

APRIL 2023 | ISSUE 37

# Coaching Perspectives

THE ASSOCIATION FOR COACHING  
GLOBAL MAGAZINE



## Changing organisations

Beyond burnout: the shared responsibility of resilience

Leadership coaching for purpose

How the pandemic changed teams, perhaps forever

Optimal energy: a game-changer for leaders?

Leader-as-coach: coaching by osmosis

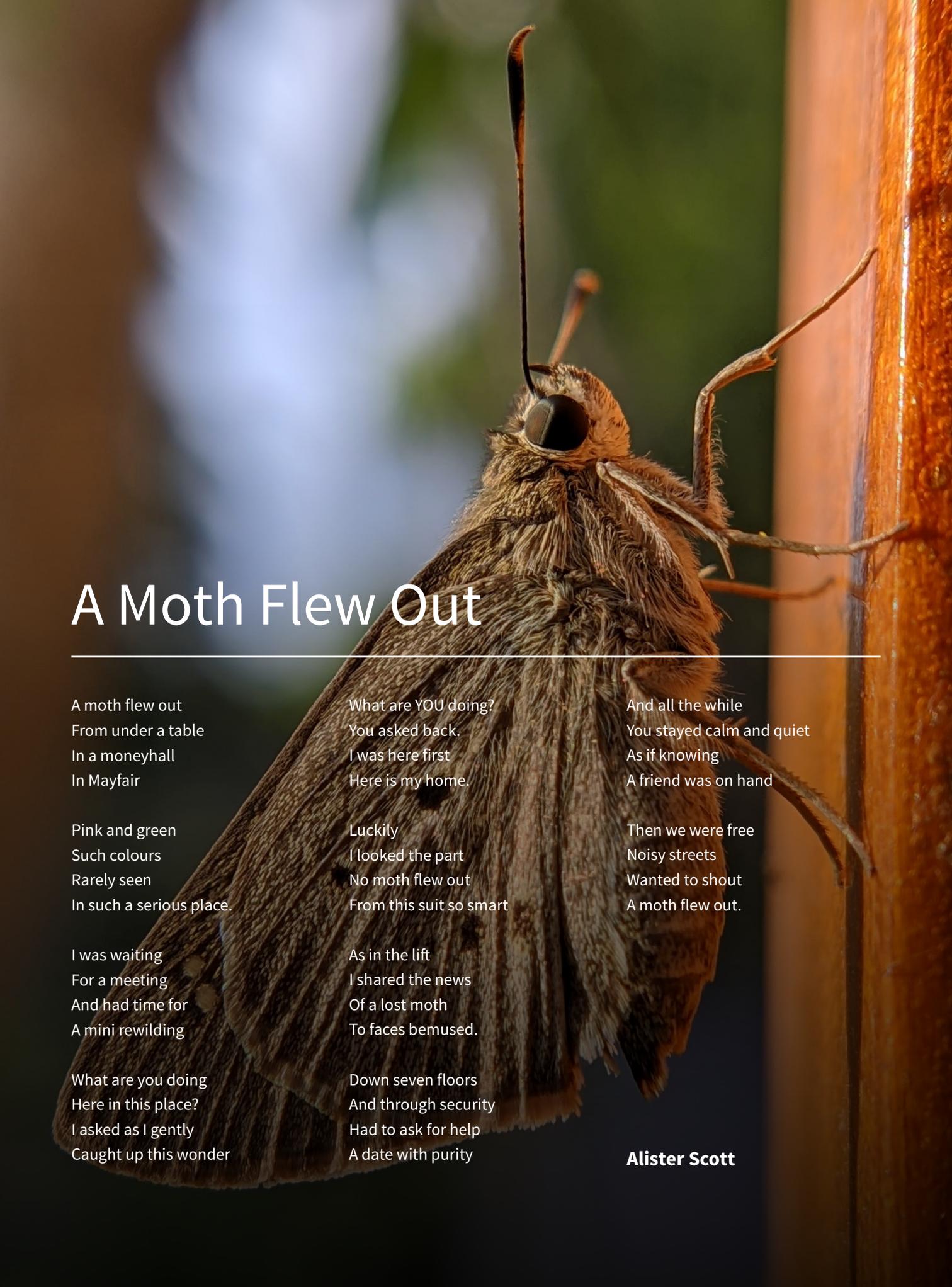
ISSN 2632-9735



9 772632 973502

ADVANCING COACHING IN BUSINESS AND SOCIETY, WORLDWIDE

ISSN 2632-9735 (PRINT)



# A Moth Flew Out

---

A moth flew out  
From under a table  
In a moneyhall  
In Mayfair

Pink and green  
Such colours  
Rarely seen  
In such a serious place.

I was waiting  
For a meeting  
And had time for  
A mini rewilding

What are you doing  
Here in this place?  
I asked as I gently  
Caught up this wonder

What are YOU doing?  
You asked back.  
I was here first  
Here is my home.

Luckily  
I looked the part  
No moth flew out  
From this suit so smart

As in the lift  
I shared the news  
Of a lost moth  
To faces bemused.

Down seven floors  
And through security  
Had to ask for help  
A date with purity

And all the while  
You stayed calm and quiet  
As if knowing  
A friend was on hand

Then we were free  
Noisy streets  
Wanted to shout  
A moth flew out.

**Alister Scott**



*'Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.'* — Barack Obama

How does that quotation strike you as a coach? How does it question your values and purpose, your inspiration for what you do? For me, it is a powerful call to action that I can relate directly to my own purpose: to enable others to change their lives and the world for the better. Our work so often centres around change: the need for it; the desire for it; making a plan for it; working out what change is most desirable. It comes from a sure belief that things can and will be better, and that the solutions are within our power. A belief that clear, optimistic thinking will get us there.

In this edition of *Coaching Perspectives*, we centre our attention on changing organisations, where much of our work as coaches ultimately resides, whether we work with leaders, their teams, or the individuals trying to make sense of their roles within and relating to entities bigger than themselves. Individuals can play pivotal roles in founding, leading and changing organisations, but I believe it is through the power of the greater-than-the-sum-of-its-parts collective that lasting systemic change can happen.

The ever-present spectre of the Covid-19 pandemic haunts the background of many of our conversations with leaders and their teams. Yet amongst its horror, the pandemic has led to research into how teams and organisations have been changed, likely permanently, by rapid and necessary shifts in how we work. We are beginning to understand what a sustainable and truly 21st-century workplace might look like – and, crucially, where we can place our attention in order to make the best of the technological advances that have made remote and hybrid work a possibility. We present here two research-based articles, from researchers at the University of East London and Henley Business School, examining how teams coped and indeed thrived. They teach valuable lessons for understanding a more effective way of working in teams. For coaches of leaders, leader-coaches and team coaches, this research may prove invaluable.

To take inspiration from Gandhi: be the change you wish to see in the world. Marie Faire and Keith Merron each argue that change in any organisation must start with, and be embodied by, the top: leaders and boards must live and breathe the purpose, values and behaviours they wish to see in their organisations. Marie believes that the responsibility for instilling a good organisational culture –

that most crucial element to long-term success – lies at the very top level. Keith's assertion is that leaders must transform their own paradigms to effect change in those within their organisation.

Yet it is abundantly clear that all is not well with many organisations. The need for organisational resilience is rarely far from leaders' thoughts, but to what extent are our working practices promoting that resilience? Lucy Ryan argues that a swing towards productivity and the bottom line in a post-pandemic era is to blame for the current high levels of burnout across workforces. She makes the case for more shared responsibility, carving out space and time to develop and forge relationships. Look out, too, for a review of *Running On Empty* – a new book aimed at tackling the increasing prevalence of burnout in organisations.

Much of our work with clients, especially in organisations, centres around relationships with others. Often, a pressing concern with interpersonal relationships can distract from paying attention to our relationship with ourselves. Felicity Dwyer outlines a deceptively simple yet profound model to examine our polarities, enabling us to connect with our true selves, and thence to repair or strengthen our connections with others.

It is a fact of organisational life that the individuals within organisations will in time move on. When we've lived and breathed our organisation's culture and values for many years, moving on can be a huge, often daunting challenge. I felt this myself a couple of years ago when waving goodbye to the BBC, an organisation to which I'd dedicated two decades of my working life (albeit I was hardly at retirement age). Members of EY's executive coaching team outline their purpose-led model enabling retirees to plan intentionally for the next chapter in life with confidence.

As ever, these few paragraphs only scratch the surface of another rich, thought-provoking edition. I take great pleasure and pride in working with our ever-growing network of talented contributors and our editorial team to produce each issue of *Coaching Perspectives*. If you get half as much pleasure and learning from reading this edition as we did editing it, we will have done our job!

Warm wishes,

*James Bridgeman*

Co-editor

# CONTENTS

APRIL 2023 | ISSUE 37

## COACHING LEADERSHIP

- Purpose and values: the beating heart of leadership in Vuca times** 6  
Diane Newell
- The importance of coaching for optimal energy** 10  
Viv Chitty
- Coaching via osmosis** 14  
Qassim Al-Riyami
- Entertaining a coaching culture** 16  
Paul Williamson

## COACHING EXCELLENCE

- Beyond burnout: coaching for systemic resilience** 18  
Dr Lucy Ryan
- Creating healthy cultures in the midst of change** 22  
Alister Scott and Sophie Stephenson
- Coaching an evolving identity** 26  
Leslie Goldenberg, Dawn Pons and Tricia Christian

## TEAM COACHING

- Successful teaming in tough times** 30  
Jo Hargreaves, Kerrin Miller, Lata Parbhoo and Cosmin Alexandru

## RESEARCH

- Developing confidence in hybrid teams** 34  
James Woodham

## EMERGING TRENDS

- Workplace coaching: from the age of digitalisation to the age of ideas** 38  
Tünde Erdős

## THE WORKSHOP

- You've got to laugh: cartooning in coaching and supervision** 42  
David Love
- Balancing the polarities of self and other in communication** 46  
Felicity Dwyer

## COACHING EXCELLENCE

- Towards net positive social energy** 48  
Lorna McDowell

## COLUMNS

- You can't get to a new culture with an old leadership approach** 52  
Keith Merron
- Culture is set from the top** 53  
Marie Faire
- Slowing down to create space** 54  
Robert Biswas-Diener and Christian van Nieuwerburgh

## REVIEWS

- Podcast reviews** 56  
Lisa Robyn Wood and Suzy Hunt
- The Reading Room** 58  
Lizzie Bentley Bowers and Sarah David
- Running on Empty** 60  
Reviewed by Dr Rob Kemp
- Superhuman Coaching** 61  
Reviewed by Clare Beckett-McInroy
- The Triumphant Team** 62  
Reviewed by Mihaela Diaconu
- The Gift of Coaching** 63  
Reviewed by Ingrid Seim

## Editorial team

**Executive editor:** Hetty Einzig  
editor@associationforcoaching.com  
**Co-editor:** James Bridgeman  
james@associationforcoaching.com  
**Co-editor:** Clare Manning  
clare@associationforcoaching.com  
**Production coordinator:** Stephanie Lucas  
stephanie@associationforcoaching.com  
**Sub-editor:** Cameron Harvey-Piper  
cameron@associationforcoaching.com  
**Design:** www.martinwilliamsondesign.com  
**Photographer:** Fabio Grassi www.fabiograssi.com

## Editorial board

**Geoffrey Abbott** – Director, Executive Coaching Programs, Graduate School of Business, Queensland University of Technology  
**Stanley Arumugam** – Independent consultant and coaching psychologist, Johannesburg, South Africa  
**Taaka Awori** – Managing director, Busara Africa  
**Hetty Einzig** – Coaching, leadership and training consultant and author  
**Martha Miser** – Aduro Consulting LLC  
**Philippe Rosinski** – MD, Rosinski & Company

Katherine Tulpa – CEO, AC. Co-founder and CEO, Wisdom8

## Commissioning editors

**Stanley Arumugam** – Africa  
**Taaka Awori** – Africa  
**Angela Wright** – North America  
**Sarah Tennyson** – North America  
**Michael Cullen** – Canada  
**Gillian Squirrel** – Research

## Membership

The AC is an inclusive body for the coaching profession, not just coaches. There is a full array of membership types on offer, including for coaches, providers of coaching and coach training, academic institutions, not-for-profits and large global organisations or corporates that are building coaching cultures. Each type of membership offers its own type of benefits and services. Further details are available at [bit.ly/ACmembership](http://bit.ly/ACmembership)

**For membership enquiries:**  
[members@associationforcoaching.com](mailto:members@associationforcoaching.com)



## Getting involved in the AC

We are always happy to hear from people who are interested in volunteering. To find out more please visit [bit.ly/ACinvolve](http://bit.ly/ACinvolve)

## Share your thoughts with us

Follow us on Twitter @ACoaching and join in the coaching conversations!

## Interested in contributing?

If you'd like to discuss submitting an article or review, please get in touch with us at [editor@associationforcoaching.com](mailto:editor@associationforcoaching.com). We welcome your ideas, submissions and feedback.

## Association for Coaching

Golden Cross House  
8 Duncannon Street  
London WC2N 4JF UK  
[enquiries@associationforcoaching.com](mailto:enquiries@associationforcoaching.com)  
Tel: +44 (0) 333 006 2676  
[www.associationforcoaching.com](http://www.associationforcoaching.com)

## AC membership includes discounts for:

### People Alchemy

An easy-to-use online resource providing practical advice, from subject matter experts on over 130 management topics.

### Association for Coaching Supervisors

An association dedicated to promoting the understanding and use of coaching supervision amongst coaches, mentors and organisations.

## Professional Indemnity Insurance

AC members receive preferential rates from the following organisations:

**Howden Professionals** - covers UK and ROI members only.

**Oxygen** - covers UK, Ireland and most of Europe though the pricing for this will be different.  
[www.oxygeninsurance.com](http://www.oxygeninsurance.com)

## Towergate Professional Risks

**Westminster Indemnity Ltd** - covers worldwide excluding US and Canada  
*Inclusion of these offers does not imply endorsement by the AC. Members should satisfy themselves about the goods/services on offer.*

## Coaching capers by davidLove (art-based coach/supervisor)

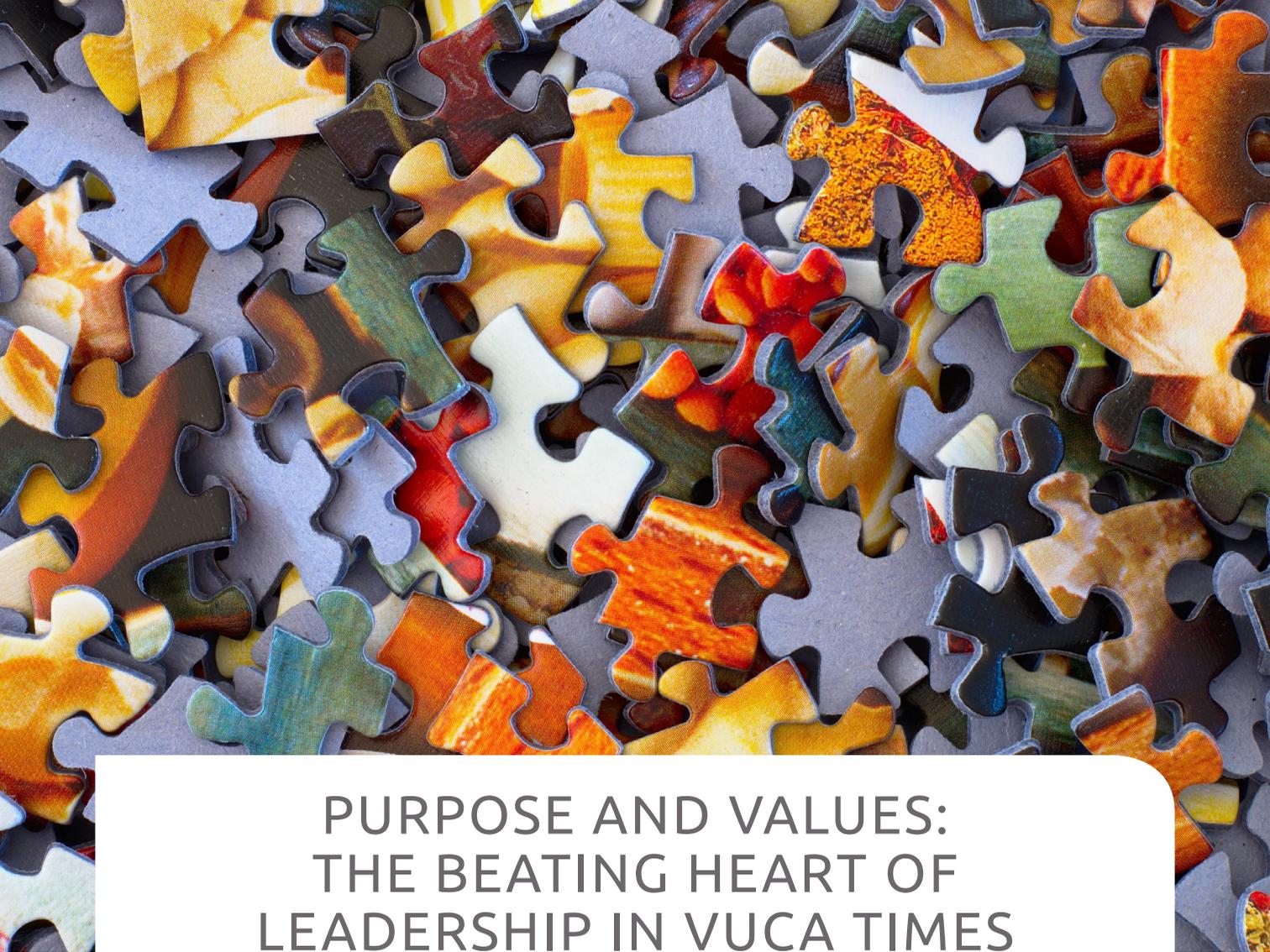
## #2: Changing organisations



## ABOUT DAVID LOVE

David is a leadership coach and coach supervisor who deploys art-based approaches, including cartoons, in his work, believing in the power of creative methods for generating insights and learning. His coaching clients are leaders and managers in public services and he has a strong commitment to enhancing public value for the benefit of all citizens. As a supervisor he works with teams of in-house coaches (such as in the UK National Health Service) providing group supervision, and with individual coaches working across all sectors. David also designs and facilitates coach development workshops and is currently supporting art-based coach and supervisor Anna Sheather in the creation of the AC-accredited diploma in art-based coaching.

[linkedin.com/in/david-love-b712716b](https://www.linkedin.com/in/david-love-b712716b)



# PURPOSE AND VALUES: THE BEATING HEART OF LEADERSHIP IN VUCA TIMES

What do you think leadership really is? Which models do you cling to? Are you ready to be more vulnerable? **Diane Newell** invites us to reflect on how our view of leadership will limit or expand the type of coaching we can do.

*'Efforts and courage are not enough without purpose and direction.'*  
– John F Kennedy

What's the role of a leader in today's complex, ambiguous, virtual organisation? How do leaders create success in a world that requires constant adaptation? For the leadership coach these are key questions. Your philosophy and understanding of what leadership is will shape your practice and your impact, so being clear and conscious of them is vital. My purpose here is to share my understanding of leadership and its impact on my coaching contracts, as a spur to get you thinking about your own.

I'm writing from a view that the key tasks of leadership are developing clear and shared understanding of purpose, and sustaining alignment and commitment to purpose. You can find similar views expressed in many recent leadership models, such as the Telos Leadership Lens.<sup>1</sup>

## WHY PURPOSE MATTERS

What's driving us to express these newer, more post-conventional leadership models is that traditional models break down in so-called VUCA environments where 'change' as a one-off, separate piece of organisational leadership is replaced by the need for constant organisation-wide adaptation.<sup>2</sup> Traditional models, which focus on leadership as separate from followership and driving performance through goals and process, create an impossible demand on leaders to create flexibility and responsiveness while maintaining ownership of direction and perfect control. Many organisations and leaders still cling to the assumptions inherent in older models, perhaps because the demands of newer models are for authenticity, connection and vulnerability – uncomfortable places for many leaders to go.

*It is common for leaders to report struggling to find time to even reflect on purpose and direction in the maelstrom of their daily agenda*

When we talk about being purposeful we are really talking about deliberately acting consistently with purpose and values. Purpose is the 'why': the reason the organisation is there, the reason the team exists or the key of the function. Values determine the 'how': how we act, how we think, what we see as right and valuable. Strategy, process and goals express the path we are currently plotting to achieve purpose, consistently with our values. But, we can only be as adaptive and responsive as we need to be to thrive – in strategy, process, goals and behaviours – if we really understand purpose and values.

That purposeful, adaptive focus may sound self-evident to some readers: but, if you are a leader, or work with leaders, reflect on how much of the energy and focus of a day or a leadership meeting is on these key tasks? My own experience is that it is common for leaders to report struggling to find time to even reflect on purpose and direction in the maelstrom of their daily agenda and to-do lists.



**Figure 1: the X diagram devised by Buck Blessing and Tod White of BlessingWhite<sup>3</sup>**

Being purposeful is not all about the needs of the organisation. It is a fundamental truth that to sustain high performance we need to be getting something back – if we aren't getting rewards and satisfaction from our effort we will eventually disengage or burn out. A purposeful or values-based leader focuses on creating sustainable high performance, developing both the contribution to organisational purpose and to the contribution your working life makes to your own purpose and values – a theory based on models like the Blessing White X shown in figure 1.

## ALIGNING INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANISATIONAL PURPOSE

What creates satisfaction for each individual at work is unique. It depends on their values and purpose, needs, motivations and drives. This can alter over time and context, and for most people it is a relatively unexplored area. Being purposeful demands that we are positively aware of what we need to sustain our energy and actively manage ourselves to maintain it at work. This requires both an investment in greater self-awareness and a culture in which we are empowered to find our own best way to sustainable high performance. You will doubtless have spotted the importance of coaching conversations and a coaching culture to both of these prerequisites!

It is of particular importance that purposeful leaders are able to find and sustain this alignment and commitment – frankly, if you aren't motivated by the organisation's purpose, or driven by your team's purpose, how are you going to inspire anyone else? If you aren't acting consistently with espoused values, how will you be trusted? I'm not proposing some cult-like situation in which every leader has (or pretends to have) a religious fervour about the organisation's purpose and values; what I am describing is an approach in which every leader can find within the organisational purpose and values something that genuinely, authentically and sustainably inspires and motivates them.

When a leader can express their individual purpose – what they value and how they find it in the work of the team and organisation – it creates not only trust in the leader and in their sustainable commitment to purpose, but it also makes space for others to find their own inspiration.

*'It was so powerful that, as he spoke, it was easy to see how the team was changing. You could read in their eyes that this story diffused in their hearts and minds. They linked the issue to their values. And this immediately pressed their "hot button", and not only gave energy to act. After such strong connection with personal values, there was no way to leave this problem unresolved.'*

– Team member quote

*If you aren't motivated by the organisation's purpose, or driven by your team's purpose, how are you going to inspire anyone else?*

## HABITS OF A PURPOSEFUL, VALUES-BASED LEADER

- Works with their team to create and sustain clarity of the why, what and how they will create success.
- Seeks, encourages and offers feedback to allow every member of the team to see and navigate gaps between expected contribution and reality – recognising that changing circumstances require us to continually adapt what we focus on and how we contribute.

- Is self-aware, and works consciously on their own alignment and commitment to purpose.
- Connects their own values – and how they are inspired by and committed to organisational purpose – to team success and goals.
- Consciously seeks to act consistently with their own and organisational values.
- Uses a coaching style that allows others to find their own engagement. You can't 'drive' alignment and commitment; you can only create the environment in which others are supported to find and maintain it for themselves.

This last habit is really key. Understanding their role in this way gives leaders purpose and impetus in their use of coaching.

*'We have also enabled this shift in leadership culture and style by investing in the coaching capability of leaders and managers. A leader can't make someone engage and be motivated. If your aim is to create sustainable engagement in change you need to invite others to find their own connections to the purpose and direction of the team, business unit or organisation... Helping others to know and manage themselves better becomes a key part of the values-based leader's role.'*  
– Client quote

## BEING A PURPOSEFUL LEADERSHIP COACH

The intent of purposeful leadership coaching is to release the potential of each individual leader to realise both their own and their organisation's purpose. We are focusing on finding and growing that sweet spot at the apex of the BlessingWhite X. What this demands of the purposeful leadership coach is, I think, not dissimilar to the FACTS challenging coaching model proposed by John Blakey and Ian Day.<sup>4</sup> It requires the same grace in giving honest, non-judgemental feedback about behaviour, while maintaining trust and rapport, and in challenging leaders to be accountable for all aspects of their impact. A leadership coach working from this perception of leadership will always be paying attention to the whole system, because purpose, alignment and commitment are both systemic and personal.

## CONTRACTING FOR PURPOSEFUL COACHING

Whether you're coming from this purpose- and values-driven approach or any other leadership model, I believe it's key for leadership coaches to contract deliberately and consciously from that model. The purposeful leadership coach is by definition contracting both with the individual leader and with the system, because their work is to realise the potential in both.

One question organisational clients often ask as I explain this approach is: what happens if individual purpose cannot be realised in this organisation? My first response is to reassure that this is a rare outcome. As a good friend and colleague once said: life is not a tragic accident. Most people are in organisations where they can find satisfaction. But if a leader's personal purpose and values are so out of line with their organisation's that no sweet spot can be found, enabling them to realise and act on that will be better for everyone. For the vast majority of leaders what it creates is a resilient capacity to be more engaged more of the time.

*'Today, as I may have doubts or do not understand why I experience an energy drop, or even as I'm reflecting, I take a step back, consider my values and seek to understand how I could better nurture and connect with them.'*  
– Client quote

A consequence of working from purpose for me has been to help me consciously focus my work on individuals and in organisations where there is clear overlap between their purpose and mine. However, being purposeful in my coaching – investing constantly in both the satisfaction I get from coaching and in being clear about my purpose as a coach – has also allowed me to work with people and in situations that I might find challenging. Conscious curiosity about others' purpose, and focus on what I find inspiring in them, inspires me to help them realise their potential.

---

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Diane is an EMCC master accredited coach and has been practising as a leadership and team coach for over 25 years. She is a director of the OCM Group, where she takes responsibility for their consulting and organisational work ([ocm-discovery.co.uk](http://ocm-discovery.co.uk)), and is a lead contributor and editor to *Coaching and Mentoring: Practical Techniques for Developing Learning and Performance* (Kogan Page, 2022).

