



The University of Sydney



# Harvard Medical School

## Coaching in Medicine and Leadership Conference 2009

# “The Evidence for Coaching”

Anthony M Grant *PhD*

Director, Coaching Psychology Unit  
School of Psychology  
University of Sydney  
Sydney NSW 2006  
Australia

[www.psych.usyd.edu.au/coach](http://www.psych.usyd.edu.au/coach)  
[anthonyg@psych.usyd.edu.au](mailto:anthonyg@psych.usyd.edu.au)

---

# What are the public (and or academia's) perceptions of a “coach”?



## **... Coaching Needs Critical Thinking ...**

### **... We Need Rigorous Empirical Evidence**



*“To me, the single most important thing for coaching (and positive psychology) to keep in mind is the necessity of collecting **rigorous empirical evidence**. This may be the only this that separates the field from earlier humanistic psychology and from current non-validated self-help books, while also dealing with difficult scientific issues concerning demand effects, placebo effects and just plain wishful thinking.*

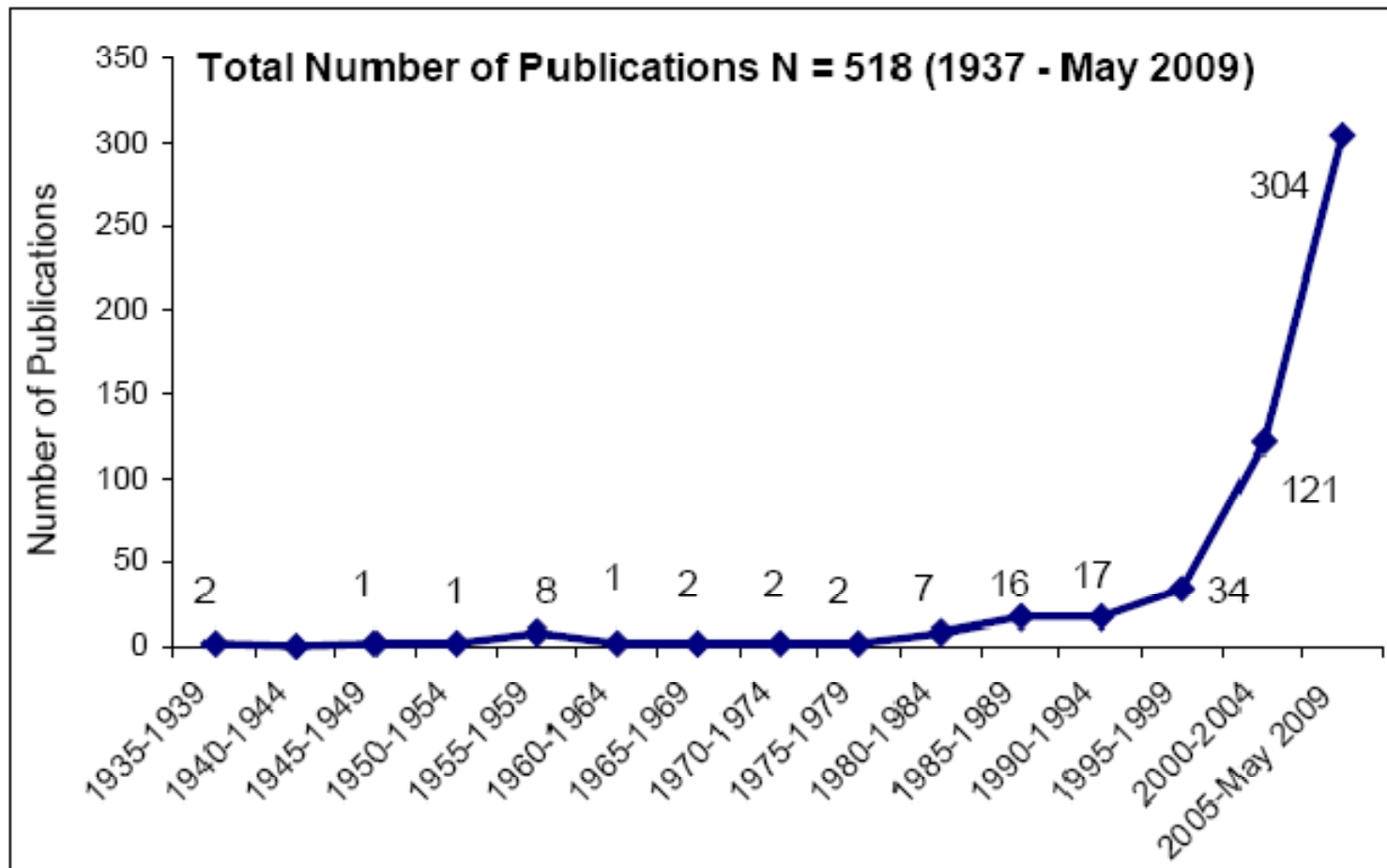
***Coaching ... is especially vulnerable to these problems because of the commercial and money-making possibilities it presents.”***

Ken Sheldon, 2007

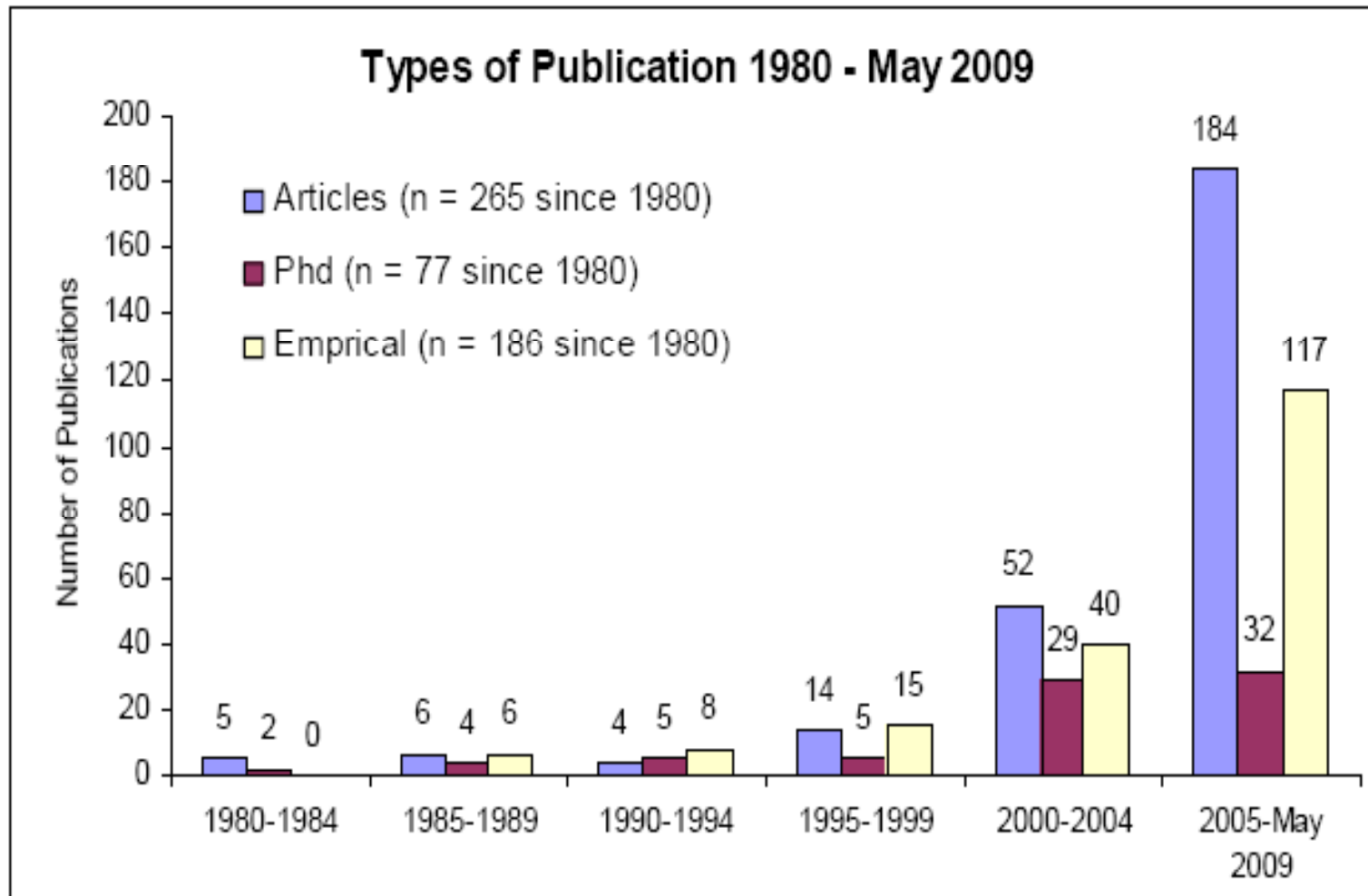
in Grant, A. M., & Cavanagh, M. (2007). Evidence-based coaching: Flourishing or languishing? *Australian Psychologist*, 42(4), 239-254.



