

JANUARY 2023 | ISSUE 36

Coaching Perspectives

THE ASSOCIATION FOR COACHING
GLOBAL MAGAZINE



Coaching and Identity

Deep dive: who do we care to be?

How critical reflection drives social change

Identity ownership: essential for confident leaders

What can permaculture teach us?

Coaching gay men: what coaches need to know



ADVANCING COACHING IN BUSINESS AND SOCIETY, WORLDWIDE

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Man, opposite

The man opposite
Is you
Opposite to you
To who you thought
Was you
Your opposite
Man, opposite.

The sign of strength
Of a man
Is to protect, be gentle
Whatever you thought
Was the mark of a man
Think again
Let go of your plan
It's the opposite
Man, opposite.

Soften into your power...
That grip in your fingers
Your gut, your face
Is rage, grief, regret
A function of the cage
You've built
And has been built around you,
You're opposite
Man, opposite.

Like the Matrix
And the Adjustment Bureau
Things are not as they seem
And...this is also not a dream
Escape through courage
Coeur-rage, heart rage
Refuse the cage
Be the Man, opposite

And when the tears arrive
Hot and sudden
Jerking from your eyes
From a source unknown
Let them flow
Until you know, man
No longer
Man, opposite.

Alister Scott



As I sit down to write this editorial I am struck by the scale of the concept of identity. There are so many facets and nuances to explore. We learn that it is shaped by external environments, experiences and expectations, and then blended with an internal sense of purpose, strengths and values. It is not a singular concept, as we carry multiple parts within ourselves. It is complex and ever-changing, much like the world we live in. It shows up in coaching explicitly but often implicitly too. Thank you as ever to our writers, who have shared their thoughts and experiences in a bumper edition that we hope will challenge and inspire you in equal measure.

There are strong calls to action here for us as individuals and as coaches. Hetty Einzig encourages us to reimagine the concept of care, to switch from an individual lens to a collective view and capture that elusive sense of 'oneness' that is so critical to our wellbeing – and ultimately the survival of our species and the planet. Charmaine Roche calls on us to embrace critical reflection as part of our practice and to take action for social change. Bex Harper invites us into the world of permaculture, which enables us to identify with a way of living that is more connected, meaningful and sustainable.

We are reminded of the fluid nature of identity, which shifts and develops across a lifetime – beautifully captured in our interview with Anthony Kasozi. I was struck by the concept of identity as a radical statement, and how the choices we make about how we present ourselves to the world can have a significant impact. I was reminded of my 11-year-old self, moving from London to the countryside, making a conscious decision to rewrite my accent the second I started secondary school. My Cockney lilt was abandoned overnight and replaced with deep Cumbrian tones. Not a brave, radical act – driven instead by the need to fit in – but nonetheless a key decision concerning identity. Louise Sheppard highlights how the issues executives are bringing to coaching have changed significantly since the Covid-19 pandemic, and how with this comes an identity shift for coaches and a far greater focus on self-development in supervision.

There are multiple transition points in life that offer us a chance to reflect and redefine our identity: our first significant job; career promotions; retirement; having a family; facing an empty nest; menopause; the list goes on... As my daughter finishes university and my son sets off for a year of travels, I know only too well the sense of being poised on the cusp of a major change – remembering the richness of the last 20 years and beginning to see the opportunities ahead. A reimagining of roles and identity is inevitable. These moments are often full of high and complex emotions, requiring us to look backwards and forwards simultaneously, to be compassionate towards ourselves and others, and to be courageous as we face the future. See research articles by Dr Andrea Kilpatrick on the importance of identity ownership for leaders, and by Professor Penny Dick, Jenny Pollock and Emma Shute on redefining the concept of career success.

Our columnists and book reviews all provide additional resources to stimulate your thoughts on identity. On a lighter note, we also hope you enjoy the arrival of cartoons by David Love on page 5.

A final thought: whom among you already identifies as a writer? Or could, given the chance? We are always keen to hear fresh voices from new writers around the world. If this calls to you in some way, please contact us at editor@associationforcoaching.com. We would be delighted to discuss your ideas for an article.

Warm wishes,

Clare Manning

**Clare Manning
Co-editor**

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Since publication we have been notified of a mistake with the references for the article 'Inequities, health and belonging: the impact of systematic oppression' by Marie Faire and Fenella Trevillion in the October 2022 edition of Coaching Perspectives. We apologise for any inconvenience caused. The online edition has been updated and can be accessed via the AC website.

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

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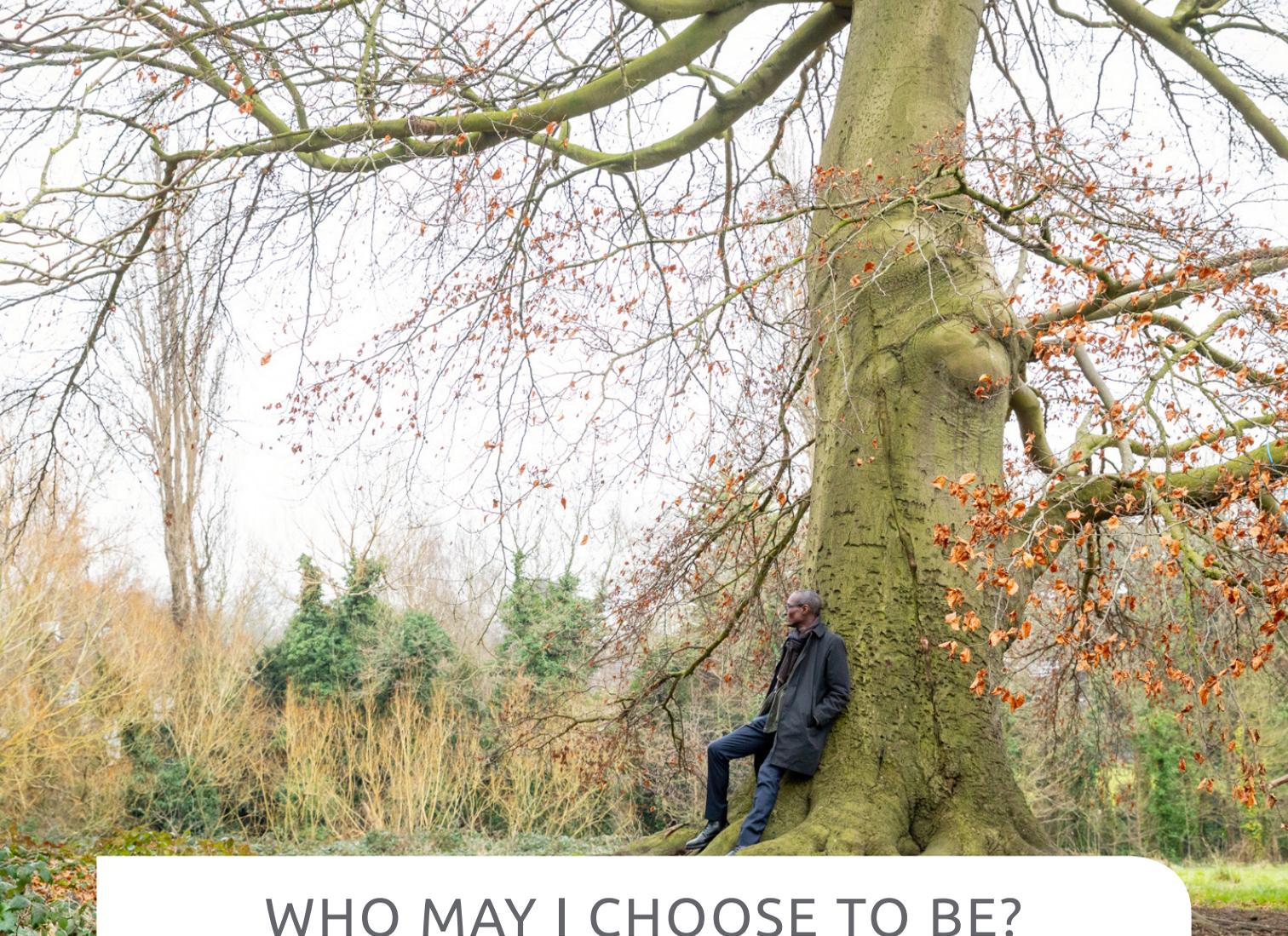
Coaching capers by davidLove (art-based coach/supervisor) #1: Coaching & identity



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.

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WHO MAY I CHOOSE TO BE?

Do we choose our identity or does our identity choose us? How does our sense of identity change over our lifetimes? In a wide-ranging interview with co-editor James Bridgeman, **Anthony Kasozi** explores the complex evolution of identity.

'WHO MAY I CHOOSE TO BE?' HOW DID THAT QUESTION EMERGE FOR YOU?

Through an unfolding awareness – one that started early in my life, and has evolved slowly and in increasingly revealing and developing ways. This encompassed at first an innocent awareness, then a conscious awareness, an intellectual awareness and then what I refer to as an organisational and sociological awareness – ending now with a personal reflective and relational awareness.

The innocent awareness of this choice occurred when I was very young, around five or six. My grandfather worked in the king's court in Buganda in Uganda, with lots of military ceremony that really caught my attention. I would greet him when he came home and salute him – and he'd call me 'Anthony-General', and that was who I was. It's stayed with me – my sisters would call me that – and that was my first awareness of 'I can choose to be that'.

Then came my conscious awareness, going a long way from home to boarding school, aged 12. I realised I could choose to be something else. I chose to use the name Anthony Kasozi, rather than being known by Anthony Sebyala, my clan name – very deliberately, because I wanted to be differentiated from my brother. I realised that through relationships, what I chose to do, how I chose to dress, I could choose to be different things. You also realise that you can choose to be the nerd, the socialite or whatever, as it suited. I wasn't the same at home as I was at school. So that was a much more conscious awareness.

Then, as a teenage refugee in Kenya with my parents, when we left Uganda and Idi Amin's rule, came an intellectual awareness; suddenly I realised I was an 'alien'. I had to carry an alien identity card. I was told I was different from all the other boys in school: was I going to be proud of that difference, or hide it? At the time, I was

reading Anwar Sadat's autobiography, *In Search Of Identity*, in which he talks about his own identity and the identity of Egypt. I started noticing at that time too that African countries were changing their names – Upper Volta became Burkina Faso, Rhodesia became Zimbabwe – and people were choosing to use their African names rather than their European names: Cassius Clay had become Muhammad Ali. He was and is a hero of mine – but it raised lots of questions. So I developed an intellectual awareness: that you could use this as a statement, a radical thing, to not simply sit with what is given you, but to question it.

Now as an adult, with roles and responsibilities, I have an organisational and sociological awareness. When I was navigating the corporate ladder, I wondered: why would anyone bother to be a manager or leader? They had more work, had more trouble and were blamed when things went wrong. It was only when I realised that managing was an opportunity to help people do what they really want to do, and to do it very well and be happy with it, that it clicked – 'ah, that is something that I would choose to be!' And then, I had a reason for being a manager, as opposed to being labelled a manager.

Now, it's very much about me choosing very carefully what I call myself – an OD practitioner, a writer – because those are things that I feel comfortable with. I struggle a bit with 'coach'. For the purposes of earning a living and connecting with others, I'm happy to live with the term, but I think the label 'coach' is in some ways too broad, at times too reductive, as to what it is we do. I say 'I coach and I do XYZ,' rather than label myself directly as such.

Our experiences inform us, shape us and even make us, but they do not define us completely – certainly not when we are still able to reflect, expect and aspire

HOW USEFUL ARE LABELS IN QUESTIONS OF IDENTITY?

It's often to do with context, and intent: who's using them, and for what purposes? The question I often ask is: 'does this help?' Is it helping me, helping others, helping us to connect? Or is it getting in the way, because labels can box you in – but they can also give you a place to rest. I remember turning up and saying: 'hello, I'm Anthony Kasozi, I'm the consultant,' and somebody turned around and said: 'not another bloody consultant.' I realised: OK, that didn't help!

But my names are labels – Sebyala, my Ugandan Deer clan name, immediately places me and locates me within the Baganda people. No doubt within Uganda and the Baganda it helps me fit in and gives me certain privileges (and responsibilities!). It helps me. Then, in Kenya, not having a Kenyan name immediately singled me out, and not necessarily in a helpful way.

WHAT OF THOSE WHO FEEL THEIR CHOICE OF IDENTITY IS BEING DENIED TO THEM BY OTHERS?

Some existential questions can be hidden away or obscured from sight. Such denial does not remove them. We are born curious, seeking meaning, finding and exploring. My reading of various histories and biographies suggests that you can no longer deny a people or an individual this choice once they choose to express it. It may take time and it may not be easy, but that choice eventually rises. And once it does, the power to express it will follow, and this is not in the hands of the oppressors. It is in a gift to the oppressed. Like in Victor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*, in the end they can't really control what's going on in your head and what's going on in your heart. Once that starts expressing itself it becomes a battle. I'm not saying it is easy and I'm not saying it always ends well, but it cannot be denied.

WHAT HAPPENS TO US WHEN WE SHARE AN AUTHENTIC STORY OF IDENTITY?

I've been talking to lots of people sharing their experiences of identity and a number of things surprised me. In sharing stories, very often we allow ourselves to see ourselves and to be more fully seen as we choose to be by others. There's a lot of processing that goes on – about the past, what's happened, what's happening – but it's only when we start telling the stories that we bring to the fore what may not have been acknowledged.

We need invitation and time to tell our stories, as well as good listeners. Very often in today's harried world we have none of these. These days, we don't invite people to come, and say: 'James, you share with us; sit around the fireplace for a while and we will give you time to tell us your story, until you finish.' We don't live like that, and we desperately need to. We need people who just sit there and listen attentively (a bit like my grandchild does, always asking what happened next!) – that kind of really engaged listening.

Hearing other people's stories also has a profound effect. Stories show how all of us are uniquely different from each other. Despite having common and shared experiences and even being brought up in very similar ways, our experiences of life, how they make sense and have shaped and influenced how we see ourselves and others, is so richly different and unique. It's very affirming, particularly if it's hard. It doesn't have to be a really good, uplifting story. It can just be an authentic story. There's a certain freedom in having shared that: now we can connect around something else, and there's a new possibility that can emerge. When I haven't shared that, it is almost like a burden that I am carrying on my own.

From listening to all the stories that I have heard from others, I am aware that our experiences inform us, shape us and even make us, but they do not define us completely – certainly not when we are still able to reflect, expect and aspire. They can be foundations from which to construct possibility: foundations that we can retrospectively underpin and strengthen, even change and supplement, even if we can never (and may never want to) completely get rid of them.

Stories are also essentially about learning. The oral tradition is alive in us and is a way of carrying themes and memes through life and

across generations. When we share our stories, they come to life and they live on – within us, and through and in others. I often discover what I care about and what I am thinking – even as I consider myself introverted – when I start having conversations and sharing.

Finally, stories also make it possible to challenge and change. We can write chapters and end chapters. We can start and finish. We can leave parts unfinished. We can choose to put a whole book down and pick up another. We can read others' stories and let them speak to us – or we can write our own and let those engage with others. Most hopefully we can use stories to be the connector between us. They can be the way we engage and slot in with each other – find the place where we are free and free up the places that we find fixed.

We need invitation and time to tell our stories, as well as good listeners. Very often in today's harried world we have none of these

IN YOUR EXPERIENCE, HOW DO ISSUES OF IDENTITY SHOW UP IN ORGANISATIONS?

I think quite simply they show up through the people and the stories they tell. As an OD practitioner I'm always interested to hear the stories people tell about themselves: about their history, when they're joining, when they're leaving. The stories we tell ourselves, live by and choose to tell. They all tell a story of us and the organisation: how we have been, and how we aspire to be seen.

Stories either set us free or they emasculate us; for me, any story that emasculates the human spirit – that dumbs people down, that treats them with disrespect, that makes them less than what they might be, that simply makes people unhappy – doesn't bear sustaining. It's problematic and I will fight it, one way or another: I will challenge it. That's been my experience: that, more often than not, people will challenge unhelpful and fragmenting stories, particularly if they are in positions where they don't have to collude with them to survive.

WHAT DO COACHES NEED TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT WORKING WITH STORIES OF IDENTITY?

Telling stories of identity is often not an easy or painless thing to start to do. So an awareness of this has to accompany any offer or invitation to share. Always be clear of one's own intent as well as the shared intent. Start by asking 'why' as a coach: why am I doing this work now? Why does this matter?. Also ask, all the time: will this help? Is this helping? What is helping?

The other aspects are common to much work we do as coaches. Positive regard, humility, good listening and being: a zen-like quality of simply being content to sit with. Much as we have stories to share, we need compassionate, understanding and caring listeners.

Possibly just being there to sit and listen is what is most called for from the other (coach or fellow traveller), fortunate enough to be granted the opportunity to be around, present and ready to do so. I think sometimes we talk too much in coaching conversations. There's something about just being alongside each other.

There is a lovely storytellers' saying in Luganda that basically translates as: 'I am unwrapping it and you are pinching me'. You know, trying to make me go faster – the plea is to let it slowly unfold, let me unwrap it.