- 
1. By, R. T. (2021). Leadership: In pursuit of purpose. *Journal of Change Management*, 21(1), 30-44.
  2. Chadha, A (2021) *Emerging Perspectives in Management, Entrepreneurship and Innovation* (pp.3-8): Falcon Publishers
  3. BlessingWhite. 2015. *The X Model of Employee Engagement - BlessingWhite - Leadership Development and Employee Engagement.*
  4. Blakey, J and Day, I ((2012) *Challenging Coaching: Going Beyond Traditional Coaching to Face the FACTS*: Nicholas Brealey Publishing



# Become an Ashridge Accredited Executive Coach



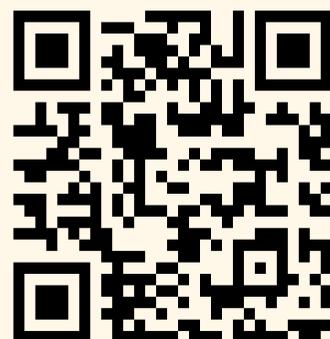
At Hult Ashridge we believe the relationship between coach and client is at the heart of effective coaching, and the central vehicle for learning and change. Designed for experienced coaches and consultants, our postgraduate coaching qualifications allow you to go deeper into your practice, making an even bigger impact on your clients.

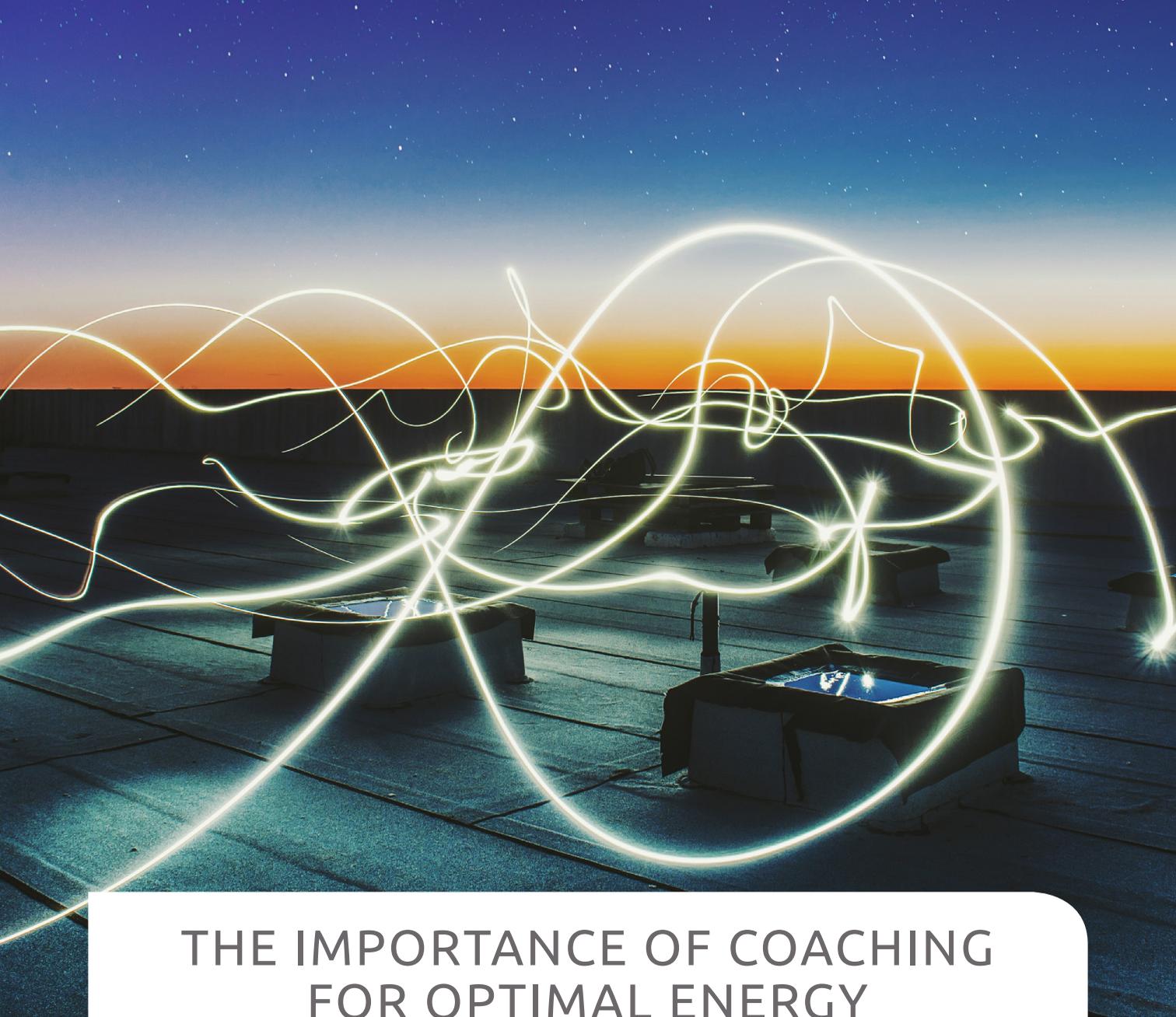
Fast-track your way to EMCC Senior Practitioner Status with Ashridge Coaching Accreditation

Start Date	Delivery Method
22nd May	Face-to-face

Visit [hult.edu/mec](https://hult.edu/mec)

Scan the QR code below to find out more





## THE IMPORTANCE OF COACHING FOR OPTIMAL ENERGY

What happens when we ignore our energetic highs and lows? Can energy management be a game changer for leaders? **Viv Chitty's** research shows how executive coaches can engage with 'Optimal Energy'.

We are living in a time when people are finding the world of work, and the world in general, exhausting. Much is being written about burnout and downshifting. National and global crises are taking their toll on people, with more pressure being piled on leaders in all fields, who are expected to perform and inspire when facing strong headwinds. How can they deal with these demands if they do not have the energy to do so?

The Covid-19 pandemic affected most of our energy levels due to social, emotional and cognitive impacts:

- It has been described as devastating for the nervous system for a number of reasons. It elicited threat responses (we were on high alert for danger – a danger caused by something we could neither see nor control) and affected the ability to coregulate, connect and find safety with others, which is a human biological imperative when faced with threat.<sup>1</sup>
- There was more ambiguity: humans generally prefer certainty, and people didn't know what was coming next and forward planning was difficult.

- Many could not follow their usual habits, and the formation of new habits became harder.
- Situations that bring instability and require us to do things differently result in hypervigilance and heightened emotions: this takes more energy.
- Some may have experienced great distress.
- Others may have experienced a sense of languishing: an absence of wellbeing and thriving, and a sense of simply going through the motions without feeling good about it.<sup>2,3</sup>
- The collective traumatic experience and the contraction of most aspects of life led to brain fog for some.<sup>4</sup>

In a post-lockdown world where Covid is endemic, it will still be an impact. On a personal level, some individuals will have Covid-related post-viral fatigue, while others may have suffered a bereavement. Some may feel socially isolated working from home more than before and many will feel the impact of back-to-back virtual meetings.

*If we're in it for the long haul, then it's got to be sustainable. Everybody can burn like a supernova but it doesn't last very long*

On an organisational level, Homayoun Hatami and Liz Hilton Segel – senior partners at McKinsey – suggest that ‘managing complex organisations is much harder today than it was just a few years ago.’<sup>5</sup> They propose that many leaders will be having to manage organisational changes such as restructuring, redundancy programmes and acceleration towards automation and digital transformation, alongside the redesign of work processes and accompanying need to retrain the workforce. Meanwhile, they are having to ensure that companies can move faster to safeguard resilience across a variety of business areas due to inflation and depleted supply chains. There is a demand to rethink opportunities in light of current volatility. At the same time, leaders are having to re-engage employees, considering how to enable them to find meaning in their work and remain with the organisation.

## THE BENEFITS OF OPTIMAL ENERGY

When facing such demands there are benefits for leaders, and therefore their organisations, in having energy levels that enable them to carry out their day-to-day tasks and meet these aforementioned expectations. Intentional consideration of, and acting to address, energy and self-care in this context can have massive value for the individual, and shouldn't be treated as simply a cosy add-on to their agenda.<sup>6</sup>

Optimal energy means having the right amount of energy for what you are trying to do and achieve at a given time. In addition, energy levels need to be sustainable. As one of my research partners said: ‘if we're in it for the long haul, then it's got to be sustainable. Everybody can burn like a supernova but it doesn't last very long.’ It is unrealistic to expect high energy to be constant. In fact, I suggest

that the pressure to achieve this would be detrimental. Skilful management of energy means knowing what you need at a given time; recognising when your energy levels are optimal, lacking or not appropriate; and understanding what you personally need to do to address any issues.

## MY JOURNEY WITH OPTIMAL ENERGY

My interest in client energy in the context of executive coaching came from my 24 years of working as an executive coach. I had become increasingly aware of differing energy levels in my clients, with some struggling to meet the constant demands being made on them. I started to wonder whether I should be addressing energy directly with clients when I perceived it to be an issue affecting their performance and relationships in and out of work. As a result, I began to read about energy and discovered the work of authors Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz on energy management.<sup>7</sup> Their book *The Power of Full Engagement* suggests that there are four different types of energy: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual (the ex-psychology student in me did question if this was the case). As I read the related literature further, I struggled to discover a definition of energy (the meaning of energy was generally implied) or any information about how to address this in coaching. To find these answers I embarked on a master's degree at Oxford Brookes University in the UK.

My research had some interesting findings: the highly experienced executive coaches whom I interviewed did recognise the concept of energy in their clients and believed that it was relevant to address it when appropriate. Two conceptualisations were formed, one of energy and its influences and the second relating to when, and how, executive coaches can address client energy levels.

## A CASE STUDY

A senior client had two small children and a mother with Alzheimer's disease. Sometimes they would feel exhausted and other times described being completely over-energised, particularly when with people, trying to prove that they were absolutely fine – when they really weren't. They were pushing and pushing themselves to carry on, to perform, not to be flattened. Something had to be done. They started to process how they were feeling and their fluctuating energy levels, and began to understand the impact this was having on their work and relationships. They came up with strategies: identifying some of the stories behind their internal pressure; working on self-compassion; planning around events; saying no; meditation; yoga; healthy eating; walking; and seeking support from friends. This took them through these tough years.

## WHY ADDRESS ENERGY WITH SENIOR COACHING CLIENTS?

When energy is suboptimal one's performance, behaviour and interactions with others can suffer. There may be an impact on

emotion and cognition, including disassociation<sup>8</sup> and a knock-on effect on an individual's organisational culture – plus an influence on the efficacy of coaching they are receiving. Research has suggested that being appropriately energised has numerous benefits, such as increased performance and productivity, and the ability to inspire others.<sup>9,10,11</sup> Specifically for senior executives, it can mean career success; work and life satisfaction<sup>12</sup>; improved health and wellbeing<sup>9,10</sup>; and higher levels of creativity.<sup>13</sup>

The bottom line is that, however good an individual's work-related intentions are, if they are not appropriately energised to act on them they are less likely to succeed.

So, are executive coaches doing their clients a disservice if they do not acknowledge and work with a client's energy when it is influencing their work and their coaching? I suggest that the executive coach, when appropriate to the client (this doesn't have to be the overall focus but can underpin what we do), is well-placed to enable the client to become aware of the importance of conscious management of energy and the negative impacts of being inappropriately energised. Then, they can help enable the client to address their energy by building a package of personalised interventions. As a result, our clients may more often be optimally energised to meet the demands of a challenging working world.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Viv Chitty is director of Viv Chitty Associates, a coaching consultancy that works with senior people in a wide variety of sectors. She has been an executive coach for over 20 years, is a coach supervisor and has written *Coaching for Optimal Energy: A Guide for Executive Coaches*. She is passionate about working with senior clients who have multiple challenges to face. Alongside qualifications in psychology, counselling and coach supervision, she holds an MA in coaching and mentoring.

[vivchittyassociates.co.uk](http://vivchittyassociates.co.uk)

For information about her book, please visit:

[vivchittyassociates.co.uk/coaching-for-optimal-energy-the-book](http://vivchittyassociates.co.uk/coaching-for-optimal-energy-the-book)

1. Porges, S.W. (2020) 'The Covid-19 Pandemic is a paradoxical challenge to our nervous system: A Polyvagal perspective', *Clinical Neuropsychiatry*, 17(2), pp.135-138.
2. Keyes, C.L.M. (2002) 'The mental health continuum: From languishing to flourishing in life', *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 43(2), pp.207-222. Available at: <https://doi:10.2307/3090197>
3. Grant, A. (2021) 'There's a name for the blah you're feeling: It's called languishing', *New York Times*, 19 April. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/19/well/mind/Covid-mental-health-languishing.html>
4. Sarner, M. (2021) 'Brain fog: how trauma, uncertainty and isolation have affected our minds and memory', *The Guardian*, 14 April. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/apr/14/brain-fog-how-trauma-uncertainty-and-isolation-have-affected-our-minds-and-memory>
5. Hatami, H. and Hilton Segel, L. (2022). What matters most? Six priorities for CEOs in turbulent times. 17 November. <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/what-matters-most-six-priorities-for-ceos-in-turbulent-times>
6. Chitty, V. (2023) *Coaching for Optimal Energy: A guide for executive coaches*. Abingdon: Routledge
7. Loehr, J. and Schwartz, T. (2003) *The power of full engagement: Managing energy, not time, is the key to high performance and personal renewal*. New York: Free Press.
8. Loehr, J. (2007) *The power of story: Change your story, change your destiny in business and in life*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
9. Quinn, R.W., Spreitzer, G.M. and Lam, C.F. (2012) 'Building a sustainable model of human energy in organizations: Exploring the critical role of resources', *The Academy of Management Annals*, 6(1), pp.337-396.
10. Parker, S.L., Zacher, H., de Bloom, J., Verton, M. and Lentink, C.R. (2017) 'Daily use of energy management strategies and occupational well-being: The moderating role of job demands', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, pp.1-12
11. Cross, R. and Parker, A. (2004) 'Charged up: Creating energy in organizations', *Journal of Organizational Excellence*, 23(4), pp.3-14.
12. Baruch, Y., Grimland, S. and Vigoda-Gadot, E. (2014) 'Professional vitality and career success: Mediation, age and outcomes', *European Management Journal*, 32(3), pp.518-527.
13. Atwater, L. and Carmeli, A. (2009) 'Leader-member exchange, feelings of energy, and involvement in creative work', *The Leadership Quarterly*, 20(3), pp.264-275

## Calling all prospective writers...

We invite you to consider the upcoming themes for the next four editions of *Coaching Perspectives* and see if something captures your interest. If so, please contact us at [editor@associationforcoaching.com](mailto:editor@associationforcoaching.com) to share your ideas for an article. We will then set up a commissioning call to explore further.

### July 2023 | Coaching for All | Submission deadline: 15.5.23

We will cover themes such as the democratisation of coaching and digital disruption; access for all on a personal and professional level; role of coaching and supervision in encouraging equality and social justice; coaching at a community, societal and global level; taking a systemic view.

### October 2023 | Coaching in Times of Conflict | Submission deadline: 15.8.23

This edition will consider how can coaching be used in times of conflict, ranging from war zones to workplace disputes; coaching in times of ecological, economic, political crisis; coaching for those in personal crisis. We'll look at questions such as where does coaching sit alongside mediation, trauma work, therapy; and what is the role of supervisors in supporting coaches who are in crisis or privy to conflict?

### January 2024 | Leader-Coach and Team Coaching | Submission deadline: 15.11.23

In this edition we invite contributors to delve into the evolution of the leader-coach; how coaching sits alongside other leadership styles; the synergy between leader-coach and team coach; the wider eco-system view; development of strategic coaching; future of internal coaching networks versus leader-coach; leader-coach supervision; the burgeoning field of team coaching, and more...

### April 2024 | 10 Year Anniversary of Coaching Perspectives: Past, Present and Future of Coaching | Submission deadline: 15.2.24

An open call to celebrate the best of coaching over the last decade and begin to imagine the decade to come: What has inspired you? Challenged you? Made you more effective? How do we future-proof our profession? What will be needed of coaches and supervisors by 2034? What will the landscape look like at a micro-, meso- and macro-level?

# Systemic Team Coaching® Certificate

RUNS  
THROUGHOUT  
THE YEAR

Run in partnership with Professor Peter Hawkins and Renewal Associates, this ICF-accredited experiential virtual programme explores how to coach teams to consider both their internal dynamics and external stakeholders working with the connections and influences within and outside the team.

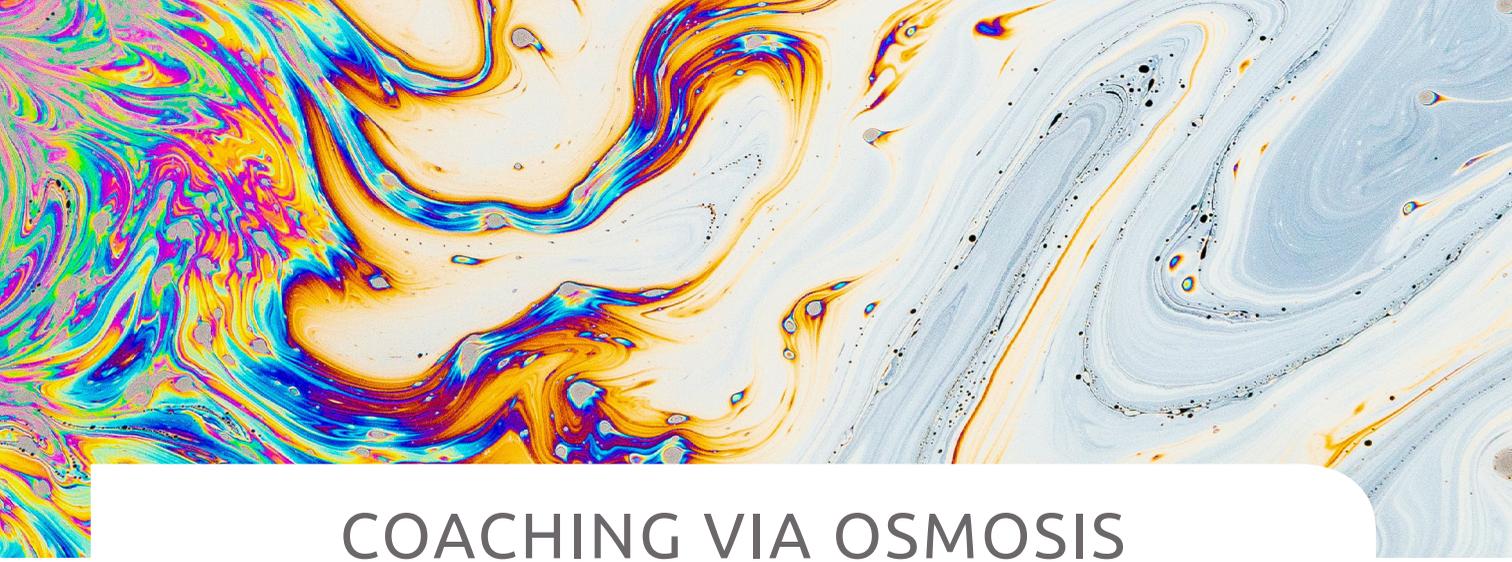
Combining theory, case examples and practical exercises to ensure understanding and application of the Systemic Team Coaching process, participants also become licensed to use the Team Connect 360 diagnostic tool.

**The AoEC is your go-to coach training provider with options for every step of your learning journey and professional development.**



Coach Consultancy   Coaching   Coach Training

+44 (0) 20 7127 5125 | [enquiries@aoec.com](mailto:enquiries@aoec.com) | [www.aoec.com](http://www.aoec.com)



# COACHING VIA OSMOSIS

How is a leader-coach formed? What contributes to the growth of a leader who employs a coaching style? **Qassim Al-Riyami** shares reflections on his personal and professional development over a varied organisational career.

Early on in life, effective coaching and steadfast guidance were invaluable to my personal growth; its importance was made apparent to me in the juxtaposition of competent and ineffectual coaches and teachers. I had the pleasure of being under the tutelage of ones that nurtured and fostered those under their guidance and sought to work within the framework of their varied perspectives. Then, there were those that forced their own rigid and inflexible path onto their pupils. Having the good fortune of being nurtured by coaches that met me where I stood, rather than try to force me into a mould of themselves, contributed tremendously to my approach when I eventually had the honour of assuming that responsibility.

## THE START OF THE JOURNEY

My first coaching position was during my master's programme at the University of Texas in Austin. Tasked with serving as technical assistant (TA) to some of my professors, I came to appreciate my knack for adaptability and clear communication, two of the pillars that support the foundation of effective mentorship. Even though my TA role was limited to technical guidance, I learned how to adapt to a multitude of learning styles and discern the importance of accounting for the human factor. Human beings differ in culture, language and religion – and that is a deciding factor in where and how I apply my efforts.

As I continued in my education, into my PhD programme, my opportunities to grow as a coach multiplied as my mentorship duties became more rigorous, thus allowing me to blossom as a coach and leader to my junior colleagues. The collaborative nature of the programme required unambiguous communication along with precise listening skills to ensure efficiency and equal workload distribution. Here, I bore witness to the consequences of ineffective leadership and could diagnose points of failure in the coaching process. I learned to resist readily providing answers and instead to promote creative thinking and to encourage ownership of the solutions.

After my education, as a senior reservoir engineer for Petroleum Development Oman effective leadership became a core tenet of my job, and the validity of my work depended on effective communication with my team members and my ability to set challenging yet achievable goals for them, then subsequently coaching them to meet those expectations. This was the foundation that all my other duties stood upon.

## LISTENING AS THE BACKBONE OF COACHING

In any leadership position, the ability to listen actively is imperative to fostering an effective team, and a lack of responsiveness from leadership lies at the heart of any collaborative breakdown. Communication between a leader-coach and their team should be open and continuous: only then can further productivity bottlenecks be addressed. Listening as a leader is not a passive process; it takes active engagement with every link in the chain of productivity. At times, communication from team members is unambiguous. Frequently, though, it takes a degree of nuance in understanding their various perspectives. This becomes important when coaching team members through personal and professional development.

Without active listening, a team member's talent may be squandered and finding creative solutions to novel problems will become impossible. Leaving these resources untapped will manifest as a deficit in leadership, and ultimately result in an unproductive team performance.

*Without active listening, a team member's talent may be squandered and finding creative solutions to novel problems will become impossible*

## CULTURAL AND ETHNIC SENSITIVITY

Viewing diversity as a hurdle is counterproductive in any collaborative process; practising cultural sensitivity puts the onus of adaptability on the leader rather than the team, and shying away from that opportunity to grow is a net loss for any organisation. Embracing what makes us different is what makes a good team thrive. Learning each other's strengths allows for maximum collaborative proficiency, and learning of individual points of improvement can go a long way to remedying loss in value creation.

In my experience, a lack of cultural, religious and linguistic awareness is at the root of the detrimental consequences of poor leadership. Understanding your team and their unique perspectives will not only allow them to operate in a healthy and rewarding environment, but will also allow you as a leader to tap into previously inaccessible – due to the requirements of sanitised corporate communication – resources. Accounting for the diversity of your team will always be advantageous to a leader-coach, boosting efficiency, productivity and overall job satisfaction.

The reason I adhere to this philosophy is that I had the honour of working alongside a leader who displayed such emotional intelligence that her consideration for her team was reflected in their drive to excel. Seeing them as individuals rather than tools at her disposal set her team up for optimal performance, allowing them to lean into their individual strengths and negate any friction that arises from bruised egos.

## SINCERITY: COACHING AS A FUNDAMENTAL SKILL

Effective coaching as a leader takes confidence and courage: confidence in the analysis of your team as well as a clear vision for a path forward, and the courage to tactfully communicate deficiencies within the team as well as individuals. Addressing deficiencies within a team or individual team members relies not only upon an ability to pinpoint the cause of the deficiency but also the willingness to suggest paths for improvement and growth towards turning this weakness into a strength. Being sincere in your coaching is a way to cut through the noise and address directly the points of contention. As a leader-coach, my task is not to offer spoon-fed solutions, but instead to illuminate the paths forward, confident in the team members' abilities to discern the best path for themselves.

## THE SIMPLE POWER OF GROW

The GROW model is what I credit with elevating my proficiency as a personal and professional coach. The clear and structured methodology makes large and intimidating goals seem far more achievable; it plays a pivotal role in my coaching style and contributes directly to the success of my team. Since many will already be familiar with this method, I will not delve into the details, but the structure it adds to my coaching style keeps those I lead focused on their goals, and taking the time to consider the paths forward goes a long way to easing the anxieties that come with striving for loftier goals.

This method has a way of driving the ambition of my coachees, allowing them to experience the efficacy of proper planning and the effect it has on achievement. Additionally, it forges the right accountability and relationship between coaches and coachees, where the structured approach sets the right expectations.

*He would ask many questions,  
but almost never offer the answers.  
A good leader-coach builds  
self-reliance, not dependence*

## THE ROAD SO FAR

I began by crediting my good fortune in receiving sound guidance and coaching, and that has endowed me with high expectations of myself as a coach. I believe in the importance of a leader-coach setting the tone, meaning I fully expect the attitude I embody to diffuse into my team and work environment. My diligence fosters diligence in my team and my detail-oriented approach will demand attention to detail in return.

Watching and learning through doing is what enabled me to grow into an effective leader-coach. The diffusion of the attitudes and techniques that my mentors and coaches embodied has allowed me to hone my individual approach to coaching. This drives me to excel as a leader in homage to those that preceded me.

I am reminded of an invaluable experience I had working under the deputy managing director of my organisation, who would never squander an opportunity to coach me. One time, when he did not like a slide in my presentation, he asked probing questions and reminded me to think of what I wanted to achieve by including that slide, and consider how my delivery would complement it. He would ask many questions, but almost never offer the answers. A good leader-coach builds self-reliance, not dependence.

Looking into the future, especially as I approach retirement, my role as a leader and my coaching system are ways to market myself as a future educator, in an effort to contribute back into the cycle of knowledge-sharing that has fostered me throughout my career.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Qassim has over 25 years of oil and gas experience at PDO, and is currently a PDO reservoir engineering discipline head. He has worked in different leadership roles: as development manager for a cluster of tight gas fields; as a well and reservoir management team leader for a mature water flood asset; and as head of corporate business planning. As a senior reservoir engineer, he matured and operated different projects, such as water-flood, steam-flood, miscible gas injection and water alternating gas. Qassim holds a PhD and an MSc in petroleum engineering from the University of Texas in Austin, and a BSc in electrical engineering from Sultan Qaboos University in Oman.