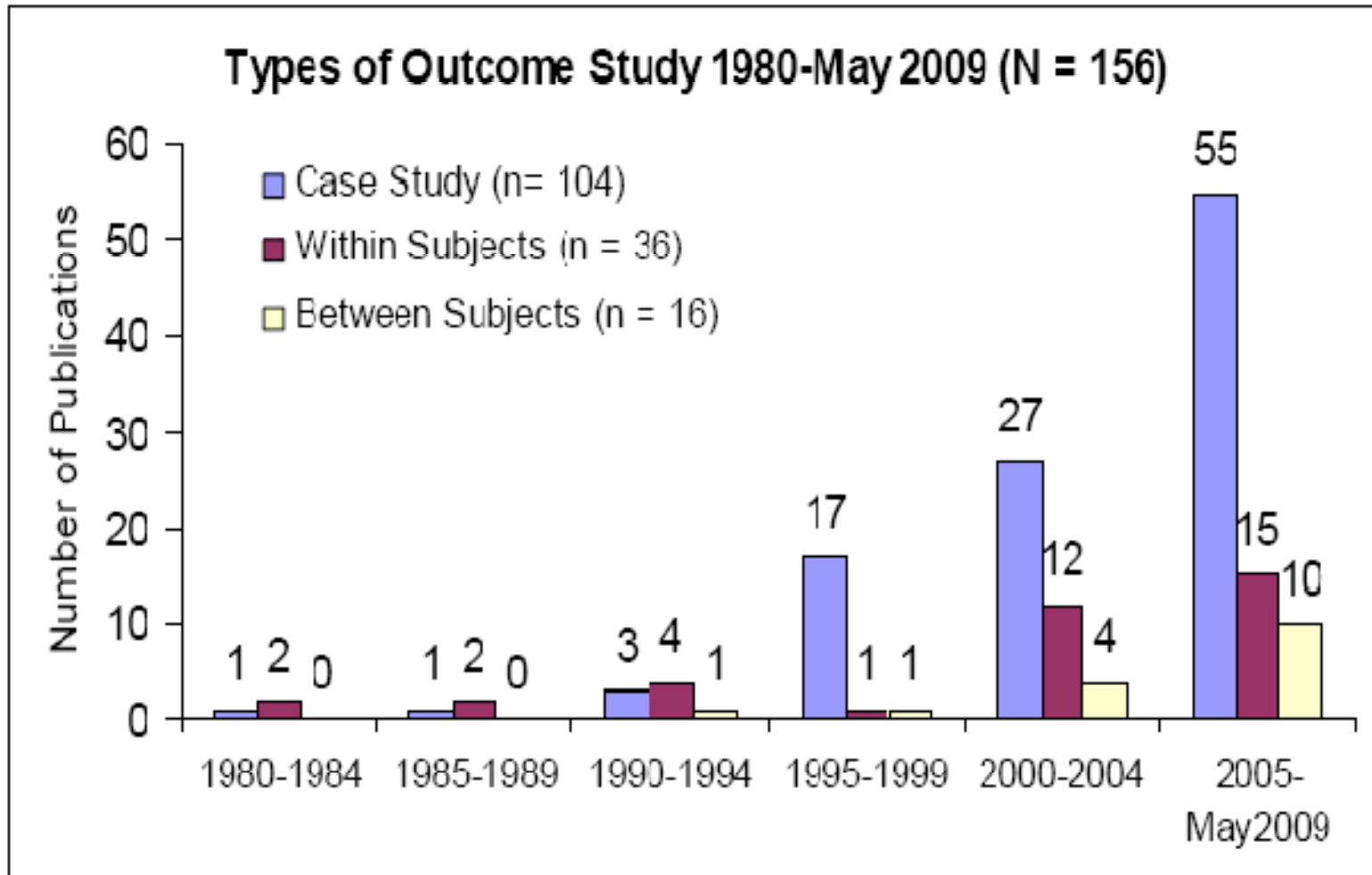
# What is the evidence-base?



# What is the evidence-base?



# What is the evidence-base?



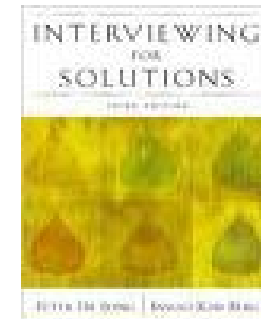
# Is this good? How to compare?

## Coaching Studies (1980-2009)

- 36 Within-Subject studies
- 16 Between-Subject studies (RTC/quasi: U.Syd = 6)

## Solution-focused Therapy

### SFBT Outcome Studies (1985-2006)



- 22 Between-Subject studies (RTC or quasi, inc unpublished work: Kim ,2008)
- 10 Between-Subject studies (RTC or quasi, only used published work; Corcoran & Palillai, 2009)



# Aims of the U.Syd Coaching Research Program since 2000

- Further develop evidence-based approaches
- Study the development of the coaching industry
- Examine effectiveness of coaching
  - Range of populations (adult, workplace, schools)
- Use coaching as real-life experimental methodology: “psycho-mechanics of change”
- Develop more sophisticated coaching frameworks
  - Integrate coaching and PP, use of mindfulness, adult developmental frameworks, etc