This is work that cannot be done in a hurry. Indeed, I would even question whether it is work. It is simply a fulfilment of itself. A lot happens when we share stories... the beauty of it is that even what can happen in and with storytelling is open-ended. That is why there will always be the story that hasn't been told, and the book that hasn't been read. It is a testament to the creativity and originality that is the essence and story of the universe and all that is in it.

This interview builds on a workshop entitled 'Stories and experiences of identity – Who may I choose to be?'; delivered by Anthony at the seventh Relational Coaching Conference at Ashridge Hult on 30 September 2022.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Tutor, coach, OD practitioner and writer. Consulting and coaching director at Quilibra Ltd. Anthony supports and facilitates the development of leaders, teams and organisations as they seek to challenge, refresh and recreate their ways of thinking, working and relating. In doing so he enables individuals and teams to stretch and change – innovating and building new abilities – to address difficult questions and to achieve extraordinary, shared outcomes. At this time, Anthony is particularly preoccupied with accompanying leaders and organisations in transition and facing difficult questions of identity, purpose and direction.

For more information, visit anthonykasozi.info/bio-notes.aspx.



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CONFIDENCE, CLARITY AND OWNERSHIP OF THE LEADER IDENTITY

The move to senior leadership is often accompanied by major knocks to confidence. Coaching may hold some answers, argues **Dr Andrea Kilpatrick**.

Having coached leaders during their transition to senior leadership over many years I have noticed that confidence is often significantly affected at this point. One of the key coaching outcomes frequently described as the coaching programme finishes (and observed throughout by myself and by organisational stakeholders, as well as by the leaders themselves) has been increased confidence. This motivated my desire to understand more, in my doctoral research, about confidence at this transition point and the role of coaching in supporting confidence.

Exploration of the literature showed confidence as a multi-dimensional concept that was difficult to define, and that there was no research in either the coaching or leadership fields exploring it in relation to leaders in transition. The largest body of research on confidence in both the coaching and leadership fields explores self-efficacy, a different but related concept to confidence, and this is mostly in passing rather than as the main research interest. These gaps in literature led me to conduct a first-person qualitative study of working with confidence in the transition to senior leadership, from the perspective of eight senior leaders and four executive coaches working with senior leaders at this transition point.

AN UNDERSTANDING OF CONFIDENCE

This study shows confidence to be a concept distinct from self-efficacy, though it shares what are considered to be some of its key

sources: feedback, support and preparation. As opposed to self-efficacy, this understanding of confidence is not related to any aspects of task, such as the belief in being able to achieve a particular goal or mastery (e.g., 'I feel confident because I have done it before').

Instead, four key areas of confidence emerged from the research, providing a new understanding of confidence within the specific context of senior leadership transition. Confidence was described as the following four areas:

- a feeling of ease and energy;
- remaining in control (primarily of emotions);
- having clarity (e.g., of direction, purpose and leader identity);
- being able to be vulnerable as a senior leader.

The experiences of loss of confidence, shown as the opposite of each of these, were even more prevalent in the findings, and these were described as:

- exhaustion and energy depletion;
- loss of control of emotions;
- lack of clarity and an experience of 'stuckness';
- the inability to show vulnerability as a senior leader.

These experiences have been drawn together in a framework (Figure 1) that is deliberately configured as a circle to show how each of these four areas interconnect.

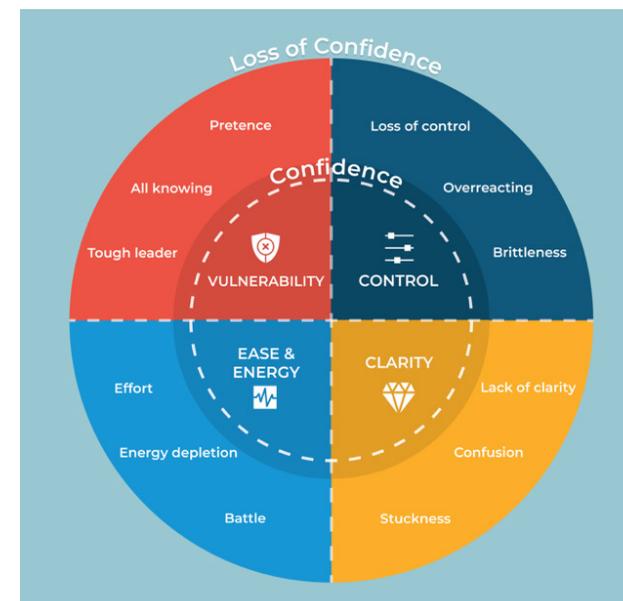


Figure 1: A framework of the experiences of confidence and loss of confidence within the context of senior leadership transition

A significant part of the challenge to confidence for new senior leaders stemmed from what the organisation was not doing. Alongside a lack of psychological safety, three key areas were shown to impact confidence if lacking from the organisation: feedback, support and help with preparation for the transition. This brings new understanding to confidence, elevating it beyond being purely a concern of the individual.

HOW COACHING HELPS

Coaching was found to be critical to supporting confidence for leaders at this transition point. It was shown to do so through: the safe space of coaching; gaining clarity (in particular of leader identity); and feedback and support.

The **safe space of coaching** helped to support the leader's confidence by allowing them to explore, share and alleviate their experiences of vulnerability. This was significant because the leaders felt that they were unable to show vulnerability within their organisations. This is illustrated by one participant (Fahima) using the metaphor of war to contrast the safety of the coaching space with how she feels in her organisation: 'It was a momentary kind of reprieve. It was almost like I could go into the little trench with her, batten down the hatches and breathe for a few minutes, but then I still had to climb my way back out and run across the field with people shooting at me.'

The safe space was created in part by having the coach alongside, sharing the weight of responsibility, and thereby by reducing the experience of loneliness that many of the leaders felt.

Finding clarity through coaching was also shown to help confidence in several ways: being able to talk things through with the coach; working out priorities; the use of certain coaching tools to enable clarity through self-awareness; helping the leaders regain clarity of purpose and direction; and gaining clarity on and then taking ownership of leader identity. Indeed, the coaches interviewed discussed how the identity transition was one of the key challenges

faced by senior leaders that impacted their confidence – more on that in a moment.

How leader identity work is enabled by executive coaching remains largely unexplored in the coaching literature, with some recent exceptions,ⁱⁱⁱ and most studies focus on leader identity work in development programmes rather than coaching.^{iii,vv} This study shows how integral leader identity development work was for the leaders at this transition point in connection with confidence. The process of working with leader identity to enable confidence was shown to include the following stages: exploration, integration of 'old stories' about the self and the eventual ownership of the new identity.

The first stage of the leader identity development process included exploration, which involved working with the coach to understand and reject the expectations of others about leader identity. The coaches described how the leaders had previously passively accepted ideas about their leader identity from others and that, at this stage of seniority, they instead needed to reject these ideas and to create their own leader identity.

The second stage of the leader identity development process included the integration of 'old stories' about the self. These stories had often been a defining part of the leader's identity, and often implying a sense of not being good enough – buried deep, but still affecting the leaders. Surfacing and integrating these stories into the new leader identity helped to create a sense of wholeness and congruence for the leader, which gave them confidence. The integration of personal identities and the resulting congruence of identity builds on our understanding of the importance of having a coherent sense of self after leadership transition.^{vi}

The process of working with leader identity to enable confidence was shown to include the following stages: exploration, integration of 'old stories' about the self and the eventual ownership of the new identity

The final stage of the leader identity development process included ownership of the reconstructed leader identity: helping the leader, through coaching, to claim how they wanted to be and, as such, a proactive (rather than passive) creation of identity. Ownership of their leader identity was shown to give the leaders confidence, described through references to energy and movement. They signified confidence throughout this study, summarised in the following excerpt from one of the coaches (Renée): 'Once they realised it was up to them to create [their identity], suddenly there was a real excitement and energy burst, because they could become the leaders that suited them, not what other people wanted from them.'

The findings also suggest that taking ownership of their identity helps leaders to have a sense of acceptance about themselves, despite any perceived or real shortcomings. The stage of ownership in the leader identity development process and the confidence it gives the leader, facilitated by the coaching, has not been previously researched in leader identity development research.

FEEDBACK AND SUPPORT

In contrast to the lack of feedback and support found in their organisation and the resulting impact on their confidence, these leaders described how the feedback and support provided by the coaching gave them confidence. This was 'informal' affirming feedback, such as a reminder of what the leader had achieved or a simple affirming message, as described by one participant (Tina): 'You're doing really well.'

In the coaching literature, the use of affirming feedback from the coach in the confidence-building process has been given only brief attention in a handful of studies.^{vii,viii,x} Use of affirming feedback is indicated as a core coaching competency only by the ICF, and its role in the confidence-building process could be explored further.

Support in coaching was described in several ways: taking away the loneliness of senior leadership through being able to share the weight of responsibility; having the coach there alongside; and the use of normalising. This understanding is helpful when we consider that the only reference to support in a coaching competency framework is in relation to the coach needing to demonstrate 'empathy and genuine support for the client'.^x

Focusing directly on confidence and how coaching supports it, this study gives an understanding of the critical role that coaching plays in supporting confidence within the context of senior leadership transition. It brings a specificity to the understanding of confidence and loss of confidence for these leaders, including showing the importance of gaining clarity on leader identity and being able to own the process. This is important because it potentially allows us to be able to work with confidence more productively, both in coaching and also in organisational leadership development.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr Andrea Kilpatrick is an experienced executive coach working with senior leaders across all sectors. Andrea has a particular interest in transitions, confidence and leadership development. She is an accredited senior practitioner with the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) and is training to be a coach supervisor. She has a doctorate in coaching from Oxford Brookes and an MSc in career management and coaching from Birkbeck, University of London. For more information, please contact Andrea at andrea@kilpatrickexecutivecoaching.com.

NOW WHAT?

These recommendations might be helpful to coaches working with confidence in the context of senior leadership transition:

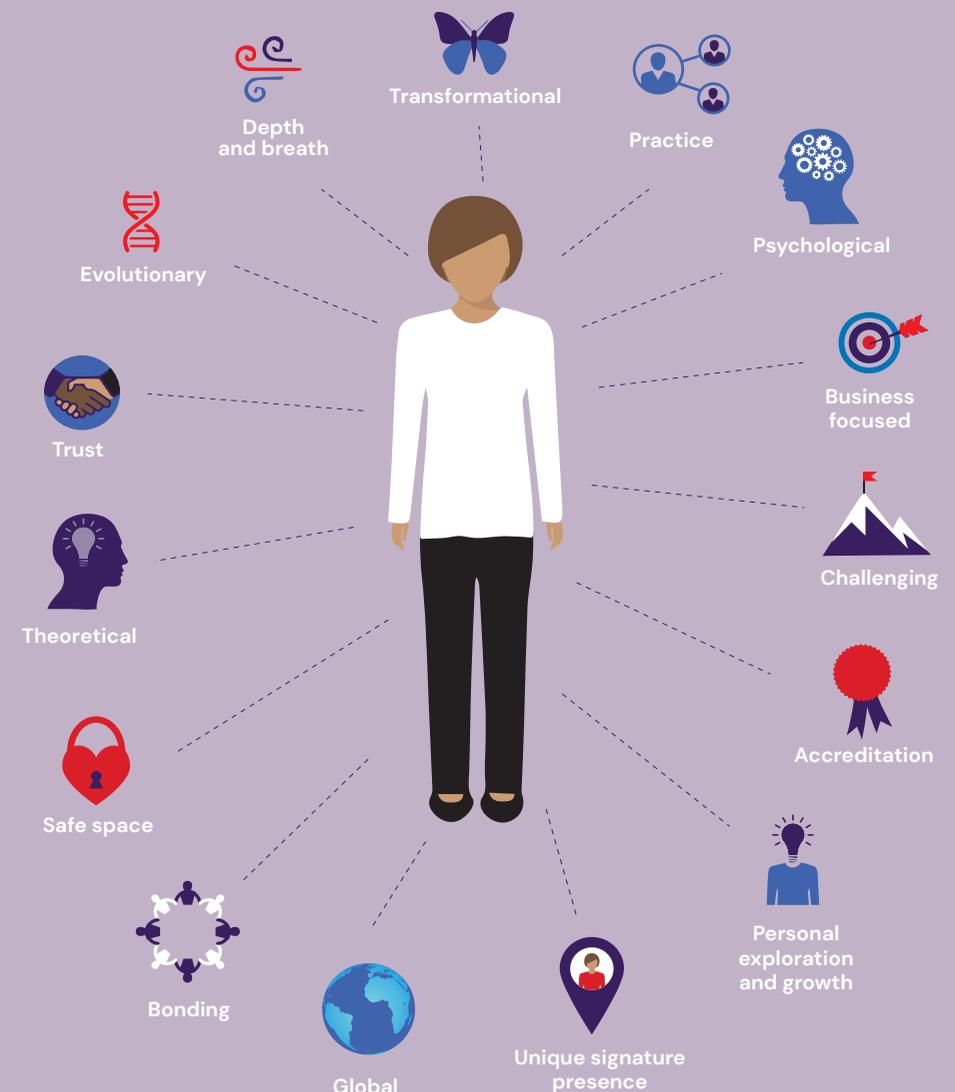
- Focus on creating a safe space for the coaching, such that the leader feels able to share vulnerability in a way in which they may not within the organisation.
- Think about the physical signs of confidence as indicators of levels of confidence (e.g., ease and energy versus exhaustion and depletion).
- Work with vulnerability in coaching. For example, explore the perceived need for the façade of confidence at the expense of authenticity; self-doubts and alternative perspectives; loneliness; and the need to belong.
- Help the leader to feel in control of their emotions, but recognise the complexities of doing so and the impact it might have on their confidence if they don't feel authentic.
- Focus on how to give the leader support by being alongside them. Encourage them to share the weight of responsibility, and discuss what other support the leader can find within the organisation, such as mentoring, sponsors, a peer group or a supportive line manager.
- Give regular informal affirming feedback and discuss whether the leader is adequately supported by feedback within the organisation.
- Normalise the challenges that the leader is experiencing (drawing on leadership research or the coach's experience of coaching other leaders at this transition point).
- Help the leader to prepare adequately for the transition (ideally, aim to start the coaching before the transition).
- Help the leader to gain clarity by giving them the space to talk about and reflect on their challenges; exploring 'stuckness'; helping the leader to find direction; clarifying priorities; and enabling the leader to move forward.
- Work with the leader on exploring, clarifying and owning their new leader identity.

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WHO ARE WE NOW?

Leaders are exploring existential questions. Coaches rarely bring cases to supervision anymore. The landscape is changing and so are we. **Dr Louise Sheppard** shows us how...

I work as an executive leadership coach, team coach and coaching supervisor and am interested in developmental theory and how leaders, coaches and supervisors are evolving due to societal change. I have carried out two pieces of research during the past year. The first was to find out what wise and responsive leaders are currently doing and how they are being with their teams and organisations during these VUCA times. The second involved asking coaches what they are noticing in their coaching with leaders, and supervisors how their experience of working with coaches has changed over the last few years. I shared the results at the International Conference on Coaching Supervision at Oxford Brookes in May 2022.ⁱ

One of the key findings was that, more than ever before, leaders and coaches are facing issues related to their identity. Our identity is how each of us chooses to define who we are.ⁱⁱ We define identity through our personal characteristics, relationships and group memberships. There is greater need to develop proactively our identities as teams become more virtual, diverse and global. Coaches play an important role in supporting leaders and teams to identify how their identity may need to change to deliver what the future requires of them.

HOW LEADERS FEEL

We are living in unprecedented times, surrounded by significant global changes and challenges, leading to an increase in mental distress and isolation. John Vervaeke, a professor of cognitive science at the University of Toronto, refers to this situation as ‘the meaning crisis’.ⁱⁱⁱ In this context, what are leaders raising during coaching? Leaders are confiding more than usual about how they are experiencing work and life. They are:

- Being more transparent about wanting to increase their self-awareness and understand who they are.
- Expressing their existential angst and asking coaches to support them to explore existential questions like their purpose in life. They are feeling burnt out, finding that work is no longer meaningful for them, and wanting to leave their organisations.
- Sharing their self-doubt and how they feel ‘othered’ by their colleagues.
- Coming to coaching exhausted and exploring how they can disconnect when they are expected to be contactable 24/7.
- Wondering what form of hybrid working will work best for their businesses and families and worrying that they can’t meet the diverse needs of their employees.
- Finding that being an ‘expert’ leader is no longer working. They are having to wean themselves off being involved in the detail and problem-solving. At the same time, they are facing some wicked problems to which there are no simple solutions: how to manage with fewer staff and rising costs, and how to do so in a way that motivates and empowers staff.
- Asking coaches to help them to broaden their perspectives and think more systemically.

HOW COACHES FEEL

Supervisors have noticed that coaches are valuing the space provided by supervision more than ever. Coaches, like leaders, are exhausted and aware of the lack of space in their lives; they are

questioning what work they can say no to. Coaches now want more checking-in and attunement at the start of supervision, and with this comes a willingness to disclose emotions such as anxiety and fear. Supervisors have noticed coaches being more curious, reflective and self-aware, and more interested in their personal identity and development as leaders and human beings. Supervisors are finding coaches less deferential and the supervisory relationship feeling more peer-to-peer.