# ENTERTAINING A COACHING CULTURE

Where do coaching and live theatre intersect, and what can each learn from the other? **Paul Williamson** reflects on Ambassador Theatre Group's journey towards creating a coaching culture.

To me, coaching and theatre inhabit a similar space in my heart and mind. Both happen 'in the moment', both rely on connection, both require authenticity and heightened awareness, and both can explore character and narrative.

I love the way theatre respects and empowers its audience. I remember watching the wonderful musical *Come From Away*, where the cast rearranged chairs on the stage to represent the interior of a plane. The audience didn't need a lavish replica of an aeroplane interior: all they needed was a suggestion and some great performances, and their imaginations did the rest. The audience was trusted to fill in the gaps, and as a result were able to 'see' the plane interior. In a similar way to co-active coaches trusting that their coachees are creative, resourceful and whole, it strikes me that theatre is doing much the same here: inviting audiences to partner with performers on stage in order to co-create. I've often thought what a powerful analogy this is – not only for coaching but also for leadership, and, expanding still further, for cultivating a healthy organisational culture. All require trust and collaboration.

When I trained to become a coach, I was also struck by how much some of the creative techniques used in coaching reminded me of rehearsal exercises an artistic director might use with actors. Techniques such as using space in the room to indicate where a person was in their journey. Or chair work, where you speak to an empty chair, imagining someone is sitting it and then swapping to become that person and responding. A director might use techniques and games such as these to explore how characters relate to one another, or to help an actor find their character. It strikes me that often this is the work coaches are doing with their coachees.

All forms of live entertainment involve storytelling to some degree. The story of how we're creating a coaching culture at Ambassador Theatre Group (ATG) is still being told. It is a complex narrative –

sometimes scripted, sometimes improvised – and far from complete, but here are some edited highlights.

## BEGINNINGS

We began in 2014, with a key objective being spotting and developing ATG's 'leaders of tomorrow'. We wanted to create a leadership pipeline and identify, develop and retain talent in the business.

I partnered with an external coach and facilitator, Nicky Stone, and we created a two-year programme for emerging leaders, called Rising Stars. Interestingly, the programme itself was developed in an emergent fashion too. We adopted a coaching style and designed content that engaged participants and asked important questions of them. From this we discovered what the group needed in order to develop as authentic leaders. We then created bespoke learning sessions around those emergent themes. We contracted at the start of the programme and ran group coaching sessions at the beginning of every session we facilitated. This allowed the group to bond, show vulnerability and connect at a deep level. A lot can happen over two years, and individuals shared all their ups and downs. It was a psychologically safe environment, enabling people to share openly, be coached in the moment, experiment and push themselves further than they might have done ordinarily. Through this process they learned about their core values and purpose. Each participant was also matched to an internal certified coach, allowing them to have one-to-one coaching conversations at key points, helping them explore new terrain, overcome barriers and set personal goals.

Ending with a graduation event, each Rising Star gives a presentation on their journey, what they've learned and what kind of leader they are. It never fails to be anything other than utterly inspiring. So much so that it caught the eye of senior managers in the audience, who then asked for similar investment in their development. A powerful

narrative was building, and, contrary to popular belief, it showed that you don't always have to start at the top of an organisation and work down – in truth, like any story, you can start the narrative anywhere.

Looking back, I think the key to this success was linking coaching with leadership and providing people with the platform and company-wide exposure to tell their success stories in their own words. This inspired and influenced others and created an organic movement through storytelling.

Another key strategy is trying to get managers to practise coaching skills early in their careers. That's why we've developed in-house courses – virtual, face-to-face and via e-learning – that do precisely that. This helps to make the learning accessible and increase reach, which I think positively impacts on our culture.

*A powerful narrative was building, and, contrary to popular belief, it showed that you don't always have to start at the top of an organisation and work down*

## THE HERE AND NOW

We now have three successful in-house leadership development programmes – Rising Stars for emerging leaders, Interval for experienced managers and Leading Lights for senior leaders – all of which contain a golden thread of coaching running through them.

The programmes have been described as transformational and life-changing by participants and include sessions with influential master coaches, thought leaders and authors such as Dr John Blakey, John Leary-Joyce, Jude Jennison, Dr Sarah Hill and Dr Carole Pemberton. These incredible contributors share their insights on key subjects such as trust, relational leadership, resilience, how we show up, and the stories we tell ourselves that either help or hinder. They also model how to hold a space, listen, ask questions and be curious. I remember one Leading Lights participant describing himself as authoritarian and a bit of a dictator prior to attending the course. Learning coaching skills and hearing from successful people who used coaching as a way of leading led to a transformational change for him. A year after the programme he said: 'If you talked to people that worked for me pre and post Leading Lights, they'll tell you I'm a different person.'

Our experience at ATG has been that key turning points tend to be emergent, which is congruent with coaching practice in general. We introduce a new initiative or programme and then, as people apply what they have learned, the culture changes as a consequence.

One such example was shared with me recently by Colin Marr, theatre director of Edinburgh Playhouse. Colin was in the first cohort of Leading Lights and has recently completed his coaching diploma, joining our central coaching faculty. While studying, he read Nancy Kline's *Time to Think*. Colin said: 'the real thing that sank home was how she suggested you run meetings, and I've used it a lot.' He started by introducing it into small staff meetings, beginning with an invitation for each participant to say something positive, prompted by questions such as asking for one reason why they're proud to work at the organisation, or one thing they like about their job. Colin said:

'I was really surprised about how well people responded to it, and how it changed the tone and atmosphere of the rest of the meeting.' This prompted Colin to continue on this trajectory, get braver and ask progressively harder questions of larger groups of people.

By following Kline's model of rounds of timed, individual contribution from everyone present, Colin found that potentially challenging, confrontational meetings became really constructive. Without using these techniques Colin felt 'we'd have heard an awful lot from three or four people and very little from the other nine or 10. But, because everyone knew they were going to get their time, they didn't interrupt each other... They knew they didn't have to fight for their space, so I think it made a real difference.'

Colin's example shows how coaching techniques can quickly and positively influence culture, creating more inclusive environments where everyone's voice is heard.

## THE FUTURE

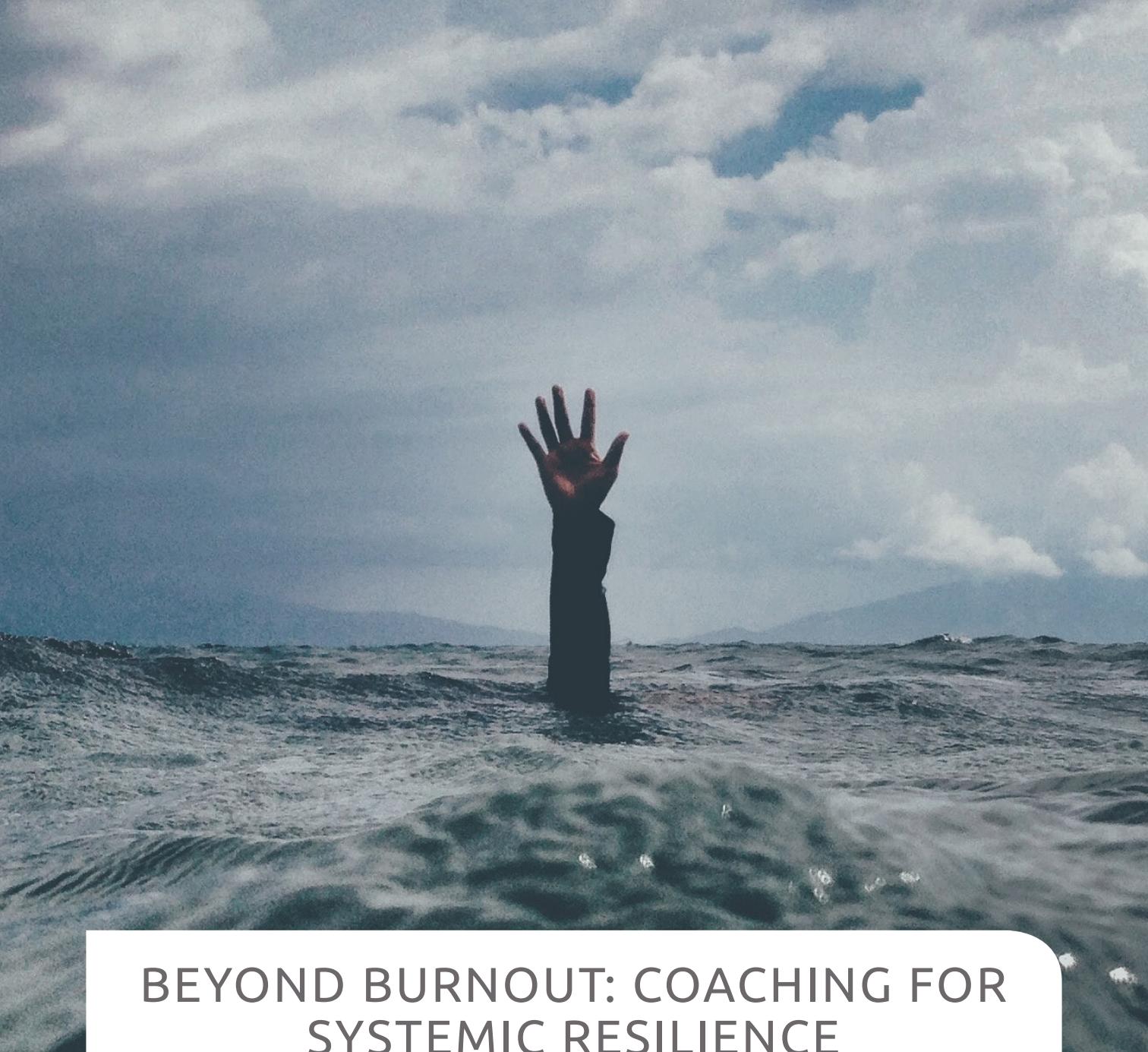
There is still much to be done. I am struck by how much opportunity still remains for organisations to apply coaching principles and philosophy to everyday aspects of corporate life. For example, the principle of contracting with a coaching client ahead of a coaching relationship could easily be applied more broadly. I often wonder how much better meetings would be if we took the time to talk about how we want to work together, and agree some guiding principles to enable everyone to share their views in a way that is encouraging and respectful. Doing this would create psychologically safe and inclusive working environments. Similarly, before starting big interdepartmental projects, imagine if those involved did the same, and then revisited that contract as they went along. Imagine the conflict and clash of expectation that could be avoided. Imagine how much smoother these projects would run.

What next for ATG? Well, having established our newly qualified in-house coaching faculty, and invested in a new coaching platform, we're just about to start offering coaching out to the wider business, which feels like a big milestone. From here I'd like to grow the faculty and further democratise access to coaching. I suspect the work required to create a true coaching culture never really ends. We keep going. We've entertained the idea of coaching and now we're performing... and so the story continues...

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Paul Williamson is group head of talent development at the Ambassador Theatre Group (ATG), the world's largest live entertainment group. He reflects on the journey towards creating a coaching culture at his organisation.



## BEYOND BURNOUT: COACHING FOR SYSTEMIC RESILIENCE

Resilience can no longer be considered an individual matter. What can coaches do to encourage organisations to tackle the wider, systemic issues that stoke the fires of stress and burnout? [Lucy Ryan](#) believes it's time for shared responsibility.

---

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, stress and burnout were already prevalent within many UK organisations. The largest UK stress study for the workplace, carried out by the Mental Health Foundation in 2018, reported that 74% of respondents felt so stressed that they had felt overwhelmed or unable to cope at some point in the past 12 months. Fast forward to today and burnout is only increasing. The 2022 Global Burnout Study found employee burnout had increased

by 5% in the past 12 months, with 60% of employees more likely to take a sick day and 23% more likely to pay a visit to the emergency room, while 40% of people stated burnout as the reason they left their job in 2021.<sup>1</sup> And C-suite executives are not immune, with 76% of those asked in a recent Deloitte study stating that the pandemic negatively affected their wellbeing.<sup>2</sup>

This slew of ever-increasing burnout statistics in the workplace attests to the simple fact that the unpredictable, volatile way we work is proving unsustainable for many employees. Unsurprisingly, companies have looked towards building resilient workforces as the answer, often with an abundance of wellbeing strategies.

But there's a problem. The focus for developing resilience has been on the individual: self-care training (e.g., meditation apps, subsidised gym membership, yoga) or resilience coaching. The message is clear – this is your issue, and we'll help you to cope. To shift beyond burnout – that is, for an organisation to move to a position where they are not fraught with cumulative employee stress crises – requires a change in perspective. A shift from individual accountability to one of shared accountability, where the organisation has sustainable practices in place that enhance systemic resilience. But are organisations prepared to make this change? In the face of an urgent post-pandemic need to focus on performance, it's possible that responsibility for resilience is only moving back towards the individual and away from the business. As a human resource director recently commented to me: 'we're under immense pressure and we have to shift the conversation back to performance and leave wellbeing to the individual.' Put another way, high performance at human cost... again?

## SURVIVING THE WHITE WATER

To survive the complexity of today's world of work, employers are urged to be like white-water kayakers, 'quickly analysing and responding to an ever-changing flow, knowing and trusting themselves so they won't panic'.<sup>3</sup> This makes resilience coaching both a necessity and a valuable life lesson, particularly when coaching focuses on evidence-based areas for sustainable behavioural change. That is, a sharpening of someone's cognitive abilities (think of this as their flexible, mental resourcefulness); optimism (how they explain away adversity); emotional regulation (the most important factor in resilience); and self-efficacy (the closest scientific construct to confidence). Years of coaching leaders has shown me the criticality of learning these skills as early in a career as possible.

But no individual is an island, and 'beyond burnout' is achieved when an organisation is prepared to discuss how the impact of their environment sustains and increases burnout levels. When a business insists that resilience is a personal matter, they are letting themselves off the proverbial hook. It is like watching someone plunge down a man-made white-water rapid while turning up the hazard level.

*In the face of an urgent post-pandemic need to focus on performance, it's possible that responsibility for resilience is only moving back towards the individual*

## WHAT IS ORGANISATIONAL RESILIENCE?

We can usefully define organisational resilience as 'a company's capacity to absorb stress, recover critical functionality, and thrive in altered circumstances'.<sup>4</sup> This sounds straightforward, yet surely there is a paradox between the definition and the reality?

Resilience is needed when the climate is unknown, changeable and unpredictable. At such times, it requires everyone to operate with speed and trust, cross-functionally. Yet, too often, people are working in siloed, virtual, economic islands, on short-term solutions that maximise shareholder value.

This complex, uncertain environment also requires teams to be supportive, resourceful and full of rejuvenated zest! And if that sounds impossible, it's because many organisations are designed to achieve the precise reverse of this. In my book, *Lunchtime Learning for Leaders*, my research showed how the paradox lives and breathes in most companies. How many of these practices seem familiar to you?

- Back-to-back meetings (virtual and in-person).
- Unsustainable email inboxes.
- Low tolerance for mistakes.
- Focus on the urgent.
- Abundant silo mentality.
- Few opportunities to recharge throughout the day.
- Learning squeezed into brief courses and rarely revisited.

This is where a coaching approach to exploring the issue of sustainable, cultural resilience can be vital. In my experience it requires a both/and approach. That is, a focus on individual resilience and the system they are operating within. Resilience needs to be addressed from as broad a perspective as possible. Let's explore some coaching approaches to help you address it from a wide-angle lens.

## START WITH CONTRACTING

As with so much of coaching, the direction for helping your clients consider a wide-angle lens about resilience comes at the contracting stage. Imagine you're discussing a potential leadership coaching contract with your organisational stakeholder and they're talking about a number of senior leaders who are in need of resilience coaching. Without an understanding of the systemic pressures the leaders are facing, your client will remain paddling furiously upstream, with or without your help, and so your skill will come with broadening this discussion. I suggest three areas for a deeper exploration: awareness, impact and support. Let me offer you some coaching questions to guide this discussion:

- Tell me about the environment these people are operating in.
- In what ways does the culture support (or undermine) resilient leadership behaviours?
- What is the impact of this on individual leaders?
- How do the organisational values align with the desire for increased resilience?



- How does the senior leadership team model the importance of resilience behaviours? (or perhaps, how do they model their unimportance!)
- How much support will the leader get before, during and after coaching as far as their resilience is concerned?

I'm not for a moment suggesting that resilience coaching will magically shift your client's culture. Wishful thinking! But what you are bringing awareness to, in this white-water world, is the impact of the broader system on sustaining resilient behaviours. Without this, the £££'s spent on individual resilience coaching will be undermined by the daily practices that sap the life out of the people you work with, when your back is turned.

## FROM DEEP ROOTS TO FLOURISHING TEAMS

A revolution has been taking place in the scientific understanding of trees (bear with me, I have a point here!) and Peter Wohlleben is the first writer to convey its amazements to a general audience with his book *The Hidden Life of Trees*. Since Darwin, Western ideas have generally thought of trees as disconnected, isolated and competitive – battlegrounds for survival of the fittest. There is now substantial scientific evidence that refutes this idea, showing that trees are cooperative and interdependent, relying on a symbiotic relationship underground and above our heads, sharing space and light.

The analogy with organisations is striking. Resilient teams have a deep connection to their roots, the vision and purpose, balanced with an ability to respond and flex to new situations. Space to learn and grow is prioritised. And these skills are achieved through a

network of reassuring relationships, based on empathy, realistic optimism and a can-do confidence. This gives us a direction for coaching systemic resilience by helping clients in five ways:

1. To connect with the clarity of their organisation's and team's vision and purpose.
2. To develop agile and flexible mindsets in the face of adversity with the language of realistic optimism.
3. To prioritise learning, mastery and personal growth (for themselves and their team).
4. To build strong, supportive, cross-functional relationships.
5. To find space to achieve this.

I'll prioritise the latter – space – here, as without it nothing else will happen. Critically, the necessity for space must equal the urgency given to pace. For example, individual space might look like:

- The ability to reflect on and consider your week's work.
- Getting to the end of the working day with energy still in your tank, and more to give to your family.
- Not feeling sick when looking at your email inbox.
- Finishing a meeting and having time to linger and talk to others (yes, virtually too).
- Closing your laptop or shutting down your devices when someone wants to talk to you.
- Scheduling time to think in your calendar – and sticking to it!

This might look overly simplistic to you. But I've had profound coaching conversations with clients and stakeholders around these six factors, just by asking someone to score themselves (or their teams) on their personal effectiveness. The next conversation is to consider the impact of their answers on the development of systemic resilience, and how they might further the organisational capacity for energy, reflection time and planning.

**Resilient teams have a deep connection to their roots, the vision and purpose, balanced with an ability to respond and flex to new situations**

### LEAN ON ME

For a broader, business-wide coaching approach to resilience, your clients need to know that in all directions across their organisation – upwards, downwards and horizontally – people can pull together. Not just in the face of a crisis, but in a desire to support each other that's entrenched in their organisational DNA. For 50 years, it's been fashionable within evolutionary theory to regard human beings as basically selfish. Richard Dawkins' book *The Selfish Gene* is illustrative of the philosophy that natural selection works through solitary individuals edging out the competition – akin to early theories of trees. More recently, psychologists, social scientists and historians have broken with this theory. For example, in his beautiful book *Humankind*, historian Rutger Bregman demonstrates that our basic instinct is to cooperate rather than compete, to trust rather than distrust, and to look for what is good and positive in others. Put another way, Brene Brown suggests that 'we're hardwired to connect with others.'<sup>5</sup> Some coaching questions for a leadership team might include:

- How do your team members care for each other and share both success and failure?
- How often does your team give and receive constructive feedback? How honest and frank are these conversations? How can you make this a regular practice that everyone feels safe to take part in?
- How does your team react when under pressure?
- What would you need to do differently to help your team pull together, share resources and create new ways of approaching problems?
- What other cross-functional teams does your team rely on? How well do you know them (really)? What can you do to get to know them better? What would be the positive impact of this?

### PRIORITISE LEARNING

Resilience is so often equated with a bouncing ball. Adversity hits and we bounce back. The reality is much more nuanced and best understood through a timeline. That is, to become more resilient

you need to learn from the past, in order to cope with the present and to build fruitful habits for the future. And so to close this article, I'd urge you as a coach to continue to encourage your clients to prioritise learning and growth – as individuals and as businesses – as this practice will encourage not only the ability to survive the present, but to thrive in the future. Self-guided questions help busy executives focus on their development, such as:

- What new learning did you discover about yourself last week?
- What strengths are you leaning on at the moment? How can you capitalise on this for the future?
- As you develop new ways of working, what new strengths are materialising in your team?
- What new ways of working are becoming evident in yourself, your team and your company?
- How can you bring more joy to work? How did you bring joy to your team last week?

Beyond burnout is about helping clients shift their paradigm of resilience from being an individual priority to one of collective responsibility. We need meaningful work to help us flourish; a confident mindset to know that we can cope, now and in the future; work relationships that matter; and the space to learn, perform and thrive.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



In the past 20 years, renowned leadership coach and trainer Dr Lucy Ryan has developed over 10,000 leaders across 29 countries. Lucy understands what works for leaders, what they want (and need) to understand and what gets them results – blending the academic with relevant practice. With a master's in positive psychology and PhD in management and leadership, Lucy ensures her clients get the latest thinking, combined with ideas for positive application for themselves, their teams and their organisations. She is the author of *Lunchtime Learning for Leaders* and a senior lecturer in positive leadership at the University of East London.

1. Chan, D. & Clarke, S. (2022). The Global Burnout Study. infinite-potential.com.au
2. Hatfield, S. Fisher, J. & Silverglate, P. H. (2022). The C-Suite's role in wellbeing.
3. Kellerman, G. R. & Seligman, M. (2023). Tomorrowmind. London. Nicholas Brealey Publishing, p.37.
4. Reeves, M. & Whitaker, K. (2020) A guide to building a more resilient business. July edition. Harvard Business Review.
5. Brown, B. (2015) Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent. USA. Penguin Life.



# CREATING HEALTHY CULTURES IN THE MIDST OF CHANGE

Relax into the subtle, powerful, simple art of giving and receiving appreciation. It couldn't be easier. [Alister Scott](#) and [Sophie Stephenson](#) show us how...

Change can be stressful – we know this. But the relentless, breakneck speed of change in most current organisational settings is pushing many people to their limits, causing burnout, relationship breakdown and, often, a substantial loss of productivity, let alone compassion and kindness.

Yet right under our noses there is a completely natural set of behaviours – simple, effective, powerful, enjoyable and rigorously researched<sup>1</sup> – that can help to address these challenges, enabling us to live and work with more ease and effectiveness.

By harnessing these behaviours, we as coaches and people professionals can help create psychologically safe cultures where everyone can be themselves and bring their best, in turn helping to address the challenges of stress and complexity. This brings enormous value to our clients, and we can derive huge enjoyment and satisfaction at the same time.

We offer some practical steps to help build a strong foundation for the culture of your team or organisation, or those of your clients. Building on Nancy Kline's insights into the importance of appreciation, we add two significant areas: encouragement and recognition. Moreover, we complement Kline's simple framework for how to give powerful appreciation with an element that we have consistently found to be missing: how to *receive* encouragement, recognition and appreciation.

In this way, we offer practical, accessible tools to greatly accelerate your ability to create a powerful, healthy, productive culture.

## WHY SHOULD APPRECIATION MATTER TO ORGANISATIONS?

When employees know that their work and contribution matter, when they feel encouraged, recognised and appreciated, they are more engaged and more effective in their roles. In fact, our experience is that this helps in all aspects of life!

When leading change, there will inevitably be complexity, challenge, critique and pressure – what we call 3CP. In all organisations, it is common for people to face an unrelenting stream of performance reviews, self-evaluation and 360s, yet we know that people thrive and do their best work in atmospheres characterised by high levels of encouragement, recognition and appreciation. This is what Alister and Neil Scotton, co-authors of *The Little Book of Making Big Change Happen*, call an ERA culture.

In this article we want to:

- Highlight why leaders often find it hard to see and say what they most appreciate in their people.
- Outline some of the powerful benefits of creating an ERA culture.
- Give you some practical tools to take this forward.

## WHAT IS AN ERA CULTURE?

**Appreciation** is the act of acknowledging a person's inherent value. We see something that the person does or says, and we then express

what we appreciate about them. When used most powerfully, the focus is less on someone's accomplishments but rather on their worth as a colleague and a human being. As such it is expansive and not conditional. When we appreciate a quality in another person, it helps them to know and appreciate themselves better. This then enables them to apply this quality to multiple areas of their life, not just to one specific moment or domain.

**Encouragement** helps people to trust themselves and develop courage and confidence in their own ideas and way of being. It gives people support, hope and confidence as they learn – to try out new things, bounce back from adversity and back themselves.

**Recognition** is about giving positive feedback, sometimes publicly but often in private, based on results or performance. It tends to be conditional; it's generally in the past and it is based on what someone has already done. Different approaches are required to help different people feel appreciated and valued – verbal words of encouragement, time, a desire to help and your presence can all be experienced as ways of creating a more appreciative culture.

Encouragement, appreciation and recognition sit on a spectrum of acknowledging the good qualities in someone, but they meet subtly different needs: recognition is about what people do; appreciation is about who they are; encouragement is about who they can become.

Put together, these leadership behaviours become a way of being around others: a powerful, positive and costless means to see and name the best in people and situations. These behaviours hit you first on the way out. Not only do you feel good when you offer these gifts to others; it changes your way of seeing life when you are looking for positive things to name, ERA-style.

*Recognition is about what people do;  
appreciation is about who they are;  
encouragement is about who they  
can become*

We all want to be appreciated for who we are, as well as for what we do. ERA cultures are ones where people receive both. Anyone familiar with the work of Kline and the Thinking Environment will know that an essential component of helping people to think well is having an environment where appreciation is normalised and valued – we notice what is good and we say it. Research has found that in positive, stable and healthy relationships, there is a 5:1 ratio of ERA-type behaviours to 3CP.<sup>2</sup>

So often, ERA-type behaviours have been viewed as soft skills rather than what we have consistently found them to be: a critical component of helping teams to solve their hardest problems, work creatively, and have the challenging yet constructive discussions and disagreements that enable them to do their very best thinking.