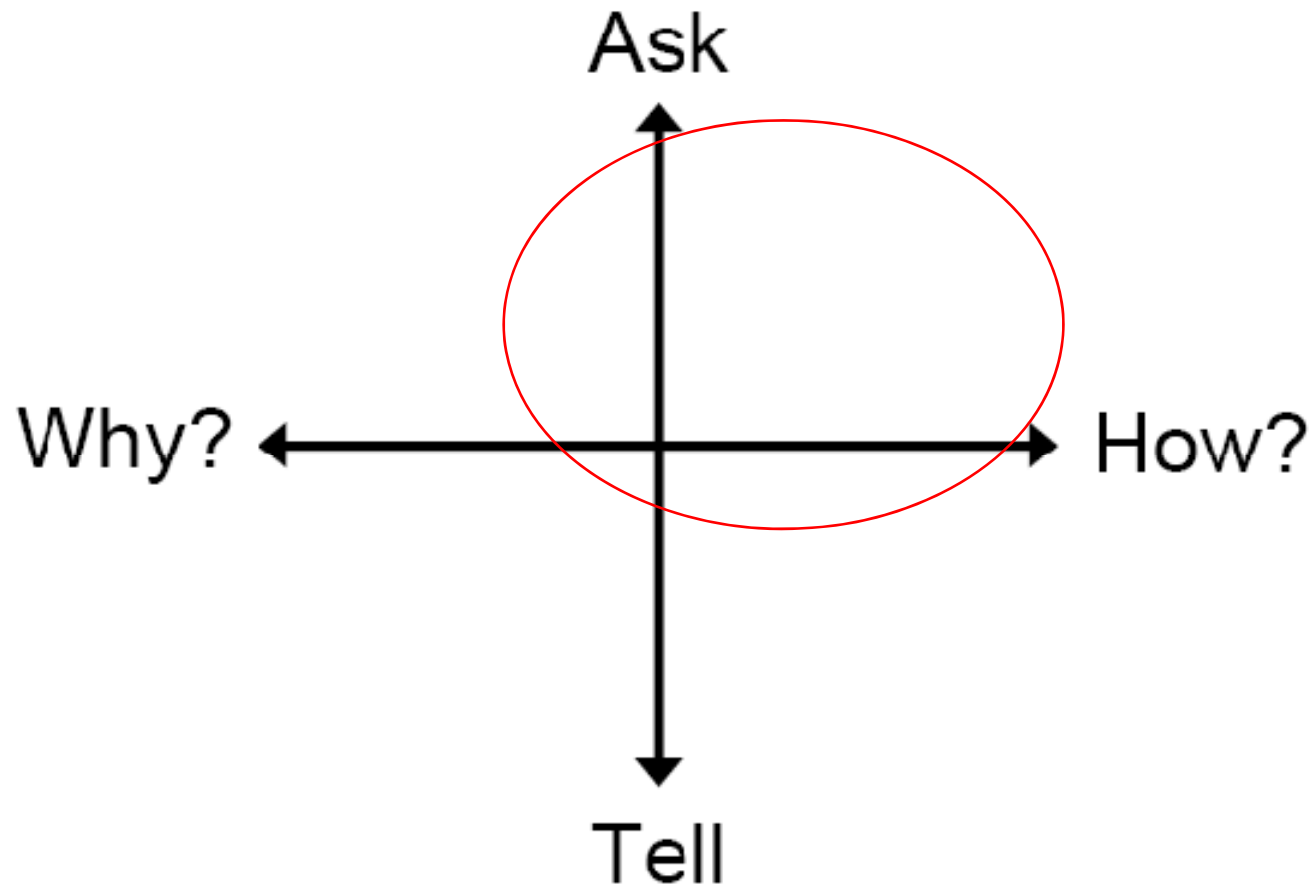


# U.Syd Coaching Research Program

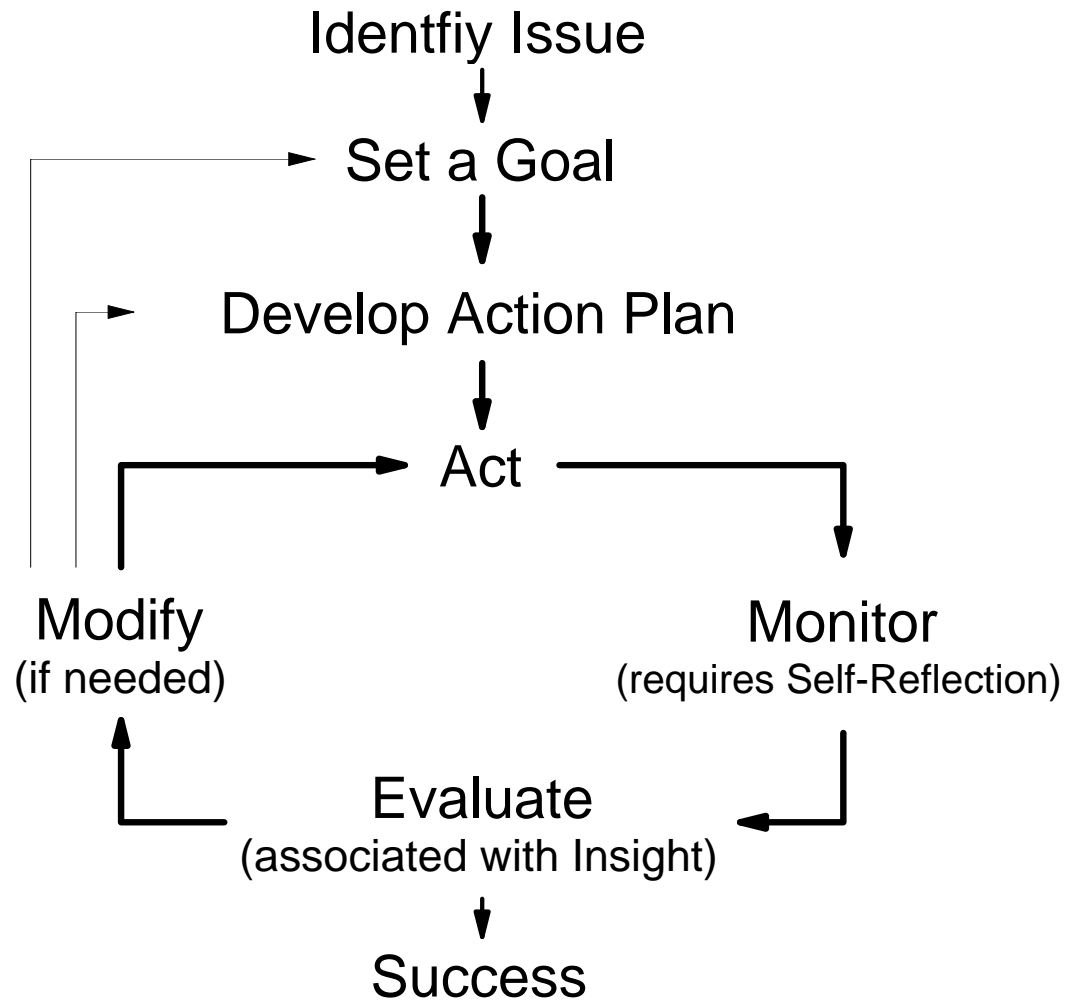
- Eight Outcome Studies:
  - 6 Randomised; 2 Between-subject
- Four Coaching Industry Studies
  - Large scale international survey (ICF) (N =2,500)
  - Australian Life and Executive coaching industry surveys
- Range of Theoretical Papers
  - Coaching Models; Mental Health and Goal Attainment; Commentary papers
- Additional Coaching-related Empirical Work
  - Self-reflection and Insight; Stages of Change; Solution-focused vs. Problem Focused Coaching; Mindfulness and Perspective-taking in Leaders; Over 100 articles and book chapters, reports and > 100 conference presentations



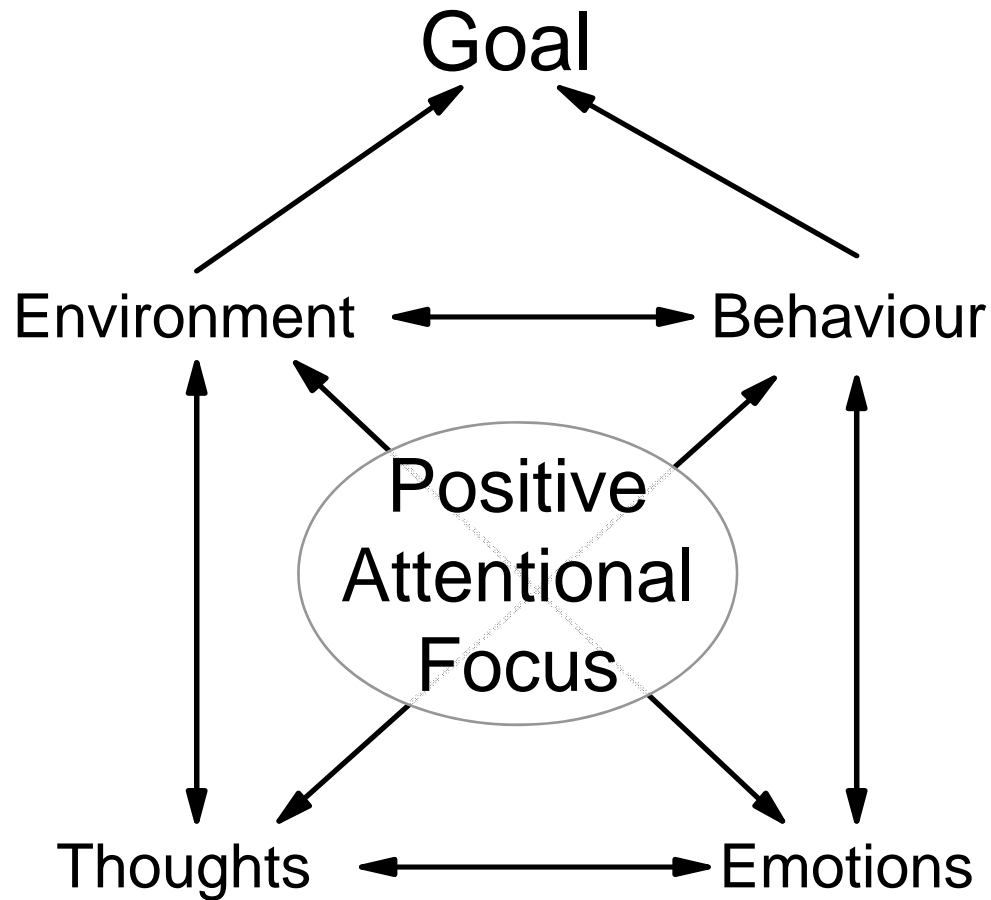
# Ask-Tell Matrix



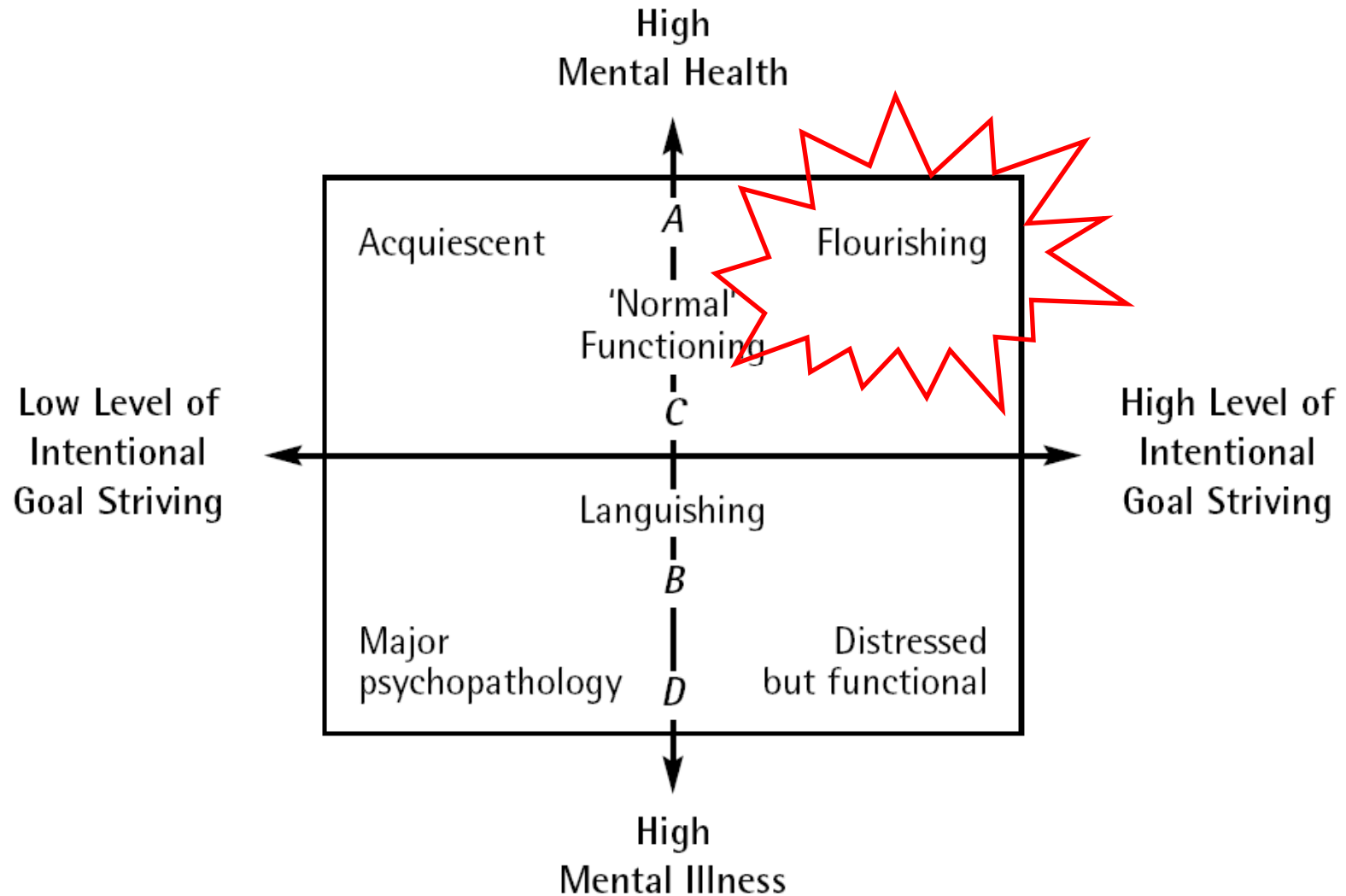
# Generic Model of Self-regulation



# The Solution-focused Cognitive-Behavioural Model

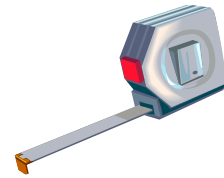


# Goal Striving and Mental Health



# Measuring Coaching Outcomes

- **Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS)**
  - Simple scaling; Levels of attainment
- **Presence/Absence of Mental Distress**
  - DASS: Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale
- **Presence/Absence of Well-being**
  - QOLI; PWB; SWB; PANAS; Hope; Cognitive Hardiness; Workplace Well-being Index
- **Metacognitive Processes**
  - Self-reflection and Insight Scale



Question:  
Does Coaching Really Work?