This differs from my doctoral research findings of six years ago, into how coaches help and hinder their supervision, where I identified power differentials and fear and anxiety as two factors negatively impacting coaches’ behaviour in supervision.^{iv} Now, power differentials have been eroded as we’ve seen into each other’s homes and lives more as a result of remote working; through us all being subjected to societal changes; and by Covid making us feel powerless together. Coaches feel more connected to their supervisors through their common humanity and feel that they are fellow travellers. Having said that, for novice coaches, power differentials likely still feel prevalent. In my original research, coaches spoke about not wanting to disclose their fears and anxieties, for example because they did not want to look incompetent. Coaches are now saying that they are openly bringing their fears, anxieties and existential angst and using their supervisors as a container for them. Both coaches and supervisors are more willing to disclose their fears and there is general acceptance that no one knows the answers.

In my recent research, I asked both coaches and supervisors what coaches are bringing to supervision that is different to a few years ago. They identified:

- More trauma-related issues, such as coping with the deaths of parents, friends and colleagues.
- Coaches wanting to talk about their feelings of powerlessness and reflect on how they can make a difference in the face of global crises. Coaches are asking: what am I on this planet to do?
- Coaches shifting from bringing transactional issues to wanting to reflect on their inner state and do developmental work, for example how their own identity is developing.
- That, as individual clients disengage from the organisations that they work for, coaches are finding themselves caught in the middle and asking who the client is.
- An increasing number of ethical issues. Coaches talk about challenging their clients more on gender, race and ESG (environmental, social and governance) issues.
- Leaders are bringing increasingly complex issues and are feeling stuck. As are coaches, who are overwhelmed and asking their supervisors whether they are doing enough or adding value.
- That there is a lot more team coaching being commissioned. Team coaches are seeking to define the personal philosophy that guides their work, and questioning leaders’ and their teams’ readiness for team coaching. Coaches come to supervision for support on how to avoid getting entangled in the complex work issues that teams raise during team coaching, so that the team coaches can focus on the team’s capacity to work together.
- Alarming, that coaches are bringing far fewer specific cases to supervision, with some supervisors estimating a reduction of up to 80%.

WHAT DO LEADERS WANT FROM COACHES?

Leaders want coaches who will:

1. Support them to look after themselves and increase their resilience. Leaders can be overwhelmed by the uncertainty of a rapidly changing environment and want to be able to talk about their feelings in a confidential environment, to face their fears and to regain perspective.
2. Explore how to develop their leadership style, vision and direction, and how to structure their teams differently. They want to use coaching to help them to 'step onto the balcony' so that they can take a broader view and make better decisions. It is useful for coaches to understand development and leadership theories to do this.
3. Create a dedicated space for reflection where leaders can try out new ideas and be encouraged to take a systemic view, and be challenged to look externally and consider different approaches.
4. Provide feedback so that leaders can understand how they come across and work on their identity to keep pace with the speed of change.

WHAT DO COACHES WANT FROM SUPERVISORS?

Coaches want supervisors to:

1. Provide more relational supervision. A recent research paper concluded that, during supervision, supervisees want to explore their emotions more; receive more constructive feedback from the supervisor; and hear what the supervisor is experiencing.^v
2. Reassure them: coaches are giving reassurance to clients and are themselves needing reassurance. They want space to normalise, acknowledge and celebrate their work: 'Is what I'm feeling normal?' 'Am I doing a good enough job?'
3. Support them to increase their self-awareness so that they can use themselves as an instrument in their coaching.
4. Explore ethical dilemmas through dialogue. Clients are becoming more litigious and bringing claims against their organisations, which is affecting coaches' confidence.
5. Provide specific team coaching supervision. Team coaching involves more relationships than individual coaching and is more complex. Team coaching supervision requires an understanding of team coaching competencies and ethics; a knowledge of team coaching approaches, models and processes; and an understanding of systems thinking, family dynamics and the importance of the dynamic between the team leader and team coach.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

So what are the implications of all this? I think that there are five sets of questions that we should ask ourselves.

1. How do we avoid getting sucked into feeling that we must add value by resolving all the wicked issues that leaders are facing? How do we avoid getting seduced into becoming 'rescuers', which can lead to dependency and leave clients and coaches feeling less skilled? Can we model 'not knowing' and develop clients' and coaches' agency, resourcefulness and independence in the process?

2. How do we manage our boundaries when we feel strongly about societal issues? Where do we place ourselves on a spectrum between active campaigner and developing the awareness in the leader or coach? While it is important for us to have our own values, we need to avoid trying to 'fix' or invoke shame. We need to keep the space open for exploration, dialogue and understanding.
3. Are we neglecting work issues with leaders and case work in coaching supervision, instead over-focusing on the restorative function at a time when the issues that clients face are getting more complex and challenging for coaches?
4. Do we need broader training for coaches and supervisors in specific areas such as coaching on identity and purpose, and team coaching supervision?
5. Finally, as the coaching and coaching supervision markets become more specialised, are we prepared to say 'I can't offer that,' and to recommend someone else who specialises in that area?

The meaning crisis affects us all: we are questioning our identities on individual, team, organisational, national and global levels. We can support leaders and teams by helping people to reflect; to explore their identity, purpose and vision; and to regain perspective. We need to do this for ourselves too, through our own support networks, including our supervisors.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr Louise Sheppard enjoys coaching senior leaders across the sectors, being a team coach and providing coaching supervision. She is a partner at Praesta LLP. Louise has a doctorate in coaching and mentoring and an MA in professional coaching. Her background is in business and leadership development. She started her career with Unilever PLC and then worked as a management consultant. Louise lives in London and can be contacted at louise.sheppard@praesta.com.

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THE SURPRISING TRUTH ABOUT LEADING IN A DIGITAL WORLD

How can working with the body help leaders develop greater behavioural flexibility and the resilience needed to lead in this time of exponential change? How can we help those leaders putting on a brave face in an environment of mounting complexity and uncertainty? The body holds the answers, says **Claire Dale**.

Many of the topics that crop up when we coach leaders take us directly to the body. Confidence is a feeling, a neurophysiological state, a dance between sympathetic and para-sympathetic nervous systems and our perceptions and beliefs. Motivation is another neurophysiological state and a dance with the dopamine system. Risk-tolerance is the balance between testosterone and cortisol. Self-esteem? That's serotonin. Empathy and compassion? That's oxytocin. Managing energy and developing resilience – those crucial leadership competencies – are pure neurophysiology too.

It turns out that, at a fundamental level, all our thoughts and emotions have a chemistry: neuropeptides racing through our bodies and brains in our nervous systems and bloodstreams, and our memories and experiences are chemistry too.

WAKING UP TO THE POWER OF THE BODY

Our bodies are incredible technologies. Research tells us that, when we regulate our breathing patterns, we have the potential to achieve a 62% improvement in cognitive function on complex tasks. When we are walking rather than seated, we are 45% more likely to have a high-quality, innovative idea. And when we move freely in an unplanned way, we can think more divergently; moving in a structured way helps us think more convergently.ⁱ

Not only that, but where leaders behave in ways that develop trust and shared purpose, levels of the neurochemical oxytocin increase – and, according to the research of Dr Paul Zak, employees have 105% more energy, are 50% more productive and 40% less likely to burn out.ⁱⁱ

All of this creates a powerful, science-based argument for working with the body to give us greater behavioural flexibility, and there is a growing realisation that embodiment – or, as we call it, our physical intelligence – is the next core competency that coaches need in their toolkit. Why? Because all change happens in the body. However much thinking happens, leaders remain stuck in old patterns of behaviour unless we help them embody and rehearse new ones. And in today's fast-paced, digital, uncertain world, stuck is not a good thing for a leader to be!

PHYSICAL TENSION: AN ENEMY OF BEHAVIOURAL FLEXIBILITY

One cause of behavioural inflexibility is physical tension. Try this experiment. Tense the muscles in your upper body, arms and abdomen, and limit your breathing. Maintaining the tension, try saying out loud: 'I feel flexible and responsive'. How true can that statement feel when your body is holding that level of tension? Now, release the tension, drop your shoulders, shake your arms loose, free up your breath and repeat the statement. It is likely that with the tension the thought didn't fit with the body state, but that when you released the tension you felt more congruent. From this experiment you might note how powerfully our physical state influences our emotions and thoughts.

During change and complexity, unhelpful patterns of physical tension can build up in the bodies of leaders as they try to gain control. This is caused by elevated levels of cortisol: the arousal, threat and stress chemical that switches on our sympathetic nervous system, firing up our muscles ready for action even when no action is needed. This has an impact on key flexibility chemicals such as the steroid DHEA (dehydroepiandrosterone), which underpins our vitality, and the neurotransmitter serotonin, which is vital for gut health, sleep and the suppleness of the connective tissue between muscle and bone. Our body becomes more rigid, shaping and being shaped by patterns of thought and emotion that become part of our identity and belief system, giving rise to limitations in our behavioural flexibility.

With this chemistry leaders lose touch with their more expansive, creative selves, yet are pressured into putting on a brave face. They feel less than authentic with their people, and the social bonding and trust (oxytocinergic) system is also affected. Leaders might huddle with their key team members in times of change and fail to communicate with compassion to the wider team or organisation.

Talking will not shift these patterns of tension alone; for that we need to work with the body. One tool that coaches certified in coaching with physical intelligence learn to use is the MOT (map of tension), drawn from the flexibility section of our curriculum.

Working with tension is one route into working with the body. The physical intelligence toolkit also includes: working with posture to gain clarity, strength and vocal power; monitoring and working with breathing patterns and heart rate for mental and emotional stability; understanding the seven systems of the body; creating a higher level of cognition and mental clarity through use of the body; generating habits that support creativity and innovation; accessing our three brains, including our gut (enteric) and heart (cardiac) brains; developing the ability to view the world from multiple perspectives; handling complex relationship issues; and building thriving systems

THE MOT (MAP OF TENSION)

When a block is identified in leadership coaching, the coach can ask if/where the coachee is currently aware of tension or discomfort in their body.

Tension hotspots can be drawn on a diagram of the body for visual reference. Then ask: what level of intensity between 1-10 is the tension? What do you notice about that area of your body? What happens when you intensify it, and what happens when you release it? It helps if the coachee places their hand on that body area and 'breathes into' the point of tension.

Then ask: what does that area of tension need? Movement, stillness or something else? What kind of breathing helps? If they move you can mirror them, reflecting the movement back, or play it back verbally. Then ask: if that part of your body could speak to you, what would it be saying? Are there emotions connected with this area of tension? What connections are you making to the leadership challenges we discussed? Is there a regular physical practice you'd like to adopt?

With this powerful process you can help the leader make profound new connections, and resource themselves with physical intelligence habits.

for working and living. There are also processes to boost optimism, process powerful emotions, unlock somatic markers and use visualisation to create a future focus and accountability, enabling leaders to quickly let go of the past and generate energy for the future.

Where personal resilience issues arise, it is helpful for leaders if their coaches feel confident to make connections with aspects of exercise, diet and sleep, because these are important components of being in a fully resourced leadership state. Many leaders also now use wearable technology to monitor their physiology, and coaches can easily gain enough knowledge to be able to discuss this too. For all of us coaches, our own standards – and impeccable physical intelligence practice – are what put us in the most resourced state for our clients and enable us to feel confident in this area.

BEHAVIOURAL FLEXIBILITY AND NEUROPLASTICITY FOR LEADERS

A flexible human system has the greatest possible neuroplasticity, the ability of the brain to restructure or rewire itself when it recognises the need for adaptation. This has significant implications when we are coaching leaders who have identified styles of leadership that they would like to develop.

The body provides the perfect entry point to creating new patterns of behaviour outside our habitual ones. Exploring different ways of moving, speaking and engaging enables us to access less-well-known parts of ourselves.

Underpinned by theories drawn from Antonio Damasio (on consciousness and somatic markers^{iii,iv}) and Rudolph von Laban (on how we use our energy in the form of effort and flow^v) we have developed detailed protocols for exploring and re-patterning physical and vocal habits. Through this process, leaders access new choices and became more flexible, integrated and emotional, mentally and physically, which also results in their intentions being clearer to those they lead.

I began this work at RADA Business, where the pedagogy is entirely embodied. Posture, grounding, breath, voice, narrative, rehearsal and repetition were the tools of the trade in order to manage nerves, stand on any stage, tell a story and move an audience, many of which we might call leadership skills.

Here I met Kevin Chapman, co-founder of the Physical Intelligence Institute, and we soon realised that whenever we were working with the body at this level of depth we were working with neuroplasticity. I mapped the neuroscience onto different leadership styles, and we discovered that neuroscientific knowledge combined with the rehearsal of new behaviour can help unlock a greater range of positive states that leaders can access.

This has become a radical new way of working with C-suite executives, enabling them to adapt their leadership style to suit different situations and handle complexity while retaining their naturalness and authenticity in their interactions. As Daniel Goleman has observed, leadership style is not a function of personality but rather a strategic choice, and that situational flexibility between styles is key.

Taking a Jungian approach, we often work with the embodiment of four leadership styles; authoritative, inspirational, compassionate and analytical. In the exponential digital age the compassionate leadership style is arguably the most significant behavioural style to fall by the wayside amid digital, remote and global working. Masterclasses in 'becoming a compassionate and empathetic leader' have been among the most popular with coaches who are members of the Physical Intelligence Institute.

A FINAL WORD

Korn Ferry's recent paper on enterprise agility explains how the expectation of leaders in this exponential, digital age is to perform and transform simultaneously.^{vi} Performing requires the control leadership styles of authority and analysis, while transforming requires the people-centred styles of inspiration and compassion.

Addressing this, according to Ferry, is pivotal to an organisation's ability to be an agile enterprise. If this is the current requirement, then coaches need a toolkit to enable leaders to gain the necessary behavioural agility. It is a fascinating challenge, and while we have already created some practical solutions that we are sharing with coaches, this area of research has incredible scope and will be the topic of my PhD over the next two years.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Claire Dale has spent 20 years researching movement, neurophysiology and coaching. She is the author of the award-winning book *Physical Intelligence* (Business Book of the Year 2020) and since 2004 she has been director of Companies in Motion. In 2021 Claire launched the Physical Intelligence Institute with Kevin Chapman, bringing accessible, science-based embodiment practice to coaching. Claire is a regular contributor on BBC Radio London. She supports ending modern-day slavery by coaching Nasreen Sheikh, director of the Nepal-based Empowerment Collective to influence influential figures such as Jeff Bezos and the Pope, and she once taught Ed Sheeran to dance!

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A DECOLONIAL TAKE ON ETHICAL MATURITY

Can critically reflective action learning sets prime coaches for social change? The answer is yes, and the time is now. [Charmaine Roche](#) explains how.

‘[Radical] compassion can be described as letting ourselves be touched by the vulnerability and suffering that is within ourselves and all beings. The full flowering of compassion also includes action: not only do we attune to the presence of suffering, we respond to it’
Tara Brach

Since becoming a qualified supervisor I have been supporting a growing number of organisations, groups and individuals wanting to make a difference in the world in relation to social justice issues. They are motivated to open up spaces for critical reflection that will help internal coaching pools or leadership teams recognise and disrupt systemic racism and discrimination in all its forms. As a learner, too, in these spaces, I see myself as a facilitator of critical reflection and radical compassion, as defined by Tara Brach. As such, I see myself as a systems guide, a seer of patterns – internal and external – and the spaces in between, drawing on creative energies to shift the inertia in and around us. This is the spirit I invoke when using the terms supervisor/supervision.

As a result of recent challenges to coaching from social movements such as the Climate Coaching Alliance and grassroots movements for anti-racist, anti-oppressive practices, coaching could be said to have taken a social turn.ⁱ I do not believe that the same can yet be said for supervision. This is of particular interest to me as a researcher in the field of coaching ethics. Reflective practice, as both the process and

product of supervision, is seen to be at the heart of developing an orientation towards ethically mature practice. The research report *Racial Justice, Equality and Belonging in Coaching*ⁱⁱ revealed that for the Black, indigenous and other coaches of colour I interviewed, coaching training and practice can be experienced as a ‘white space’, with largely Westernised assumptions and norms presented as neutral, universal and uncritically transformational. I know from personal experience that the same can apply to supervision training and practice. Challenging these normative assumptions can release enormous creativity. What might a social or decolonial turn, which decentres Westernised norms, look like in supervision, and what new possibilities might it inspire?

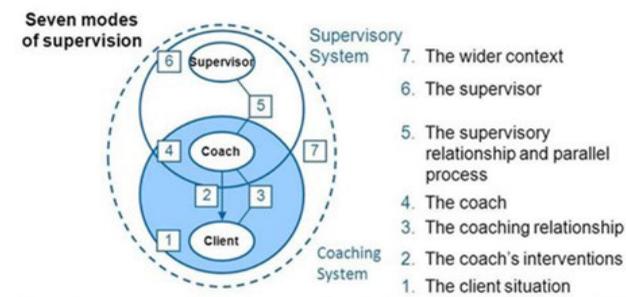
DECOLONISING REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

‘For reflection to be considered critical it must have as its explicit focus uncovering, and challenging, the power dynamics that frame practice and uncovering and challenging hegemonic assumptions (those assumptions we embrace as being in our best interests when in fact they are working against us).’ⁱⁱⁱ

This quote from educator Stephen Brookfield points to what the current limitation might be in reflective practice more widely across the profession, and particularly for supervision.

