

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION PROJECT: The Experience of Critical Self-Reflection by Life

Coaches: A Phenomenological Study

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The purpose of this study was to describe the experience of critical self-reflection by life coaches. Life coaching is expanding within many disciplines including education, health care, business, social work, and wellness. Life coaching involves a coach working with an individual or groups aimed at effecting change for professional and personal development. This study addresses the gap in understanding the experience of critical self-reflection in the coaches' practice.

This was a qualitative study grounded in the phenomenology method. Data was collected from certified life coaches who were purposively sampled from referrals by certified life coaches within the United States. Data was collected from the participants through the use of critical incident questionnaires (CIQ), journal summaries, and a semi-structured final interview. The epoche phenomenological analysis was utilized to analyze the generated narratives (i.e., data).

The results of the analysis emerged five themes (1) structure and discipline, (2) increased self awareness, (3) passionate purpose, (4) professional development, and (5) enhanced relationships with self and others. The findings revealed critical self-reflection provided an introspective self-analysis for the coaches to enhance and expand their coaching skills including presence, powerful questions, listening, strategic interventions, and self-management. The coaches identified increased energy for themselves between coaching sessions after completing the CIQ, which provided a mechanism to slow down, focus, and prepare for each coaching session. The focused attention on the coach's behaviors, thoughts, and actions led to the coach's increased awareness of how to redirect and course correct before and during a coaching session. This redirection and focus created a deeper connection with their clients. The coaches recommended critical self-reflection be taught in coach training schools and become a regular practice within the coach's professional development.