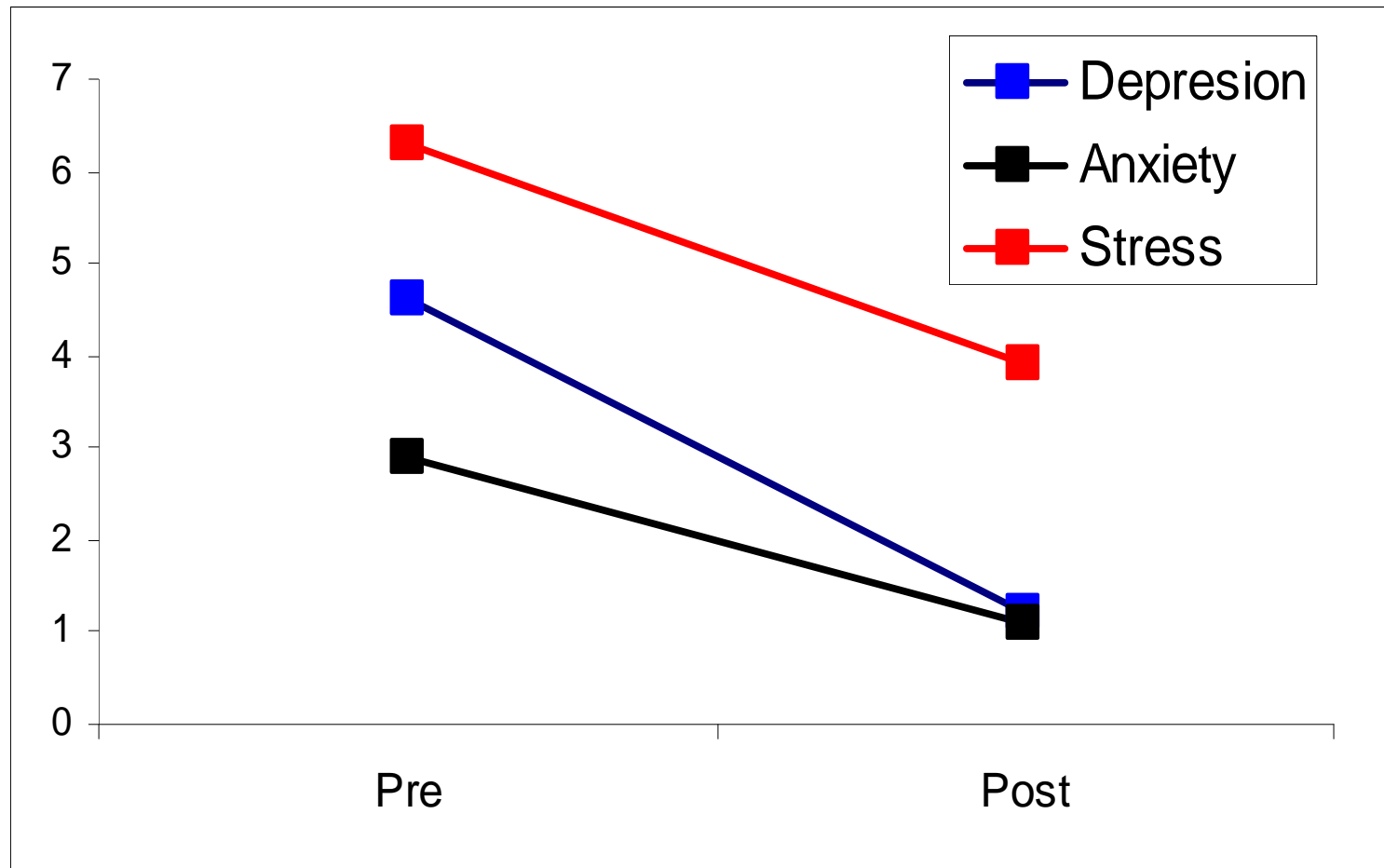
# Coaching as Applied Positive Psychology

- **First Study: Solution-focused, coaching group program**
- **Q: Does Coaching “work”, and how does it impact on self-reflection and insight?**
  - Within subjects; N = 20 (Adults 35.6yrs)
  - 13 wks, 50 min weekly, group-based “GROW” sessions
- DVs: Self-Reflection & Insight Scale; Quality of Life; Mental Health; Goal Attainment

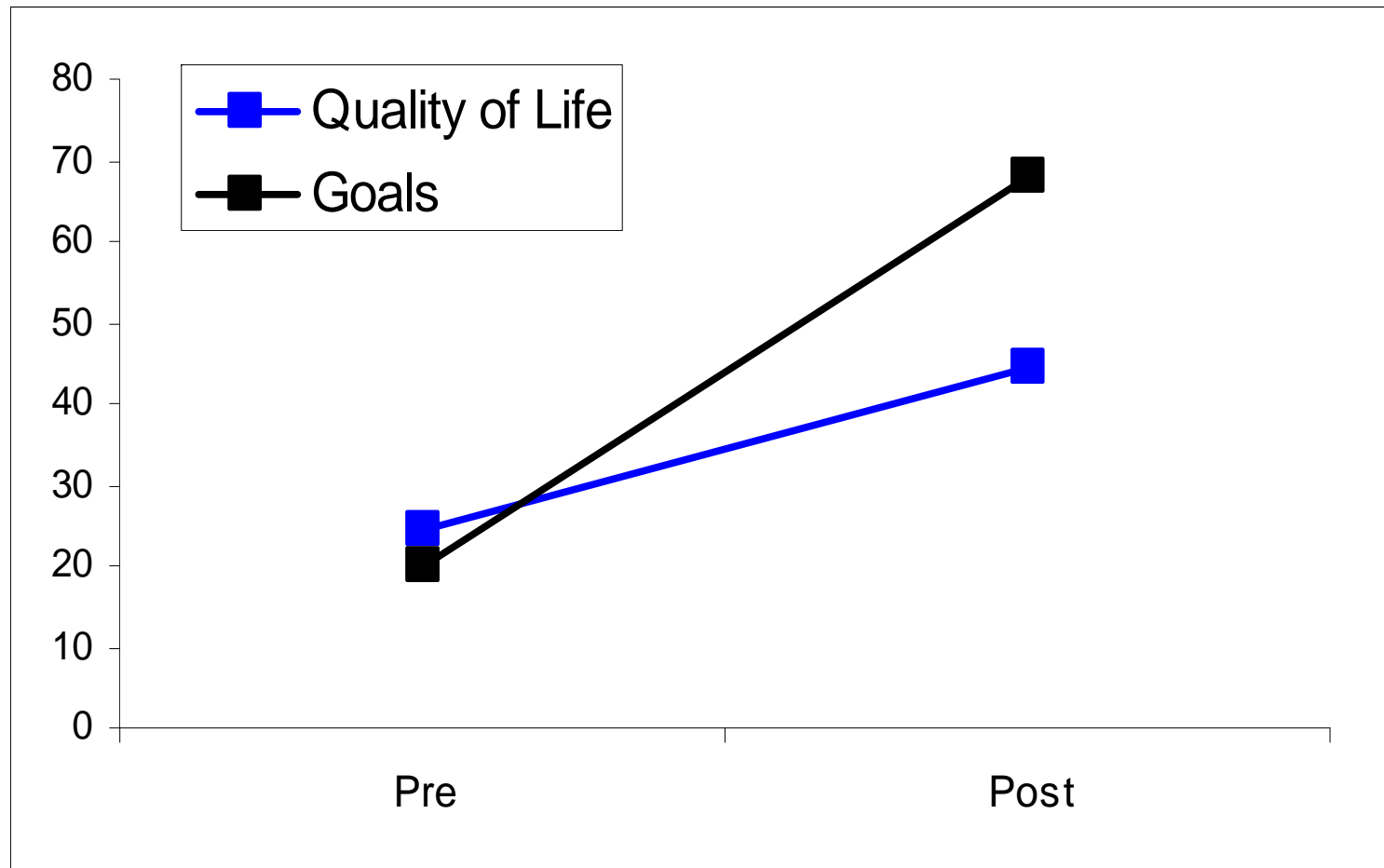
(Grant, 2003)