Both of us have focused on appreciation in our work over many years and have seen it bring extraordinary results:

- The CEO of a national charity was in a thinking pair with a board member who had been a thorn in her side for years. Yet, given

the chance and mandate to appreciate her, he had so many positive things to say that she did not have a chance to give him appreciation back in the allotted time (she did so later). She told one of us: 'This has transformed my relationship with him, and my whole sense of foreboding before board meetings.'

- A senior manager who was quite tricky in a first meeting ended up being in a thinking pair with one of us in the second meeting and, in the appreciation, said: 'You saved my marriage. I got home after that last meeting and after 10 minutes my wife said to me, "You're actually listening, aren't you?", so I carried on with this listening and started saying what I appreciated about her – which I had always felt but not often said – and everything has changed for the better!'

## Appreciation

Make it sincere,  
specific & succinct

See what you value and say it.



Receive with gratitude

Allow, Acknowledge, Accept.



Make it a practice

Aim for a 5:1 ratio of appreciation  
to challenge and critique.



Encouragement

When people are lacking confidence  
or belief in themselves or when they  
are trying something new or  
challenging.



Recognition

Notice what people are doing  
well, look for their potential &  
give them opportunities to  
shine.



Graphic designed by Sophie Stevenson

There are three guiding principles to giving appreciation with skill. An easy way to remember them is as the three Ss:

- Be **sincere**: above all else, only share things that you feel.
- Be **specific**: so the recipient can recognise the link between what you value and something that they have done.
- Be **succinct**: most people find it hard to take in too much ERA at one time. Interestingly, the more succinct we are, the more generally the appreciation can be applied.

In principle, giving appreciation should be simple, but we've discovered that people find it far from easy.

What appears to stop people from giving appreciation with confidence and ease is a combination of time and skill. We don't slow down long enough to look for and recognise what we value. And, when we do, we lack a vocabulary of appreciative qualities – and practice.

*Drop by drop, word by word, this intangible, powerful feeling, being like water, can douse the fires caused by the stresses you face, and feed the seeds of your confidence, creativity and generosity*

We have also found that what often stops people giving appreciation is an unwillingness for it to be accepted. It is hard to give authentic appreciation if we don't allow it to be received – and people can be very reticent about hearing good things being said about them.

However, if it is true that thinking something good about someone and not saying it is like wrapping a present and not giving it, what might be the significance of the counterpart to that, namely an unwillingness to receive a gift? In the same way that there are three Ss to giving good appreciation, we suggest that there are three As of receiving encouragement, recognition or appreciation:

- **Allow** the words to enter your system, so you can actually feel the positive emotions they elicit. Recognise and allow a few moments for the appreciation to be fully absorbed. Research indicates that it takes about 10-12 seconds to absorb positivity fully into your body.<sup>3</sup>
- **Acknowledge** that what the other person is saying is true for them, so probably contains some truth about you – even if you feel some initial doubt or resistance!
- **Accept**: receive it, write it down, capture it somehow and, drop by drop, word by word, this intangible, powerful feeling, being like water, can douse the fires caused by the stresses you face, and feed the seeds of your confidence, creativity and generosity.

Different people will feel these three As should go in different orders – that's fine. Whatever works! If you are following the principles and their spirit, you won't go far wrong.

Three final tips to start generating more appreciation:

1. At the start of a meeting, take a moment to say briefly what you've noticed the team or each individual doing well.
2. Send your team members a handwritten card on their birthday to share what you value in them.
3. Look for the potential in those around you and find opportunities to help them to shine.

We have repeatedly seen how even small drops of ERA can act like magic in organisations – better relationships, more resilience and, paradoxically, a greater willingness for people to critique themselves or accept suggestions for how they can improve. So, next time you are with a group, try creating some moments where people can offer each other some ERA. This can be one of the most powerful things you will do for them – and yourself.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Sophie Stephenson is a teacher, facilitator and faculty member of Time to Think. She has over 25 years of professional experience working in leadership, coaching, facilitation, strategy and personal development. Her CV includes The Royal Navy, The Prince's Trust, the Australian wine industry and a master's in teaching from Melbourne University. She has run her own business, The Thinking Project, for the past 12 years. You can find her at [www.thethinkingproject.co.uk](http://www.thethinkingproject.co.uk).



Alister Scott is a leadership advisor, systemic coach and movement builder. He is one of the co-founders of the Compassion Practices Collective, a co-director of the Global Rewilding Alliance and co-author with Neil Scotton of the acclaimed *Little Book of Making Big Change Happen*. Alister is also the resident poet for *Coaching Perspectives*.

[compassionpractices.net](http://compassionpractices.net)  
[rewildingglobal.org](http://rewildingglobal.org)

1. Aristotle project: [rework.withgoogle.com/print/guides/5721312655835136](https://rework.withgoogle.com/print/guides/5721312655835136)
2. Gottmann Institute: [gottman.com/blog/the-positive-perspective-more-on-the-51-ratio](https://gottman.com/blog/the-positive-perspective-more-on-the-51-ratio)
3. [rickhanson.net/ted-x-marin](http://rickhanson.net/ted-x-marin)

The Association for Coaching (AC) have some exciting news:  
**A new two-tier Coach Supervisor and Supervisor Accreditation scheme has officially launched!**

The new schemes outline varying levels of experience and training required to accredit, making accreditation even more accessible, helping you to demonstrate a commitment to your clients, improve professional development and maintain standards of excellence when supervising.

*Advancing coaching in business and society, worldwide*

[www.associationforcoaching.com](http://www.associationforcoaching.com)



**Coach Supervisor or Master Coach Supervisor (Individual or Group or Both)**

SCAN ME



For those with coach accreditation from one of the professional bodies.

**Supervisor or Master Coach Supervisor (Individual or Group or Both)**

SCAN ME



For those coaches or non-coaches who are not accredited coaches but have coach supervision training and experience.

## PART-TIME POSTGRADUATE COACHING COURSES

Flexible, blended learning Coaching MA, Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate at one of the UK's top universities. Integrate theory with practical skills to develop a depth of coaching expertise. You may be a coach, consultant, line manager, entrepreneur, HR professional; 'coaching for all' is our philosophy.

**Starts in October**



**WARWICK.AC.UK/COACHING**

PASSION LED US HERE

## COACHING AN EVOLVING IDENTITY

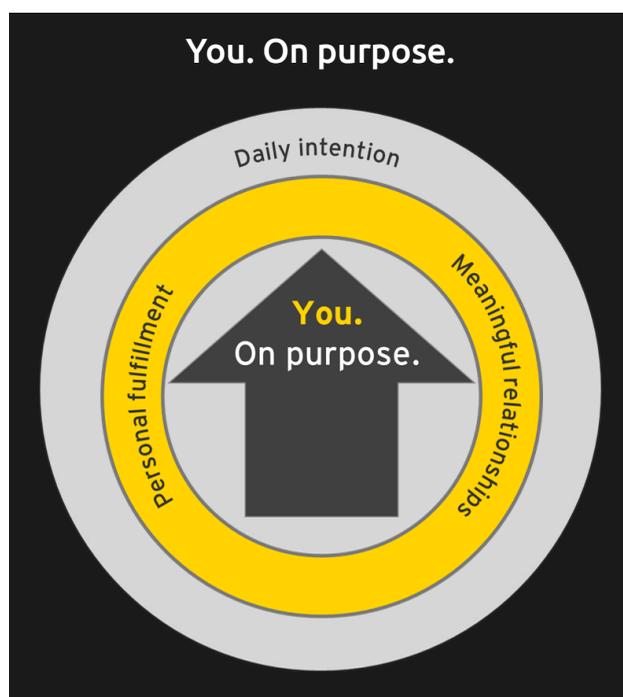
Stopping work at 65 is quickly becoming a thing of the past. [Leslie Goldenberg](#), [Dawn Pons](#) and [Tricia Christian](#) share their Encore Coaching approach for the stage in life formerly known as retirement.

How long do you expect to work as a coach?

And what will you do next?

How do those questions land with you? Your reaction may depend on where you are in the arc of your career and lifespan. By choice or circumstance, many individuals eventually face a turning point where they reconsider who they want to be and what they want to do in the later chapters of their lives. Contemplating this can feel both exhilarating and daunting, especially for those who have spent decades climbing the ladder in organisations and professions where logical next steps are well-defined.

As executive career coaches with EY, a global professional services firm, we have worked with hundreds of executives on the verge of concluding a major segment of their professional career. By and large, we've found many of these coaching clients are ready and eager to experiment, reconnect with un-lived dreams, and activate their purpose with more agency and intentionality. Yet, we've also seen that one of the most disorienting and uncomfortable aspects of this transition is grappling with an evolving identity. Adding to the challenge is the need to address two transitions happening at once – finishing well in one's current role while preparing to start a new chapter. We offer you a proven approach to helping clients navigate both transitions with a greater sense of confidence, clarity and purpose.



For professionals completing an intense career season, there are many possibilities for an 'encore chapter', which can last decades. This is different from the typical retirement scenario of past generations. We are living in an era in which career and life journeys go on much longer than prior generations.<sup>1</sup> In addition to greater longevity, there are fewer social constraints on what people can do. So the question becomes how can we empower and support clients to make the most of this season in their lives.

Our experience of coaching in this space has shown us that what clients pay attention to during their transition journeys will affect how quickly and effectively they find their footing and purpose. We discovered the biggest differentiator is in attending to two questions:

- 1) What matters most to you?
- 2) What makes your life matter?

Considering these questions is critically important because the encore season of life offers a tremendous number of options for how to spend the time that was once occupied by work. While choice is a blessing, that level of freedom can be overwhelming without a compass to guide the way.

To that end, we developed 'You. On Purpose' – a model based on our work with hundreds of executives transitioning into life beyond their traditional career. The tagline for this model is 'Purpose first, plan second', which might feel counterintuitive. During times of uncertainty and transition, most people rush to create a plan and act on it swiftly to get to the other side of the change curve. Yet pausing to identify your 'why' unlocks the 'what' and 'how' of your encore chapters.

In the model, all the elements within the circle are in constant conversation with each other. Discovering your 'why' – your purpose – is an evolving process. It sits at the heart of the model because it informs the outer rings of what you'll focus your time and energy on, who will accompany you and how you'll intentionally live this out on a day-to-day basis.

The 'what' of this model is made up of components that, if prioritised, bring the greatest level of satisfaction to your post-career life.

It includes engaging in meaningful relationships and doing things that are personally fulfilling.

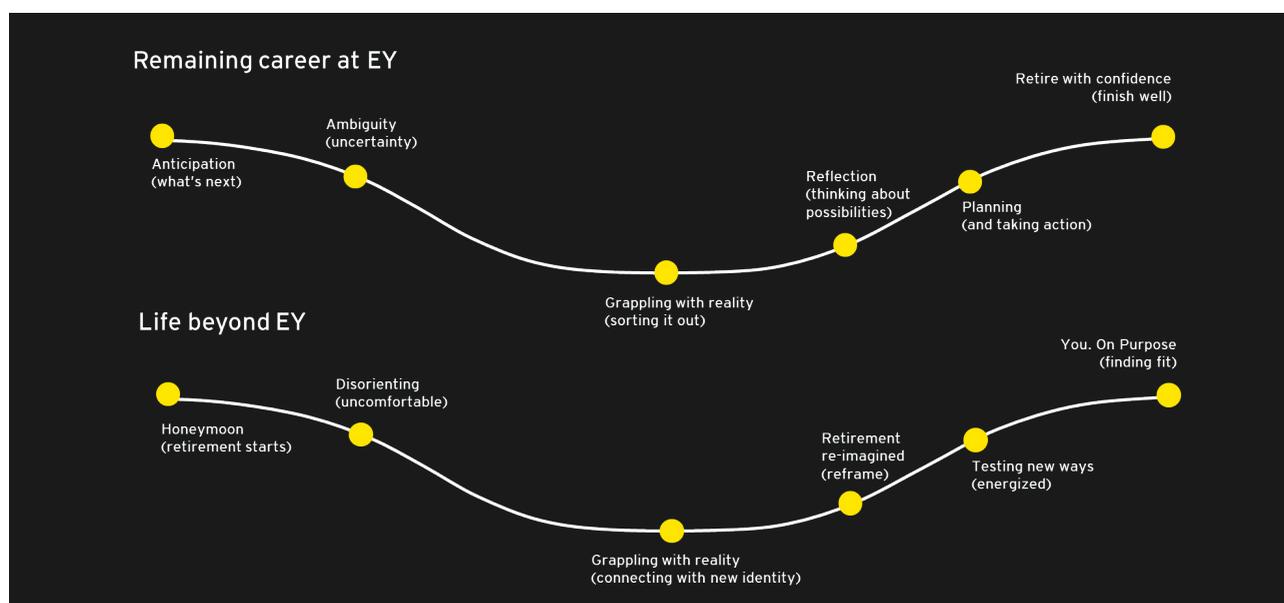
The 'how' of the model is daily intention. It's waking up each day with clarity around the choices you'll make and the mindset you'll adopt to live your life on purpose. All of this informs your identity – who you are in relation to each of these elements and who you are becoming.

## COACHING TO THE MODEL

We've found several highly effective ways to activate the You. On Purpose model with clients, including group coaching workshops, one-to-one coaching engagements and encouraging the inclusion of the individual's significant other in the process. The group forum provides a unique opportunity for peers to support and learn from each other. The agenda for the one-and-a-half-day workshop includes a look back at formative life experiences, an evaluation of the present state and the development of a blueprint to begin shaping a meaningful future. About half of the participants opt to continue the work they started in the workshop by engaging one-to-one with a coach. This invites clients to explore options and develop new ideas while holding space for the many emotions, questions and thoughts that emerge. Given the unique aspects of this chapter of life, we've found that engaging participants' significant others in a coaching session can be invaluable to aligning expectations, actions and goals.

Coaching ideally begins 12-18 months before the planned retirement date and continues through the first year of post-retirement, although timelines vary greatly. The typical cadence is once a month, although it can be more frequent for clients who are actively job searching or interviewing, and less frequent for those who have settled into a new identity and routine.

While your own encore chapter may be far in the future, we hope to inspire you to invest and engage with this inspiring client population. You can make a tangible difference in the lives of those who are renewing their identity and sense of purpose after completing an intense career.



## CASE STUDIES

One of the beautiful privileges of doing this work is bearing witness to the identity evolutions and myriad diverse paths clients pursue as they embark on their encore chapters. Jeffery Perry and Alison Hooker are former EY partners whose stories of transformation are captured below.



**Jeffery Perry** was a global client service partner and practice leader at EY. He completed his EY career in 2020 and, rather than retiring, shifted into a portfolio that includes: business and leadership advisory and thought leadership work under his own firm; corporate

board service for three publicly listed companies; and non-profit board service, including being chair of the board of trustees for his alma mater, Babson College.

Jeff reshaped his work identity based on a desire to find new ways to apply his passions and expertise. His portfolio approach enables him to share his know-how as an advisor, author, and corporate and non-profit board director. As a board member, he has brought his experience in leadership, strategy, mergers and acquisitions, and business transformations to the governance agenda.

Jeff started working with a coach several years prior to shifting gears and knew, even then, that he wanted to leverage his experience differently going forward. Helping Jeff to articulate his personal vision and serving as a sounding board at moments along the journey was the most impactful help his coach provided.



**Alison Hooker** was among an early wave of women admitted to the partnership at EY and held various client service and organisational leadership roles during her tenure. When she retired from the firm in 2017, she had been serving as the chief

talent development officer for the Americas. She chose to complete her EY career a few years earlier than originally planned, to care for an ill parent. Dialogue with her coach helped her to make this difficult decision, and then to navigate an abbreviated succession timeline.

In her new chapter, Alison has chosen to focus on only that which fervently appeals to her, with no specific long-term goal in mind. After completing her leadership coaching certification, she trained as a yoga instructor and then an embodiment coach, and ultimately built a practice that specialises in working with predominantly mid-career women in both corporate and academic settings. Over time, her sense of purpose was found through sharing with others that lasting internal shifts can be gently achieved through what she refers to as embodied kindness – the desire to listen to and connect with not only the internal voice in your head, but the internal voice in your body. Alison credits her relative ease during this transition to the support of a coach who had particular expertise in working with people stepping into the rich and fertile fields of retirement. Her biggest insight about identity change following her career is the realisation of how much of herself she felt she had to hold back in order to conform to the (largely male) partnership of which she was a part. She is taken with the expansiveness that comes with living day-to-day as one's full self.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Tricia is one of the founding leaders and executive coaches for the EY Career Center. She is passionate about coaching leaders at defining moments and crossroads in their careers. Tricia specialises in personal brand coaching, where she helps leaders articulate and activate the power of their unique value so that they can achieve their vision of career success. Tricia is an ACC-certified coach with the ICF.

Dawn is the Americas director of executive career coaching for EY and co-founder of the EY Career Center. She is responsible for driving strategy and offerings focused on equipping EY leaders and strategic friends of the firm with the clarity and confidence to navigate career transitions. Dawn's dynamic coaching approach and expertise in career transitions has empowered thousands of leaders to discover their best future within and beyond EY. Dawn is a PCC-certified executive coach with the ICF.

Leslie is an executive coach at EY specialising in transitions, including leaders changing gears after full-on careers. Leslie was formerly a partner in a boutique consultancy, a senior manager at PwC and a talent development leader at IBM. She earned her MA from UCLA and BA from UC Berkeley. She holds a PCC coaching credential from the ICF. She recently won the Bridger Award from the ISPSO for a paper on internal coaching.

1. OECD (2022), Life expectancy at birth (indicator). doi: 10.1787/27e0fc9d-en (Accessed 29 November 2022)



Achieve **Association for Coaching (AC)**  
**Coach Accreditation**  
to reflect your credibility as a coach, support  
your visibility to potential clients, and maintain  
standards of excellence and best practice.

With varying levels of AC Coach Accreditation available choose the level that best suits your needs and invest in yourself today!

*Advancing coaching in business and society, worldwide*

[www.associationforcoaching.com](http://www.associationforcoaching.com)



**Visual Coaching**  
**A Practical Journey into**  
**Six Psychologies**  
with **Dr Yaron Prywes**



Join this programme and explore the visual frontier of coaching. Dr. Yaron Prywes will introduce participants to innovative, field-tested visual techniques that can be integrated into existing coaching repertoires.

Join us to become a more 'well-rounded' and capable coach, regardless of your coach education and training to date.

*Advancing coaching in business and society, worldwide*

[www.associationforcoaching.com](http://www.associationforcoaching.com)



An eight-webinar Signature Programme:

 25 April 2023

 2, 9, 16, 23 and 30 May 2023

 6 and 13 June 2023



## SUCCESSFUL TEAMING IN TOUGH TIMES

How do leaders navigate a permacrisis? [Jo Hargreaves](#), [Kerrin Miller](#), [Lata Parbhoo](#) and [Cosmin Alexandru](#) came together to research how C-suite leaders are handling turbulent times. It turns out team coaching naturally fits the bill, for now at least...

The Collins English Dictionary recently announced their word of 2022 to be permacrisis, a term used to describe 'an extended period of instability and insecurity, especially one resulting from a series of catastrophic events.'<sup>1</sup>

As the threat of Covid-19 subsides, businesses across the globe are navigating the return-to-office and hybrid working transition. Businesses including Twitter and Snapchat have shifted their focus, requesting their staff return to the office for at least three days a week. This is supported by a recent LinkedIn survey that reported a continued fall in levels of remote working: over half of British executives surveyed shared a desire for their staff to work in the office, citing concerns about productivity and stifling innovation.<sup>2</sup> Despite this desire from some businesses, it seems that hybrid working is here to stay, with the same LinkedIn survey reporting that leaders in the UK get double the number of applicants for remote-based jobs than office-based ones.

Businesses and leaders are under huge pressure to consolidate a 'new work' contract that addresses the desire for greater flexibility from many employees, as well as dealing with the practical consequences of hybrid working practices. In a survey conducted with over 1,600 C-suite executives in late 2021, 57% expected an increase in competition for talent and talent retention, with a significant decrease in quality of internal relationships, strength of culture, internal collaboration and pace of skill building.<sup>3</sup>

This renegotiation sits alongside a challenging economic and political macro-context. A 2023 PWC survey of 4,410 global CEOs outlines the current challenges leaders are facing: 40% of those surveyed thought their organisations would no longer be economically viable in 10 years' time if they continued on their current course.<sup>4</sup> This survey underlined the consciousness among today's leaders that we are living through extraordinary times, with five broad megatrends – climate change, technological disruption, demographic shifts, a fracturing world and social instability – reshaping the business environment. There is little doubt that these volatile times present an inflection point for leaders and their teams, and the coaches who work alongside them.

It is against this backdrop that our research team of four team coaches – located across Romania, South Africa and the UK – interviewed 20 C-suite leaders in March 2022, exploring:

1. How team leaders in diverse geographic regions were experiencing the permacrisis context.
2. How their teams were being impacted.
3. What support and development approaches might be useful to them in building and rebuilding their teams.

Despite the geographic, cultural and industry differences in the leaders interviewed, our conversations highlighted three emerging trends for leaders and their teams:

1. The importance of building leadership range.
2. The shift towards the team.
3. The emerging value of team coaching.

*'I was signed off from work for a month and I decided to be honest and tell my team about my experience. I had a lot of feedback saying it's great when a senior leader admits they're human'<sup>5</sup>*

## BUILDING LEADERSHIP RANGE

Most leaders shared how the permacrisis environment had shaped their leadership style. Given the increase in virtual interactions, and the resulting impact on relationships with direct reports, most leaders reported making significant adjustments. Many spoke of increasing their focus on the human side of leading, building their presence, listening more, role-modelling vulnerability, checking in more frequently, showing more empathy, spending more time on wellbeing and mental health, and encouraging their team to do the same in their team interactions. They spoke of building more authenticity, trust and care into their teams, creating a more effective team dynamic – especially during crisis situations. They were more aware of two new stressors for their direct reports, on top of day-to-day role requirements:

1. Combining personal and family needs with the challenges of working from home, hybrid working and/or returning to the office.
2. Dealing with the fears and additional stress of their own team members resulting from the volatile context.

This focus on human-centred behaviours necessitated building their range as leaders, incorporating new behaviours into their leadership repertoires. As coaches partnering with leaders, the idea of leaders 'building their range' presents an important arc for coaching engagements.

## THE SHIFT TOWARDS THE TEAM

A second theme emerging from our research was a shift from individual to team, and the emergence of the team as key in driving performance outputs and problem-solving. Leaders expressed a clear shift from needing to be an expert who held all the answers to working towards collective problem-solving as a team. In this move towards a team-based way of working, the leader's position is one of servant leadership, where greater attention is given to building and sustaining psychological safety within the team and collectively clarifying a shared purpose.

This has been supported in our coaching engagements since the research, where many leaders have spoken of a need to display both humility and expertise in their learning mindset, looking to the team to seek solutions rather than constantly demonstrating their knowledge and skills. In many teams this more collaborative approach heightened engagement and has allowed team members to perform to higher levels.

Leaders were clear, however, that moving towards a team focus was not without its challenges. Individual preferences for certain ways of working and styles of interaction quickly surfaced in virtual and hybrid working. Given their personal circumstances and experiences, some members flourished and some struggled. Many leaders and teams experienced confusion and setbacks in their ways of working. This introduced dissonance in team dynamics and necessitated changes in team processes. Many leaders saw it as their clear mandate to identify and attend to these new dynamics and to propose ways of overcoming problems arising from them.

Here, coaching interventions were welcomed, to support the leader and team in their growth and development. In our practice, we have found that the use of psychometric profiling at the start of team coaching engagements works well to help frame the conversation in a common language, enabling team members to raise their awareness of their individual and collective strengths and potential blind spots, and empowering them to explore these through further team coaching sessions. Coaching was also felt to be useful in supporting teams achieve greater clarity on roles, goals, tasks and interdependencies – and achieving alignment towards a common purpose.

Leaders also noted the value of using more participatory decision-making in their teams. This required both making sure that all team members had their input heard plus taking faster decisions, given the unpredictability of the environment and the need to change with very short notice. This improved both the productivity and the agility of both teams and their leaders.

We heard of the positive impact of sharing challenges and encouraging teams to learn together. Especially where they had built a sense of safety, leaders felt doing so increased both the team's willingness and ability to solve challenges.

As the leaders in the study painted a clear picture of their teams and how they were working to build team effectiveness, the research team revisited a research study from 2017 that had polled over 5,000 executives.<sup>6</sup> This study outlined three dimensions of successful teamwork:

1. **Alignment on direction:** where there is a shared belief in what the organisation is aiming to achieve and the team's role in this.
2. **High-quality interaction:** characterised by trust, open communication and a willingness to embrace conflict.
3. **A powerful sense of renewal:** an environment in which team members are energised because they can take risks, innovate, learn from outside ideas and achieve something that matters – often overcoming great obstacles to do so.

*'We had to keep in constant communication and over time I focused more on the why and how, while the team delivered on the what'<sup>5</sup>*

As leaders and their teams navigate the permacrisis around them, our research highlighted that they were naturally working towards building each of these – with varying levels of success.



## THE EMERGING VALUE OF TEAM COACHING

Team coaching would be useful in navigating the hybrid model. How to re-norm and re-form as teams head back to work. Team members must establish new ways of working and new habits in a hybrid context, and tailor working arrangements as a collective entity.

As we continued our conversations with leaders, it became clear that there was a range of approaches for seeking support and of pathways for building team effectiveness. While some teams did not engage in any formal intervention, most spoke about initiating internal interventions as a start. Holding off-sites and away-days was often an initial approach; other options included external partners providing consultancy, mentoring and individual or team coaching. Team facilitation was provided in areas of mental health, emotional intelligence, resilience, managing conflict and personal mastery workshops.

While some leaders preferred internal interventions, team members tended to prefer working with external parties, especially in difficult or delicate situations, as they were perceived as being fairer and more objective.

Many leaders highlighted the value of taking time and being deliberate in building support for their team. They described the important improvements in the quality of both team relationships and performance when the team engaged in reflective and collective learning experiences. They spoke of the benefits of building insight into their ways of working together and actively problem-solving through challenges. These findings in our research are aligned to lecturer and author Peter Senge's view that teams produce better results, experience growth and handle challenges in a more effective way when they learn together.<sup>7</sup>

Leaders indicated that when they started relearning how to engage and support their teams and build deeper levels of dialogue, they developed creative, collaborative ways of connecting and started learning, growing and performing together. In addition, leaders also commented on improved levels of accountability, systemic awareness and team dynamics, along with increased knowledge transfer.