For example, the seven-eyed model of supervision is designed to encompass all levels, from the intimate individual, to the relational and to the broad sweep of the wider system. However, my experience has made me ask if this is what happens in reality? A question addressed in the fifth edition of *Supervision in the Helping Professions* reveals that, while supervision training encourages work in all seven modes (see Figure 1), ‘some supervisors become habituated to using just one mode’.^{iv}

Figure 1: Seven modes of supervision^{iv}



My experience of being trained to use the model as a supervisor is that, while the aspiration to be ‘systemic’ is there, in practice this is limited by an overreliance on psychodynamic approaches and psychoanalytical tools such as parallel process, transference and counter transference – possibly reflecting the origins of the seven-eyed model in counselling and psychotherapy, with little attention to the macro-sociological dimension: e.g., coloniality, power, oppression, race, class, gender, politics and legal systems, patriarchy and social movements for change.

I believe that ethical maturity requires an understanding of the sociology of race, power, domination, oppression, resistance and empowerment. Coaches and supervisors wanting to serve clients who in turn are seeking to advance self and social change, and/or those negatively affected by their lived experiences of oppression, need these conceptual tools. An additional, equally central issue is the supervisor’s role in developing the ethical capacity and ethical maturity of those they partner with.^{iv}

The approach I outline later in this article challenges coaching and supervisory norms in two distinct ways.

Firstly, it challenges the idea that ethical maturity is a stage of development made up of a set of personal characteristics applied to resolving ethical problems. Instead, ethical maturity is seen as a social practice engaged in by individuals in pursuit of fair and just outcomes to sticky and challenging social, organisational and personal issues and questions. The difference may be subtle, but it is real. Ethical issues brought to coaching or supervision are not solely the personal problem of the coach, as supervisee, to resolve in alignment with their values and beliefs and in isolation from the prevailing social context. Social and systemic dimensions are integral factors in decision making and the implementation of ethical actions. This may be implicit in ethical decision-making frameworks like the APPEAR model, but not always made explicit.^v We are in ‘the system’; ‘the system’ is in us. We actively align and are passive or resistant, often without conscious attention or intention.

This is where the second challenge comes in. Coaching and supervision tend to frame ethical issues predominantly in terms of individual attitudes, behaviours, choices and responsibilities. As a result, the ethical questions raised are framed largely as individual problems. The approach advocated here recognises that our values, beliefs and morals – core aspects of identity – are developed within specific cultural and social contexts. Consciously seeking out ethical partners who will support you in thinking outside of your habitual ways of knowing or being with ethical issues is a vital part of the practice of ethical maturity.

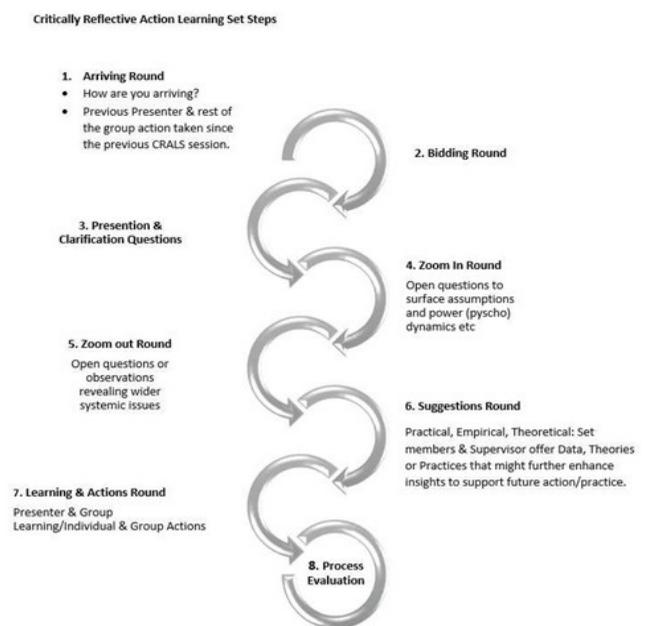
CRITICALLY REFLECTIVE ACTION LEARNING

As a way of exploring these issues further, I began to experiment with critically reflective action learning (CRAL) in my one-to-one and group supervision practice. The following section sets out this approach and provides an illustrative case study based on my emergent practice.

The benefits of CRAL as a process:

- CRAL aims to ‘emancipate’ practitioners on three levels:
 - They become aware of their theories-in-use,^{vi} unlearning normative behaviours and practices, thus increasing their capacity for inaction as a transition towards choosing other ways of approaching and resolving systemic issues.
 - They become aware of often-unseen constraints of assumption, habit, precedent, coercion and ideology.^{vii}
 - They learn to align interactions and decision making with ethical frameworks that value equity, moving from intention to impact as a measure of progress^{viii}
- CRAL aims to provide a framework for:
 - Questioning the underlying assumptions informing professional practice.
 - Taking an approach that holds the individual and the social as mutually influencing interrelated systems, drawing on social psychology.
 - Including as core the analysis of power dynamics and structural issues affecting human development within society, organisations and relationships.
 - Enabling practice from an emancipatory rather than adaptive approach to change.

Figure 2: CRAL works by employing an eight-step process^{ix}

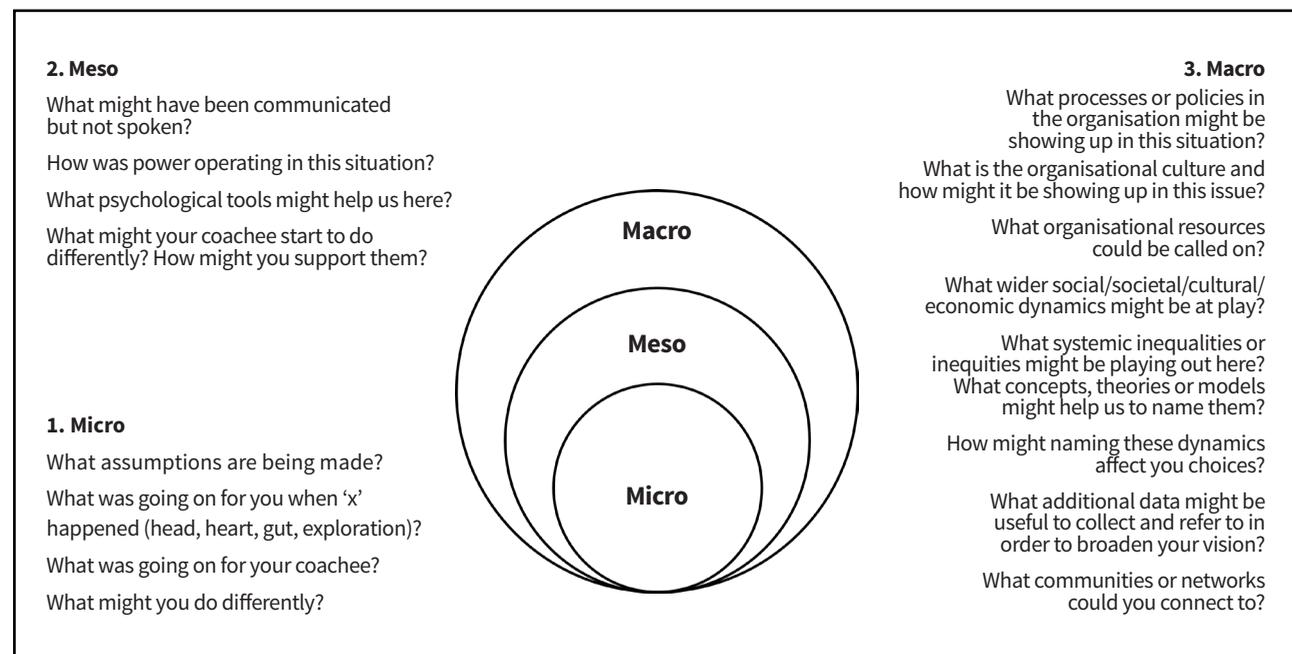


CRAL IN ACTION

Figure 3 sets out questions that I suggest take reflective practice into the domain of criticality and social justice. It has become my standard tool for supporting the zooming in and zooming out process when facilitating a CRAL supervision set. This process for supervision does not dispense with a focus on the micro dynamics and interrelational dynamics of the case under discussion; instead, it ranges across all levels. It does so on the basis that each level contains the other in a nested system of complex, interconnected, interdependent and mutually interrelated processes.^x

By drawing attention to socio-macro-dynamics, the questions are designed to provide a cognitive scaffold, while the set holds the emotional discomfort of ‘transgression’ that is often triggered for the set members. It is the combination of both – the challenge and the holding – that creates the potential to move beyond professionalised, normative biases. As Brookfield notes, stepping out of the practices normally associated with professional identity and norms can cause turbulence and avoidance.^x This process not only aims to engage the practitioner in critical reflection; it is also intertwined with generating critical theory and with a rejection of any pretence to neutrality. There is a relational shift from the ‘I’ as both the subject and object of reflection to the self in relation to other human beings and the planet.^{xi}

Figure 3: The CRAL process tool



A CASE STUDY

Context

Group supervision for an internal coaching pool that provides coaching to professionals in a global not-for-profit organisation.

Summary of case brought to group supervision

The coach wanted to explore a ‘failed’ coaching relationship. The coachee, a Black African female, had joined an established team in a multi-national organisation. The majority of the team comprised white men and women from European countries. The coachee described how difficult it was to find a place in the team. Her opinions were not respected or listened to. It was hard to build relationships because everyone else already seemed to know each other. Racism was named as an issue in their conversations but not explored as a focus for the coaching.

CRAL set practice

In zooming in, the set paid attention to the coachee’s feelings of failure and probed what might be going on for the coach here: what

were the underlying assumptions about what the coachee wanted or needed? What did the coach want or need? What was the success criteria for the coaching engagement from each point of view? What emotions were engaged, how did they affect the coach/coachee relationship and psychological safety?

Coaching outcome

While the coachee had wanted to stay in the organisation and had tried out different strategies for ‘fitting in’, they eventually decided to leave and the coach now felt that that was the right decision. However, the coach felt that she had failed because this happens in the organisation a lot: people leave because they feel pushed out.

In zooming out, the set paid attention to where else this was happening in the organisation. What are the success criteria for offering coaching from the organisational perspective? Is the question simply adapt or leave? The coach was part of an internal coaching pool and a leader in the same organisation as the coachee. What patterns were being observed? What did this say about the culture of the organisation? What policies or practices

were reinforcing or reproducing the pattern? New staff induction processes were raised. Interest was shown in what ethical tensions the situation created for the coach. What were the implications for leadership and accountability in the organisation?

Learning

In discussing the learning, both the presenter and the set members reflected on their responsibilities as coaches when they became aware of wider dynamics through their work as individual coaches. They wanted to explore how they could use this ‘intelligence’ without violating confidentiality. They felt that neutrality got in the way of challenging aspects of the culture experienced as exclusionary. In doing so, they were being complicit with what they identified for the first time as the organisation’s culture as an aspect of systemic racism.

Action

They talked about collecting data to test out what the bigger pattern looked like across the organisation. Who was leaving? What could be done proactively to change these outcomes? Collective action and collective responsibility became the focus of learning and action. The potential of the set to contribute to change was palpable.

The future is already emerging as more diverse in terms of philosophical and practice foundations for coaching for social change and greater justice. The promise is there too for supervision as a holding of spaces for radical compassion and critically reflective practice, where we not only see injustice but act in relation to it. For me, creativity in this area has been inspired by the principles of decoloniality. We need communities of practice to support us through the emotional turbulence and cognitive dissonance of the subjective changes required by this shift. Group supervision can be one such community of practice.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Charmaine Roche is an executive coach, an accredited supervisor and a PhD researcher into the ethics of coaching for social change in oppressive contexts. She offers coaching, one-to-one and group supervision, and coach training underpinned by the philosophy and ethics of decoloniality. Her three-day course ‘Coaching for social justice: decoloniality as a systemic lens’ runs again in March 2023. For more information visit lifeflowbalance.co.uk/online-courses.

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A PERMACULTURE APPROACH TO COACHING

What does your client need to understand about living sustainably – for themselves, their loved ones and the planet? Dr Bex Harper shows us that thinking through a permaculture lens is not just about ecology.

People tend to perceive permaculture as specific to gardening and food cycles, but it is much wider than that. Formed from the words permanent and culture, permaculture asks us to consider what living sustainably looks like for us and helps us to reframe our identities in a wider context. Permaculture principles are important for health and wellbeing, given that burnout or ‘boom-bust’ energy cycles can be avoided if a person is able to approach their life from a perspective of sustainability and balance. Permaculture has therefore become a central principle in navigating my LGBTQ+ identity and my life with both neurodiversity and a chronic illness. I also use it as a framework to coach clients who are chronically ill, neurodiverse or battling constant microaggressions and discrimination because of elements of their identity, such as LGBTQ+ clients.

There are three main ethical principles in permaculture:

- 1) Earthcare
- 2) Peoplecare
- 3) Fairshares

Earthcare includes respecting and looking after the planet, making eco-friendly decisions and promoting biodiversity. Earthcare activities seek to halt and reverse the effects of pollution and ecological destruction. Permaculture involves working with nature instead of against it and is an approach that affects all areas of life, from what you eat to how you travel. This principle is what most people think of when I say that I take a permaculture approach to my coaching and my life. While growing my own organic food and keeping chickens on my allotment help my body and mind to thrive, they form only one aspect of the many ways permaculture shapes my identity.

Peoplecare involves supporting each other, engaging in personal development and developing communication and listening skills. The peoplecare part of permaculture ethics helps us to recognise that self-care and personal development are essential for going beyond survival and moving towards thriving! When our needs aren’t met, we may become anxious, impatient, disconnected

and overwhelmed – states that we, as coaches, often see in our clients and sometimes even ourselves. Peoplecare is particularly relevant to coaching and to what good coaching can provide. By knowing ourselves and who we are as part of a wider group (family, workplace, community, friendship group), we can understand who we are as individuals and what we want from various areas of our lives. It can help us to strengthen relationships by (re)forming boundaries, learning limits and understanding our identity, wants and needs, as well as the identity, wants and needs of others. Coaching is firmly a peoplecare activity.

Fairshares requires us to acknowledge that Earth’s finite resources are precious, and urges us to reduce unnecessary consumption. It also encourages sharing skills and resources to empower other people to improve their lives. Fairshares helps us to think about how our own resources are finite – we cannot do everything or stretch ourselves too thinly without risking our mental and physical health. Fairshares encourages self-care, while still recognising that we are part of a wider community. The phrase ‘don’t pour from an empty cup’ is often used when talking about taking time out from helping others to do some emergency self-care when burnout is becoming a real possibility. Sometimes we also need to accept help offered to us and learn that this is not a weakness – it is the ebb and flow of fairshares!

Earthcare includes respecting and looking after the planet... Peoplecare involves supporting each other... Fairshares requires us to acknowledge that Earth’s finite resources are precious

FIVE KEY PERMACULTURE COACHING QUESTIONS

If a permaculture approach sounds like something that would benefit your clients, try these permaculture coaching questions:

- How sustainable is ... for you?
- How can you ensure ... is sustainable for you?
- What can you do to ensure your long-term wellbeing?
- Who can you accept help from, or who can you ask for help?
- What can you do to improve your home or work environment?

PERMACULTURE IN COACHING

A key tenet of permaculture is that the individual accepts responsibility, thinks holistically and takes action, which then provides opportunities for further empowerment.ⁱ Although this principle was originally used in terms of individuals taking responsibility for growing their own organic food locally, it can be applied to so many of the other areas of life that our clients bring to coaching sessions.

In terms of my own approach – Earth coaching – my client work is highly focused around improving health and ensuring wellbeing for those with ADHD, dyslexia, ASD/ASC and chronic illnesses. Fairshares has been a core aspect of my work with clients. Working hours beyond your capability, stretching yourself thinly or pushing yourself to your limit daily will not be sustainable long-term without risking burnout. Even very healthy people have bad days or low energy days, so we can all learn from pacing. Aiming to function at a maximum of 80% of our limit means we are allowing our minds and bodies time to rest. Permaculture can teach us more about how to pace ourselves by recognising that the long-term sustainability of our health, goals and progress is vital.

Permaculture uses zoning in landscape design to maximise beneficial interconnection, so that the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts. Zone 00 references the person(s) at the heart of the system and Zone 0 signifies the home; the numbers increase up to Zone 5, which indicates wild nature, left untouched.ⁱⁱ Earthcare, for me, isn’t just about conserving planet Earth and our shared duty to protect the environment, but also our personal responsibility for our home environment – Zone 0 – where we tend to spend most of our time. Our home surroundings are important to forming our identity and creating wellbeing. So, one of the key areas that I work with is creating a peaceful and sustainable living space. Living and working in a cluttered home can wreak havoc on your mental and physical health. Running a home that is three times the size of what you really need just to store your belongings (that you may not even need or value) doesn’t make financial sense or ensure wellbeing. While many neurodivergent and chronically ill people are unable to work, those that are in work are increasingly choosing to work from home, making it doubly important to create a nurturing environment to live in.