# Depression, Anxiety & Stress

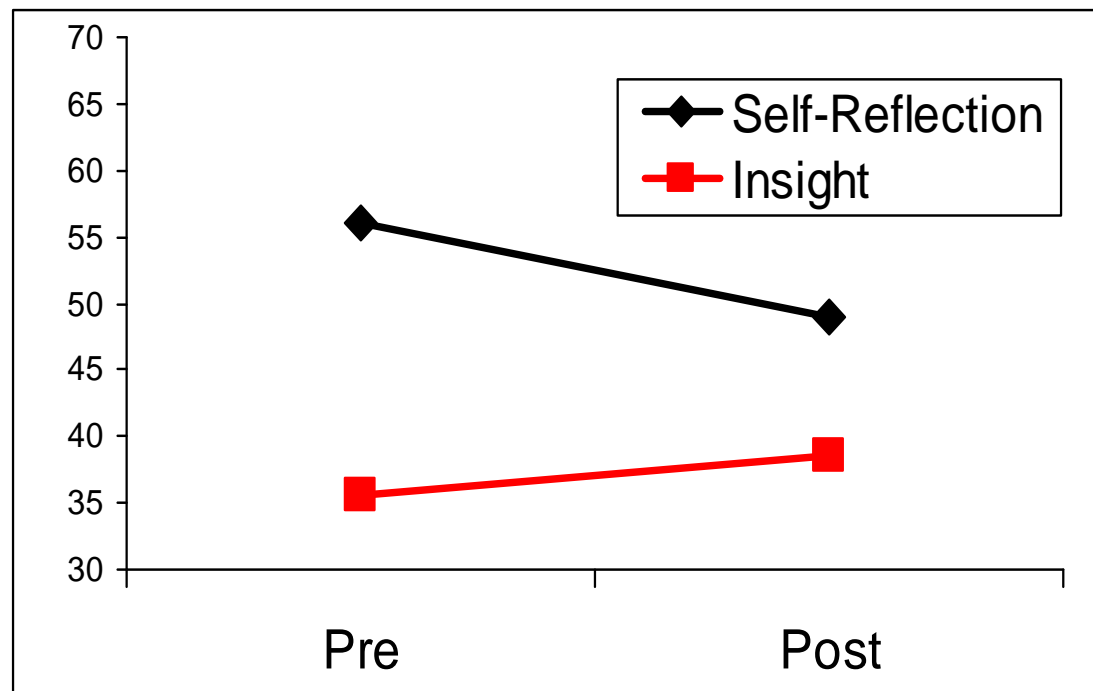


# Goals and Quality of Life



# Self-Reflection & Insight

	Pre	Post	<i>p</i>
Self-Ref	56.05	49.05	<.01
Insight	35.65	38.60	.02



# Correlational Relationships

---

## Goal Attainment

---

Self-Reflection

$$r = -.36 \quad (p = .01)$$

Insight

$$r = .28 \quad (p = .04)$$

---

As participants moved through self-regulation cycle towards goals, they became less self-reflective & had greater insight



# Key Points

- Positive psychological benefits even though focus of program was on goal attainment
- Self-reflection may not facilitate goal attainment
- Insight is important factor in change
- Coaching should be solution-focused & generate insights & goal-oriented actions, rather than self-focused reflection



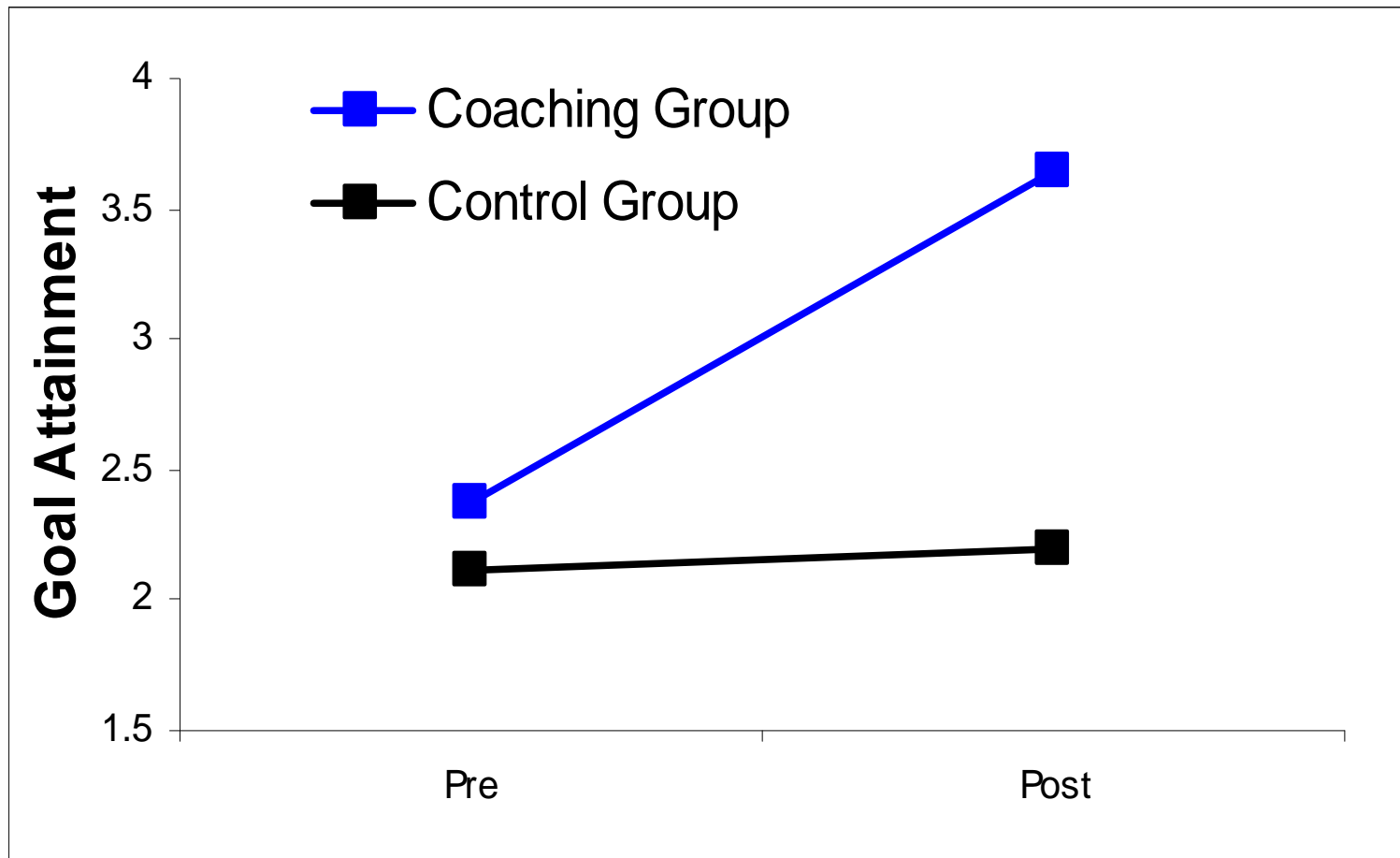
## Coaching as Applied Positive Psychology

- **Solution-focused, Cognitive-behavioural coaching individual program (RCT)**
- **Q: Does coaching work when screening/excluding participants for mental health issues?**
  - Randomised controlled study; N= 67 (Adults 38.5yrs)
  - Screened for mental health problems – 22 excluded (25%)
  - Intro. evening, 10 wks 45 min weekly individual coaching
- DVs: Goal Attainment; Psychological Well-being, Mental Health, Subjective Well-being; Emotional Intelligence

