: It feels both annoying and liberating at the same time. I feel frustrated that I've spent so much time and effort in this company, feeling thwarted at every turn. I feel like finally I have an answer for what's happening and I feel liberated because I now know it's not me it's just this company and it's not going to change.

Coach: And where does that awareness lead you to? (Beginning process of new construct)

Client: It leads me to thinking it wasn't me, I wasn't the problem and now that I know what the issue might be, I have to take action on it.

Coach: Then what is the action step that's apparent for you to take following our conversation? (Supporting embedding new construct by clarifying action)

Client: Well I have a couple. The first is to just sit down and reflect on all this. Second is to start thinking about what kind of work environment I really want. After that, I guess I'd research to see what else is out there. That gives me a bunch of things to do.

Coach: How do you feel about doing these things? (Challenging the level of investment in creating a new construct)

Client: I feel positive. I feel like I have my life back and it's in my hands for the first time in a long time.

How to Do “Deconstruction”

For (Beliefs, Perceptions, Mental Models, Negative Self-Imagery, and Limitations.)

Stage 1 – Challenging the perception of the Construct – this can be done in the short version by starting with the Peace Process and moving right to steps 3, 4, and so on. Or the longer version by following the Peace Process with Reveal to get a deeper awareness of what’s actually calling to be deconstructed. Whichever path is intuitively attuned to is the one to take.

1. Begin by doing the Peace Process for yourself and the client.

Start by closing your eyes.

- Now focus on your breath. Notice when the ‘in’ breath begins and notice when it ends. (pause) Notice when the ‘out’ breath begins and ends. (pause).
- Notice the rhythm of when ‘in’ begins and then makes the transition to ‘out’. (pause)
- Notice how long each phase takes. (pause)
- Now notice how long both take together. (pause)
- Begin to notice the space between in and out. (pause)
- Notice that the space is very slight but if you let yourself you can become more aware of it.(pause)
- Notice that it’s not holding and stopping, it’s just a distance in between in and out. A transition of energy. (pause and allow some time to notice this space in between)
- Notice that your breath goes in and out like the waves of the ocean

2. Access higher awareness by using Reveal for how to start the Deconstruct process

- Now notice that your life energy is like the ocean with waves of energy going in and out with the breath. (pause)
- Now begin to see yourself as the ocean, with the waves moving back and forth in rhythm with the breath.
- Observe the surface which is full of busyness – waves, foam, movement, much like your mind filled with the busyness of thoughts and the body busy with feelings moving into thoughts and thoughts creating feelings. (pause, allow a little time for this)
- Notice that all this busyness is floating on the surface level and near surface level.
- Now let yourself go deeper, dropping down and down in this ‘ocean’ to where it’s less busy, and it’s getting more and more quiet the deeper you go and the further away you get from the ‘noise’ of the surface.
- The deeper you go the more distance you’re putting between you and the busy surface of thoughts and feelings. (allow some time to notice this)
- Now let yourself go even deeper where it is even more silent and with less movement. Even though every now and again a few thoughts will bubble up out of you to the surface or some feelings may arise and float up. (pause) There’s no need to try and change this phenomenon or ignore your thoughts and feelings. Just notice that the deeper you go the more they are becoming less and less present in your awareness and fewer and fewer they are as you have more and more quiet. (allow some time)

- Notice this effect continuing as you go deeper now finding yourself in almost pure silence inside. Let yourself float at this level. (pause)
 - While you are floating and in the feeling of silence, let whatever question you have slip outside the boundaries of your being and into the depths of the ocean of silence you're floating in. Let the curiosity flow out of you and into the ocean surrounding you. (pause) Let this question flow out like waves rippling throughout this vast ocean of silence.
 - Now simply wait for an answer to drift back to you. It may come quickly or it may take a little bit of time. If you have any thoughts about how fast or how slow it is, simply let those thoughts escape and bubble up to the busy surface while you stay filled with the silence. (pause)
 - Sometimes the response will be quick and sometimes the question lingers as it gathers what it needs to respond to you, like a sonar wave rippling through the water into the essence of your being. (pause) Let it seep into your conscious awareness in whatever form it comes... Words, a 'feeling', a sensing, pictures, sounds or symbols. Whatever way it comes is the way it needs to come. (pause a bit longer)
 - Then, when you have it, even if there is no response, slowly let yourself rise to the surface bringing your answer with you along with that depth of silence in your being. Bring it all with you as you come to the surface so that even when you get to the top. (pause)
 - When you feel you're at the surface and back in the room' open your eyes. (pause) Write down your answer if you feel that's appropriate. Write the word or words of it if it was in a sentence form. Write a description if it was something you saw, heard or felt. If it came as a symbol, see if you can draw the symbol. Do whatever you need to do to be able to reference it. Then let your curiosity about its relevance to you show itself.
3. Inform the person that we will be challenging not only the logic level, but also the emotional level and physical level as well.
 4. Use what was Revealed to Clarify the Construct being presented.
 5. Begin the inquiry paying special attention to the words the client is using. Sometimes even a language nuance keeps it stuck. In particular notice the emotional charge around particular words and phrases. Use those to inform your questions.

Throughout the inquiry, have the client examine the components of the Construct. Allow space for both the client and yourself. Periodically check back in with Reveal to ensure you are having your questions come from a place of neutrality instead of trying to intellectually create questions, or figure it out ahead of time where they "should" be going. Allow for divergence while staying focused.

This is a process that keeps diving deeper and deeper into the language of the construct. This is an important part of the process to stay with until there is a shift in the client. Essentially you are taking the construct apart piece by piece until it's clear what the underpinnings that hold the construct together are.

Check in at the end of this stage to see if there are any emotional leftovers that might impact the construct being relinquished and either do the Be With or Space process with those.

Stage 2 – Challenging the Structure of the Construct (additional pathways)

- A. Inquire into the function of the Construct. What does it do for you exactly the way it is? How does it serve you?
- B. Inquire about the operation of the Construct. What does it have us do? How do we behave when it's working? On a physical level? Spiritual? Emotional? Intellectual?
- C. Inquire about the current/historical evidence of validity of the construct. Anecdotal as well as actual.

Stage 3 – Embedding a New Construct

1. Ask client to create and commit to an experiment that demonstrates the opposite of the construct and creates a new one.
2. Ask the client to establish what would be contradictory evidence to the old construct.
3. Ask the client to seek "expert" testimony that contradicts the old construct. ('i.e.' Copernicus showed us our "belief" that the Sun revolved around the world was inaccurate through evidence.)
4. Ask the client to field test the new construct.
5. Ask the client to act 'as if' the adjusted belief is right and gather new evidence/testimony to support the adjusted construct.
6. Repeat the experiment as needed until the new construct is in place.