Coaching can often be centred around achieving external goals and the productivity culture of getting things done. Yet, we have seen a vast shift over the past decade or so towards inner work and focusing on ‘being’ instead of ‘doing’. I have found my CPD training in existential coaching to be fundamental to working successfully with those with chronic illnesses and neurodiverse brains, who often get stuck panicking that they are not doing things ‘as they should’, and who struggle because their minds or bodies don’t function in a normative way. By focusing inwards, we can work with the now and focus on our presence – and that of the client – in the coaching space, which brings us fully into the peoplecare aspect of permaculture.ⁱⁱⁱ Such an approach allows for powerful realisations about how identity is formed, as well as how societal expectations can have an impact on and possibly oppress aspects of our identity.

I find the Narrative Tree of Life exercise effective in my coaching for helping clients understand their identity and how nature is part of that identity.^{iv} When clients crave a connection with nature, they can use natural materials like charcoal, leaves, petals and herbs to bring their narrative tree to life with textures, smells and colour. The therapeutic benefits of art and clients’ connection to nature have been highly effective in my coaching, allowing clients to reframe their identities and struggles.

So, even if, for whatever reason, we disregard the environmental elements of permaculture, there are many other layers that are relevant to identity formation, personal growth and social impact, and that can have a positive impact on our clients.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr Bex Harper (they/them) is an accredited Earth coach and an AC member who helps neurodiverse and chronically ill people to conquer stress, burnout, overwhelm and disorganisation so that they can get back to being in control of their lives. Using a permaculture approach, Bex nurtures clients back to thriving! Bex is a neurodivergent chronic illness survivor who continues to use nature for therapeutic purposes by growing organic food, raising chickens and going wild swimming.

www.earthcoaching.net

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WHAT COACHES NEED TO KNOW ABOUT COACHING GAY MEN

Does sexuality matter when coaching men facing challenges at work? How about when dealing with questions of identity? And when is it appropriate to broach the subject? The answers are rarely definitive, but insights from **Mat Daniel's** latest research provide some guidance.

Many gay men have benefited from greater societal acceptance over the last few decades, but they continue to face challenges at work. Even within accepting Western societies, staff that are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or other sexual identities (LGBTQ+) are more than twice as likely as straight employees to face discrimination in the workplace, and there is discrimination in recruitment too.

Gay men may feel excluded by workplace socialisation practices based around typical heteronormative cultures, and as a result fail to bond with others at work; this may then translate into an inability to reach privileged circles, limiting their ability to progress their career. Even in the relatively liberal United Kingdom, a quarter of straight people would not vote for an openly gay prime minister, and nearly one in five would be unhappy with a gay manager.¹ Discrimination is likely under-recognised and under-reported.

Objective discrimination is not the only challenge that gay men face at work. Same-sex attraction may define someone as gay, but this attraction has wide-ranging consequences for how a man experiences and interacts with the world. Challenges at work might arise as much from the man's meaning-making as from any

discrimination. So, the stresses experienced by this stigmatised minority can be viewed along a continuum, ranging from objective external conditions and events (e.g. frank discrimination), through expectation of such events to internalisation of negative societal attitudes.ⁱⁱ In psychological literature, the excess stresses experienced as a result of one's minority status are thought to explain the greater incidence of mental health problems in gay men compared to straight men.

Coaching has a proud tradition of supporting groups that have faced disadvantages in the workplace. Much has been done around supporting women leaders, and more recently as a profession we have been exploring how we deal with race and ethnicity. However, relatively little has been written about coaching LGBTQ+ people, despite LGBTQ+ coaches having proportionate presence in the coaching community.

The information provided here is based on published research and books as well as my own research, during which I interviewed coaches and gay men to establish how coaching could help gay men in the workplace.

The specific focus of this article is about coaching gay men around gay-related aspects of their professional lives. However, it is important to remember that being gay is just one of many identities that a gay man might have, and being gay may be of no relevance to the coaching issue at hand. A coach's assumption that being gay is a problem would be just as damaging as any heteronormative assumptions or language. So, a good starting point for coaching gay men, or indeed anybody, would be for the coach to be unknowing and aware of the assumptions they are holding.

Being gay is just one of many identities that a gay man might have, and being gay may be of no relevance to the coaching issue at hand

THE GAY IDENTITY IN WORKPLACE CONTEXTS

Identity is the subjective interpretation of who one is. It shapes how a person views themselves, and influences their beliefs, actions and group belonging. Although same-sex attraction defines a man as being gay, this attraction has widespread consequences for gay identity beyond simple attraction.

The development of a man's gay identity is complex. Vivienne Cass's stage model is perhaps the best-known theoretical framework for it: it starts with identity-confusion, then comparison, tolerance, acceptance, pride and finally synthesis.ⁱⁱⁱ Others argue that gay identity-development is non-linear and unpredictable. Certainly, adjustment to a socially stigmatised identity is considered to be an important developmental task of gay youth, but men vary in the exact timing, trajectory and outcome of their gay identity development. As they enter the workforce, young gay men may still be working on their gay identity, but must then simultaneously develop their professional identity as well. This is an additional challenge, especially if the two are at different stages of maturity.

Even established gay professionals face a career-long need to manage their gay identity in a heteronormative workplace, and most men will hide their sexuality at least occasionally. Although many Western workplaces may be accepting, worldwide there is a real risk of hostility. Pretending to be straight means living a lie, which is stressful, and it prevents the development of deep workplace friendships and allyships (this is important because gay men's sources of workplace support are usually straight colleagues). Even trying to pass without frank attempts to mislead leads to issues, because the gay man misses out on the heteronormative workplace socialising that matters for career progression. Coming out isn't enough on its own for optimum psychological wellbeing; it is beneficial to also have self-acceptance, congruence and identity integration. Better integration of professional and gay-personal identities is associated with greater use of caring leadership behaviours^{iv}, while visibility of LGBTQ+ leaders in the workplace fosters acceptance and provides role models.

COACHING GAY MEN IN WORKPLACE CONTEXTS

Although being gay may be of no relevance to the issues at hand, since the relationship between coach and coachee is likely to be important whatever the topics discussed it would be wise to approach chemistry meetings without any heteronormative assumptions that might alienate the gay man right from the start. Demonstrating an accepting attitude means that the coachee would be able to bring up gay topics – if they happen to be relevant. Choice of language helps: referring to partners rather than wives would be an example of language that doesn't assume heteronormativity, while enquiring about the partner in subsequent conversations could demonstrate ongoing inclusion and interest in gay aspects of the coachee's life. Whether the coach discusses partners and life outside employment within workplace-based coaching will of course depend on their philosophy and the nature of the assignment. If the coachee's life experiences include numerous rejections, the coach might have to work extra hard to establish a trusting and safe relationship no matter the topics discussed.

As in all coaching, an attitude of unknowing is beneficial, as is awareness of one's own prejudices, biases and assumptions. A careful balancing act is required between demonstrating some awareness of the gay world without making assumptions: individual gay men will have different experiences. A good coach will create the conditions where the gay identity could (but not should) be discussed; equally the coach shouldn't assume that being gay is an issue. Skilful negotiation of this delicate balance will create strong relationships, but if in doubt then an attitude of unknowing and curiosity would at least avoid damaging the coaching alliance through heteronormative assumptions.

A gay coach working with a gay coachee might find it easier to create acceptance and use challenge, but there is a danger that the coach might assume that the coachee has had an identical gay experience. Mentoring research suggests that gay men value having a gay mentor, but in psychotherapy literature what seems to matter more than sexuality-based matching is an accepting and affirming attitude from the therapist irrespective of their sexuality. For the straight coach, this means awareness of their own prejudices and assumptions, an accepting attitude and possession of relevant diversity-related knowledge. Professional coaching bodies expect coaches to practise inclusively and be diversity-aware regardless.

Whether the coach broaches the topic of the gay identity or not will depend on the coach's own philosophy, the purpose of the assignment and the contracting in place

DISCUSSING BEING GAY IN COACHING

Coachees might bring issues that are obviously linked to their gay identity. Examples include discrimination; the challenges of

planning a future in an organisation where the coachee cannot be themselves at work; or decisions about coming out – which is rarely binary, as many gay men will be out to different degrees in different circumstances, with the need for gay identity management then spanning their whole career.

The gay identity might also be of relevance in more subtle ways. Same-sex attraction means gay men have different life experiences to straight men, possibly leading to fear of rejection, a need to conceal parts of oneself, negative self-regard or a lack of group belonging. Once at work, it may be that hiding persists as much as a result of the man's own worries, vigilance and habitual ways of thinking as from any actual discrimination. For example, someone out at work might not wish to share personal details, even though it might create stronger workplace relationships and create bonds with superiors that would be important in career progression. Being gay is, of course, not the only reason why someone may be intensely private.

The coachee may not link their presenting issue to their gay identity, but as the coach listens they may wonder whether being gay could be of relevance. For example, the coachee reporting difficult interactions with a superior and the coach wondering about discrimination; or a coachee discussing difficulties in creating friendships at work and the coach wondering about a fear of allowing professional and private lives to mix. Whether the coach broaches the topic of the gay identity or not will depend on the coach's own philosophy, the purpose of the assignment and the contracting in place. The specific question of whether the coach raises the relevance of being gay or not can perhaps be framed within the bigger question of where along the support-challenge continuum the coach is comfortable, or whether the coach sees themselves as a neutral bystander or a co-creator.

There is no one right way of working. What matters more is that we know who we are as a coach – the downsides as well as benefits of this position – and that we communicate this to prospective coachees at the start of the relationship. If the coach decides that they will bring up the possibility that being gay may be relevant, and the coachee himself hasn't recognised a link to the presenting issue, then clearly this needs to be done sensitively, from a position of curiosity, with a strong supportive relationship in place and with contracting that supports such challenge. Within counselling, research suggests that broaching is beneficial to the working alliance and counselling outcomes, but is probably underused.¹

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Mat Daniel MEd PhD is a UK National Health Service consultant, a medical educator and a coach specialising in supporting doctors to have successful and meaningful careers. His master's degree research explored how coaching supports gay men at work. In addition to coaching individuals, he teaches coaching and mentoring skills to healthcare professionals, and applies his coaching knowledge to talk about medical careers. He initiated and now co-facilitates the Association for Coaching's co-coaching forum for health and social care.

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THE EVOLUTION OF MANAGERIAL COACHING IN JAPAN

Masa Matsumoto reflects on the development of managerial coaching in Japan, and asks what the identity of coaching will look like in the near future.

People are often fascinated by Japan, but its realities are sometimes unknown or misunderstood. In my experience as an executive coach and leadership consultant in Tokyo, this is particularly true when it comes to managerial coaching training (teaching coaching skills for managers) here in Japan.

Coaching in Japan has its roots in the late 1990s. A few companies began providing coaching training, but it was very rare.ⁱ It began gaining traction slowly in the 2000s when coaching skills training for managers gained popularity. This momentum carried on into the 2010s and 2020s.ⁱⁱ Today, both executive coaching and coaching skills training are quite widespread. Currently, the Japanese economy faces difficult times in regard to the world of work. Due to an ageing population, workforce numbers are declining quickly, so employers are forced to compete over scarce highly skilled workers. Employers face retention challenges as well: due to their scarcity, highly skilled workers have more negotiating power, which has led them to become more open to switching jobs and companies.

Despite these challenges, much of the Japanese work style has remained unchanged and is still very traditional. For example, Japanese workers are reluctant to take advantage of their annual leave days and working from home is still much less common than in Western countries. To adapt and meet these new challenges, the government enacted the Work Style Reform Bill in 2018.ⁱⁱⁱ This was a big deal in Japan, and the stir it created continues today. The Work Style Reform Bill is an effort to make workers and companies adopt more progressive work styles. So, what does this mean for managerial coaching in Japan?

These changes in Japan's world of work have increased interest in new ways of managing employees. Managerial coaching is gaining more attention as a skill managers can use to adopt a more appropriate way of management. As a result, the demand for coaching skills training for managers is increasing. In one study, when Japanese managers were asked what skill (out of 14 options) was particularly important to managers today, more than half replied coaching, which ranked second overall after managing.^{iv}

CHALLENGES

Having implemented managerial coaching training programmes in Japan for the past five years, I have witnessed many challenges unique to the country. First, Japanese managers and reports do not hold one-to-ones as much as their Western counterparts. According to one study from 2019, only 35% of Japanese employees had even heard of one-to-ones. Most of the time, if they do happen at all, one-to-ones only happen two or three times a year for performance reviews.^v Since most coaching takes place in one-to-one settings, not having regular one-to-ones is a tremendous hindrance to getting managers to coach their reports.

A related challenge is the relationship Japanese employees have with their managers. There are still traditional aspects to the manager-report relationship in Japan that would be perceived as old-fashioned or awkward from a Western point of view. In Japan, human qualities are often taken into consideration when employees are evaluated.^{vi} For example, it is not uncommon for Japanese employees to only leave the office after their boss has, even after working hours.

These actions are viewed as dedicated and cooperative, both traits that will be viewed positively when employees are evaluated.

Although not all companies in Japan may be like this, on average some element of this exists in many large Japanese corporations today. Employees' constant concern about how their human qualities are perceived by their manager overly complicates the coaching between manager and report. Many managers come to me for advice on how to get their reports to speak up or be more open about their thoughts, feelings and desires. I do not receive this type of concern as often from Western managers.

There are still traditional aspects to the manager-report relationship in Japan that would be perceived as old-fashioned or awkward from a Western point of view

OPPORTUNITIES

Although there are many challenges in getting managers to successfully coach their reports, there are also many exciting opportunities. The Work Style Reform Bill has encouraged many managers to rethink their leadership/management styles. I have noticed this in the trainings I deliver. When I look back at how managers would react to coaching three or four years ago, managers today have a much more open mindset towards adopting a coaching approach. Terms like inclusion, diversity, wellbeing, psychological safety and engagement – as well as coaching – are much more mainstream now.

I see a few aspects of Japanese culture that may work in favour when coaching – one in particular. From having trained both Japanese and Western managers in coaching skills, and observing how these managers coach one another during training, I have noticed a trend. When Japanese managers coach, they tend to provide more acknowledgement to their coachees, which causes the coachees to share more. Of course, there were certain cases where Western managers would do the same, but on average I witnessed Japanese managers doing so more often. We know from cultural studies that the Japanese have one of the world's most collectivist and high-context cultures.^{vii} Whatever the reason, acknowledgement is an effective skill for successful coaching, which I believe Japanese managers in general may have a knack for.

When Japanese managers coach, they tend to provide more acknowledgement to their coachees, which causes the coachees to share more

WHAT'S NEXT?

I believe coaching is key for managers in Japan to make positive changes in how they lead. The companies in Japan that have adopted a coaching-oriented approach are leading the way, and other Japanese companies are trying to make similar changes in order to not be left behind.

What would take managerial coaching in Japan to the next level? Japan's managers would need to add their own spin and evolution to the practice of coaching. In Japan, coaching is still very much considered foreign, and many managers shy away from it. If and when managerial coaching in Japan can evolve into something tailored that matches Japan's culture, I believe coaching will cease to exist as something imported from the West and become a true part of Japan's work style.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Masataka Matsumoto ACC, MBA is an executive coach and leadership development consultant based in Tokyo, Japan. Masa was born in California and raised in Tokyo, Japan and Massachusetts, and is bilingual in Japanese and English. Masa has a Bachelor of Laws from the University of Tsukuba, an MBA from McGill University and is an International Coaching Federation certified coach.

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DEEP DIVE!

WHO DO WE CARE TO BE? THE ETHICS OF CARE REVISITED FOR THE COACHING PROFESSION

Are we ready to choose to care? **Hetty Einzig** explores care, kinship and how an ethics of care – standing for courage, attention, regeneration, equity – could provide a framework for cherishing our fragile world and for valuing and giving purpose to our time here.

'When humans investigate and see through their layers of anthropocentric self-cherishing a most profound change in consciousness begins to take place. Alienation subsides. The human is no longer a stranger, apart... What humankind is capable of loving from mere duty... is very limited... The requisite care flows naturally if the self is widened and deepened so that protection of free nature is felt and conceived of as protection of our very selves.'
Thinking Like a Mountain, Joanna Macy et al

OPEN TO CARE

Feeling grim and hopeless one summer Sunday, I walked down through our local park to the river. A tall iron gate, normally closed, was propped open with an A-frame chalkboard on which was written: *Community Garden, Open day, All welcome, Come in and look around.* So I did.

I met friendly smiles, a welcome, an offer to be shown around and a cup of tea. I was asked no questions beyond my name. Wandering around this modest, even scruffy, piece of land, I began to take in its semi-cultivated wildness: cherry, walnut, apple and plum trees, rough beds for salad, some vegetables, herbs and other plants that no one could quite name, dandelion, burdock and love-in-the-mist rampant. A shed tucked into the fence, stocked with tools cleaned and hung in neat rows, a compost heap, an old garden table and Bunsen burner for making tea. The unkempt air of gentle wilderness mixed with some enthusiastic but casual gardening was unthreatening. This was

not an allotment. It was a place to enjoy flexing one's gardening skills – if you had them – to plant what you loved, or to potter, help out or just hang out.

I joined the WhatsApp group. I now follow notifications from regulars about making basil pesto and muscle salve from the garden's plants, of unusual butterflies, of lettuces birthed in the garden growing on kitchen sills, of wormeries and manure. I go when I can, watering, weeding a bit, asking what needs doing and doing it. I try to bring attention to the task. I was struck one Sunday to see a woman I'd previously seen vigorously planting then sitting reading on a bench. No pressure. This was a place to feel regenerated, a place of care and kinship.