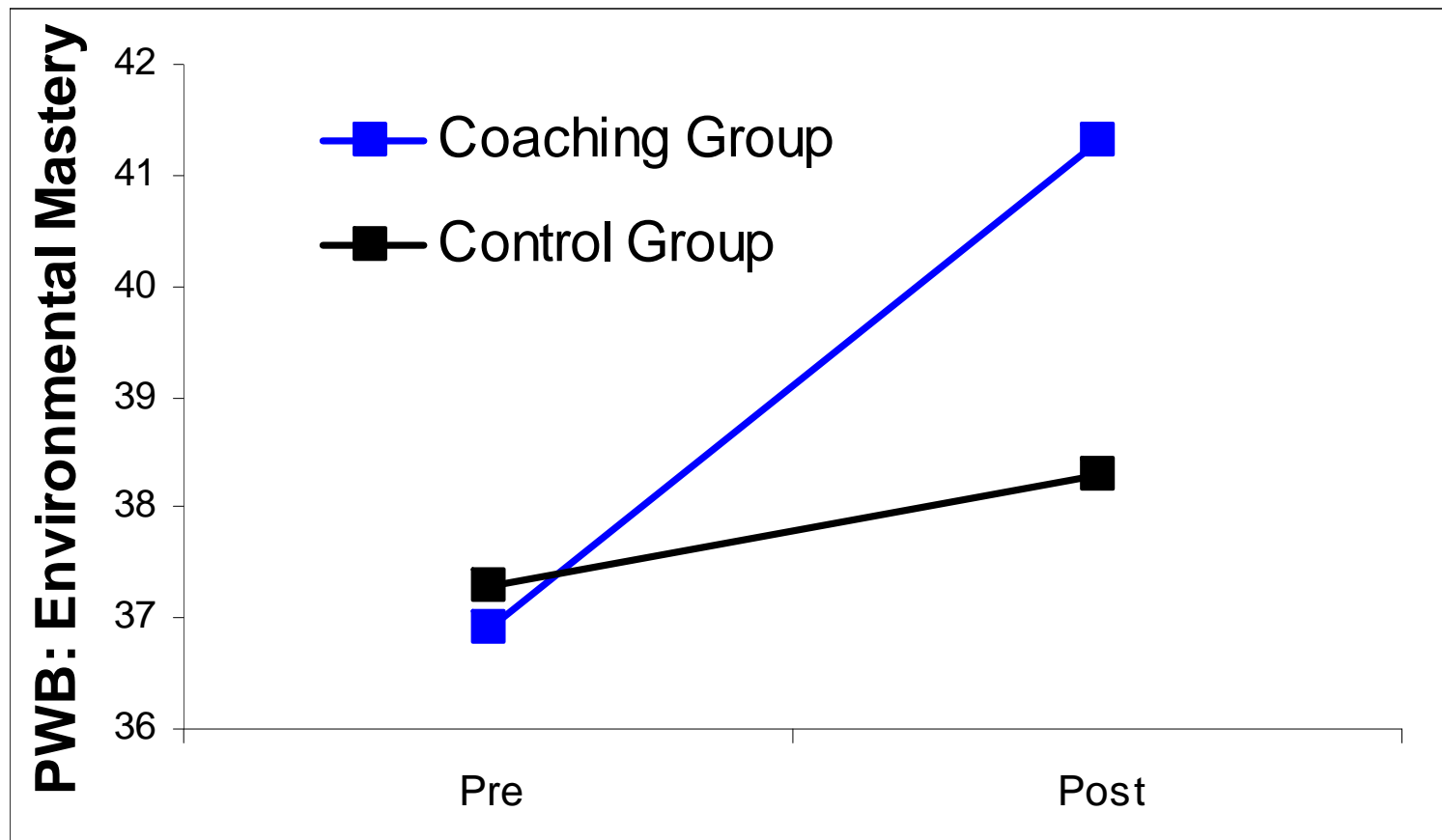
(Spence & Grant, 2005)



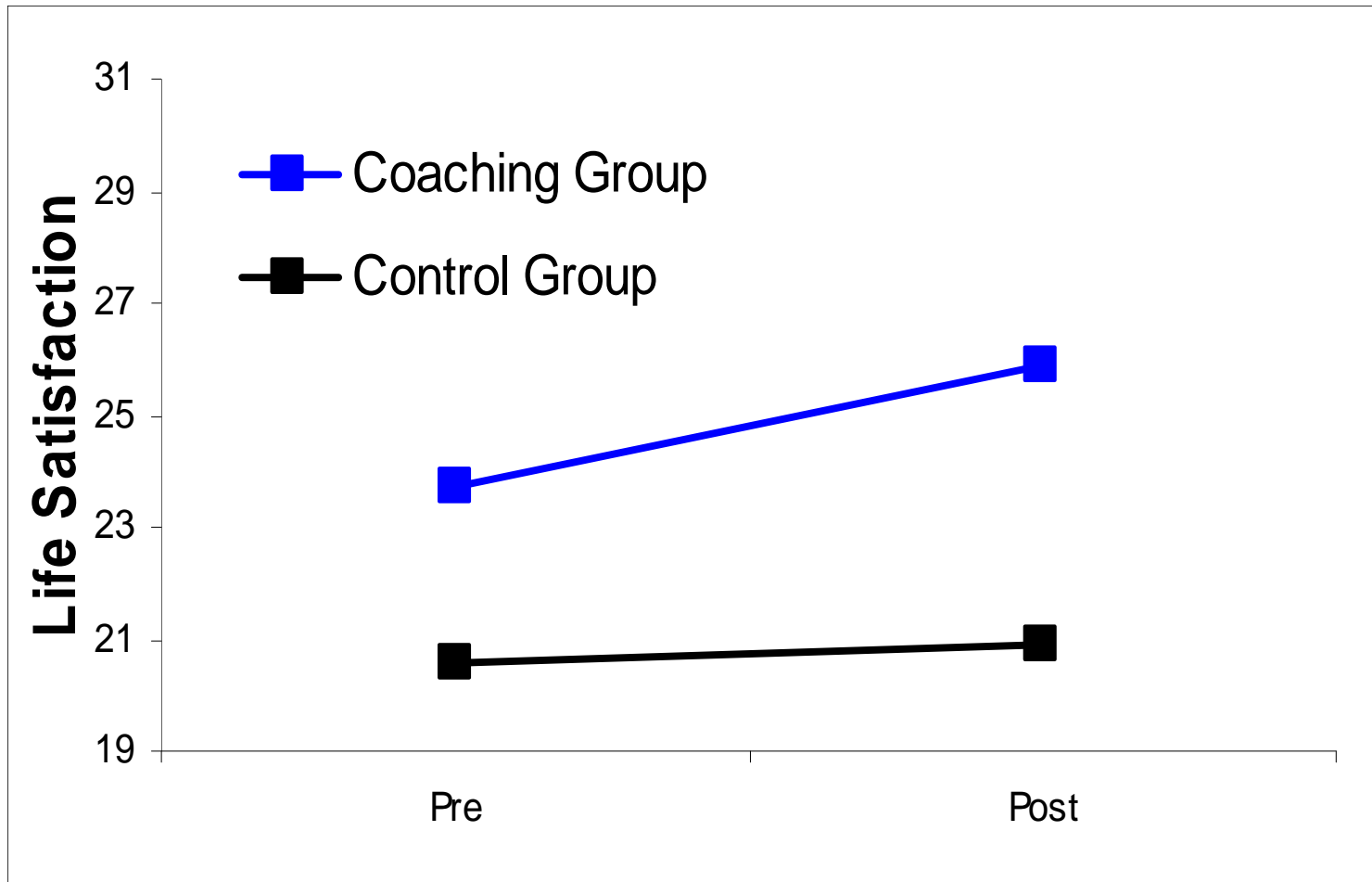
# Goal Attainment



# Psychological Well-being



# Life Satisfaction



# Key Points from Study

- Individual coaching can be effective
- Coaching not an “infallible” panacea
- Not all outcomes measures significant
- Mental Health screening may reduce chance of significant outcome on well-being measures
- Related problems with measuring “wellness” in non-clinical populations – ceiling effects?



## Coaching as Applied Positive Psychology

- **Executive coaching during organisation change (RCT)**
- **Q: Is executive coaching effective at enhancing workplace well-being?**
- Solution-focused, cognitive-behavioural executive coaching with 360 feedback
- 45 executive and senior managers from large public health service
- Quantitative and qualitative measures used

(Grant, Curtayne, & Burton, in press)



# Executive Coaching & Well-being

- Half-day leadership development w/shop
- Organisation in major change process
  - 360 feedback (HS-LSI)
  - Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS)
  - Cognitive Hardiness Scale
  - Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale
  - Workplace Well-being Index
- Four coaching sessions over 8 to 10 wks.



# Goal Selection Process

- **Problem:** How to ensure coachee's goals meet both individual and organisational needs
- **Solution:** Following consultation with organisational sponsors and coachee, seven broad goals drafted
- Coachees select two of seven broad goals to focus on in coaching