We identified that, when leaders reported an improvement in team dynamics and team ways of working through learning and reflecting together, they were – often intuitively – providing a business case for team coaching. This was especially clear in the value they attributed to:

- Relaunching their teams.
- Building team connection and relationships.
- Developing team alignment and clarity on roles, goals, tasks and common purpose.
- Increasing team dialogue and collective learning.
- Leveraging multiple perspectives and peer thinking.
- Rebuilding team dynamics.
- Developing ways of collaborating across the team.

We marked a distinct shift from a formulaic approach in supporting teams – often in a more transactional, ‘one-and-done’ event-based approach – to a more catalytic and transformational team intervention – taking place over time and using a collective approach to learning and problem-solving. This is aligned to contemporary views that stress the importance of doing team-focused work as an ongoing process, and that periodic off-site sessions will not permanently reset a team’s dynamics.<sup>8</sup>

*It’s time for us, as team coaches,  
to heed the call of our times  
and to step boldly into the arena,  
at the sides of the leaders looking  
to the future with concern  
and trepidation*

Without necessarily having experienced (or even being aware of the emerging field of) team coaching, most leaders suggested at the value of a process that includes the composite elements of any team coaching engagement:

- Taking place over an extended period of time, across multiple sessions.
- Focusing on the whole team.
- Aligning, reflecting and learning together.
- Building lasting, sustainable change in the team’s health, effectiveness and dynamics.

We feel that the potential for team coaching to support leaders and their teams through the permacrisis is clear. While still an emerging field, it is well-positioned to provide leaders with the sustainable support they are seeking for their teams as they learn and relearn, build and rebuild, making a significant impact on team effectiveness.

In these extraordinary times, leaders and teams are being asked to step beyond the bounds of the tried-and-tested. They are being asked – individually and collectively – to build new ways of relating, new ways of working and new levels of performance. It’s time for us, as team coaches, to heed the call of our times and to step boldly into the arena, at the sides of the leaders looking to the future with concern and trepidation; to articulate clearly the value of our approach; to partner with leaders and their teams and work to build positive, productive, lasting teams – teams fit for difficult times.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Jo Hargreaves, Kerrin Miller, Lata Parbhoo and Cosmin Alexandru are executive and team coaches located within the UK, South Africa and Romania respectively. They work in a global context, coaching, lecturing, researching and writing on topics relating to leadership and teams in their own practices. They collaborated in this research group as a part of a team coaching programme across 2021 and 2022.

[linkedin.com/in/jo-hargreaves-35481912](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jo-hargreaves-35481912)

[linkedin.com/in/kerrin-miller-b749872](https://www.linkedin.com/in/kerrin-miller-b749872)

[linkedin.com/in/lata-parbhoo-24409a6](https://www.linkedin.com/in/lata-parbhoo-24409a6)

[linkedin.com/in/cosminalexandru](https://www.linkedin.com/in/cosminalexandru)

1. collinsdictionary.com/woty
2. Telegraph, Dec 26 2022, <https://archive.ph/9lluW>
3. hbr.org/2021/03/designing-the-hybrid-office (C-Suite Outlook 2022 : Reset and Reimagine. The Conference Board)
4. pwc.com/gx/en/ceo-survey/2023/main/download/26th\_CEO\_Survey\_PDF\_vF-2.pdf
5. CEO qualitative interviews March 2022, conducted by authors’ research team.
6. Keller, S. & Meaney, M. (2017). High-performing teams: A timeless leadership topic. McKinsey Quarterly, June 2017. P 1 - 3. Accessed via [www.McKinsey.com](http://www.McKinsey.com) on 12 February 2022.
7. Senge, P. (2006). The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of The Learning Organisation. Random House.
8. Graves, (G). (2021) What do the experiences of team coaches tell us about the essential elements of team coaching. International Journal of Evidenced-Based Coaching and Mentoring, 2021, S15, p 229 - 245.



## DEVELOPING CONFIDENCE IN HYBRID TEAMS

Sudden moves to remote working hit teams hard but, after an intense period of trial and error, new strategies have emerged. **James Woodham** shares his research findings on the conditions needed for hybrid teams to thrive.

The sudden shift to remote working brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic created a once-in-a-generation event that has forever changed the way office-based teams and organisations operate. It also presented a unique opportunity to study the affective states of teams and organisations: how they reacted to this paradigm shift and the associated stresses and opportunities that came with it. As the world emerges from the pandemic, the full influence of remote working on organisational issues such as culture, communication, leadership, performance and employee wellbeing is still being discovered. For my master's degree I conducted a piece of qualitative empirical research using in-depth interviews and thematic analysis to find out from leaders how teams' confidence had been effected by moves to remote working. With remote working and hybrid teams now a mainstay for many organisations, these findings emerge at an opportune moment to provide leaders and organisations with new understanding of resilience, morale and productivity within virtual teams. The findings also provide context for coaches to adapt to this new way of working.

In order to understand where a team's confidence comes from, we first need to understand where confidence comes from. Psychologist Albert Bandura coined the term self-efficacy to describe a person's belief in their capabilities to achieve a particular goal.<sup>1</sup> Self-efficacy is a form of human agency and is central to Bandura's social cognitive theory, which presents a model of human functioning and learning whereby individuals exercise a degree of control over their thoughts, feelings, motivations and actions.<sup>2</sup> This allows us to self-reflect, evaluate and affect future performances.

The theory outlines the cognitive processes that coaches work with to help raise their clients' awareness and to effect change. Bandura argues that this confidence also applies at a group level through what he calls collective-efficacy. Collective-efficacy describes people's shared beliefs in their collective power to produce desired results.<sup>3</sup> Collective-efficacy is a group-level variable property, yet resides in the minds of its members. Self- and collective-efficacy are task-specific, so can vary between tasks and within a task's duration depending on the conditions. Teams can develop their collective-efficacy through processing information from four main sources.<sup>4</sup>

1. Mastery experiences: based on a team's prior achievements.
2. Verbal persuasion: group members can be persuaded by others about their collective capabilities.
3. Vicarious experiences: taking inspiration from other teams or organisations.
4. Physiological states: teams and organisations also have affective states in the ways they react to pressure and success.

Within work organisations, teams with high collective-efficacy are more creative and productive, and, when faced with challenges, demonstrate more resilience. Successful teams rely on strong social connections within both the team and their wider network. The value created by these social networks is called social capital. Social capital can be defined as 'as the norms and networks that facilitate collective action'.<sup>5</sup> The value of social capital is evident in the powerful effect that social networks can have on organisational productivity and wellbeing. Central to both social capital and collective-efficacy is trust, which is considered fundamental to the interdependent relationships that operate in organisational systems and society at large.

Through semi-structured interviews, the research aimed to understand the experience of leaders' perceived collective-efficacy over three periods: in an office environment before the pandemic; after the switching to remote working; and the subsequent period where remote work became more established. I was aware of the need to create psychological safety for the participants, many of whom were revisiting and talking about what was a difficult period in great detail for the first time. Many participants commented on how cathartic it was to process that experience retrospectively.

## Five main themes emerged:

### 1. THE BUZZ OF THE OFFICE

Prior to Covid-19 lockdowns, teams working in a shared office spaces generated collective-efficacy in a number of ways. First, there was a mutual support that existed through working in close proximity. Participants described seeing, hearing and sensing when colleagues needed help. Being present in the environment allowed teams to respond quickly and provide the support necessary to continue to progress towards goals. Second, information travelled much quicker via informal communication within an office environment. Being able to turn and ask a quick question to a nearby colleague, to listen to conversations in the office and to have corridor catch-ups all served to give teams confidence that they could progress towards their goals quickly. Third, collaborating and sharing knowledge horizontally across an organisation between teams was much quicker and easier in an office environment, which meant teams felt more connected and informed. Fourth, socialising was an important way to strengthen work relationships and therefore develop collective-efficacy, as team members got to know each other better. Socialising ranges from making a cup of tea together in the office to going out after work for drinks and meals.

### 2. SEEING IS BELIEVING

The second theme describes the period immediately after lockdown when, according to my research, collective-efficacy declined. Communication levels within teams dropped and became more formal via virtual meetings. Team members became more independent and less interdependent. There was a blurring of work and home boundaries, which brought its own challenges for teams as some members found it hard to balance their professional and personal lives. There was a dramatic loss of trust when teams started working remotely, as suspicions emerged around what others were doing (or not doing!). There was a breakdown in trust in all directions. Leaders lost trust in team members, team members lost trust in leaders and team members lost trust in each other – and those drops in trust led to a drop in collective-efficacy.

### 3. CONNECTED AND VALUED

The right technology is crucial for a remote team's collective-efficacy. When a team has the right technology working efficiently, it gives the team confidence that it can achieve its goals. Conversely, when that technology isn't available or not working, confidence drops. The right technology makes team members feel valued and heard – and for some individuals that doesn't always happen in

*Those two or three days in the office allow teams to check in, maintain relationships and share information, which sets them up for when they work remotely*

face-to-face meetings. The uniform-sized tiles on a videoconference call give everyone an equal place in the meeting, making it feel more inclusive and more focused. Moreover, different types of technology can be used for different purposes: while videoconferences feel formal and appropriate for team meetings, messenger apps work well for informal communication within teams.

#### 4. FOCUS AND PURPOSE

The leaders interviewed for this study worked for an organisation designated as essential work by the UK government. Participants described experiencing a wartime mentality or 'Blitz spirit', which meant that initially teams were energised and galvanised by a sense of purpose and the value of their work. It also created greater clarity around a shared vision and focus for the teams, which increased confidence in their ability to achieve these new goals during what was an intense but ultimately unsustainable period.

#### 5. A NEW TYPE OF LEADERSHIP

Leaders were faced with a range of new challenges over the longer term, and were required to develop new skills to deal with these issues. There was also an acknowledgement of the fatigue that set in as lockdowns continued. But, once teams were allowed back in the office and were working in a hybrid way, there was a real boost to team confidence. Those two or three days in the office allow teams to check in, maintain relationships and share information, which sets them up for when they work remotely. While teams are now accustomed to working in a hybrid way, there is still a lack of consensus about remote-working best practices, plus a recognition that more needs to be done to improve hybrid working.

For leaders this research highlights the importance of maximising the value of time spent in the office. Those days together are important for helping team members, sharing information, and building and maintaining social connections within and between teams. For leaders of hybrid teams, it is important to consider the extra and different communication required. Consider which platform or product is most effective for your message, and create inclusive virtual meetings in order to maintain trust. While this research reflects a unique period of Covid-19 lockdowns and heightened experiences in relation to focus and purpose, these findings are still relevant to virtual team coaches and team leaders in the post-pandemic period. A clearly defined purpose, vision and goal will help foster collective-efficacy under any conditions.

There are still emerging challenges and uncertainty about remote working and hybrid teams, and coaches and team coaches will play a vital role in helping leaders and teams navigate the future of work.

---

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



James Woodham is a freelance and associate coach and positive psychology practitioner specialising in executive, career and team coaching. James trained as a coach at the BBC through their AC-affiliated training programme and also holds an International Systemic Team Coaching Certificate from The Academy of Executive Coaching. During lockdown, James embarked on a master's degree in applied positive psychology and coaching psychology at the University of East London and graduated with a distinction earlier this year. James is also a coach for the charity Coaching Inside And Out.

[linkedin.com/in/-james-woodham](https://www.linkedin.com/in/-james-woodham)

---

1. Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioural change. *Psychological Review*, 84, 191-215.
2. Bandura, A. (1989). Human Agency in Social Cognitive Theory. *American Psychologist*. 44 (9), 1175-1184
3. Bandura, A. (2000). Exercise of Human Agency Through Collective Efficacy. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*. 9 (3), 75-78.
4. Goddard, R. & Salloum, S. (2012) Collective Efficacy Beliefs, Organizational Excellence, and Leadership. In Spreitzer, G. and Cameron, K. (Eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Organizational Scholarship*. Oxford, Oxford University Press
5. Woolcock, M. (2001) The place of social capital in understanding social and economic outcomes. In Proc. OECD/HRDC Conference, Quebec, 19-21 March 2000: the contribution of human and social capital to sustained economic growth and well-being (ed. J. F. Helliwell), pp. 65-88. Ottawa: HDRC.

## Psychological Safety in the Workplace

### A four-part Webinar Series

with **Mark McMordie**



Organizations and teams with a high level of psychological safety perform better on almost any metric or KPI in comparison to those that have low psychological safety.

Given the growing interest from organizations wishing to scale psychological safety globally, this webinar series provides an overview of the field and what works.

*Advancing coaching in business and society, worldwide*

[www.associationforcoaching.com](http://www.associationforcoaching.com)



 10, 17, 24 and 31 May 2023



## Creating the Reflective Habit

### A four-part AC Webinar Series

with **Michelle Lucas**



Have you attempted to create firmer boundaries and set aside time to reflect?

In a world of “busy”, reflective practice often falls to the bottom of the list. You are not alone in the struggle to press pause. In this webinar series you will learn the mindsets and techniques to help you create the right reflective habit for you.

*Advancing coaching in business and society, worldwide*

[www.associationforcoaching.com](http://www.associationforcoaching.com)



 28 June 2023

 5, 12 and 19 July 2023





# WORKPLACE COACHING: FROM THE AGE OF DIGITALISATION TO THE AGE OF IDEAS

Today's organisational life feeds on the digitalisation machine. Where can we find workplace coaching and coaching mastery in that, asks **Tünde Erdős**.

## **AT ONE END: WORKPLACE AND ORGANISATIONAL CHALLENGES**

The current mood of disorientation and even impending doom around a cascade of ever bigger disruptions is driving one significant emotion: the fear of becoming irrelevant. That fear is paired with a sense of exploitation, which seems to lead to active disengagement.<sup>1</sup>

### ***From secure base to secure edge***

We're losing our secure base of a 'socially-connected-self-for-shared-responsibility' in a digital world in which organisations have lost sight of what it means to have great teams anchored in social contracts. The need for social contracts is essential because it takes collaborative processes to achieve solid buy-ins for high-impact change projects. It's a world in which coaching could help organisations move beyond the paradigm that collaborative decision-taking is at odds with fast decision-making.

However, even though the digitalisation machine is about workforces using AI and virtualisation to work faster and smarter, we end up feeling exploited. We disconnect. We're not equipped to retain a secure edge over digital-tech workplaces that drive digital-process-based efficiency when we need social-contract-based effectiveness. Organisations don't yet recognise their own accountability in offering their workforces the opportunities to feel relevant, connected and accountable.

This isn't to block or deny digital technology. Digital tech can protect people and jobs, for instance in healthcare. Why shouldn't a poor villager in an underdeveloped region enjoy good healthcare via a smartphone to the same level that I receive in my advanced urban hospital? The point is: how ought organisations ultimately use digital tech to enable their workforces to re-engage with organisational life?

### *The Mozart in the digitalisation machine*

The issue is not about digital tech making humans feel irrelevant, at least not in workspaces that require us to a) use a wide range of skills simultaneously, and b) deal with unforeseen scenarios creatively. Organisations can be the Mozart in the digitalisation machine. Digitalised workplaces have the capacity to reignite workforce engagement. Yet, digital tech has so far only given rise to workplaces that require ever greater emotional and mental stamina to cope with an organisational life of endless upheavals and disruptions, where quick-fix, panacea-induced stress-reduction techniques will no longer do the job.

#### **What's the challenge?**

Organisations are under immense pressure to meet shareholder expectations. It can feel like there is no way to escape the rat race for innovation. That's because, when under pressure, the brain can't produce the energy it needs to be able to see all the options: at best, it will only produce black and white scenarios. So, organisations progress for progress's sake in a world governed by unchecked neoliberal systems and unbounded industrial and financial-market capitalism. What is the end in mind?

Both organisations and workforces argue that they've seen disruptive challenges before and humans haven't become irrelevant yet. But if we work in service of a specific digitalised process just to become more efficient, we are merely dancing to the tune of digital tech. We're taking humans for granted.

Maybe, beyond the fear of irrelevance, what we should be worrying about is the shift in authority from humans to digital tech, as this opens the gates to the rise of digital dictatorship.

### **VIGNETTE**

In a global not-for-profit organisation where I was supervising professionally trained internal coaches in 2022, coaches believed that they weren't given the opportunity to deliver 'proper coaching'. They felt obliged to give career advice to colleagues. What prompted them to believe and feel that?

They answered: 'We have a digitalised coaching tracking system that defines coaching mostly as some form of career advice. Colleagues must fill the system after each session based on the algorithmic data. We can't work around this. We're expected to perform as internal coaches such that no one is harmed. It's too political. We don't have the time to figure out what to do. We coach on top of our functional roles. We're really very busy.'

The drama of such bureaucratic decision-making in an organisation whose stated purpose is serving greater humanity is ironic. In a universe of work that's turning into a flow of data, with humans called to merge into an all-encompassing data processing system (created by them), the struggle to make 'the right career choice' appears ridiculous.

Do we have models for making sense of such a work life? Who benefits when we stop thinking?

### **AT THE OTHER END: WORKPLACE COACHING CHALLENGES**

Today we're seeing third-generation coaching.<sup>2</sup> While first-generation coaching focused on specific goal-attainment to drive performance and productivity, second-generation coaching focused on the quality of the coach-client relationship to drive appreciative coaching dialogues towards clients' effectiveness. Although it accentuated collaborative systems thinking<sup>3</sup> as crucial for purposeful impact for/in/with organisations, second-generation coaching didn't account for disruptive changes.

Third-generation coaching fundamentally focuses on coaching for deep purpose and meaning-making in disruptive organisational life. It does so through discursive practice in which coach and client engage as fellow human companions, in collaborative critical reasoning through different dialogue forms.

#### **Coaching for disruptive changes**

It's understood that resistance is life-giving and has the potential to lead to complexification as well as individuation.<sup>4</sup> Specifically, resisting can lead to upsetting a certain order of things, which can render the process of finding answers to issues complex. At the same time, resisting can lead to clarifying boundaries, which helps identify areas where compromise and balance can be achieved. Both concepts are core to our constantly fluid and moving reality. This approach accepts that without resistance everything would collapse. As coach and client engage with resistance in a chamber of resonance shaped by symmetry/asymmetry and equality/inequality, workable realities can arise from the union between difference and sameness. Hence, the power of coaching lies not in asking powerful questions but in actively engaging with asymmetry and inequality as generative forces in a world that can't be sustained through individuated performance optimisation alone.

#### **Farewell, performance optimisation**

Third-generation coaching cautions that supporting clients in doing anything to keep up with self-optimisation, without any critical reasoning, damages the power of coaching.<sup>5</sup> Coaching that supports organisations in pursuing the ill-conceived desire to keep up at all costs means bowing to the mantra that 'you can't stop digital tech'. Brinkmann even suggests that coaches that work to these paradigms should be sacked.

Yet, workplace coaching is often governed by the same pressures as those that govern organisations – faster and smarter:

- **faster** through AI and digital tech (even though we know that purposeful meaning-making in human interaction requires the 'art of lingering in dialogue'<sup>6</sup>).
- **smarter** through easy-to-implement strategies (although for humans to embrace the turbulent flow of change it takes genuine engagement with resistance to 'the new').

#### **What's the challenge?**

Against low coach-education standards (e.g., typically 60 training hours) in an unregulated coaching field, and with coaches still following the mantra that clients provide their own advice without wondering if that advice is any good for generative impact in today's world, the challenge is to hold transformative dialogues as an intensive

co-reflective process – be it one-on-one, team or organisational coaching – in which:

- o clients' self and identity are reflected as serving some social purpose;
- o values are reflected upon to explore their maturity for today's fluid reality;
- o and the dynamics of stability and fluidity of identity are tested for their impact beyond the purpose of individuation in organisational life.

## **BOTH ENDS: WORKPLACE COACHING REALITY CHECK**

A recent research paper I co-wrote<sup>7</sup> may be a place to start. We studied the role of workplace coaching for clients' self and identity in the process of their authentic self-development (ASD). The findings resulted in four main suggestions for workplace coaches:

- Expand your coaching styles beyond those that focus on goal attainment to include those that reflect process knowledge about coaching.
- Clients don't need more but better self-regulation in their complex workplaces. This is about the rhythm of self-regulation rather than the mechanical regularity of it. Irregularities in rhythm generate a certain degree of adaptability, which is a much-sought-after capacity for dealing with the reverberations of disruptions.
- You need skills that enhance clients' ability to work with goal instability: to grow as self-determined individuals through adjusting goals as a way of a) developing continuity in the face of contradictory behaviours, and b) integrating inconsistent behaviours into a coherent self-concept. As goals are malleable in organisational life, clients need to maintain their stability of goal-directed functioning rather than the stability of any one particular goal.
- Sometimes self-regulation is important, sometimes not. When a goal – organisational or other – matches clients' identities, clients feel self-concordant in their goal pursuit, which doesn't require any self-regulatory resources. Or, conscientious clients don't feel affected by mood swings in their commitment to goals.

Still, I observe an intellectual virus in coaching: reality is treated through magical thinking, with some coaches offering 'life-changing opportunities' to cope with the impact of digital tech on our mental and emotional health. On the one hand, those opportunities promise to solve it all with quick-fix digital tech challenges – the fundamental nature of which we don't fully understand yet – while disregarding our knowledge about the role of self-regulation processes to health functioning in complex organisational life. On the other hand, those offers promote AI and digital tech to cure the impact of those same digital processes.

Most ironically, when coaches claim that we can't deny digitalisation, they deny something more profound – namely that the stakes of coaching effectiveness and reputation are high and prone to at least one serious illusion, that of attention. That is to say that we have no idea what we're overlooking in how we're coaching today.

*Do we take the time for the art and craft of coaching in a world that knows only one thing: bigger, faster, higher?*

## **WORKPLACE COACHING: REFRAMING OUR ATTENTION**

Reframing our attention means having 'discomfort-zone' conversations about how digitalisation impacts us and how we impact digitalisation. For that, we need to engage in some rigorous self-distanced reasoning around the strategic scaffolding of our coaching mastery.

As jazz icon Miles Davis said: we need to make each other happen! That means strategically scaffolding our coaching mastery in a way that will suit the requirements of a digital new, with openness to being impacted by digitalisation. That's about:

- Being okay with being vulnerable in the digital normal, rather than employing magical thinking.
- Being modest in our mastery rather than coaching to be a hero.
- Remembering that clients feel disconnected through digital tech, and therefore;
- Tapping into our inherent relational skills to stop our and our clients' worlds from disintegrating through how we choose to see reality.
- Collaborating to reflect the powers and pitfalls of digitalisation for our mastery.

This scaffolding invites us to address three key dimensions of coaching mastery:

1. Our deep intention as a coach.
2. Embracing what works and what doesn't work in our own digital normal.
3. Integrating who we're becoming through reflective practice.

## **THE AGE OF IDEAS**

I have at least five ideas to enable a rigorous reasoning process.

1. It takes guts to explore to what extent we're anxious to create emotional immunity to stave off, dive through or live with the competitive and disintegrating nature of our digital normal. Anxiety in coaches, like in clients, is produced – through organisations, societies and systems – because of negative bias. The pressures of not getting clients have a more significant impact on our psychological state than the positive effects of courage to challenge digital tech. If we had courage rather than anxiety speaking through our mastery, what would courage have us do?

2. We work in silos, as if we had the knowledge with which to do so. We engage in the politics of the personal prison: 'It's me being a great coach having great clients.' We're persuaded that with more marketing skills and by shouting highest, proudest and wildest we'll get clients. Will we also perform best? We're taking ourselves too seriously: we're having a hard time 'reducing ourselves to zero', and the me business is killing us – as we're killing nature. Do we take the time for the art and craft of coaching in a world that knows only one thing: bigger, faster, higher?
3. There's a paradox about the power of coaching, which is that coaching is powerful but we don't act powerfully. While we're buried in others, we can't see ourselves as part of a greater whole to serve something bigger. Yet, we're not separate experiences. We are dust with consciousness, at least biochemically speaking. What else are we in our power and humanity?
4. We are kind people, but when stressed we tend to not be kind, which is ironic because kindness is the primary antidote to stress. Gearing up to ride the wave of digital coaching, we get caught up in polarised views around going digital: the idea that there's a right and wrong way to digitalise is hardly being kind to ourselves. What are we energising with our thoughts? Our decisions today cast the long shadows of tomorrow. How kind is our long-term decision-making to ourselves, our practice and those whom we serve?
5. We produce powerful questions as part of our mastery: we encourage innovation, we enable clients to have future foresight and we expand horizons of thinking. What happens when change through digitalisation is achieved? What challenges will that pose for people, their contexts, our environments and the stakeholders of coaching? There's always collective and contextual development. Where are we after change has been achieved? Does our mastery include that?

## BEYOND ENDS

What matters is WHO we are WHEN we engage with digitalisation and not THAT we engage with it. That's why we see people doing the same thing with different outcomes.

Our accountability lies in helping our clients realise their own accountability by inviting them to engage in rigorous self-distanced reflection of their 'self in digitalisation'. Once they see who they are in this, they will see what they need to do differently.

We coaches can raise the level in all that we engage in, if we only realise that we too are always just an idea away from a new reality. The ultimate question is: what do we want to role-model?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Tünde holds a PhD in business and organisational management and an Ashridge master's in executive coaching and team coaching. Tünde is an academic as well as an ICF MCC coach and a senior practitioner with EMCC. She has authored four articles in high-ranking peer-reviewed scientific journals, three books and a range of articles in professional coaching magazines. Tünde runs her ICF-accredited coach-leader experiential learning set focusing on presence as the key competence at mastery level. Recently, Tünde produced a documentary: *The light and shadow of coaching – in and beyond organizations*, to collect donations to fund coach training for women in Kenya.

