

# COACHING BEHIND BARS & BEYOND

AFTER YEARS ADDRESSING CRIME, MENTAL HEALTH AND POVERTY, CLARE MCGREGOR REALISED THE TRUE POTENTIAL FOR SUSTAINABLE CHANGE LIES IN HELPING PEOPLE FIND THEIR OWN SOLUTIONS.

## THE POTENTIAL WITHIN

If you think you have no options and no hope in life, then why bother with anything at all? People near rock bottom often lack belief in their power to change anything, yet have the most potential to benefit from coaching. Over 30 brave and generous-hearted coaches have given their time and experience to the charity Coaching Inside and Out (CIAO) since 2010. We started in Styal prison near Manchester airport, where six women killed themselves in one year, and have now helped over 500 men, women and children both in prison and in the community, who have committed crimes or are at risk of doing so. We've discovered there is more potential than we ever imagined in the toughest of circumstances where you might think people lacked both the resources and the will to change their own lives.

## THIS IS YOUR LIFE

CIAO is entirely client-led and we work as equals without dwelling on or judging the past. We don't ask about people's crimes, just as we don't ask about corporate clients' misdemeanours. It is not a soft option but we challenge people for their own benefit, not the benefit of 'the system', which makes a vital difference and we often hear: 'I've never told anyone this.'

Any one of us could so easily be in prison ourselves if circumstances played out differently at any point. As our very first male client in the community said, 'People do things because of the hand they were dealt: who they're around, who they mix with and how they were brought up. Now I'm putting my cards back in the pack and giving them a good shuffle.'

Coaching allows someone to step back, consider their whole life and get to the heart of their problems, beliefs and hopes so that they can make the most of their lives, for all our sakes.

## IN SIX HOURS OR LESS

Within just six hours of one-to-one work a trusted CIAO coach can unlock ideas from people who are often just told what to do. As a female client said, 'Prison makes you think a lot, but I didn't know how to think before – I wouldn't have got anywhere without the life coaching... I didn't understand myself.' Clients whose guilt and life history made them feel worthless and who'd never dared hope for anything better have taken responsibility, come off drugs, got fit, got jobs, started their own businesses and looked for ways to give and help, as well as reduced the harm they do to themselves and others.

## IT COULD BE YOU

CIAO took coaching to the extreme working behind bars with people who've committed the most terrible of crimes. It makes you realise just what you, your clients and coaching are capable of when you stretch yourself to your limits. Whilst at least one coach in the team needs to know enough to make the initial connections and set up the service, thereafter not being an expert in the client area makes coaching easier, since you couldn't give good advice even if you tried. We don't know anyone else's life (as coaching my husband taught me) and not needing to be an 'expert' means being available to coach almost anyone anywhere. In spite of the huge challenges of gates, keys and 'threats to kill', the benefit to coaches working in prisons in

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terms of personal and professional growth is extraordinary. Some coaches choose to coach alone but being part of a team means sharing the mistakes and frustrations as well as the successes.

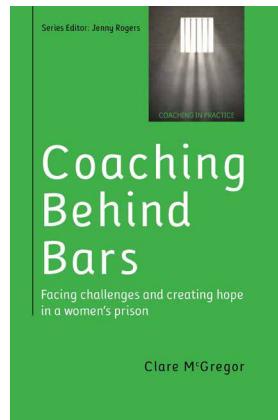
#### PEOPLE POWER

Many coaches approach us with a real appetite for pushing themselves and their clients. CIAO wants to support and encourage other organisations and individuals to work at the extremes whilst learning from the ever-increasing network of coaches already doing so. Our fellow charity in London, Spark Inside coaches young people too (see Issue 2, July 2014 of this magazine); and other organisations overseas are far advanced as well.

CIAO expanded into the community in 2013 and into a male prison in 2015. Commissioners have also renewed contracts for Stronger Families (aka Troubled Families), as coaching is particularly useful for those with extremely complex lives in whom society has given up hope and who've given up hope themselves.

There are far more possibilities though. We held an event to encourage people with an interest in criminal and social justice to explore where else we might use coaching to tap into the potential of people to change their own lives for the better, not just within the criminal justice system. This article

is the next step in that exploration of how we can tackle the world's toughest problems. If you're one of the curious or if you're already doing extreme coaching, we'd love to hear what you're up to and your dreams of great things to come.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Clare McGregor spent 20 years working with people at street level before co-founding the charity Coaching Inside and Out (CIAO) in 2010 [coachinginsideandout.org.uk](http://coachinginsideandout.org.uk). She shares their fabulous clients' stories and her many mistakes in *Coaching Behind Bars: Facing challenges and creating hope in a women's prison* (OUP/McGraw Hill 2015). In 2016 she'll take the message of hope further by trying stand-up comedy. She's always happy to share ideas and be distracted so do tweet

[@Clare\\_McGregor](https://twitter.com/Clare_McGregor) or email [clare@claremcgregor.co.uk](mailto:clare@claremcgregor.co.uk).

## COACHES NEED TEACHERS

### JOSEPHINE SCHOOLKATE RECOUNTS HER PERSONAL JOURNEY TO BECOMING A COACH, ACROSS CONTINENTS AND OVER TIME.

I have always been driven by my imagination, so central to the development of my coaching identity has been the creation of a fictional painting with the faces and stories of those who have inspired my journey. My painting is not yet finished, neither are my dreams. I encourage my executive clients to reflect on whose shoulders they stand and how their personal 'picture book' can provide confidence for them in times of uncertainty; also, as leaders, how their stories can bring hope and colour to the lives of others. Here is the personal story of my search for a coaching identity.

It was a frosty morning in Switzerland, snow covering the windows of the bathroom. 'Congratulations Josephine,' the mirrored image said to me. 'You've just completed your first year

as an executive coach.' 'How many times have I congratulated others on their transitions?' I thought. 'And is that face really the "new me" or someone else smiling?'

However, as I gazed at my reflection that early morning, I knew something had changed.

During my six years at IMD business school in Lausanne, I was very fortunate to have had the opportunity to study with talented faculty, many of whom are considered masters in global leadership development. It helped me to prepare for the journey ahead and to understand what great educators and coaches do differently. I recall my first day on campus, being introduced to the bible for all educators, *Mastering Executive Education*, written by IMD