We care for what we value – our loved ones, our work, our community or nation. But the converse carries a truth less considered: we come to value what we care for. It is in the daily actions of caring – of tending, planting, watering, fixing, mending, building – that we expand our sense of self.

The literary academic Christina Lupton tells us that fiction 'rarely does justice to the quality of days and weeks and years spent together, to the rhythms that comfort, the agreed-upon ways of folding laundry, roasting potatoes, running a bath.'¹ Care is ordinary: a primary instinct we take for granted. But stories tend to focus on heroes. It is the singular, the wild, the extraordinary that grabs our attention and dominates our media. Do we need to re-fall in love with the intimacy and beauty of ordinary? The Japanese recognise this more subtle beauty in a range of words and phrases – *shibui*,

*wabi-sabi, mono no aware, kintsugi** – that capture the simple, unobtrusive, often cracked, broken or transient nature of what is most precious.

Often repetitive, sometimes boring, arduous or unpleasant, the daily actions of care can also be meditative, soothing, deeply satisfying. Either way, caring in action alters us. It is in caring that we mature from the 'little emperors' of our babyhood to consider and take into ourselves the wellbeing of others, of our environment and places we call home. This expands our sense of self: it reminds our beingness that there is no such thing as 'I', only 'I-in-relationship'.

Care goes deeper than actions – it is a core value encapsulated in the simple affirmation 'I care'. Caring is the route through which we shift our 'allegiance from the abstractions of *known relationship* to the presence of *felt relationship*' as Phillip Shepherd puts it in *Radical Wholeness*, an elegy to our interconnectedness and how we might recultivate this in a world fenced and defended.

As I discovered, and intuitively felt, that Sunday in the community garden, being a part of another's flourishing – whether child, plant, animal, idea, community or nation – reconnects us, within as much as without. It swells our hearts and brings a sense to being alive.

MAKING SENSE OF CONTEXT

I need to begin with where I am – where we are. To speak about care and the ethics that flow from adopting care as a foundational principle I need to ask: what are the waters we swim in? Because context is a determining factor in how we perceive, conceive and enable new ideas. Care though, is far from being a new idea. It is as ancient as life itself. So how have we strayed so far from its centrality to existence?

Every year the compilers of the Oxford English Dictionary choose a word of the year. In 2016 the word they chose was *post-truth*. Defined as an adjective 'relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.'² We might view the term as a neat signifier of the inflexion point our contemporary WEIRD world (Western, educated, industrialised, rich, democratic) has reached. Enmeshed in culture wars³ while some very real facts are pressing: in recent times, the 2007-9 financial crash, two years of global pandemic and now the war in Ukraine (the latest reminder of a thriving worldwide warfare industry) have lodged in our imaginaries as undeniable demonstrations of a world in trouble.

The acronym VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous), coined in 1985 by economists to describe the post-Cold-War era, has recently been nudged aside by BANI (brittle, anxious, non-linear, incomprehensible), suggested by the futurist Jamais Cascio as a more accurate descriptor of the turmoil of the post-pandemic world. Brittle refers to the fragility of businesses and organisations, exacerbated by just-in-time manufacturing, 'lean' staffing and other efforts to maximise efficiency, leaving no slack or resilience in the system. These brittle systems could snap at any moment, more fuel to the widespread climate of anxiety. Anxiety makes us edgy and reactive: we take hasty decisions in a haze of urgency. Behaviours are by turn frenetic or paralysed for fear of making things worse, sliding for many into depression. In a non-linear world there is a 'disconnection between cause and effect in time, proportion, perception'⁴ What was once complex now has multiple causes, meanings and destinations, as we witnessed during the pandemic.

At the same time, a dark ghost hovering yet pressing evermore into the foreground, is our awareness of global heating, climate disruption and the destruction of ecosystems. The IPCC and others warn that there is now but an eight-year window in which to act to avert total systems breakdown.⁵ And yet our governments do little to nothing. They seem insouciant. The combination of urgency and fear with the feelings of impotence felt by many further fuels anxiety – often in a cocktail of disillusion, cynicism or despair. These feelings are too widespread to be partitioned off under the neat label of mental health problems.

One current indicator of this anomie has been dubbed the 'Great Resignation': record numbers of people leaving their jobs post-pandemic. The trends are highest in those who are mid-career, and in those working in the tech and healthcare industries.⁶ Thirty-six per cent of those polled in a recent McKinsey report had left their job without another to go to. The top reasons they cited were not feeling valued by their organisation or their managers, and not feeling a sense of belonging at work. This last factor was strongest among non-white or multi-racial employees.⁷

Since all data depends on the questions you ask, could it be that workplaces are not only unable to respond to our need to feel valued and to belong, but are also out of touch with our need to find value *in* our work – and further, to feel our work adds value to the world we live in?

Often repetitive, sometimes boring, arduous or unpleasant, the daily actions of care can also be meditative, soothing, deeply satisfying. Either way, caring in action alters us

As I try to understand the cataracts threatening to rush us downstream I identify three broad streams of enquiry, which seem to me enmeshed, mutually reinforcing. I see these streams as part of a push-back against our ways of living and working on a planet in danger, a challenge sometimes referred to as the Great Turning,⁸ the Great Transformation⁹ or the Great Transition.¹⁰

Firstly, the precepts of empire and the Enlightenment values (of scientific rationalism, of liberation from superstition and expansionism) that fuelled it are being contested: the realities of violence, cover-ups and breath-taking arrogance behind the narratives of progress, science and logic are being exposed.^{11,12}

Second, there is a widespread awakening to the imperative of listening to and truly hearing other voices. The recent mass movements #MeToo¹³ and #BlackLivesMatter¹⁴ brought to the fore the experiences of women and of people of colour in that same patriarchal world that reached its apotheosis in empire. They are rejecting those norms and demanding visibility, respect and justice. In the process they are attuning us to be more alert to, and less tolerant of, suppression and 'wilful blindness'.¹⁵

The third stream I observe is a searching for alternative ontologies. The Establishment, those institutions of government, law and order, finance, healthcare and education that frame and give foundation to our daily lives, is fraying at best, fraudulent and unfit at worst. In this post-truth world, the yearning for an ethical framework to live by, to re-find truths we can build on, is expressing itself strongly.

The environmental movement has long championed the voices of indigenous people. From being a fringe interest, their worldviews are now seen to offer relevant insights into how to live. In our secular world we could say that people are seeking to rediscover goodness outside our individual efforts, and to re-find meaning and purpose where the gods of neoliberalism are, if not yet toppled, found increasingly wanting. Our understanding of identity is morphing: from me to us; from mine to ours; from separate to interconnected; from boundaried to porous.

Identifying these distinct but intertwining discourses is helping me see beyond the confusion, distress and complexity to signs of emergence. It would seem our identities are on the line. How do we care to see ourselves now? Revisionist histories are being written¹⁶, indigenous cultures revisited for wisdoms we have lost in our scientific focus on linear logic and our love affair with technology.¹⁷ In coaching there is a growing appetite for new action-logics that embrace more ecosystemic approaches, and which look to promote collaboration and contribution over individual winning.¹⁸

Post-truth, VUCA and BANI are reductive terms of course, but we reach for them as way markers when our world feels overwhelming. The provision of guidelines, social codes to help us through this messy complexity, is precisely what ethics are meant to provide. Ethics can't tell us which choice to make or path to take but they can provide lights along the journey. They provide points of reference for our individual and collective deliberations. But our ethical codes too need revisiting...

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UNHEARD VOICES NEED TO BE HEARD

In this time of scrutiny it is only right that we should re-examine the foundational precepts of coaching. Coaching, I have written elsewhere, is a mongrel profession – and this is a strength.¹⁹ Education, psychology, philosophy, sports science, economics, spiritual traditions from East and West, the social sciences and politics have all contributed to its roots and development.

However, to point out the hitherto 'unthought known',²⁰ all the major theories in these various disciplines were created by men: white, of a certain age, from the West. These theories, founded in the male point of view, were presented and still are generally accepted as the norm and the standard by which all humans should be compared, measured and judged.

In developmental psychology all key models of human development are deduced from observation of boys' play (seen as 'the crucible of social development'²¹), behaviours and choices. Women are seen as deviating from the norm, failing to conform to the rules of the game and failing to achieve the standards of excellence that boys and men strive for, and which underpin the legal structures that characterise an orderly society. It is these models that have shaped our view of the world, what it means to be human, our understanding of

morality and ethics – and of course, in turn, the development of coaching heuristics.

*'It is difficult to appreciate the enormity of the exclusion of women from the history of ethics' writes Lawrence Hinman, a major contemporary authority on ethics. 'If one looks at the history of moral thought, it is as if women hardly existed.'*²²

WOMEN CARING

Spurred on by this blind spot, Harvard psychologist Carol Gilligan based her longitudinal research on exploring women's points of view, listening to women talk about their experience. She interviewed girls and women between roughly 12-30 years old on the topics of self, morality, will, choice and conflict, using standard written scenarios from psychology research to elicit their take on what characters should do in the face of a range of moral dilemmas. Her groundbreaking 1982 book, *In a Different Voice*²³, gives us women's distinctive ways of seeing the world. Neither better nor worse, but different.

Not (or no longer) exclusively associated with women, I want to highlight these diverse ways of looking at the world as signposting the potential for change towards more interdependent ways of being – as more fit for purpose in our complex and beleaguered world.

Reading Gilligan's book again some 30 years after I first read it, I am arrested by a passage in which she hints at Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget's dismay on observing girls' 'more "pragmatic" attitude towards rules'.²⁴ She notes how 'innovative' girls are: rather than stick to the rules they find ways to preserve the relationships within the group, to the point even of stopping the game. This incapacity for 'law-making', surmised Piaget, is what makes women unfit to lead. In the light of a post-#MeToo era, and of the emphatic need for new ways to work, live and inhabit our planet – for innovative solutions that disrupt our faulty business-as-usual habits in all spheres – Piaget's dismissal of the innovative skills of girls seems particularly misguided and unfortunate.

Gilligan instead puts a positive psychological and philosophical emphasis on girls' turn-taking approach and relationship orientation, and argues for this as a valid ontological position. She expands on the damage done by our valorisation of separateness.

*'Theories of psychological development and conceptions of self and morality that have linked progress or goodness with disconnection or detachment and advocated separation from women in the names of psychological growth or health are dangerous because they cloak an illusion in the trappings of science: the illusion that disconnection or dissociation from women is good.'*²⁵

Given the conceptualisation of our planet as Mother Earth, it is easy to extrapolate and see the extensive damage caused by the privileging of hyper-masculinised, dominator styles of being over female partnering styles.²⁶

None of this is new. Indigenous peoples have always celebrated and cared for our interdependence with our natural worlds. And critiques of Western models of leadership are growing. One arresting analysis is the forensic unpicking by Ladkin and Bridges Patrick of Bernard Bass's transformational leadership theory – still the most widely accepted and used leadership model.²⁷ The unconscious assumptions that underpin the discourse have made their way into coaching too: a totalising and essentialising norm of white, male, hierarchical, individual, separated, able-bodied and cisgendered; above all, a self-evident imperative to transform followers to fit this elevated norm.

Pulling together the strands of a number of ancient and modern philosophical traditions in their magisterial book *Ethical Maturity in the Helping Professions*²⁸, Michael Carroll and Elizabeth Shaw note that Gilligan's work has been crucial in shifting our understanding of moral reasoning and decision making, breaking apart linear or unilateral models, requiring us instead to combine and integrate situational, relational, emotional, communicative, contextual and ecological considerations. As several of Gilligan's interviewees replied when addressing the moral dilemma scenarios: 'It all depends.'

ETHICAL MATURITY

Carroll and Shaw describe ethical maturity thus:

*'Having the reflective, rational, emotional and intuitive capacity to decide actions are right and wrong or good and better, having the resilience and courage to implement those decisions, being accountable for ethical decisions made... and being able to live with the decisions made and integrating this learning into our moral character and future actions.'*²⁹

Ethical maturity includes components – like reflexivity and emotional intelligence – that are prominent in the moral reasoning of the women interviewed by Gilligan. As our understanding grows that rationality and thinking are not separate from feelings, that the body-mind is an integrated whole and that we are interconnected with our context, culture and wider ecosystems, so our views of ethics are shifting too.

Gilligan's work showed that far from being lesser than the reasoning of boys and men, women's inclusion of empathy in their discourse demonstrated a tolerance for ambiguity and a capacity to engage with complexity that we would now consider admirable and impressive. The women's approach to ethics sought innovative approaches to problem solving while also safeguarding and maintaining relationships. This instinctive and mature ethical stance is better attuned to the realities of interdependence, constant change and fluidity of identity than the more rigid, rule-bound binaries of right-wrong employed by boys when presented with the same moral dilemmas in parallel studies.

Increasingly the concepts of empathy and compassion are moving from nice-to-have to being understood as essential for a healthy and effective workplace – especially in light of the mounting studies showing high levels of overwhelm, disaffection and feeling undervalued at work.³⁰ *Compassionate Leadership*³¹ (Michael West), *Intelligent Compassion*³² (Amy Bradley), *Compassion Practices*³³ (Andy Bradley) and *Compassionate Resilience* (Laurence Cassøe Halsted)³⁴ are now part of current discourse in the health and care services, sport and some enlightened workplaces (see Frederic Laloux).³⁵

The Covid-19 pandemic was seismic in so many ways. It proved a watershed in accelerating understanding of compassion as vital and foregrounding the primacy of care to our human lives – and to living well. This is gaining further ground as we adapt to living-with-Covid. While we might automatically associate the word 'care' with healthcare, the caring professions or with the care we devote to our personal relationships, we need to now make the leap to understanding deeply that the concept of care – not just caring for, but caring about, caring with, being care-full – is fundamental to a decent, well-functioning society and to a viable human presence on Earth. Care has been defined as 'a form of close attention, an intense form of connection' – a first principle of living.³⁶

To some readers the value of caring is common sense. But in the context of neoliberal exceptionalism and winner-takes-all culture – or the 'uncare' that it systematically built from the 1940s on (as described by Sally Weintrobe in her excoriating account of neoliberalism³⁷) – Gilligan felt she had to make the case for it, just as we still need to do around self-care: to shift the frame from self-indulgence to self-respect.

The concept of care – not just caring for, but caring about, caring with, being care-full – is fundamental to a decent, well-functioning society and to a viable human presence on Earth

It is worth reminding ourselves how we – as coaches, psychologists, educators and leaders – have, like our clients and alongside more sensitive or pluralist models, unconsciously introjected a phalanx of psychological theories that valorise separation, independence, achievement, winning, rule-making and rule-following as norms – especially in the workplace. These privilege individuation over intimacy; the hero who leaves home to follow his destiny over the hearth-holder; dominance of the few over collegiality of the many. These theories also accept violence and cruelty as governing principles rather than incidental deviations from being 'humankind'. Formulated by a patriarchal world, these models have been presented as proxies for all humans. While this simplification may sound savage, those at the receiving end, including the other-than-human and our natural world, feel the exclusion, the hurt and the damage that such worldviews engender. I confess I want to prod us to imagine better, and I see a viable alternative in Gilligan's work.

THE ETHICS OF CARE

In contrast to prevailing ethical models derived largely from philosophical, religious or rational traditions, Gilligan proposes The Ethics of Care:

*'... an ethic grounded in voice and relationships, in the importance of everyone having a voice, being listened to carefully (in their own right and on their own terms) and heard with respect. An ethics of care directs our attention to the need for responsiveness in relationships (paying attention, listening, responding) and to the costs of losing connection with oneself or with others. Its logic is inductive, contextual, psychological, rather than deductive or mathematical.'*³⁸

Care is about relationships. This is the same principle that drives quantum theory, as professor of physics Carlo Rovelli reminds us: 'it pushes us to rethink reality in terms of relations instead of objects, entities or substances... what quantum phenomena are is evidence that all properties are relational.' As Rovelli admits: nothing new here. Plato said it, the Buddhists have said it. 'Nothing has independent existence' – everything is in relation to something else. This is mainstream stuff. Should we not therefore prioritise our attention to those links, relations, effects and influences? Should we not give our relationships – all of which sustain each other – our utmost care? Since – as we are constantly reminded – we, like the rest of life, win only through collaboration.³⁹ Instead it is the individual, the object and entity that continue to fix our attention. We valorise heroes and celebrities, we covet the car, device or dress, we talk in terms of good and bad organisations, as discrete entities – as if all had magical

powers, *dei ex machina*, unattached, with no obligations or ties. Are we stupid? Or are we afraid to care?

In *Intelligent Kindness: Rehabilitating the Welfare State*, John Ballatt, Penelope Campling and Chris Maloney make the case for caring as an intelligence, based on the recognition that the welfare of one depends on the welfare of all.⁴⁰ Kindness has its roots in kin, and acknowledges our kinship with others. It begins with connection with another person, and allowing their needs, experience and personality to influence us. Kinship is a mark of respect; without this sense of kinship equity, diversity and inclusion agendas remain worthy but often lifeless exercises. In my own life, I value and attend to not only my immediate and extended family but also our local farmers' market, the community garden, friends and neighbours, our cat, my garden, certain places in London, Suffolk, Wales, France – I feel how all these knit together and hold me in an expansive web. I experience the pleasures and responsibilities as part of who I am – who I care to be.