1. Gallup (June, 2022). State of the Global Workplace: 2022 Report. Retrieved on 24 February 2023: <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/349484/state-of-the-global-workplace-2022-report.aspx>
2. Stelter, R. (2022). Chapter 12: Third-Generation Coaching: Theory, Research and Practice. In: Passmore, J. & Leach, S. (Eds.). *The Third Wave of Cognitive Behavioural Coaching: Contextual, Behavioural and Neuroscience Approaches for Evidence-Based Coaches*. Pavilion Publishing and Media Ltd.
3. Lawrence, P. & Moore, A. (2019). *Coaching in Three Dimensions: Meeting the Challenges of a Complex World*. Routledge: Essential Coaching Skills and Knowledge.
4. McGilchrist, I. (2021). *The Matter of Things: Our Brains, Our Delusions, and the Unmaking of the World*. Perspectiva Press.
5. Brinkmann, J. (2017). *Stand firm: Resisting the self-improvement craze*. Polity Press.
6. Stelter, R. (2022). Chapter 12: Third-Generation Coaching: Theory, Research and Practice. In: Passmore, J. & Leach, S. (Eds.). *The Third Wave of Cognitive Behavioural Coaching: Contextual, Behavioural and Neuroscience Approaches for Evidence-Based Coaches*. Pavilion Publishing and Media Ltd.
7. Erdős, T., Wilt, J., and Tichelmann, M. (2022). Workplace coaching: testing whether personality traits and their ABCD components predict authentic self-development via affect balance. *Journal of Management Development*, 41(6). Pp. 367-392.

# YOU'VE GOT TO LAUGH: CARTOONING IN COACHING AND SUPERVISION

Cartoons cut to the chase like nothing else. Could they deliver the breakthrough your client is looking for? **David Love** suggests how to approach this unique style of storytelling.

*'Instead of playing grown-ups, it is time for grown-ups to start playing.'*<sup>21</sup> **Jonas Ridderstrale and Kjell Nordstrom**

Playfulness in coaching is rightly gaining ground as a vital way for coaches to enable clients to tap into hidden reserves of resourcefulness and creativity. The world is crying out for innovation to tackle complex leadership challenges such as pandemic-related changes to the organisation of work, the achievement of true social justice and the accelerating climate emergency. Coaching constantly needs to find, or invent, new ways for clients to come at such challenges, as well as those that arise from the day-to-day management of people and organisations. After all, as coaches we work with clever, skilful and experienced people who nonetheless get stuck deploying the accepted rational means of addressing topics.

My use of cartoons in coaching sits at the heart of playfulness, enabling clients to create and play with their own humorous depictions of their chosen topics. Time and time again I see the powerful impact cartoons can have on clients' understanding of themselves and their situation, and the insights and learning generated when they unpack their images.

## THE VALUE OF CARTOONING

Some cartoons make us laugh out loud. Some don't – but they point out the absurdities in a situation, causing a wry smile



*A UK National Health Service (NHS) manager trying to 'cast spells' and 'sprinkle fairy dust' to 'prop up a broken system'. The client explored practical and positive, small but significant actions that would make a difference, such as connecting more with colleagues in smaller groups to share experiences.*

of recognition in the process. Cartoonists – particularly political cartoonists – juxtapose contradictory ideas and find the gallows humour in even the darkest subjects. They notice patterns and discrepancies, and use caricatures and satire to highlight the craziness of a situation, getting straight to its essential features.

In coaching we can enable clients to use some, or all, of the five key elements cartoonists use to create impact:

1. **Analogy:** making comparisons between two things that share some characteristics.
2. **Symbolism:** using an object to represent an idea.
3. **Irony:** emphasising the difference between the way things are and the way things should be or are expected to be.
4. **Exaggeration:** overstating or magnifying a problem, physical feature or habit.
5. **Labelling and captioning:** adding a few words to clarify an idea.

Scott McCloud (a maker of comics) highlights the importance of amplification through simplification.<sup>2</sup> The stripping down of the





***A client 'basking in the sunshine' of their contentment in their current role – but acutely aware that turbulent changes are imminent. Fearful of change, the client decided to 'stand up and check out the view' and identify those aspects where they needed to 'go with the flow'. They also resolved to explore what is behind the palm tree that might strengthen their resourcefulness – 'there might be a speedboat!'***

visualisation of a subject to its essential elements amplifies the meaning in ways that representational art cannot. We can use this idea in cartooning to enable clients to get down to the fundamentals of a situation.

Cartooning is a powerful means of storytelling – it's not just a form of sketching, it's a different way of seeing, one that can offer a radically new window onto a situation. Cartoons in coaching offer opportunities to:

- Create caricatures.
- Illustrate the pantomime nature of some aspects of organisational life.
- Invoke satire as a way of understanding challenging situations.
- Subvert stereotypes.
- Make connections to important systemic factors.
- Unearth influential aspects of organisational culture – or life more generally.

Simple elements can combine in complex ways and, supported by a coaching conversation, can be a major source of insight. Cartooning is a form of art-based coaching, and I draw on artist, coach and supervisor Anna Sheather's research and practice here. Sheather's five stages of art-based coaching framework<sup>3</sup> offers a robust and open-ended structure for engaging with clients, from the creation of a cartoon through the client-centred analysis of the image and on to the ensuing coaching conversation about the implications and learning. By adding exploration of the five key elements of cartooning, I enable a client to delve into the apparently bizarre aspects of their situation.

We know that humour has positive health and wellbeing impacts, including alleviating the anxiety and stress clients bring into the room. Jude Elliman points out that the surprise invoked by a humorous realisation can generate insights.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, humour has been

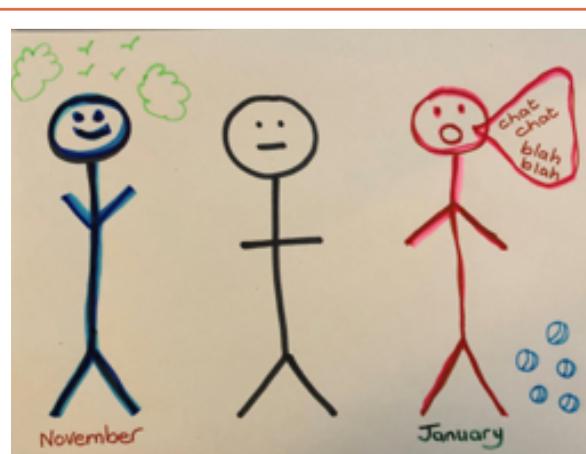
shown to strengthen relationships through the sharing of experiences. As Elliman highlights, this has valuable benefits for the all-important coach-client relationship. So, collaborating with a client to enable them to analyse their cartoon, perhaps having a laugh together in the process, I believe, strengthens trust. Indeed, as Daniel Goleman asserts: 'Laughter may be the shortest distance between two brains, an unstoppable infectious spread that builds an instant social bond.'<sup>5</sup> Of course, throughout the process as coach I need to take care not to say anything to the client that they might receive as sarcasm.

This form of playfulness, while apparently light-hearted, is extremely serious. Through creating their own cartoon focused on a topic of great importance to them, a client goes deep into the complexities of a situation, surfacing the vital emotions that underpin their thinking and behaviour.

***Cartooning is a powerful means of storytelling – it's not just a form of sketching, it's a different way of seeing***

## INTRODUCING CARTOONING INTO A COACHING CONVERSATION

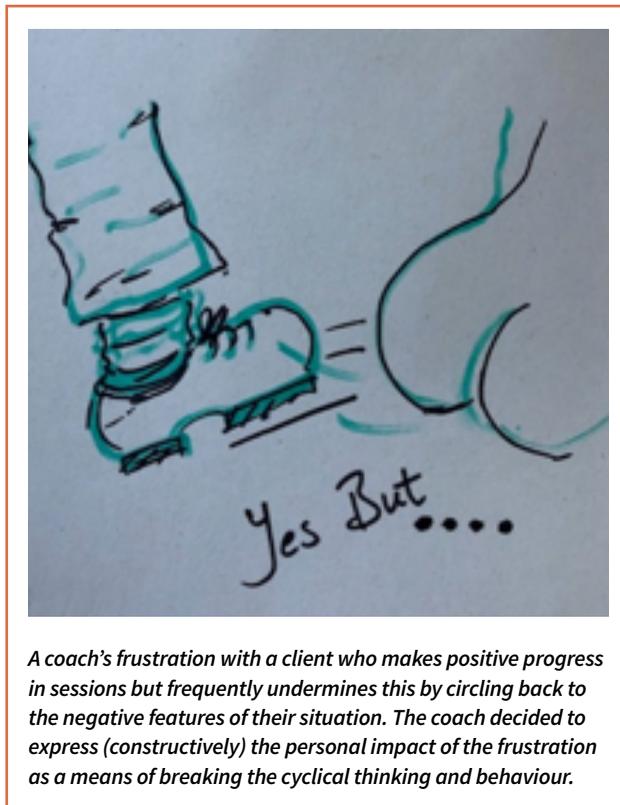
Cartooning works well when a client is stuck for words, when a radically different lens will be helpful. I might pick up that a client is already seeing the funny side of things or is displaying a sense of humour about life in general. There may also be clues that they are interested in the visual, perhaps through the language they use. Clients frequently use metaphors and these can be a way into a cartooning approach, or a Freudian slip might offer a starting point.



***A manager with two new team members. Blue is already greatly exceeding the standards for the work; Red's work is just about adequate, but they are 'dropping balls'. The client decided that comparing Red's performance to Blue's – rather than the established standards for the role – was unfair.***

In these ways we can play into the client's comfort zone. With clients who do not display these characteristics, I may want to deliberately encourage them into cartooning precisely because it is outside their comfort zone. Either way it's obviously important to remember that engaging in something that might appear a bit off-the-wall is always an invitation.

A client may be reticent for a few perfectly valid reasons. They may feel that producing a cartoon about their very serious topic feels frivolous or that the activity itself feels childish. They may also express doubts about their ability to draw. I find encouraging a playful, childlike approach is helpful – as is re-emphasising confidentiality. If the client has a favourite cartoonist, I will invite them to identify what they admire about that person's style as a starting point for launching into their own creation.



***A coach's frustration with a client who makes positive progress in sessions but frequently undermines this by circling back to the negative features of their situation. The coach decided to express (constructively) the personal impact of the frustration as a means of breaking the cyclical thinking and behaviour.***

Clients may need reassurance that all human beings are creative and encouragement that we can all create cartoons using basic shapes (e.g., circles, squares and triangles). Everyone can sketch stick figures and use dots and lines to make simple but expressive faces. Speech and thought bubbles add further observations and humour, and we can use captions and labels to add meaning, the trick being to keep words to a minimum. I prefer the terms sketch or doodle to draw, so that clients can see there is no expectation to produce a representational image. The cartoon only needs to make sense to the client given it is their interpretation and analysis that counts. I may need to explain the benefits of a cartooning approach, or to invite the suspension of disbelief... just to see what happens.

## SUGGESTED FURTHER READING

### **Art-based coaching and creativity in coaching**

Coaching Creativity – Transforming your Practice, by Jen Gash

Being Creative and Maintaining Trust, in *Advanced Coaching Practice: Inspiring Change in Others*, by Christian van Nieuwerburgh and David Love

Collage as a Creative Coaching Tool, by Andrea Watts

### **Sketching, art and cartoons**

Drawing Comics Lab, by Robyn Chapman

The Creative License: Giving Yourself Permission to be the Artist You Truly Are, by Anny Gregory

### **Humour in coaching**

What happens in moments of humour with my clients? by Jude Ellimanin, in *Behind Closed Doors: Stories from the Coaching Room*, by Erik de Haan

### **Playfulness in coaching**

Playfulness in Coaching: Exploring Our Untapped Potential Through Playfulness, Creativity and Imagination, by Stephanie Wheeler and Teresa Leyman

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



David is a leadership coach and coach supervisor who uses art-based approaches, believing in the power of creative methods for generating insights and learning. His coaching clients are leaders and managers in public services and he has a strong commitment to enhancing public value for the benefit of all citizens. As a supervisor he works with teams of in-house coaches, and with individual coaches working across all sectors. David also designs and facilitates coach development workshops and is *Coaching Perspectives'* cartoonist.

[linkedin.com/in/david-love-b712716b](https://www.linkedin.com/in/david-love-b712716b)

1. Ridderstrale, Jonas & Nordstrom Kjell. 2004. *Karaoke Capitalism – Management for Mankind* p182. Harlow. FT Prentice Hall.
2. McCloud, Scott. 1994 & 2006. *Understanding Comics and Making Comics*. New York. Harper.
3. Sheather, Anna. 2019. *Coaching Beyond Words – Using Art to Deepen and Enrich Our Conversations*. Abingdon. Routledge.
4. Elliman, Jude. *Taking Humour Seriously In Business Coaching*. [listeningpartnership.com](https://listeningpartnership.com). Accessed 16 January 2023.
5. Goleman, Daniel. 2007. *Social Intelligence – The New Science of Human Relationships*. London. Arrow. 2007



As part of our ongoing work to raise standards within the coaching industry, The AC has been designing a new accreditation scheme for practising team coaches and providers of team coaching training programmes.

Following our extensive design and consultation process, we're delighted to introduce the scheme - which will inform practitioners and organizational buyers about this new and fast-growing field - whilst addressing the need to develop a recognized international standard for coaching teams at work.

The accreditation will help coaches and training providers stand out in a busy marketplace, whilst providing that vital external quality assurance.

*Advancing coaching in business and society, worldwide*

[www.associationforcoaching.com](http://www.associationforcoaching.com)



## Introducing the new AC Team Coaching Accreditation Scheme



Learn more by watching our handy recorded webinar, led by Dr. Declan Woods, Global Head of Team Coaching and Accreditation.

SCAN ME



CLICK HERE



The Association for Coaching is thrilled to announce a new Fellow Membership.

We will soon be inviting longstanding members and experienced coaches to join the new dedicated membership category and unlock access to exclusive benefits and resources.

Fellow members will form a new like-minded community, which will provide a space for the experts and thought leaders of our industry to access great content, join experienced discussions and enhance skills amongst peers.

For more information:

✉ [individual@associationforcoaching.com](mailto:individual@associationforcoaching.com)

*Advancing coaching in business and society, worldwide*

[www.associationforcoaching.com](http://www.associationforcoaching.com)



## An exclusive new community: AC Fellow Membership



# BALANCING THE POLARITIES OF SELF AND OTHER IN COMMUNICATION

Myself as coach; you as client; they as family members, team members, stakeholders. **Felicity Dwyer's** 3D polarity model considers the rich multiplicity of identities at play within and outside a coaching conversation.

Interpersonal communication is involved in many of the issues that clients bring to coaching. Try these:

- A newly promoted manager wants to establish their authority, while supporting and motivating members of their team.
- A parent is struggling with what they perceive as a difficult relationship with their teenager.

Here, as with many other scenarios, success will come through communication based on establishing a genuine connection with others. Connected communication is a presence-based, authentic and dynamic way of being. By developing the skills to communicate in this way, our clients will reap the rewards of better professional and personal relationships.

## POLARITIES IN COMMUNICATION

One aspect of communication dynamics is the need to balance polarities. A polarity involves a pair of interdependent factors (poles) that need to be kept in balance for maximum effectiveness. A fundamental polarity in communication is the balance between self and other. This can show up in a variety of ways, such as:

- Balancing speaking and listening in a conversation.
- Balancing clear time boundaries with making time for others.
- Balancing expressing my views with openness to hearing other perspectives.

Balancing polarities involves 'both... and...' thinking.<sup>1</sup> Each side of a polarity has both positive and negative aspects. The key to success is finding a balance that allows the positive aspects of both poles to be present: can I articulate my position clearly and set my own views to one side while listening to another person?

One way of thinking about the negative aspects of a polarity can be as an overused strength. One of my personal strengths is input

(based on the CliftonStrengths assessment<sup>2</sup>): I'm excited by taking in new information. However, there is a need to balance this with another pole, which I call integration. If I overuse my input strength and don't integrate, the downsides are feeling overloaded and not making best use of my knowledge for the benefit of others.

In coaching, an awareness of polarities can help us notice when our clients may be out of balance. We can then offer questions and observations that might help them to restore equilibrium in their communication (or indeed in many other domains).

I believe that strengthening our connection with ourselves will help us to connect more deeply with others. I've developed a simple model called Connecting in 3D. This encompasses three interrelated dimensions: connecting within, connecting with and connecting beyond. Here, I consider the first two dimensions. I suggest ways that coaches can help clients attune with different aspects of their own being, so that they can connect and communicate more authentically and empathically with others.

This dimension includes attuning to messages from our bodies, our emotions and our patterns of thinking. Coaching offers an opportunity to help clients deepen their relationship with different aspects of themselves, and to become more skilled in balancing the interplay between them.

## BALANCING BODY AND MIND

The conscious mind is limited in the quantity of information it can hold at any one time. Our logical thought processes alone may not allow us to access all the wisdom that lies within us. Becoming more aware of the messages communicated by our bodies can unlock information that may not be accessible in other ways.<sup>3</sup> Take intuitive decision making, which draws on information below conscious awareness: intuition may be accessed through physical sensations, in locations such as the solar plexus. When balanced with rational

decision-making, embodied intuition can provide a greater breadth of information than logic alone.<sup>4</sup>

There are many coaching modalities that draw on the wisdom of the body. An example is symbolic modelling.<sup>5</sup> This is a clean-language-based approach that encourages clients to move away from words and to find embodied and metaphorical awareness.<sup>6</sup>

One of the ways we can learn from our bodies is through exploring our unconscious gestures. Even clients who are very self-aware in other ways may not be aware of their gestures. Where appropriate, we might offer an observation about the client's body language in order to bring this to their attention. If a client becomes aware, say, that they are making a gesture akin to pushing someone away, this might spark insights into how they are feeling about a particular relationship or situation.

The body can hold memories of trauma<sup>7</sup>, so the power of embodied coaching interventions needs to be undertaken sensitively and within the boundaries of your competence and training.

### CONNECTING WITH THE HEART

Working with the heart can be a powerful way to maintain connection in difficult conversations.<sup>8</sup> A few minutes of slow, steady breathing, imagining the breath coming in and out of the heart area, can transform our state of being into one that makes connection and empathy easier. We can learn to keep a little of our awareness attuned to the area of our heart, while directing the rest of our awareness towards listening and engaging with others.

Some years ago, during a supervision session I developed a simple ritual that I now use before meeting coaching clients. I put my hand on my heart, take a few breaths and repeat the mantra 'be here now, for you'. This process helps me come into a state of loving presence.

### BALANCING THOUGHTS AND THE PROCESS OF THINKING

Coaches hold a space for thinking. Connecting with ourselves includes developing an ability to understand how we think, not just what we are thinking at any given moment, as this is continually changing. Our thoughts can shape the way we perceive the world and the way we behave. Yet we don't have to define ourselves by our thoughts. Coaching offers an opportunity to take a step back and question some of the assumptions and habitual thinking that might otherwise go unchallenged.

You may notice that a client is caught up in stories and narratives about a relationship that may not be particularly helpful or insightful. Gently challenging the narrative can be helpful: 'Is it true that...?'; 'What else could be happening?'

When a client gets lost within a narrative, it can be helpful to invite them to come back to the present moment, to take a breath and to become quiet and centred. A powerful session I experienced as a client involved a coach noticing that I was drifting off into a cloud of thoughts. They invited me to come back into connection with my own body and then speak from that place. Being invited in that moment to notice the difference between embodied and disembodied thinking was insightful.

### BALANCING FOCUS ON SELF WITH FOCUS ON OTHER

The other side of developing a connection with self is developing the mindset and skills for more connected, empathic communication with others.

You might notice that a client is focused primarily on the message they want to communicate, or preoccupied with their own thoughts and feelings about a conversation or relationship. Become curious about what they understand about the other person. A simple question ('How might they feel about this?') can be helpful in shifting their perspective.

Sometimes a client might value help in thinking through the how of connecting well. They may not have deliberately learned or practised listening skills before. It may be helpful to ask questions such as 'What gets in the way of listening fully?', and 'What could help you to listen more deeply?'

### THE IMPACT OF BALANCE IN COMMUNICATION

Returning to the scenarios we opened with: the manager who wants to motivate their team could tap into the messages from their embodied wisdom, as well as taking time to understand what others need. The parent could practise connecting with their own heart and setting the intention to listen attentively.

When clients bring interpersonal challenges to coaching, we can help them to identify and balance the polarities of self and other – and we can invite them to explore a deeper, more connected, approach to communication.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Felicity Dwyer, MAC, is a learning and development specialist who has worked as a professional facilitator, coach and trainer since 2003. Felicity teaches on accredited programmes for two of the UK's leading leadership and management institutes. She also facilitates peer learning groups, coaches people navigating transitions, and leads seminars and workshops in communication and leadership skills. Felicity is the author of *Crafting Connection: Transform How You Communicate with Yourself and Others*. [www.felicitydwyer.com](http://www.felicitydwyer.com)

1. Johnson, Barry. 2020. *And: Making a Difference by Leveraging Polarity, Paradox or Dilemma*. Human Resource Development Press.
2. Gallup, 2020. *Now, Discover Your Strengths*; 20th anniversary edition. Gallup Press.
3. Blake, Amanda. 2019. *Your Body is Your Brain*. Embright.
4. Klein, Gary. 2004. *The Power of Intuition*. Currency, Random House.
5. Lawley, James; Tompkins, Penny. 2000. *Metaphors in Mind*. Developing Company Press.
6. Way, Marian. 2013. *Clean Approaches for Coaches*. Clean Publishing.
7. Van der Kolk, Bessel. 2014. *The Body Keeps the Score*. Allen Lane.
8. The HeartMath® Institute offers research, resources and training on the role of heart intelligence. [www.heartmath.org](http://www.heartmath.org)



## TOWARDS NET POSITIVE SOCIAL ENERGY

Could reflective practice on a wider scale transform many of today's concerns into 'social energy', accelerating better lines of thinking and ways of working? [Lorna McDowell](#) believes so.

Much has been written about society's 'immunity to change', from the founding fathers of group relations – Wilfred Bion, Eric Millar and AK Rice – to more modern psychologists such as Robert Keegan, Brenne Brown and Otto Scharmer. Their thoughts might be summarised by describing the journey of our openness to evolving as human beings: suspending our knowing and doing long enough and deeply enough to explore our social energy, namely the sea in which we swim and the intricate interconnections that subtly hold us on particular trajectories.

How often we unknowingly limit ourselves through fixed perspectives, and by the scope we put around ourselves in order to define who we are, can create further separation in a generation that has sought out individualisation. In fact, untapped answers may lie in being more fluid in our perspectives, understanding our valency and interconnections and accepting disruption to and endings of our status quos as part of natural evolution.

## TURNING THE TIDE ON IMMUNITY TO CHANGE

Stopping long enough to consider this takes courage. Pausing to reflect invokes an opening – a break in the flow of 'doing' – for more awareness to enter into our being. It takes will, practice and discipline to allow what we haven't before seen or what we have pushed away to rest in our awareness long enough for us to make something useful of it, transforming shadow into light. Things that have been fearful, irrelevant, complex, wrong or 'not to do with me', previously split off for their discomfort, can be reconnected with a positive discovery. Without reflection, we become rigid and closed, and may miss important data, potentially leading to a sense of diminishing returns and separations.

However, this is a muscle to be developed and reflection can still be dismissed as a weakness or luxury, rather than a game-changing imperative. It is not just for coaches: it's something we should all learn from an early age to add to the value of our collective social experience and energy.

By adopting a reflective practice, we become far more aware of our 'being' energy. Doing so means that we can thrive better, thereby producing net-positive valency in our social interactions. Vitality, it can help us better navigate the overwhelming complexities, polarities and interconnections that make up the intricate balance within us and within the world at large, by increasing our intuitive muscles. Complexities and ambiguities are not going to go away, they are real parts of life today, and ones which need to be understood and worked with. So, the earlier we begin the better.

Daily we are presented with an intricacy of patterns and evidence by the planet itself: from ecosystems, polar shifts and the turning of seasons to the onslaught of climate change threatening our very existence. We have a model to learn from. Shedding the idea that mental toughness, agility or resilience is about 'carrying on regardless' or 'pivoting' to another fast lane while defying what is natural is vital if we are to find better ways to resource ourselves for the future.

## A SHIFT IN THINKING AND BEING

One of the greatest benefits of reflective practice is the improvement in the quality of thinking by building our emotional, physical, mental and spiritual capacities – the energy with which we can make fast intuitive connections between things and to ourselves. This enables better 'bridging' – one of the most important transformers of our times. The connection between groups is the weak spot in the social structure of organisations and markets: people on either side of the boundary of groups circulate in different flows of information and being, often generating a negative valency or separating impact until it is worked with. Improving the flows on the boundary points in the structure creates competitive advantage and opportunities for value creation. Reflective practice, both individual and group, provides the space and freedom to face into such challenge and to work mindfully with competing realities, developing abilities to reframe and see multiple realities from a number of dimensions. It enables more compassion in considering impacts and unavoidable trade-offs in difficult decisions, leading to better decisions and shared risk-taking. Within the space of minutes, we can shift energy and outcomes with a ripple effect – once we know how.

Burnout, paradoxically, often creates the opportunity for such an opening in busy people. Many people learn best from their failures rather than wise words or concepts taught before an event. In accepting this, we can begin to turn the tide on burnout and reframe it as an important rite of passage, a transition point of growth in social energy value through learning that can really catapult a highly capable individual into a game-changing state of openness to new possibilities. It should be compassionately surfaced and supported, rather than hidden and dealt with as a sickness.

## PHYSICIAN, HEAL AND QUESTION THYSELF

As coaches, we understand the importance of reflecting on the quality of our work as a means to staying centred and aware. The challenge often comes, though, in our own hubris in the face of potential disruption within our profession, having struggled so hard to establish it. How much do we keep people out and collude with, elevate or control practices, rather than being hospitable to experimenting with new lines of thought and practice? What if reflective practice is so fundamentally important to humanity's future that it is the Noah's ark of our times? Should there be a separation between those who are coaches and those who are not?

Supervision is a reflective practice central to the development of oneself as a coach, and yet so many coaches do not regularly engage with it, often from a mindset of scarcity regarding affordability, perceived need and fears of being insufficient in some way. That's not to say such coaches don't reflect in other ways, and so perhaps the scoping and availability of supervision might need more space and creativity. In *Creative Reflective Practice*, authors Clare Beckett-McInroy and Sameera Ali Baba make the point that reflective practice is a lot more than simply reflection: it is the systematic capturing and expression of the reflection that is important, because learning happens through metacognition.

*Without reflection, we become rigid and closed, and may miss important data, potentially leading to a sense of diminishing returns and separations*

The process of recording and representing enables us to learn more about our learning. It is simply not enough to sit and think things through oneself, or even with another – it is how we go on to process and engage with the insight that will make the difference. This is helped by a degree of structure, a safe developmental space for exploration and, also, the messiness of exchanging representation and seeing, in which energy transforms and meaning-making becomes integrated.