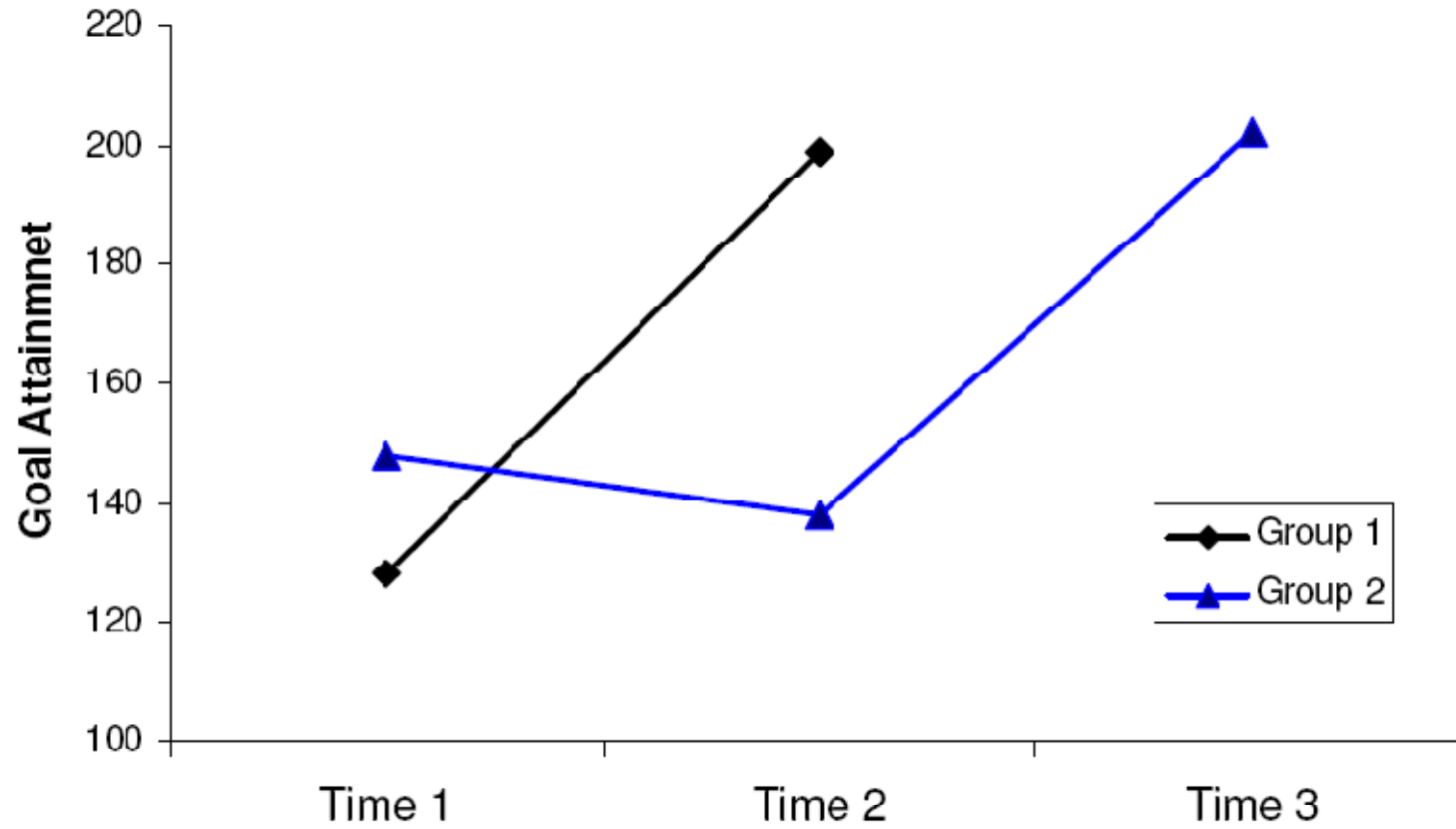


# Executive Coaching & Well-being

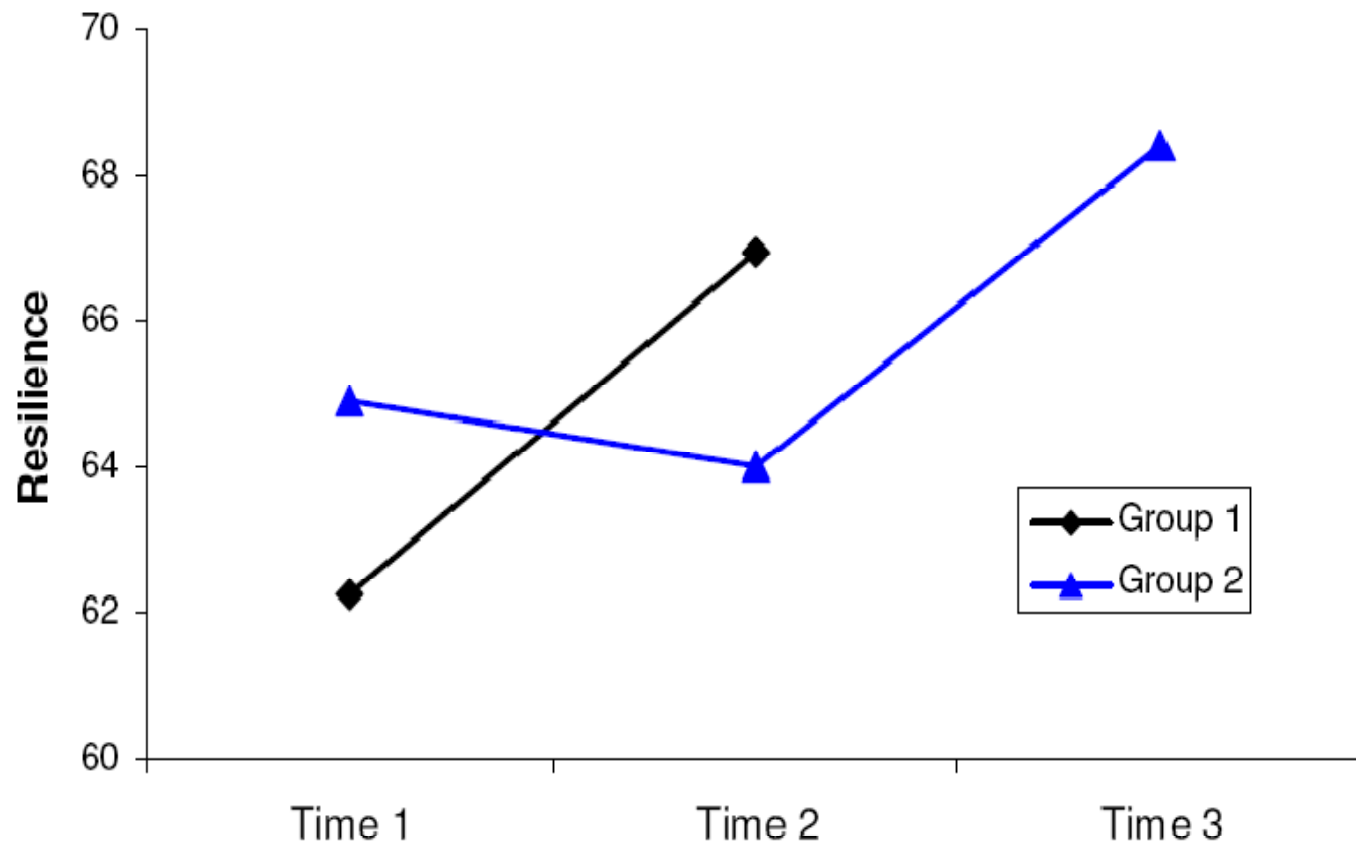
	Time 1 Baseline	Time 2 10 weeks	Time 3 20 weeks
Group 1	Training workshop Begin coaching	Complete coaching	No measures taken
Group 2	Training workshop Begin waitlist	Begin coaching	Complete coaching