Kinship is a way of describing that sense of identity as embedded within a wider network. Kin is not limited to family or those in our 'tribe' – those genealogically connected, or those we feel are like us, sharing affiliations and cultural norms. In their ground-breaking book *The Dawn of Everything*, David Graeber and David Wengrow garner recent research showing that humans have always, at least since the era of early cave paintings, been able to extend their sense of kin across territories and cultures – and perhaps also across species, judging by the beauty and grace of these early paintings of animals.

We valorise heroes and celebrities, we covet the car, device or dress, we talk in terms of good and bad organisations, as discrete entities – as if all had magical powers, dei ex machina, unattached, with no obligations or ties. Are we stupid? Or are we afraid to care?

VISION, VALUES AND THE RISKS OF CARE

Graeber and Wengrow reference Elias Canetti's contention that cities begin in the imagination: seeing oneself as a Londoner, a Parisian or a Carioca we can feel part of an idea beyond the number of people we can directly relate to, which according to the Dunbar rule is limited to 150.⁴¹ This reminds us that the world is how we envision it: we can choose to imagine ourselves as interconnected, or separate, as belonging to wider kinship groups or narrow tribes. Which we choose will shape our behaviours in the world.

It seems to me we consistently undervalue and underestimate the power of the human imagination – and of the human spirit. For many an awareness of being planetary citizens was kicked into life on seeing the first unforgettable colour images from space of our blue globe in the mid-1960s. Seeing that exquisite globe wreathed in gossamer cloud imprinted on us the extraordinary fragility of Earth balanced in space. In that moment many of us fell in love; an urge to care was aroused and has remained, piqued and tortured by the mounting threats to the planet's – and therefore to our own – wellbeing.

So, caring is risky. When we care we risk heartbreak. Covid-19 kindled a worldwide fear but it also broke open our hearts. Forced to stop the busy-busy of everyday business-as-usual meant looking around us – and starting to care about what was happening. The murder of

George Floyd in May 2020 happened in this context of awakening, igniting worldwide outrage at the callousness of the world we see evermore clearly. Righteous fury, demonstrations for justice and equity, calls for the fundamental uprooting of racism in every institution. Change felt possible.

But when outrage does not bring a response, when social institutions shrug their shoulders and change for the better does not follow, it boils down into chronic anxiety. Stress can make us narrow-minded. Fear can force a retreat from civic sensibility; it encourages us to cultivate self-protective behaviours. We see how many reduce their focus to taking care of their own. Fear is not conducive to empathy, to the expansiveness, the care and generosity that enable kinship. We see the splitting, partisanship, divisiveness and cruelties in social policy and politics everywhere.

In *Humankind*, however, Rutger Bregman urges us to eschew the newsfeed and its continuous, inflammatory reinforcement of how terrible things are, and instead consider the evidence for kindness – everywhere if we care to look.⁴² This is a different diet for the imagination. Kindness, born of a sense of kinship, has the power to shape more enabling frameworks for our existence and endeavours if we care to orient towards it, and allow its energies to enter our bloodstream and its rhythms to shape our actions. When we choose – against our primal instincts to fight or flee – to instead approach what scares us with open eyes and a curious heart, we get different results. Bregman's numerous case studies include a compelling insight into the Norwegian prison system. "The tranquillity. The trust. The way inmates and guards interact, noted one visitor in a contingent of prison officials from North Dakota, USA. The impact was profound. On their return the team formulated a plan to 'implement our humanity.'⁴³

Caring is risky. When we care we risk heartbreak. Covid-19 kindled a worldwide fear but it also broke open our hearts

EMBODIED REASONING: CARE AS INCLUSIONARY ONTOLOGY

Neuroscience tells us there are two types of reasoning (typically but loosely associated with left and right brain): analytic and empathic. One supports the making of lists and blueprints, the other emotional regulation and perspective shifts. However, in a quest for dominance, Western culture has incrementally promoted the scientific over the artistic, rules over relationships, and thereby become increasingly exclusionary. The scientific principle aims to exclude externalities, we construct fences and defences to separate ourselves from others and claim ownership, we designate the head as controller and ruler of the body. This tendency to separation and dominance has privileged the analytic network in our brain over the empathic network: while the healthy brain constantly toggles, the Western trend has been to overuse analytic types of reasoning. It is a symptom of our times that this approach is now wearing thin – as neuroscientist Amanda Blake vividly puts it, like car tyres that show uneven wear from constantly steering to the left.

Indigenous cultures by contrast are radically inclusionary. Australian social scientist Mishel McMahon of the Yorta Yorta nation describes the richness and vitality of First Nations ontology: a worldview where everything is equal, everything has meaning and everything has

agency. Human beings are just one element of a deeply intertwined ecosystem, where emphasis is placed on *garraba* ('waiting a little'), the better to be in deep listening, and on relational forms of decision making that include consulting ancestors, yet-to-be-born grandchildren and the trees, rocks and rivers that make up their world. As kinship is a broad and deep-lived experience, so care of kin is its daily practice.⁴⁴ I am reminded of how, when I entered psychotherapy many decades ago, I saw myself as a thread connecting past and future, and I held very clearly in mind my role in healing wounds of my inherited past as part of enabling a healthy future for my young children.

The Western universalising normative – an insistence on the domination of the rational, logical and technical, of a narrow definition of what constitutes data and information – has impoverished our lived lives. We miss out on the particular, the diverse ways of knowing, being and doing innate to indigenous cultures. I am especially struck by Mishel's description of the expansiveness and joyfulness that come with living as part of life. Listening to her I am deeply saddened by our goal-directed lives and Westernised arrogance that places humans separate and aloof from life – observing, extracting, controlling – but rarely enjoying, it seems, the deep satisfaction of being a part of the whole that an ethics of care can bring.

Care and kindness are not synonymous with tidy garden beds, nor with niceness, empathy or gentleness – although these are behaviours often elicited by cultures of care. Care work can be tough, as anyone who has worked in a hospital, hospice or care home will attest – and I don't just mean the physical side of their work. The dilemmas, painful choices, the witnessing and the sensitive conversations that constitute the work of care are psychologically demanding, requiring skill and mutual support – and kinship. Care demands we face into the volatility and the ambiguities of life with courage and engage in the work of reflection and dialogue around the moral complexities of real life. Intelligent kindness requires choice and deliberate practice embedded in cultural structures of care. The introduction of compassion practices into the UK National Health Service aims to provide exactly such structures, to help frame and normalise the practice of caring for each other by linking compassion with connection, care for others and community with care for self.⁴⁵

The same willingness to embrace complexity is found in successful creativity. Brett Macfarlane's INSEAD PhD research on innovation leaders working mostly in corporates explored how they dealt with anxiety, authority and frustration in tackling overwhelming challenges.⁴⁶ Broadly they occupied one of three states: euphoric (high energy), cynical (low energy) or hopeful (in the middle). Macfarlane observed how leaders trapped in the traditional concept of creativity as solo heroics fell into the defences of splitting and omnipotence in their attempts to deal with overwhelm. Psychoanalysis identifies these as primitive defences since they belong to early childhood: a fantasy of control, or attempts to make meaning by simplifying complex reality through splitting things into good and bad, right or wrong, with the bad out there – the not-me.

Macfarlane discovered that only those who could sustain a hopeful outlook 'were concerned with doing the work of regeneration' – the 'productivity zone', as he called it. Significantly these leaders demonstrated their hopeful mindset through tolerance, empowerment, composure, ambivalence and humility.

In contrast to conventional heuristics of innovative courage manifested in bold action, ambivalence and humility are important

findings. Macfarlane relates them to Melanie Klein's concept of what she termed the depressive position – when the developing child confronts the reality of paradox and imperfection. Klein thought this phase was a prerequisite for creativity, for engaging with real work.

Far from being a weakness, ambivalence is an important element of a relational approach – a recognition of interdependence and the realities of holding multiple and competing priorities in mind. Maturity is to be creative despite the limitations of the real world, to move forward with humility, in relationship and with care.

We know as coaches that the work of engaged, careful enquiry is exciting and revitalising, and can lead to creative actions when – and this is critical – grounded in a collective ethic that prioritises this approach. It's a question of choosing our ethical framework.

ETHICS OF JUSTICE AND OF EARTH

The #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter movements foregrounded the fundamental justice of the right to be heard. Systemic racism and the predominance of whiteness in the coaching profession are explored by Charmaine Roche and Jonathan Passmore in their ground-breaking 2021 report on racial justice, equity and belonging:

*"Without a critical consciousness of race and racialisation and the often hidden dynamics of power and privilege that come with them, the professional identity and practices of coaching remain fused with norms that are embedded in what scholars have defined as "whiteness". This can happen whether one is light or dark skinned. Whiteness in this context is not a skin colour or a personal identity. It is a performance of privilege that comes from the embodiment of a set of beliefs and cultural norms and the practices based on them.*⁴⁷

It is clear that whiteness is also about separateness – superiority requires distance. Counter to this, the ethics of care privilege interdependence: the care and wellbeing of others. Innovative solutions to conflicts, dilemmas and disputes are sought to preserve relationship rather than dominance.

Gilligan talks of generativity as rooted in 'its earthy redolence'⁴⁸ of intimacy as an uninterrupted flow. There are also longstanding campaigns to add the voices of the Earth and the more-than-human to this call for justice.⁴⁹

Preparing for his solo show *The Encounter* – a chronicle of National Geographic photographer Loren McIntyre's journey to the Javari valley in the remote heart of the vast Amazon basin in 1969 and his encounter with the Mayoruna – actor/director Simon McBurney visited these indigenous people. He asked them where they located consciousness, tapping his chest, heart and head to encourage their reply. Out there, they said, pointing towards the rainforest. Thinking they had misunderstood he repeated the question and received the same answer. After several attempts McBurney realised it was he who had misunderstood: the Mayoruna knew that their inner world was not separate from the world around them.⁵⁰ Their sense of consciousness was rooted in the fabric of the whole rainforest.

A sense of place as both without and within us links to an alternative concept of time and place. As McBurney recounts, and others have also experienced in encounters with indigenous peoples, the Western sense of time as linear and moving ever onwards is overturned. 'The main feature of time, by Western definition, is its passage', writes McBurney, 'but for the Mayoruna... time is at once mobile and static... It is not the implacable judge, condemning man to a tragically

brief life. Time is a shelter, an escape into safety and regeneration, a repository whose chief function is not piling up the past, intact yet dead, but rather keeping it alive and available.⁵¹

he essence of these ways of experiencing, being in and interacting with the world is that everything is relational. This offers a contrast and a reprieve from the tyranny of individuality and its ever-present burden of choice, and therefore personal responsibility, that is inherent in Abrahamic religions, Western culture and our socio-economic systems.

The African philosophy of ubuntu encapsulates this. In her article on ubuntu-inspired leadership, Joy Ntetha Siphokazi cites John Mbiti's description of ubuntu as a consciousness that 'what happens to the individual happens to the whole, and what happens to the whole happens to the individual.'⁵²

'I am because you are' is the popularisation of the ubuntu concept. Siphokazi adds that context is critical. So 'I am' also because I am located – here in North London, or in my study, or my garden, or in the nation we call the United Kingdom, or within the landscapes that are dear to me. Sociologist Bruno Latour prefers the term terrestrial to human as a reminder of our earthly location and of our parity with all other life on Earth.⁵³ And Robin Wall Kimmerer, a scientist and founder/director of the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment, exposes the depersonalising of the English language in referring to anything other than human as an 'it', which absolves us of moral responsibility and makes exploitation easy.⁵⁴

This is an issue of moral inclusion. The language we use creates our thinking, our cultures and our ways of being in the world. Diversity, equity and inclusion must also look beyond the human to all life.

In ubuntu, the values of dignity, respect, solidarity, compassion and thriving are central. Ubuntu emphasises the fostering of 'symbiotic relationships' – the very opposite of the independence and authoritarianism of the typical Western leadership model.⁵⁵ Ubuntu is about 'a post-heroic view of leadership... conceived as a group quality, a set of functions to be carried by the collective.'⁵⁶

A different morality flows from these priorities. Gilligan again:

*'...the moral problem arises from conflicting responsibilities rather than from competing rights and requires for its resolution a mode of thinking that is contextual and narrative rather than formal and abstract.'*⁵⁷

We need to recognise the cost today of this missing line of development: 'a failure to describe the progression of relationships toward a maturity of interdependence.'⁵⁸ It is not overstating things to assert that this failure has provided the psychological underpinnings – and thereby, albeit inadvertently, the legitimacy for – the growth of the culture of uncare, the consequences of which we see today.⁵⁹ The relevance for coaching is clear: if we continue to follow models that valorise success, winning, goal-setting and independence we fail to do justice to other ways of seeing, being and creating. We foster the singular, linear and dominant over the inclusive and interconnected.

For ethics to gain purchase on society and enable deep change they need to be enshrined in its laws and its codes of accountability. The late lawyer and activist Polly Higgins proposed the concept of ecocide (extensive loss or damage or destruction of ecosystem(s) of a given territory) and that this be inscribed in international law.

When we care to think about it, expanding our consciousness and

accountabilities beyond our physical body, embracing the more-than-human, the soils, waters and trees of our landscapes, as part of who we are is wholly to our advantage. 'Imagine,' says Kimmerer, 'the wisdom that surrounds us. We don't have to figure out everything by ourselves: there are intelligences other than our own... Imagine how less lonely the world would be.'⁶⁰

The relevance for coaching is clear: if we continue to follow models that valorise success, winning, goal setting and independence we fail to do justice to other ways of seeing, being and creating. We foster the singular, linear and dominant over the inclusive and interconnected

COURAGE, ATTENTION, REGENERATION, EQUITY

I began this essay reviewing the acronyms VUCA and BANI as capturing the shift from instability and confusion to brittleness and incomprehensibility. I want to suggest we coin a new acronym for our times: one that, rather than distilling our fears, galvanises our energies. CARE might also stand for courage, attention, regeneration and equity – not a bad banner to champion and guide our efforts.

Returning to the concept of post-truth, what if we were to reclaim the term? Used to describe those who play fast and loose with the facts, we might instead repurpose it to indicate the contesting of the long-cherished notion of The Truth – whether revealed by religious faith or claimed by the dominant power of a particular culture. Pluralism can be unnerving, but while there have always been culture wars we are now living in a time when claims for attention, understanding and justice have mushroomed – aided and fuelled by social media, for good or ill. The challenge to the norms and comfortable certainties of the establishment can be painfully confusing – but I suggest necessary – as we move away from imperialist structures of power held in the hands of the few to explore more equitable ways of living with each other and with the Earth.

Writing this essay over several months I have reflected on how much courage we need – I need – to step away from the dominant narratives that are as comfortable as old slippers. I start with paying attention to where I can extend care in small and larger ways – like in my local community garden. Far from virtue signalling, I am fumbling my way forward. But I find myself greatly sustained by the work of Gilligan and others – the idea of holding my erratic actions within a wider concept of care. An ethics of care can link us across traditions, cultures and geographies. They can guide kinship through the gathering quest to restore and regenerate our wounded world, and to establish equity and equality as norms.

I see the establishment of CARE as a central ethics to live by as key in the push-back against our ways of living and working on a planet in danger – identified at the start of this essay. Part of the Great Turning is the increasing realisation that it is not enough to rely on the personal goodness of the individual. Care, kindness, community, responsibility and justice all spring from love. We care because we love. We listen because we care. And we act because we are responsible. Could we then fall in love with the ethics of care – with the idea that the fundamental forces that tend towards good can be encoded and taught, embraced and lived by us all? The ethics of care necessarily

will also include justice and equity for the land and the more-than-human. Thus they provide a wider context, a container to live our lives as citizens not as mere consumers.

The ethics of care furnishes coaching with a framework to support our clients and ourselves as we navigate a turbocharged pace of change, facing our fears, anxiety and the confusion of meeting both everyday and planet-sized challenges.

The ethics of care is a multi-dimensional concept that can provide us with a strong foundation and a container for the much-needed collective enquiry within not only the helping professions but in all sectors. Personally, I need to believe we are ready for the challenge to determine what kind of world we want to live in. I hope we choose to build a kinder world. I hope we are ready.

**Shibui: simple, subtle, and unobtrusive beauty*

Wabi-sabi: concept that finds beauty and serenity in objects, landscapes, designs and so on that are simple, imperfect and impermanent

Mono no aware: the pathos of things; empathy towards things; sensitivity to ephemera
Kintsugi: the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery by mending the cracks with gold

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Hetty Einzig brings 25 years of psychology and executive coaching experience to global leadership development. A best-selling author, Hetty's career has spanned the arts, journalism, media, health and policy development in the private, public and voluntary sectors. She designs and delivers leader-coach and global culture change programmes. Key focuses are women's leadership, transpersonal coaching and regenerative approaches for contribution. She works ecosystemically and holistically founded on transpersonal psychology and informed by psychoanalysis and embodiment approaches.

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YOU AS TEAM COACH

Purpose, philosophy and stance are the three key elements that make up the identity of a team coach, argues [Georgina Woudstra](#).