Coaches have pivotal roles to play in facilitating evolution and in transmuting paralysing tensions into productive flows of energy. However, within the profession we can be at the highest risk of carrying on regardless without evolving as the world evolves; plus, with so many sole traders the risk of fragmentation is high. A containing process for navigating this evolution individually and collectively is key to sustainable growth. It's also vital to mitigating the risk of denying a natural demise and shift in demand as the skills of coaching become mainstream and integrated widely.

We must also be aware that to coach or supervise from survival mode, or unseen myopia, could lead to rescue or disassociation, paralleling part of the self that needs attention. This is a high-risk situation that can quickly lead to a degenerative cycle, one in which coaches start to have an anti-effect and lose the audiences who need them most. Fundamentally, reflection in all forms is about being ever curious and mindful about our own process, purpose, relations, intakes and outputs.

*One of the greatest benefits of reflective practice is the improvement in the quality of thinking by building our emotional, physical, mental and spiritual capacities*

## BE READY TO GET OUT OF OUR OWN WAY

It took a pandemic to have the world stop in unison and see more of what is in front of us in our own homes and neighbourhoods, and to turn a corner we had not expected.

Without an engaging practice for evolving our ways of thinking and working, a person – even a coach – will almost always disconnect both from their own change process and from the opportunity to create more value. The value loss – to society, to business and to individuals – of this disconnect is seismic, and one of the most under-recognised regeneration opportunities in our net-zero goal planning.

Reflective practice opens up people to a range of untapped resources and possibilities, ones that lift them out of the very myopia and gridlocks squeezing the life out of them. As author Christopher Johns states: 'reflective practice is the antidote to complacency, habit and blindness.'<sup>1</sup> It enlarges our seeing, soothes the emotions and restores our relationships. It is also magnificently intergenerational and intercultural. It is a game-changer, one without which humanity cannot progress en masse to any better state of being.

---

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Lorna McDowell is a systemic transformation coach and consultant, helping organisations find new ways to release their social energy and bridge their resources, developing sustainable growth and untapped value for better business and better society. She is the founder of Xenergie, an international consultancy that has developed an award-winning approach to helping organisations remodel their leaders and interconnectivity. Lorna is also the driving force behind Clusters.world, a global social innovation laboratory providing an action-learning experience bridging leaders across sectors and generations in reflecting on and transforming their approach to working for a greater good.

[www.xenergie.com](http://www.xenergie.com); [www.clusters.world](http://www.clusters.world)

[lorna.mcdowell@xenergie.com](mailto:lorna.mcdowell@xenergie.com)

---

1. Johns C. (2004). *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner* *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner*, 2nd Ed, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing

April	Wednesday 5 April 08.30 BST Ireland - Virtual Working with Clients in Distress - David B ritten	Wednesday 19 April 09.00 BST Ireland - Virtual Virtual Café	Thursday 20 April 12.30 CEST France - Virtual	Tuesday 25 April 12.00 EST USA - Virtual Listening In
	Wednesday 3 May 09.00 BST Ireland - Virtual Virtual Cafe	Wednesday 17 May 09.00 BST Ireland - Virtual Virtual Cafe	Tuesday 23 May 12.00 EST USA - Virtual Listening In	Wednesday 31 May 09.00 BST Ireland - Virtual Virtual Cafe
June	Wednesday 14 June 09.00 BST Ireland - Virtual Virtual Cafe	Wednesday 28 June 09.00 BST Ireland - Virtual Virtual Cafe	 <p>SCAN ME</p>	
			<p>For all AC Events: <a href="#">Click here</a></p>	



Association  
for Coaching

---

**Explore Leader Coach  
Membership & Accreditation**

**Did you know** the Association  
for Coaching (AC) is the **only**  
coaching body to offer  
**Leader Coach** membership  
and Accreditation?

---

If you are interested in finding out more,  
please contact:  
[corporate@associationforcoaching.com](mailto:corporate@associationforcoaching.com)

Please note that Leader Coach Accreditation is  
available to our Leader Coach members and Leader  
Coaches who are part of their Corporate Membership.

#### What is a Leader Coach?

The AC's definition is someone who applies a coaching mindset or coach approach to get the best out of their talent.

#### What does a Leader Coach do?

A Leader Coach inspires and enables others to adapt to constantly changing environments and commitment, and culture.

#### Who is Leader Coach Membership For?

For Leaders who apply a coaching mindset to get the best out of their talent.

Note: We require a minimum of 25 hrs coaching delivery\* (as a leader or a manager).

#### Why have the AC launched this Leader Coach initiative?

- To enable Leader Coaches to create a sustainable coaching culture.
- To leverage coaching to enhance performance.
- To support executives, emerging leaders, people managers, and entrepreneurs.
- To raise standards of excellence and mastery.
- To create an ecosystem that cultivates awareness, responsibility, and self-efficacy.
- To be at the forefront of leadership development.
- To support and grow the Leader Coach community.
- To attract and inspire thousands of leader coaches.

#### What are the benefits of joining the AC's Leader Coach community?

You can meet connect and share best practise, innovations with other Leader Coaches, via dedicated Leader Coach roundtables, learning resources, thought leadership, coaching exchanges, online forums, and more.

#### Why should somebody consider becoming an Accredited Leader Coach?

The AC's Leader Coach Accreditation scheme is pioneering coaching excellence. Offering you the opportunity to benchmark yourself against high professional standards, accredit on fitness to practice rather than theory and academics and demonstrate an ongoing commitment to excellence, with the only Leader Coach programme of its kind.

# YOU CAN'T GET TO A NEW CULTURE WITH AN OLD LEADERSHIP APPROACH

**Keith Merron** makes a compelling case for a paradigm shift in the way leaders view the world. Only then can we hope to save our planet.

Let's start with a simple premise: the culture of an organisation is to a large extent the reflection of the mindset or worldview of the leadership. Leadership and culture, after all, are naturally and inextricably intertwined. In study after study, one finds this to be true. So if culture drives an organisation's performance potential, then the mindset of its leadership

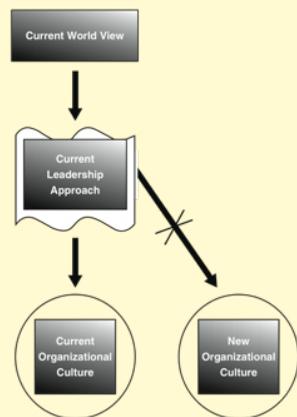


also drives a large part of corporate performance. To borrow from Albert Einstein, you can't inspire a new organisational culture from the worldview of the leadership that created it. Certainly, other forces are at play in shaping an organisation, but none more so than the conduct and character of its leaders.

**Figure 1: The consciousness of the leader creates the quality of the culture**

It is just short of impossible to renew an organisational culture if the existing leadership worldview remains unchanged. Many leaders wish it weren't the case, but those very same leaders often fail to recognise that the problems they see in their organisation are, in no small part, a reflection of themselves.

**Figure 2: You can't get to a new culture from the old leadership approach**

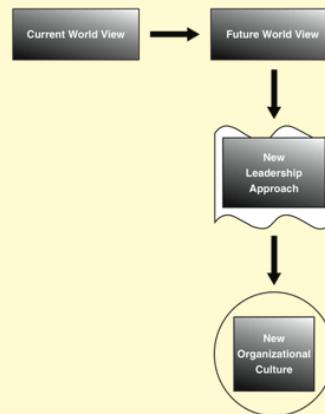


A client came to me recently and asked me to help her shift her culture. She informed me that her team was not taking responsibility enough, that she felt burdened in her role, and that she had to direct, cajole and even control others to get stuff done. Her frustration was palpable. As I listened to her story, I could see that her focus was on the organisation and her team. She couldn't yet see that her tendency to act like an uber-parent created the very culture she wanted to change. I gently offered the model set out in

this article and invited her to consider that she created the problem. I held up a mirror in front of her and she saw her role in the problem. This began to define her transformational journey.

To create a meaningful shift in the conduct of an organisation requires a shift in the mindset of the leadership. This is not a shift in type of leadership but a shift in a paradigm from one worldview to another. This is the essential goal of transformational coaching – to help leaders adopt more expansive and effective ways of leadership. In other words, for the organisation to mature, so must the leadership.

**Figure 3: New leadership patterns result in new organisational cultures**



While the prevailing paradigm of organisational leadership has achieved important advances in many areas, it may also be the source of future worldwide failure. Narrow, goal-driven efforts to achieve short-term aims, for example, turn a blind eye to the effects that such choices have on others and on the planet, leading to potential social and environmental catastrophes as well as profound injustices to the most vulnerable. Moreover,

people in positions of power rarely question existing economic structures because most of them benefit from it. Like fish in water, they take the prevailing paradigm as a given, failing to see that the paradigm itself is the problem. Caught up in its assumptions, they cannot lead from a higher, more effective place.

Global warming, war and poverty are symptoms of a culture – and a species – headed for destruction. The notion that the mindset of our leadership is driving these outcomes thus has life-and-death implications. If we want to shift the culture of our planet – indeed if we want to save our planet – the worldviews of our leadership must shift: not just those of our business leaders but of leaders across all institutions, including government, finance, education, social services and the military to name just a few. From new leadership and new cultures we have the potential to create extraordinary conditions for healing ourselves while also healing the planet for present and future generations.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Keith is the founder and managing partner of Leadership Pathways, a consulting and leadership development firm dedicated to helping organisations achieve high performance and industry leadership. He has more than 37 years of experience of assisting executives and managers. He received his doctorate from Harvard University, where his studies spanned

human and organisational development. He has published numerous professional journal articles and is the author of six books on human and organisational change. Twice yearly he offers a workshop to coaches on the subject. Learn more at [artoftransformationalcoaching.com](http://artoftransformationalcoaching.com).



# CULTURE IS SET FROM THE TOP

Make no mistake about it: senior leaders need to walk, talk and breathe the very culture they wish to create, says **Marie Faire**.

Often coaches working with and within organisations are able to observe the culture from multiple perspectives. In my own experience, the receptionist and the night porter, the caretaker and the PAs have a good grip on what the culture is really like. Those in the executive team and the boardroom may be more deluded. They point to their organisation's values and their share scheme, and forget that the most significant impact on the culture of the organisation is themselves. Their behaviours (what they say, and even more importantly what they do and how they do it) always dictate what 'goes' in organisational life. Whether at a bank or a healthcare trust, a global corporation or a charity, culture is set from the top.

Now, I don't often speak in absolutes – there are usually so many exceptions – but the cause of my departure from this rule is that this is the exception. I just don't know of any cultures that have been changed without the executive team changing first.

As Albert Schweitzer said: 'Example is not the main thing in influencing people. It is the only thing.'

I have often been asked to help to change cultures. 'So, what do you want it to be like?', I ask.

The answers vary little:

- 'We want better employee engagement' (as an aside: what a nominalisation! How different if we talk of 'engaging employees').
- 'We want to be more corporate and less siloed.'
- 'We want to be more strategic and less operational.'
- 'We want to have a coaching management style, rather than a directive one.'

Fine aspirations. Well-intentioned even. A little unspecific, but we can get over that. But... the crucial questions: what about the CEO and the directors? Are they engaging employees? Are they strategic and coaching in their style? Do they challenge managers who are not?

Too often, I know the answers before I ask the questions. And it is obvious really: if they were behaving that way, then they probably

wouldn't need to be talking to me about changing the culture (unless of course I am talking to a CEO who took over in the past three months).

Omission is just as impactful as commission. If a CEO turns a blind eye to conflict, poor performance or bad behaviour – even if that behaviour falls way short of the organisation's espoused values – you can be sure that those behaviours will flourish.

We reap what we reward. So, for example, if we reward a 'sales now' approach in preference to sustainable markets, we cannot be shocked at those who sold in the sub-prime market.

On several occasions I have suggested to an executive team that they might consider taking 50% of their own salaries for meeting their own individual KPIs within their directorate (read silo) and the other 50% for meeting the overall targets of the organisation. Many have laughed and thought I was joking. Yet this would demonstrate and generate real teamwork: corporate and collective responsibility.

In summary, my assertion is that change won't stick unless the top team are prepared to change too, and to lead the way.

So, a question that coaches could ask of directors, MDs, CEOs, or even prime ministers and presidents: what sort of role model are you?

And while we may not all be in a position to change the cultures of whole organisations, we have, every day, the opportunity to influence many others and encourage them to do so.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marie Faire has an MA in management learning and is an AC-accredited master executive coach and an AC-accredited coach supervisor. She is the lead trainer on both an AC-accredited coach diploma and an AC-accredited coach supervisor programme. She is co-founder of the Beyond Partnership.

[thebeyondpartnership.co.uk](http://thebeyondpartnership.co.uk)



# SLOWING DOWN TO CREATE SPACE

**Robert Biswas-Diener** and **Christian van Nieuwerburgh** invite us to embrace time in abundance and to notice how it can transform a coaching experience.

*Too Slow for those who Wait,  
Too Swift for those who Fear,  
Too Long for those who Grieve,  
Too Short for those who Rejoice;  
But for those who Love,  
Time is not.*

– Henry Van Dyke, *Music and Other Poems*, 1904

If there is a single theme that courses through all coaching conversations, it is time. This takes many forms: clients feeling that they do not have enough time, that they are stuck in the past, that they are obsessed with the future, that they do not know how to organise their time, or that they are suffering under the tyranny of deadlines. What’s more, in the post-pandemic world, organisations and individuals are thinking about time as directly linked to wellbeing. Given the surfeit of attention given to time in coaching, it makes sense to explore it so that we might better serve our clients.

## KEEPING TIME

It is tempting to think of time as a uniform metric – hours are standard and one minute is equal to the next. A minute in Kobe lasts the same 60 seconds that it does in Kinshasa. But that line of reasoning does not hold up to scrutiny. Anyone who has had the opportunity to travel has likely experienced the ways that people from various corners of the world relate differently to time.

The late psychologist Bob Levine spent much of his career studying pace of life across cultures. He was a clever scientist and he used creative metrics to measure the tempo of societies. For example, he compared the main clock at central train stations with the time kept by the atomic clock; he surreptitiously timed how fast postal employees sold a stamp to a customer; and he clocked how fast pedestrians walked a standard city block during the morning commute. He ultimately discarded other methods, such as measuring the time between honks in rush hour traffic.

Levine discovered that societies differ markedly in their relationship with time. Some cultures prize punctuality and efficiency

*In the fast-paced world of work, coaching can feel like a mental time-out, giving our clients the chance to take a breath and to reflect and plan outside of the pressures of daily life*

(Switzerland tops the list), while others advocate a more laid-back attitude about arrivals, departures and deadlines (examples include Brazil and Mexico). He also discovered that pace of life matters. People who live in slower-paced societies suffer less heart disease and there is a slight tendency towards helping others more. On the other hand, people from quicker places experience more economic vitality and report being somewhat happier.

There is another way the ‘time is standard’ approach does not hold up. Time does not feel the same from one moment to the next. You will admit that time varies greatly in quality. Your birthday, for instance, might feel different in many ways to the day before it. Your last day of work stands apart from the others. The day before a new product launch might feel abnormally short! Weekends stand in contrast to weekdays. Thirty minutes in the dentist’s chair is different from 30 minutes walking along a sandy beach. This is known as subjective time, and it stands apart from the more objective clock time on which societies run. Scholars sometimes deconstruct subjective time into three distinct categories:

1. **Mental time travel.** This refers to the tendency of people to shift their time focus by remembering the past, experiencing the present and anticipating the future. This is an important skill as it helps us envision consequences, link past and present experiences, create plans and dream about a future self. Coaches tend to explicitly focus on this element of subjective time.
2. **Perceiving time.** This refers to a person’s ability to notice time: noting milestones, appreciating time available, and

implementing routines. Perceiving time allows us to pace ourselves, take breaks, increase urgency and appreciate limited time.

3. **Interpretation of time.** As the name suggests, this aspect of subjective time is all about understanding time through a cultural lens. It includes the value a person places on time and the strategies they use for engaging with it. For instance, in one culture, being ten minutes late to a meeting might be offensive, while in another culture that would be considered normal.

## SUBJECTIVE TIME IN COACHING

Recently, we have begun to think of coaching as time set apart. At their best, coaching sessions feel slow and spacious. In the fast-paced world of work, coaching can feel like a mental time-out, giving our clients the chance to take a breath and to reflect and plan outside of the pressures of daily life. Coaching is a castle in time, with a moat that keeps the siege of clock time from breaching the walls. We have identified four specific ways that coaches can think about time to improve their interactions with clients (see panel).

### THINK OF TIME AS BEING ABUNDANT

We have noticed that less experienced coaches sometimes fret about time. As the session winds to a close, they feel pressured to work harder and ensure their clients arrive at new insights. Unfortunately, this can be contagious, and clients are sensitive to the change in pace. As an alternative, we recommend that coaches perceive time as abundant. Instead of worrying that there are only five minutes left, say, the coach can appreciate that there is still a full five minutes left. There is an irony here in that thinking of a session as being abundant in time allows coaches to slow down and, in doing so, offer more opportunities for reflection. Not only that, but coaches can remind themselves that a huge amount of client change occurs in the ample time between sessions, not just within them.

### THINK OF TIME AS ACTIVE LISTENING

We live in an age of talking. Technology has amplified lessons, opinions and news at a scale never matched in history. As a result, giving clients the time to be heard and to reflect can feel like quality time. It has been said that what we spend time focusing on is what we value. If this is true, coaching can be profoundly validating because what we focus on is the client – their learning, their growth, their wellbeing and their self-awareness. What's more, the temporal space and silence that mark great coaching sessions can model to clients that downtime is not wasted time.

### SLOW TIME IS REFLECTIVE TIME

It can be tempting to think of our sessions as unfolding at a constant pace. Instead, coaches can think of their coaching conversations in much the same way that Levine thought of societies: as varying in pace. Good coaches can employ perceiving time to recognise when to slow things down and when to speed them up. The slower moments are more reflective and the faster ones can be more practical. Daniel Kahneman's book *Thinking, Fast and Slow* is an excellent resource for coaches.

## RELAX AND SLOW DOWN

In the Swahili speaking regions of east Africa, you sometimes hear the phrase *pole na kazi*. It means, in essence, 'sorry you have to work'. It is a general expression of empathy, but it also denotes a 'take it easy' attitude. You can see similar sentiments in Spanish-speaking cultures that suggest that work can be done tomorrow, in various island cultures where rushing is discouraged and in the Japanese concept of *ma* (the pause between). Coaches can adopt this mindset by feeling comfortable if their client wants time to think in silence, shows up late for an appointment or if not everything gets covered in a single session.

The tension for coaches is to create a sense of abundance of time (spaciousness) while also using the constraints of time-bound conversations to create a sense of urgency for the client to make decisions and commit to experimentation. What do you need to do for yourself so that you are not feeling under time pressure when coaching? Here are some suggestions for coaches:

1. Arrive early so that you are not feeling time pressure.
2. Engineer your space to create listening environments.
3. Slow things down at the start of the session.
4. Say 'we still have 15 minutes' rather than 'there's only 15 minutes left'.
5. Avoid standing up or leaving an online meeting before the client at the end of the session.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Dr Robert Biswas-Diener** is a thought leader in positive psychology coaching. He frequently publishes research on topics such as happiness, hospitality, teaching and coaching. Robert loves to apply his background in psychology to the coaching endeavor and is eager to add nuance to and improve coaching practice. His forthcoming book, *Positive Provocation* (2023), is a call to coaches to re-examine their foundational assumptions about how coaching works. Robert has trained coaches at Positive Acorn for a decade and has run workshops for professionals in 25 countries.

**Prof Christian van Nieuwerburgh** is professor of coaching and positive psychology at the Centre for Positive Psychology and Health at RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences, global director for growth at Coaching International – a coach training provider for the educator sector – and principal fellow of the Centre for Wellbeing Science at the University of Melbourne. He is an academic, researcher, executive coach and consultant interested in the integration of coaching and positive psychology in educational and health settings. He has published widely in the field, regularly speaks at global conferences and has given presentations and delivered training in Europe, the US, South America, the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Australia.

# PODCAST REVIEWS

*Suzy Hunt and Lisa Robyn Wood from the Coaching Cast share their top picks of podcasts that focus on on the ever-changing world of work*

## Suzy's choice

### Coaching Culture Podcast: Jo Wright and Dr Toomas Sarev: Coaching, high pressure environments and the NHS

(10 January 2023, 44 mins, Spotify and Apple Podcasts)

Hosted by Jo Wright, the *Coaching Culture Podcast* discusses how to make work better. In this episode Jo talks to Dr Toomas Sarev, a consultant cardiologist at Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust in the UK. They explore Toomas's experience of helping executives, leaders and senior medical professionals find clarity in their thoughts and solutions through a coaching approach.

I'm a fairly frequent user of the National Health Service (NHS) due to living with type 1 diabetes, but I hadn't really ever fully appreciated that, aside from the great clinical work it does, the NHS is a workplace for many – silly I know! So this discussion of coaching within the context of the NHS captured my interest from the start.

Toomas starts by detailing his story and career to date. Originally from Estonia, he studied medicine and moved to work in the UK in 2010. He talks of how he found his early experiences of leadership – 'I hated anything leadership' – but explains that, after going on to study psychology and experience the good and the not-so-good practices of leadership, his interest in leadership changed. On coaching, his view is that the secret to coaching is quite simple: listening to people and asking them questions. He went on to develop the understanding that he had been coaching others for many years without even realising it, helping connect the dots for others by asking the right questions. It made me stop and reflect: I bet lots of people are coaching on a regular basis without realising that is what they are doing.

The discussion then goes onto reference the Covid-19 pandemic. It impacted the NHS like never before and the effects are still being felt today, a highly pressurised and challenging working environment for many. So what can a coaching culture look like within the NHS today? Toomas brings this to life by detailing what it could look like in daily practice. For example, when working with trainees, they may ask him what they should do. By responding back and asking them what they would do, you are creating a coaching culture. He has stopped asking questions that start with why. Reframing them as 'what made you...?' questions immediately eliminates a defensive response from the other party. A small but powerful change in creating a more collaborative and trusting work environment.

On coaching within his role in cardiology, he tries to champion listening and not giving advice: 'the most powerful learning comes from your own ideas and experiences.' He acknowledges though that sometimes advice is needed in high-pressure, challenging situations. Yet, when people are asked questions, listened to with curiosity rather than the intent to reply, given the opportunity to find their own solutions and answers, he finds that the results are often positive, with increases in happiness and trust – crucial to the NHS right now.

Toomas recognises that to implement a coaching culture into the NHS or indeed any large medical organisation is a huge task and something that he can't do on his own. Everyone in the organisation has a role to play. By trying to make the time we spend at work more enjoyable, by coming together and connecting with those who are carrying out the work through advocating a coaching approach, hopefully that will happen. He suggests that for this approach to really be embedded within the NHS, a top-down approach is required: a systemic approach that builds the right culture, identifies where people are at and refurbishes the styles of conversations happening – from trainee level right through the organisation – thus reducing the gap between intent and impact of critical conversations with colleagues and peers.

Toomas has his own podcast in the making and, if this episode is anything to go by, I imagine it will also make for a fascinating listen.



#### Our top five podcasts for you to check out this issue:

1. **Your Bravo Career** with Mark Crossfield
2. **Coaching Culture Podcast**
3. **Career Happiness Podcast** with Soma Ghosh
4. **Beyond the Water Cooler** with Lisa Lloyd
5. **No Bullsh!t Leadership** with Martin G Moore

Available on Apple Podcasts and Spotify

*Lisa's choice*

## Your Bravo Career with Mark Crossfield: #49, How to decide what's next in your mid-career, with guest Courtney Kirschbaum

(13 September 2022, 53 mins, Spotify and Apple Podcasts)

Mark Crossfield is a professional career coach who is passionate about supporting individuals to find happiness and satisfaction in their work. In his podcast, Crossfield seeks to share actionable career advice with the help of a variety of guests, sharing their career stories, their experience, their skills and those lightbulb moments that gave them the clarity to act and move forwards.

Here, Crossfield invites career strategist Courtney Kirschbaum to discuss how to continue to progress your career and elevate your success during the mid-point of your life.

The mid-point of our career may not seem like an obvious time to make changes. For many of us, this point has already witnessed us expending the energy of our youth to take risks, jump on new opportunities, test out new ideas and forge a secure platform to support the life we want: travel, houses, cars, children and so on.

However, the mid-point of a career can be a time when we question what we really want. We've reached a maturity that brings awareness and understanding of who we are, what we enjoy, what we don't enjoy and what makes us tick. It's at this point that we can find there is a misalignment between what we enjoy and what's important to us, and what we actually do. Often, though, we've become settled in a routine – a routine that provides for us and potentially others – and disrupting this feels irresponsible and scary.

Kirschbaum and Crossfield share their thoughts and ideas about how to address feelings of fear and confidence during the mid-point of our lives.

### ABOUT THE REVIEWERS

Suzy Hunt and Lisa Robyn Wood are experienced commercial leaders, qualified coaches and the hosts of *The Coaching Cast* podcast. In 2020, when the commercial world worked from their sheds, bedrooms and kitchen tables, the pair sought a place where they could go to feel supported and less alone at work. Unable to find what they were looking for they created *The Coaching Cast*. Suzy and Lisa hunt down the conversations no-one else is having in the working world and raise them in a light-hearted but insightful way. Listen to *The Coaching Cast* on Spotify, Apple Podcasts and Google Podcasts. Visit [thecoachingcast.co.uk](https://thecoachingcast.co.uk) to learn more.



Kirschbaum invites the listener to trust their instincts: lean into what feels right, lean away from those that don't and take small steps to move forwards, to build confidence. She concludes that, if it doesn't work, it can be changed again. Taking action is the key. Seeking the right professional support will also help you make the right choices and avoid others' agendas muddying your own and becoming a distraction.

I particularly like their reframing of impostor syndrome. Kirschbaum offers that we should all want to experience impostor syndrome – that it indicates that we are pushing, stretching and challenging ourselves to an extent that will enable us to fulfil our potential. Kirschbaum believes that the common mistake we tend to make is aiming too low in our job search and applying for roles that we feel comfortable we can secure. She feels that this will not keep us interested or engaged for long and that applying for a larger, stretching role will lead to greater reward while supporting us to realise our potential and maintain our engagement for a longer period.

I'll conclude with my favourite quote from the episode: 'Get out of the easy chair, because the longer you stay in it the harder it is to leave.'