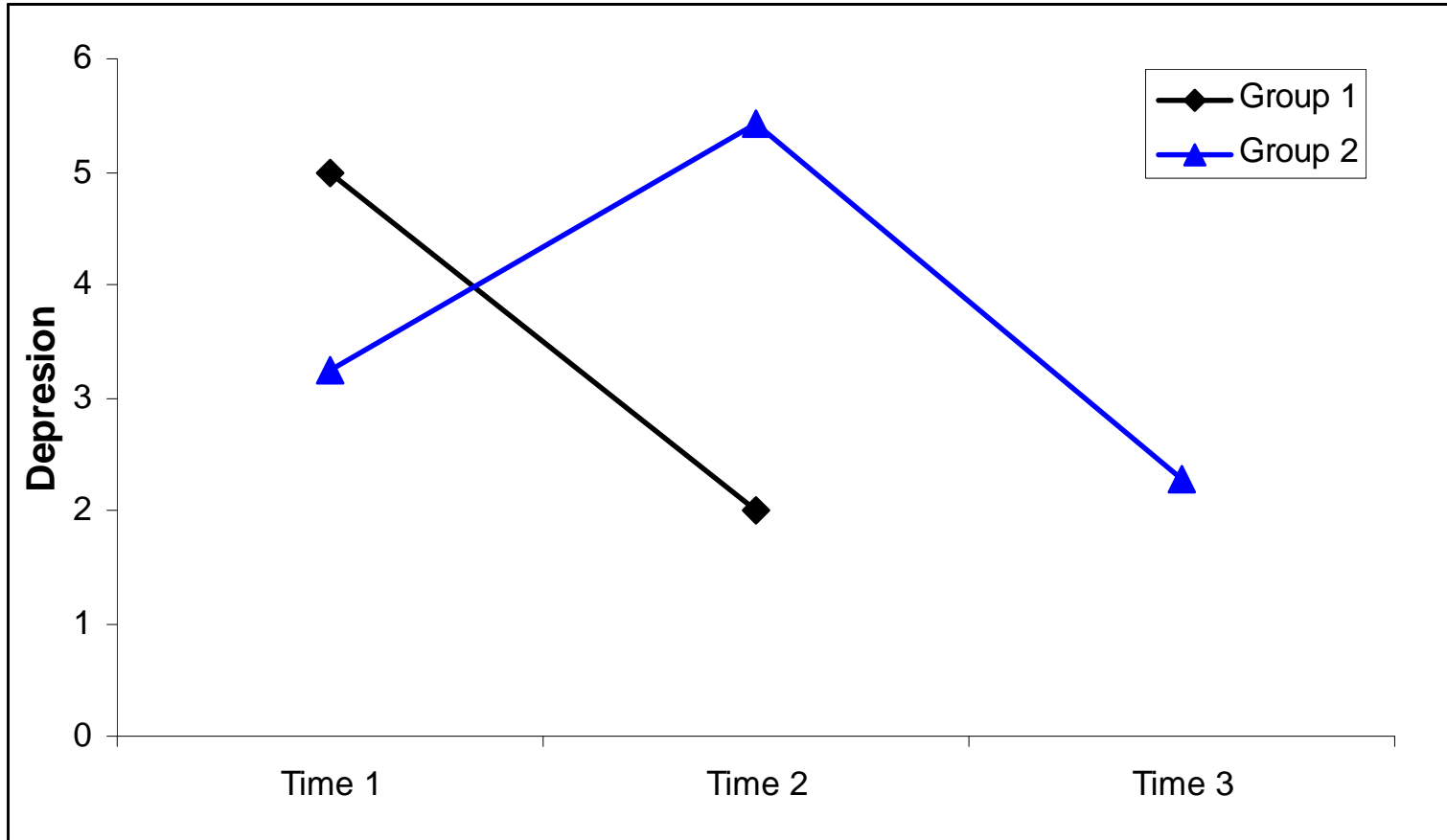
# Goal Attainment



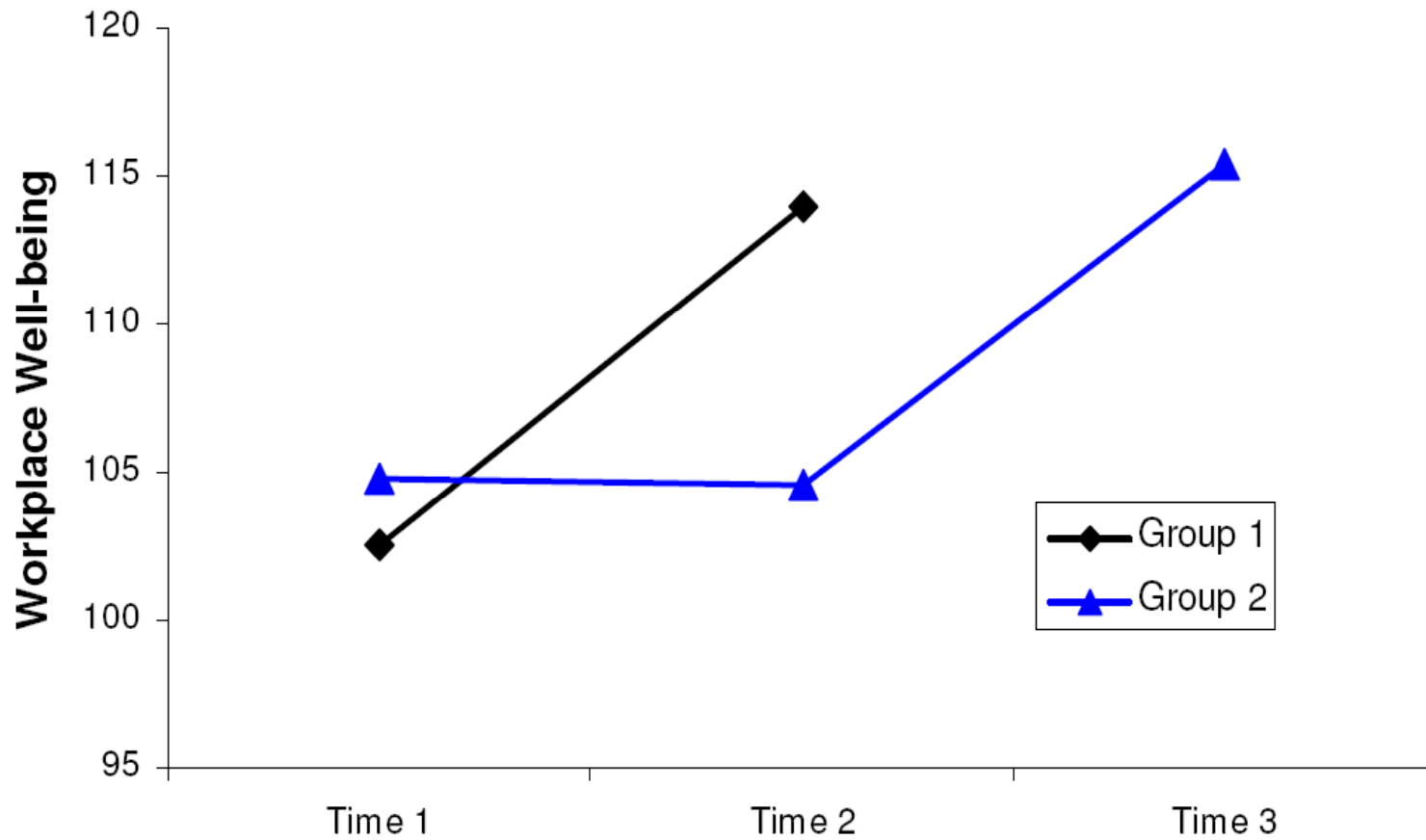
# Resilience



# Depression



# Workplace Well-being



## Key Points of Study

- Short-term executive coaching can be effective
  - 4 sessions over 8 to 10 weeks
- SF-CB executive coaching can help deal with pain of organisational change
  - Open-ended qualitative comments indicated coaching helped participants deal with change stress
- Workplace well-being enhanced through coaching – good potential tool for change



# Other U.Syd coaching outcome studies

- **Solution-focused, cognitive-behavioural coaching group program (RTC)**
  - Group coaching effective & effects of coaching maintain over 30 weeks (Green, Oades & Grant, 2006)
- **Peer vs. professional coaches (RTC)**
  - Professional coaches more effective than peer (Spence & Grant, 2007)
- **Mindfulness and Health Coaching (RTC)**
  - Mindfulness pre or post coaching vs health education only
  - Both coaching programs better than education only
  - Mindfulness before coaching can increase impact of coaching (Spence, Cavanagh & Grant, 2008)



# Other U.Syd coaching outcome studies

- **High school students (RTC)**
  - Life coaching enhanced resilience and hope (Green, Grant, Rynsaardt. 2007)
- **High school teachers (RTC)**
  - Workplace coaching enhanced well-being, goal attainment and hope (Grant, Green, Rynsaardt, 2007)
- **Personal Life Coaching for Coaches-in-training (WS)**
  - Life coaching enhanced goal attainment, resilience, insight and deepened learning (Grant, 2008)

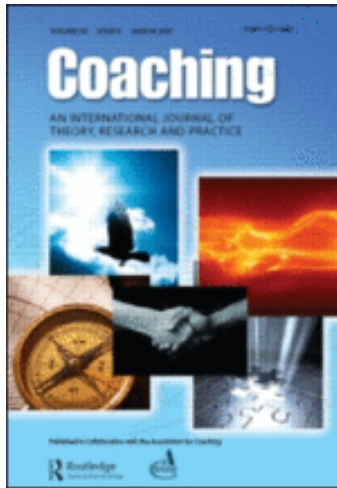


# Future: Coaching *is* an Applied Positive Psychology!

- We need
  - More Randomised Controlled Studies
  - Longitudinal studies
  - Better outcome measures
  - Sophisticated theoretical frameworks
  - Models that integrate P.P. with SF-CB
  - Solid scholar-practitioner training
  - More well-written research papers!!

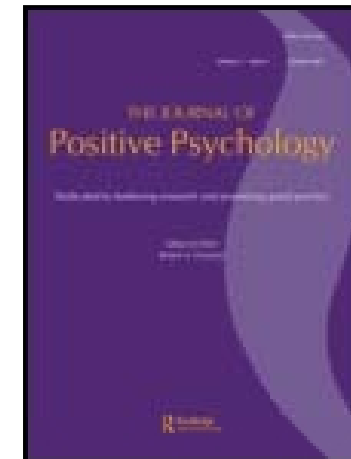
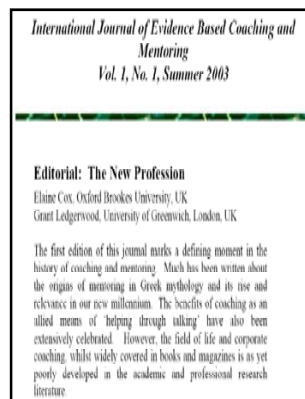
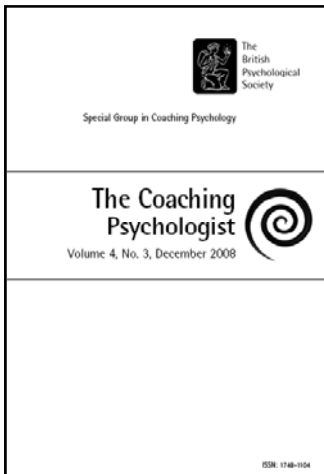
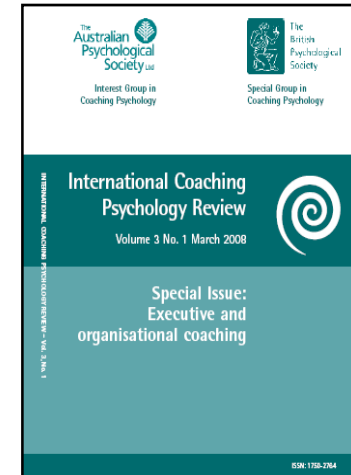


# Coaching is now decidedly mainstream



**The Realities of Executive Coaching**

January 2009



# Anthony M Grant *PhD*

Coaching Psychology Unit

University of Sydney

[anthonyg@psych.usyd.edu.au](mailto:anthonyg@psych.usyd.edu.au)

Download Annotated Coaching Bibliography  
on Evidence-based Coaching at

<http://tiny.cc/12Uxn>

[www.psych.usyd.edu.au/coach](http://www.psych.usyd.edu.au/coach)



For an updated version of  
these overheads please visit

[www.psych.usyd.edu.au/coach](http://www.psych.usyd.edu.au/coach)

[anthonyg@psych.usyd.edu.au](mailto:anthonyg@psych.usyd.edu.au)

[www.psych.usyd.edu.au/coach](http://www.psych.usyd.edu.au/coach)