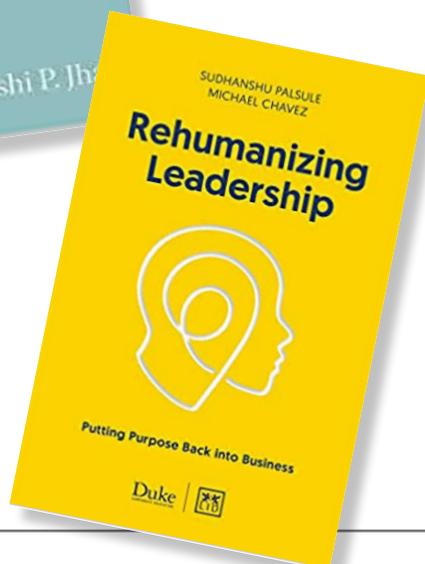
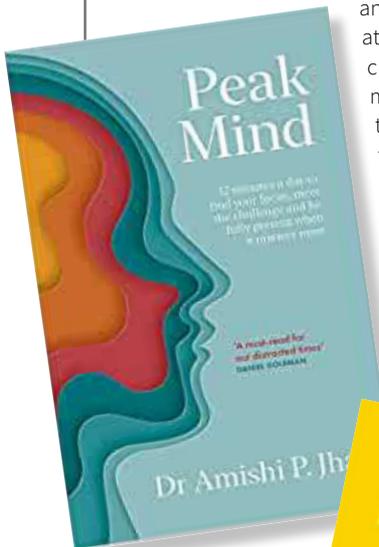


# THE READING ROOM

**Sarah David** and **Lizzie Bentley Bowers** present a range of books that reflect on the challenges of changing organisations and embracing team coaching – plus a couple of titles that take them back to the foundations of coaching individuals.

## The challenges of changing organisations

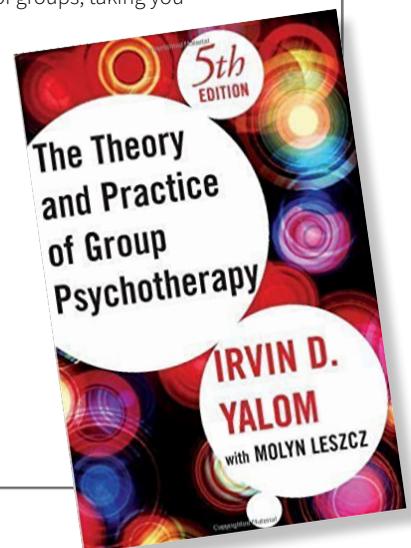
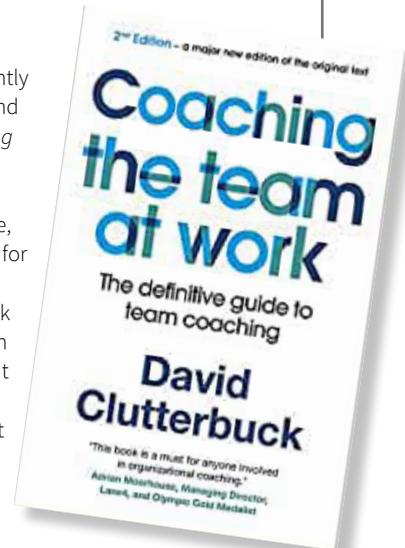
*Peak Mind* by Dr Amishi P. Jha and *Rehumanizing Leadership* by Sudhanshu Palsule and Michael Chavez both acknowledge the peculiar complexities of 21st century leadership, while honouring that there are some fundamental challenges that have not changed across the centuries. After all, monks in the year 420 AD 'felt overwhelmed with information'! Jha is unapologetic that our ancient struggles with attention can only be supported by ancient techniques, presenting plenty of research on the positive role of meditation and mindfulness – if leaders could only find 12 minutes a day to practise it. Palsule and Chavez build a similar case for attention as a 21st-century leader's critical resource, again offering mindfulness and curiosity as vital to coping with attention deficit in the midst of ambiguity. Both books are ultimately uplifting treatises on the role that coaches can play in supporting and challenging leaders to guide individuals and teams through choppy waters.

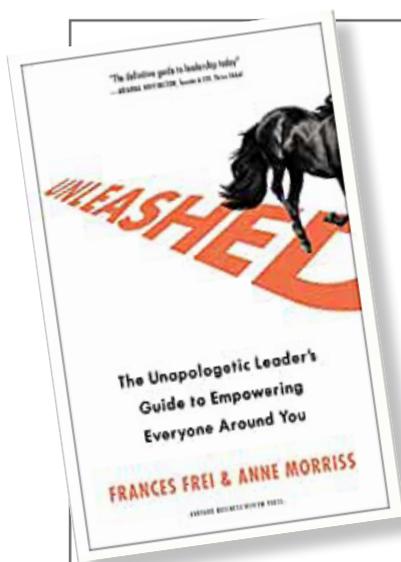


## Team and group coaching

As a coach leader you are frequently shifting between coaching one and coaching many. We offer *Coaching the Team at Work: The definitive guide to team coaching* by David Clutterbuck as a highly accessible, evidence-based, practical toolkit for how to coach more effectively at group and team level. Clutterbuck balances his practical insight with often amusing yet always relevant asides about his practice and own learnings. Did you know that 360 degree feedback was first established by a communist trade union to control managers?! We both have a well-thumbed copy of *Group and Team Coaching* by Christine Thornton, a slightly less dense yet no less practical handbook.

There is still much less research on group/team coaching compared to 1:1, and what is written is largely built on psychotherapy principles. The 800-page manual that is *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy* by Irvin D Yalom and Moly Leszcz is a wonderful deep dive into the complexity and challenge of groups, taking you through the various stages of group dynamics, as well as giving the reader ways to respond to the challenging group member such as 'the monopolist' and 'the help-rejecting complainer'.





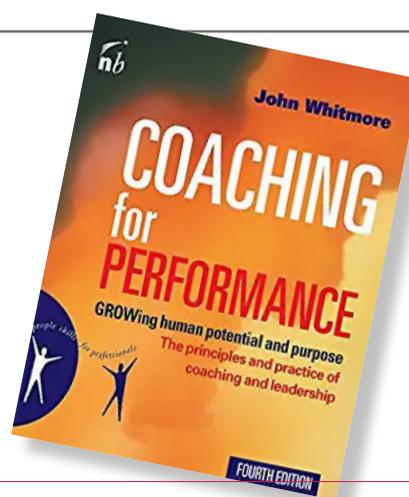
### Coaching individuals as a coach or leader

*Unleashed* by Frances Frei and Anne Morriss is subtitled 'The Unapologetic Leader's Guide to Empowering Everyone Around You'. Frei and Morriss exhort leaders to have conversations that really matter with team members. They argue that by not having these conversations, and by not giving people the guidance and insight they really need, leaders are making a 'decision to trade off other people's excellence in order to stay within the limits of your own emotional safety zone'. The book blends some of the principles of radical candour, servant leadership and high performance with heavy doses of challenge and encouragement to lead in a coaching style for the benefit of all.

*Coaching for Performance: The Principles and Practice of Coaching and Leadership* by John Whitmore was first published 25 years ago and both of us read earlier editions as part of our coaching training. The fifth edition, completed shortly before Whitmore's death, includes a new performance curve, an appendix of coaching questions and more focus on leaders bringing feedback into a coaching style of leadership.

*We'd love to hear your thoughts on our choices, and to discover what would be on your reading list for these topics. As well as getting in touch through social media, we are delighted to have started The Reading Room Live – a space where we can come together to share insights from the books we have shared here, and to hear your recommendations for books and resources related to the topic that weren't on the list.*

*Our next session is on 9 June and we'd love you to join us. The Reading Room Live is a complimentary webinar hosted by the AC for all coaches and supervisors. Visit the AC website for more details and to sign up.*



### ABOUT THE REVIEWERS



Sarah David focuses on creating positive direction with leaders who want to make a difference. She partners with clients to clarify strategy, accelerate leadership impact and nurture positive culture. Having worked at executive and non-executive level in global and multi-site businesses, she is experienced in embracing complexity and working with leadership teams to find simple, impactful solutions. Sarah is a qualified lawyer with a strategy MBA, and is a master's-level coach with research focused on the role of leaders' mental fitness.

[sarah@thrive.com](mailto:sarah@thrive.com)



Lizzie Bentley Bowers is an accredited coach working with senior leaders and teams who understand the far-reaching impact they have on both organisational outcomes and individual wellbeing, and who want to create and sustain environments in which they, their colleagues and their organisations thrive. She is skilled at supporting and challenging teams to understand and leverage their strengths, and to uncover what is getting in their way in order to increase wellbeing, trust and performance.

[lizzie@thecausewaycoaching.com](mailto:lizzie@thecausewaycoaching.com)

# BOOK REVIEWS

## RUNNING ON EMPTY

***Burnout could sneak up on any of us at any time, but there are ways through it. Dr Rob Kemp is left with a sense of hope having read this collection of lyrical storytelling.***

Amy Bradley and Katherine Semler lay out scenarios of workplace burnout in this compact and easy-to-read book. Helpfully, they also describe how burnout indicators can be binary: people who would not be classified as burnt-out according to an inventory scale may yet experience highly problematic relationships with their work.

Seeking meaning and purpose in our work seems to have been a prominent theme of the past several years. However, this seemingly benign intention has potential adverse consequences. As we look to our work for a sense of fulfilment, we risk positioning it centrally in our lives at the expense of everything else, and so our likelihood of experiencing burnout increases.

The study that gave rise to this book sought to inquire about two groups – those at risk of, and those experiencing, workplace burnout. Participants' stories were heard through a variety of methods, and some are recounted in *Running on Empty*. The Covid-19 pandemic is a backdrop common to many of these accounts.

As coaches, we will no doubt be familiar with clients coming to us with overwhelm – a key component of burnout, though often only recognised by sufferers in the 'rear-view mirror'. We see inside contributors' lives both in the thick of trauma and in retrospect through 'five songs of burnout'. It was an interesting choice by the authors to use the metaphor of song to describe these stories; it gives the contributor voices an almost epic or poetic quality. I found the way these scenarios are presented to be both narratively and emotionally captivating, and the circumstances may be familiar and reminiscent for some.

The factors and their combinations that contribute to an individual's burnout are discussed and, while there are some commonalities, each story is unique.

General fatigue is clearly not desirable, but rest does nothing to alleviate the root causes of burnout. Recovery is a longer process, and while contributors did not feel fully recovered they had learned to restore some balance in their lives. The healing practices that helped restore and rebalance are laid out in a dedicated chapter, 'Finding our way back'.

**TITLE:** *Running on Empty: Navigating the Dangers of Burnout at Work*

**AUTHORS:** Dr Amy Bradley and Dr Katherine Semler

**PUBLISHER:** LID Publishing

**PUBLICATION DATE:** October 2022

**PAPERBACK PRICE:** £13

**ISBN:** 978-1911687320



The final chapter and epilogue of this book are focused on what a potential future might be like. They include some discussion around areas where changes can be made at both an individual and systemic level. I found this chapter to be the most thought-provoking as a coach – reflecting about my role in scenarios where burnout, or potential burnout, exists. I thought about how I could better support individuals with this fresh insight, and my responsibilities towards organisations. I thought about my desire to make the world a better place through coaching – and how that desire might challenge some of my practice as a coach as opposed to, say, as a consultant. I noticed my desire to intervene directly in some of these stories, and how my rescuer was triggered – my Robin Hood drive to want to right all the wrongs of the world (and how that might be an unhelpful drive for a coach).

We will see the book differently depending on how we approach it. My primary focus in reading it was to identify and work better with workplace burnout as a coach. I found *Running on Empty* informative, thought-provoking and ultimately hopeful – while not offering an unconvincing easy fix. I appreciated this book for its content and style, and it has had an impact on my thinking and my future practice.

### ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Dr Rob Kemp has recently been appointed as head of accredited coach training at Barefoot Coaching. After a corporate career, Rob dedicated his professional life and learning to coaching – through a postgraduate certificate (2005), an MSc (2013) and a doctorate of coaching and mentoring (2021). Having practised as a coach for almost two decades, Rob is now also developing other coaches through training and supervision.

He can be reached at [rob@barefootcoaching.co.uk](mailto:rob@barefootcoaching.co.uk).

## SUPERHUMAN COACHING

***A must read for coaches, supervisors or any professionals curious about the ways in which technology will continue to enhance human-to-human interaction, says Clare Beckett-McInroy.***

The author of *Superhuman Coaching*, Sam Isaacson, is a pioneer in 'CoachTech'. He's the global director of consulting at CoachHub and chair of the UK government's coaching professional apprenticeship trailblazer group, and works closely with the ICF and EMCC Global. Clearly an expert in the field, Sam defines CoachTech as 'any technology used by a coach for coaching purposes'. The extremely wide-ranging content of his book provides excellent insight and knowledge on CoachTech tools, platforms and apps for use with coaching clients.

Isaacson has provided us with a tremendously user-friendly resource. He argues that there is currently a mismatch between the widespread use of technology for enhancing creative learning and the range of options available. As interest grows, CoachTech needs to be balanced with 'rapport between the coach and the coachee [being]... one of the biggest factors in coaching outcomes'.

By using the technology attitude questionnaire presented at the start of the book, I was pleased to learn that I could in fact be a 'Gadget Geek', having considered myself a 'Scared Sceptic'. After reading the book I was excited to learn about the use of technologies that were brand new to me, including artificial intelligence and artwork-generating tools, plus enhanced use of whiteboards for enriching coaching.

Structured around 10 themes, we are provided with overviews of various technologies: from MeetinVR's range of meeting locations; to VirtualSpeech provision of public speaking skill development; ProReal's 3D landscapes; MyNoise's soundscapes for multisensory coaching; Deckhive's virtual cards; and Miro and other digital whiteboards that utilise timelines, systemic coaching constellations, planning and other functions.

Isaacson stresses the need for being playful, and of using technology to enhance the coaching experience and learning for the coachee.

The book made me curious about the uses of CoachTech with coachees who are neurodiverse, have learning difficulties, or who might struggle with a language barrier and so forth. Going forward I will also be investigating the use of Ovida, an AI platform that can identify key moments of coaching sessions by analysing speech and facial expressions.

**TITLE:** *Superhuman Coaching: Ten technologies that expand coaching beyond what's humanly possible*

**AUTHOR:** Sam Isaacson

**PUBLISHER:** Hanwell Publishing

**PUBLICATION DATE:** July 2022

**PAPERBACK PRICE:** £13

**ISBN:** 979-8836895358



Blended throughout, ethical considerations are highlighted in relation to storage of data, using tools that are fit for purpose, and ensuring practice is all about the coachee and their learning as opposed to the coach showing off.

There is so much for a coach to consider – their attitude to technology, the skill level of their clients, and use with groups and teams. As a starting point, the conclusions of the book make it clear that coaches should try out some of the free-to-use and more basic tools as an important means of disrupting one's go-to preferences, and also because the impact of CoachTech is going to continue to grow.

Did this book provide ideas to catalyse new ways of thinking?

Provoke experimentation?

Tickle curiosity?

Yes, yes and yes.

This book is a call to the imagination – a must for anyone who is facilitating learning. As coaches we need to 'get comfortable with using VR technology [and other tools] now, to prepare us for the inevitable'.

### ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Dr Clare Beckett-McInroy is an award-winning coach who is passionate about co-creating positive transformation in partnership with people and organisations. Her work spans culture transformation, executive and board coaching, systemic team coaching, bespoke leadership development, consulting, instructional design, experiential contextually based blended learning, harnessing equality and diversity, performance management, competency frameworks, psychometric profiling and research.

**clare@beckett-mcinroy.com**

**www.beckett-mcinroy.com**

## THE TRIUMPHANT TEAM

***Mihaela Diaconu enjoys this rich collection of 40 practical tools aimed at helping team coaches and facilitators to engage teams at their specific level of team development, whatever scenario they are facing.***

*The Triumphant Team* is a practical, well-structured collection, broadly following the idea that teams go through various stages in their development and offering you the most suitable tools to move them forward in their journey.

Dr Woods advises us from the outset that the session and the tool we choose are our playgrounds, and that we can tailor them to fit the needs of the team we're working with.

The book is structured in three parts. The first takes us through a comprehensive explanation of the various stages of team development – one that goes beyond the classic Tuckman structure by focusing on the possible team goals at each stage. While it appears linear in nature, somewhat paralleling the Tuckman model, the attempt to gravitate around team goals provides a flexibility that, these days, all teams need.

It also provides background and guidance on how to use the tools. It touches upon the importance of leadership in any team development endeavour and it has a couple of team readiness tests for the facilitator/coach to undertake before embarking on an intervention.

The second part of the book takes us through each of the six team development stages identified by Woods, providing between five and eight different possible practices to choose from for each stage. The practices have inspirational quotes to accompany them, and abound with underlying subtle human focus, undoubtedly testament to the author's rich experience as a coach and psychologist practitioner. For ease, they're all presented with the same structure, explained as follows:

- What this practice can help with
- About this practice
- Time
- What you will need
- Step-by-step guide
- Tips for getting the most from this practice

**TITLE:** *The Triumphant Team: 40 dynamic practices to transform any team*

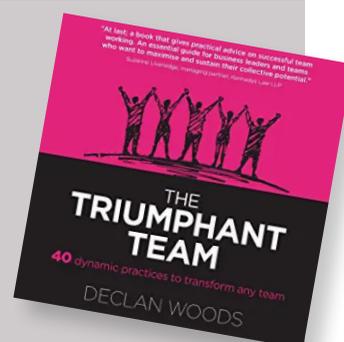
**AUTHOR:** Dr Declan Woods

**PUBLISHER:** Teamgenie Books

**PUBLICATION DATE:** 2022

**PAPERBACK PRICE:** £17.25

**ISBN:** 978-1739148300



The third part is an epilogue with concluding remarks, and a list of references and resources for coaches to enjoy discovering.

As a closing remark, I would like to share with you my favourite practice: number 33, preventing your team from burning out. It's a comprehensive practice that supports individuals and teams to take charge of their ways of working, set boundaries and work towards improving 'endurance resilience'. Woods advises teams to monitor and measure what changes and boundaries work and to acknowledge them, setting the team on a virtuous improvement spiral.

### ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Mihaela is an organisational psychologist focusing on leadership, people and organisational development/effectiveness as a coach, facilitator and consultant. Mihaela's mission is to support humans to flourish at work and build thriving workplaces and communities by using business psychology principles – one conversation, one experience and one process at a time. She has an MSc in organisational psychology, is a certified corporate and executive coach and business psychologist, and a fellow of the Chartered Management Institute. She has an extensive background in operational, project and product management and is also a British Psychological Association psychometrics test user.

## THE GIFT OF COACHING

***Ingrid Seim enjoys the duality present in Erik de Haan's latest book, which upholds love over fear in coaching conversations and contains powerful messages for new and experienced coaches alike.***

This book is a tribute to coaching and the coaching process, and to the power they have to bring about change. Staying within the parameters of the book itself, they could even be likened to a love song, and at their most powerful when they embrace the aspects of trust, compassion and hope that embody the sentiment of love in De Haan's coaching universe. That universe is also very much centred within the space of executive coaching, which might be useful to note prior to reading.

The opening chapter starts off as a model of leaning into love over fear, referencing mounting evidence that coaching works: that, provided there are good intentions on both sides, coaching will bring about positive change. It should help remove the layer of fear that so many coaches have, especially when starting out: fear of not being good enough or not 'doing it right'. Coaches might become better at their job simply by reading this first chapter.

The remaining chapters in the first section of the book delve deeper into the components that form the building blocks of an effective coaching conversation. It is a logical next step: centring us in the moment of the very thing that brings about change so that we can hone our coaching skills within it, and emphasising the importance of listening, engaging and understanding.

While enlightening, these chapters do lean quite heavily on elements from psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, and might be less accessible to those not trained in these disciplines. Ironically, they on some level also reintroduce the concept that there is indeed a 'right' way – that there is a source of truth somewhere that we will uncover if only we listen attentively enough, are aware of all aspects of transference or notice something at the right time. Rather than change being co-created through the magic of a coaching conversation approached with love and good intentions, there's a sense that we are looking at a Plato's cave of thoughts, feelings and behaviours whose real meanings can only be discovered if we master all the elements of the conversation correctly.

This tension – the dichotomy between understanding and not understanding, knowing and trusting, evidence base and intuition, imposing a framework or model and leaving things to be discovered in the moment – is to some extent embodied throughout the book itself. Powerful as they are, the love over fear theme or even the individual section and chapter titles don't always seem to intuitively match the allocated content – one gets the sense that many of the chapters could easily have been regrouped under a different heading to illuminate a different aspect. The fact that many of the chapters are amended versions of previously published articles might have something to do with this, at times making the book feel like a collection of essays on coaching moulded into an overall framework rather than the other way around.

**TITLE:** *The Gift of Coaching: Love over Fear in Helping Conversations*

**AUTHOR:** Erik de Haan

**PUBLISHER:** Open University Press

**PUBLICATION DATE:** October 2022

**PAPERBACK PRICE:** £28

**ISBN:** 978-0335251988



Despite this, *The Gift of Coaching* remains a strong homage to helping conversations and the very humanity that is embedded within them.

It emphasises trust, learning and supervision over one-sided evaluations and obsessions with metrics. It has a refreshing take on psychometrics, highlighting the risks of overreliance on them, plus the potentially negative impact they can have on coachees and the power dynamic of the coaching relationship. This should give everyone food for thought. The chapter on advocacy – highlighting how the current state of the world is defined by a leadership crisis that coaches are excellently poised to do something about – is a welcome and pragmatic stance on an issue that for many, understandably, is defined by fear. There is a whole section on staying humble: particularly insightful here are the reports of how experienced coaches can fall into the trap of presuming themselves to be experts and more efficient than evidence states. This decoupling of experience and impact is powerful and serves yet again to bring it all back to everyone's ability to be present, to reflect and to stay with the moment.

There is an interesting tension here too: the very notion of learning and reflection indicates that we can indeed get better at our craft. It is, however, almost as if coaching and the work required to become – or remain – a skilled coach exists on a different continuum. It is always in the here and now, and it is our ability to hone the skills needed to stay within those moments that is going to serve us. This is ongoing work, which perhaps, as indicated, can get more challenging with time. The fact that De Haan identifies supervision – another conversation taking place in the here and now – as key to this work is another poignant indicator of what coaching is all about.

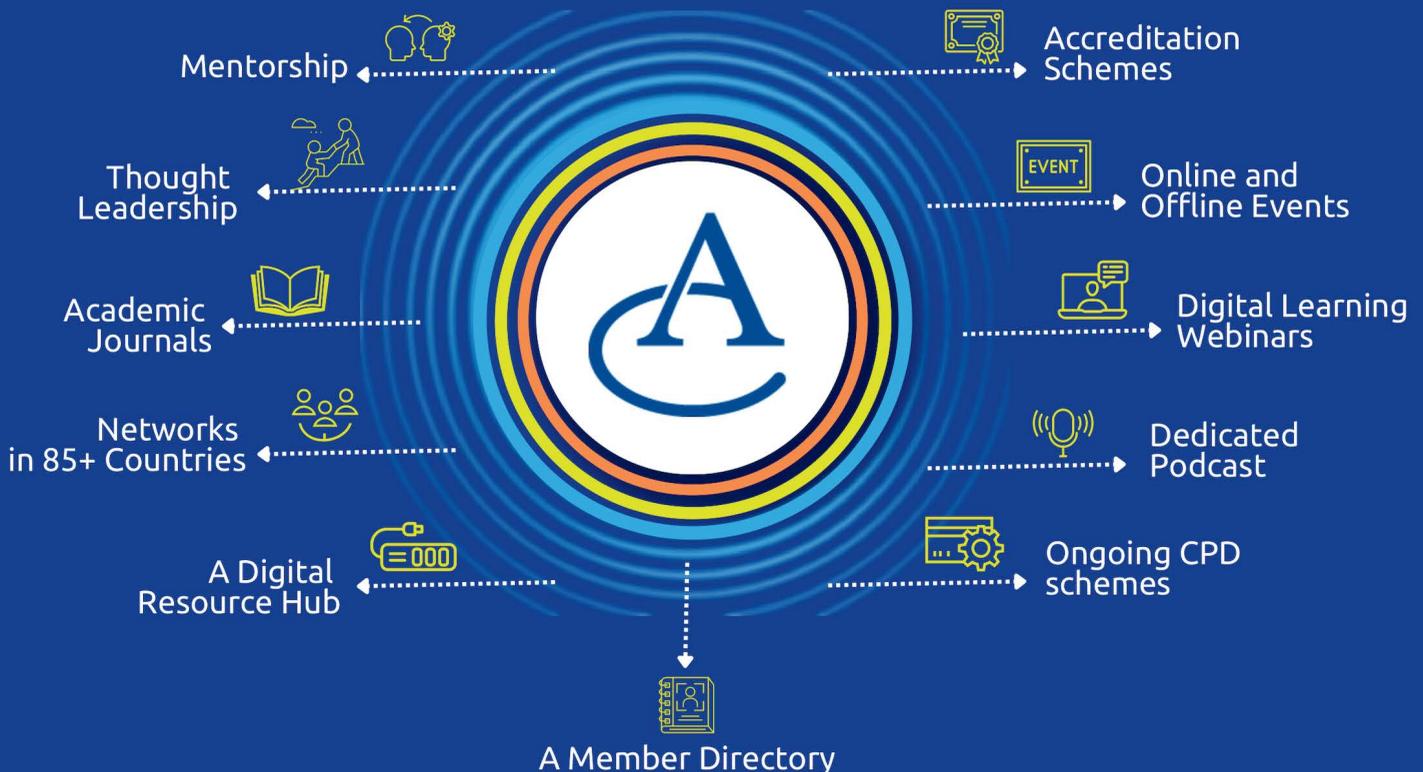
*The Gift of Coaching* is a rich, insightful and compassionate book. The fact that the framework seems slightly stretched at times might even serve as an analogy to coaching itself: a meandering process that sometimes lends itself to multiple interpretations or insights depending on where you are at any given time. Ultimately, however, with the right intentions it is likely to bring about change for the better.

### ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Ingrid Seim is a psychological coach and the founder of Avenues Consultancy & Coaching. She guest lectures on the positive and coaching psychology MA programme in the School of Applied Psychology at University College Cork, Ireland, and is a co-founder of the Positive Coaching Lab there.

# Unlock the potential 2023 has to offer...

Our members have access to a wide-ranging toolkit designed to suit their individual coaching journeys:



*Advancing coaching in business and society, worldwide*

[www.associationforcoaching.com](http://www.associationforcoaching.com)