'So, how are you going to coach the team?'

Few team coaches will answer this question in the same way. Why? Because your philosophy as a team coach is central to your response. Our philosophy shapes the way we think about team coaching; it guides our overall approach and the choices we make around conceptual frameworks, tools and exercises and our moment-by-moment decisions. Your philosophy is your mindset, and your stance is how you translate these ideals into every intervention you make as a coach.

It is challenging to be a team coach. There are countless choice points: whether to ask a question or share an observation; whether to intervene or pull back; whether to lead the process or invite the team to; whether to stick to the agenda or attend to an emerging theme or topic. You are constantly making decisions that ultimately impact the system – and yourself. You are constantly balancing the needs of the team with the needs of individual members, the leader and key stakeholders. Doing all this consistently and in the moment requires you to be clear on your philosophy, as it will enable you to make appropriate decisions and to coach more effectively.

Developing and embodying your philosophy a powerful developmental experience for team coaches, and I believe it is impossible to master team coaching without it. Yet, in the quest for excellence, many of us look outside of ourselves to find the 'best' or 'right' toolkit, model or system. We get accredited in yet more psychometric assessments, personality profiles and team effectiveness diagnostics. We take on the latest high-performing teams kit, which promises to work magic with any team. All of this plays to the fallacy that a fixed, standardised approach can be successfully applied to any team. More importantly, it all too often invites the coach to subordinate their own wisdom and power to an external source.

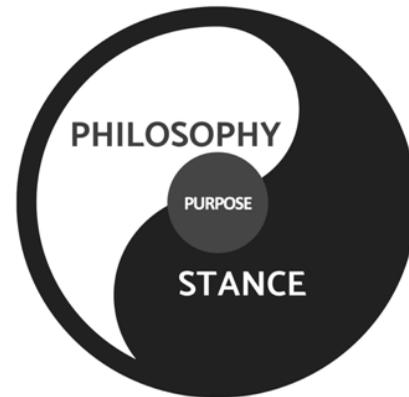
Bill O'Brien says: 'the success of an intervention depends on the interior conditions of the intervener.' Team coaching is about creating spaces where teams can connect, think and rewire how they work together. It is not something you do *to* a team; it is something you do *with* a team. To be effective, you must develop the approach within yourself and model it for others.

'Any time you deal with any situation you are making a statement about who you are and what you are about'
Pete Carroll

DEVELOPING YOUR TEAM COACHING PHILOSOPHY

Determining your philosophy is a journey of discovery into your own identity. It requires a deep dive into who you are now and who you are becoming; your hopes and dreams, your beliefs and assumptions, your values and what you stand for. To show up as your best self, you need a clear understanding of three core elements:

1. Your purpose as a team coach: your true motivation.
2. Your worldview: the beliefs and principles that underpin your approach.
3. Your stance: mantras that keep you true to yourself.



1. Your purpose as a team coach

Here are a few questions to help you to explore your 'why':

- What drew you to coaching in the first place?
- Why do you want to be a team coach?
- What kind of team coach do you want to be?
- What impact do you want to have? Or what difference do you want to make?
- What types of clients and situations do you want to serve?
- Why does this matter so much to you personally?
- What do you want to achieve for yourself?

As you reflect on this, consider your experience of coaching – whether coaching individuals or teams or being coached yourself. Think about times when you were especially moved, and consider what made these experiences so meaningful. It can help to do this activity with another coach, who can ask probing questions to support you in revealing your purpose as a team coach.

2. Your philosophy, or worldview

This is the window through which you look at the work: it informs and underpins every thought and deed in your coaching. Examine your beliefs and assumptions around the following:

- The value and purpose of teams.
- How teams function at their best.
- The role of a team leader or leadership more generally.
- The role a team member needs to play for a team to excel.
- Autonomy: should teams determine their own vision and purpose, or should that be determined by stakeholders?
- How change happens (e.g., by setting clear goals, making plans and tackling obstacles, or by constantly responding to the needs of an emerging future).
- Decision making, performance management, responsibility and accountability in teams.
- Power in systems and teams: both its function and how it's best employed in systems, leadership and change.

For all or any of your responses, ask yourself why you hold these beliefs and where they come from. Watch out for any 'should' responses – they could be the result of an internalised voice of authority, and therefore someone else's beliefs. If so, check whether they still stand for you; if you are unsure, ask yourself what a more liberating belief might be. Then, hone your true beliefs and assumptions into a set of guiding principles for your work as a team coach.

3. Your stance

Your philosophy informs your stance, and together they shape your role and approach as a team coach. Whereas your philosophy is a set of principles, beliefs or values that you hold, your stance takes these ideas and turns them into action, so you are literally taking a stand. It often takes the form of a set of mantras that determine certain skills and behaviours, for example:

- Follow the client's (team's) agenda
- Trust the process
- Be curious
- It's all data!
- Focus on the here and now
- Hold the space
- Embrace not knowing
- Centre myself

Mantras are deeply personal: they help you to live your principles as a team coach, so make them your own. Keep them simple and clear, so that you can remember them in the moment. And remember to update them, especially when you capture a new thought that really supports you as you work.

WHAT GETS IN THE WAY?

As team coaches, we are at our best when we are grounded, present and connected in ourselves. From this place, we can be fully present to the team, the wider context and to the primary reason for the coaching situation. From this place, we can 'be with' whatever needs to emerge.

But, when triggered by a dynamic, it is easy to get thrown off balance and disconnect in order to protect ourselves. We may become reactive, critical or blaming, or withdraw and shut down. At these moments, survival strategies have cut in, and our resourcefulness as a coach is depleted.

Our script can also get in the way of being at our best as team coaches. Eric Berne, creator of transactional analysis, defines our life

script as 'an unconscious pathway created in childhood, reinforced by our parents, and strengthened with evidence sought throughout life ensuring our beliefs are justified'.ⁱⁱ It is such a useful concept, because it explains many of our underlying needs and decisions. Our script can be useful, such as a belief that you can achieve anything you want in life. Other aspects of our script hold us back from our power as a coach, such as:

- Needing to be liked or admired
- Needing to be perfect
- Needing to have the 'right' model, tool, exercise, question or process
- Needing to demonstrate your knowledge
- Needing to make clients happy
- Desiring to fix things
- Being too polite
- Taking responsibility of what's not yours to take

Self-awareness is vital, otherwise our focus and energy get consumed by survival or getting our own needs met. High-quality team coach training and supervision can help you to understand your strengths, weaknesses and what is important to you, as well as how you react to different situations.

At the Team Coaching Studio we place an emphasis on the development of your identity as a team coach: 'You as Team Coach'. Your philosophy – your sense of purpose, your beliefs and what you feel is important in your work – makes up your identity. You have to figure out this to be successful as a team coach, because it guides how you coach and how you interact in every moment of a team coaching assignment. It reflects who you are and who you want to be as a team coach. When you develop and live by a clear philosophy in your work, fear becomes irrelevant; you are guided by a higher purpose and principles. And, when you take an 'inside-out' approach to your journey to mastery, you will show up at your best for the teams you serve.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Georgina Woudstra MCC, ACTC is the founder and principal of the Team Coaching Studio, an organisation dedicated to creating great team coaches.

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THE AC'S TEAM COACH ACCREDITATION SCHEME

Your patience has been rewarded! After a three-year period of research and development, the AC's team coaching accreditation scheme has launched. So, what is it, whom is it for and what does it entail? [Declan Woods](#) explains...

WHY DID THE AC DEVELOP A TEAM COACHING ACCREDITATION SCHEME?

Two sets of drivers prompted this: the market and its members. In my article for the July 2022 edition of *Coaching Perspectives*,ⁱ I charted organisations' increasing use of teams as a means of arranging work and improving organisational performance. What followed was an interest in how organisations might support teams to achieve these ends. As more traditional methods of team development (e.g., team building or facilitation) had proved insufficient to the task of responding to complex teams' needs, this created the conditions for a new form of development to emerge. Team coaching has evolved to fill this gap.

Corporate and organisational members were asking the AC for its point of view on team coaching – how it differed from other team interventions, what form it took, what good practice looked like (including how to select great team coaches) and so on.

Members working with teams (or those thinking about moving into this area) were also asking the AC whether it had a scheme to recognise and validate their practice. They wanted to know what great team coaching was and how to develop their skills, as well as obtain professional recognition for their work. Our new team coaching accreditation scheme responded to these needs.

WHOM IS IT FOR?

The AC has created a team coaching accreditation scheme for two different but related audiences. One for the individual practitioner – the team coach. The other for providers of coaching training. Many AC members currently train team coaches and are looking for accreditation of their existing programmes, while others were considering offering this as part of their training portfolio.

HOW WAS IT DEVELOPED?

I led the design of the scheme and developed it over a period of more than three years with input from a huge number of team coaches and coach training providers worldwide. Thank you!

When we began this work, there was no commonly accepted definition of team coaching or agreed team coaching competency model. We therefore started by creating explanations of teams and team coaching before creating a team-coaching-specific competency framework. These were featured in an article in the October 2022 edition of *Coaching Perspectives*, 'Are you team coaching competent?'ⁱⁱ

In brief, the approach taken to the accreditation scheme entailed:

1. A review of the literature on team coaching and related fields.
2. In-depth interviews with team practitioners to understand their work with teams, and the knowledge, skills and abilities required to coach teams.
3. The codification of different areas of practice (identified in steps 1 and 2) and the creation of a draft team coaching competency framework.
4. Consultation with a wider group of practitioners to validate the team coaching competency framework (step 3).
5. Further refinement of the team coaching competency model.

Several principles underpinned the design of the scheme. The scheme will:

- Have a member-first approach and respond to members' needs.
- Be globally relevant and internationally applicable.
- Be practice-oriented and inform team coaches' practice.

- Be behaviourally anchored, and provide a 'how to' guide for team coaches, plus enable observable assessment of their work.
- Promote excellent standards of practice: be recognised by coaches, coachees and buyers of coaching services as the industry standard for high-quality team coaching.
- Be inclusive: seek to recognise different theories, models and approaches of team coaching, reflecting the variety of team types and ways of coaching teams.
- Be developmental in itself.

HOW DO I/WE GET ACCREDITED?

There is one level of accreditation for team coaching programmes and three levels of accreditation for individual team coaches, which are as follows:

1. Team practitioner: for those with some basic training and who work with groups over a shorter duration, probably using a facilitative intervention style.
2. Team coach: for those with more extensive training and who work with a variety of teams over a longer period. They have the ability to work on more complex and demanding topics, including challenging dynamics.
3. Master team coach: for those with extensive training, and significant skills and experience. They have the ability to work with a wide range of teams, flexibly and fluidly, on highly complex and challenging topics including more entrenched team dynamics.

These levels were designed to offer a route into accreditation for practitioners with a range of team coaching training, experience and skills, and provide a progressive development pathway between them. I suggest you start by looking at the more detailed descriptions in the overview document on the AC website to help you decide which level of accreditation is right for you.

The accreditation scheme focuses upon a coach's fitness to practise, assessed against the team coaching competency model. The two most important elements of this are working ethically and the assessment of an observed piece of team coaching (as part of the training). Uniquely for this scheme, the AC has invited coach training providers to carry out this assessment on its behalf, believing this offers the fairest means for team coaches to demonstrate their practice.

A variety of different methods are used in the rest of the assessment process, including logs of team coaching training and experience, a case study across a whole programme of team coaching, and client and coaching supervisor references.

An individual applicant provides evidence against these different elements in a portfolio they submit to the AC. Coach training providers supply details of their training as part of their application for programme accreditation. Apart from the assessed team coaching practice, responsibility rests with the individual to compile and submit their application, and with the AC to assess it and award accreditation status.

WHEN IS IT AVAILABLE?

The scheme launched in December 2022 and is available to coach training providers to apply to. Team coaches can use the competency framework to inform their practice immediately and begin to compile their individual application straightaway. Templates are available to make it easy to present all of the information needed.

WHAT RESPONSE HAS THE AC HAD FROM THE MARKET?

The reaction from team coaches, coach training providers and corporate organisations throughout the research and consultation phases has been encouraging. Here's a flavour:

- 'Very comprehensive and detailed... Really great overview for a team coach.'
- 'I am impressed that the team coaching competencies are concise, inclusive and practical. They are very well-thought-out and their purpose is clear.'
- 'Really clear, achievable and pragmatic.'
- 'I am thoroughly impressed with the breadth and depth of the competency framework and the pragmatic and flexible approach to assessment.'
- 'The pathway, competency framework and scheme criteria are pitched at the right levels and have flexibility to give coaches a clear route of progression.'

Georgina Woudstra, principal of the team coach training provider Team Coaching Studio, described it as 'truly ground-breaking'. She believes 'it is the most well-considered, comprehensive and rigorous scheme available'.

After three years' hard work, I am encouraged that we are on the right track.

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

You can find out more about the accreditation scheme and competency model on the AC's website ([bit.ly/3hf3T5Q](https://www.ac-coaching.com/bit.ly/3hf3T5Q)).

In addition, I will be hosting a series of webinars for members across the AC's regions to have their questions answered. There will be a separate webinar for coach training providers and corporate members too. Look out for specific communications about these.

I look forward to meeting you on one of these calls!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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www.triumphantteams.com

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EXPLORING TERRA INCOGNITA

Grab some paper and a pencil, and prepare for a trip through the jungle: **Carsten Hennig** invites you to join him on a five-step reflective journey into a metaphor for your coaching practice.

Metaphors are rooted in the way we feel and think.ⁱ They have been widely recognised by practitioners across fields for their potential.ⁱⁱ Cognitive linguistsⁱⁱⁱ, therapists^{iv} and coaches^v investigate concepts of self through metaphorical representations in language. Since Lakoff and Johnson, this potential has been accessible on three levels^{vi}:

- concrete metaphors (as encountered in everyday use of language).
- metaphorical concepts (similarities and patterns uniting several of our personal concrete metaphors).
- metaphor-generating schemata (fundamental structuring based on early experiential perception, as well as abstract phenomena).

Effectiveness of metaphor-specific intervention in developmental coaching corresponds with its depth. Accessing deeper (more abstract) levels of metaphoric potential is challenging, since awareness of metaphors commonly extends to concrete metaphors only. To raise awareness, metaphor-related reflection based on a knowledge background is recommended. This includes knowing our own metaphors, being able to relate to metaphors in general and knowing a few things about cognitive metaphor theory.

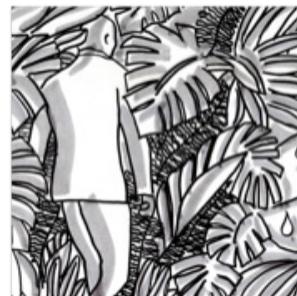
Thus, we can identify and validate the metaphors of our coachees more readily. We also know how to interpret and expand, how to question and reframe, and how to identify the affective and cognitive patterns represented within the schemata underneath these metaphors. From here, reinterpreting the metaphor will help coachees to activate fully the resources contained within their metaphorical self-concepts. We will avoid the temptation to offer them our own metaphors, which in comparison can be only a poor fit. Furthermore, raising our coachees'

awareness for underlying schemata will enable them to recognise and deal with corresponding challenges more autonomously.

Creative metaphor reflection (CMR) is a practical application.^{vii} Working creatively invites the coachee to externalise metaphorical images in a constructive and activating way. As coaches, we take this up appreciatively in the sense of metaphor reflection and validate the meanings of the metaphor. This is followed by interpretations and expansions of the framework of its meanings, up to possible implications or inconsistencies. Here we work out the emphases of the metaphor and its logic, as well as its potential to obscure. Working with the concrete metaphor, the metaphorical concepts as well as the metaphor-generating schemata also come into view.

Before we explore, please summon a metaphorical image: picture your role-concept of being a coach. Now make a small sketch of this metaphor, and headline or title it. Thank you. Voilà! Your personal '1000-words-worth' professional identity – a reference point on our roadmap to CMR. Please feel free to work it through as you read along.

Step one: identifying and visualising metaphors. To illustrate, please peruse the following sketch titled *Guide through the Jungle* (by A. Nonymous) as an example.



Step two: validating and developing metaphors. Being a guide implies leading another's way, explaining points of interest or providing guiding information. A jungle implies impenetrable thickets of tropical vegetation, and its tangled complexity could be fascinating or frustrating, maybe even risky. A person making their way is active, engaged and – based on their capability – maybe determined or in desperation. The medium shot underlines this dynamic potential; a three-quarter back-profile emphasises the person being both in front of the viewer as well as being a specific individual characterised by its profile.

Step three: expanding and interpreting metaphors. The metaphor establishes coaching as guiding the way through a jungle. Possible follow-up questions regarding 'guide' could include: who are you guiding? Are they adventurers, explorers, tourists or your followers? Where are they? Where are you guiding them to? Is there a destination, resting place or obstacle? How do you find your way? With respect to jungle, we could inquire: what kind of jungle is this? What grows here? In what way is it exotic? What kind of vegetation is above you? How do you handle the vegetation if it is in the way? Is there anything in or behind the vegetation? If so, what could it be?

Answers could be manifold and, in case of A. Nonymous, they probably would reveal coaching to be an adventurous journey through an unknown realm, full of search and survival challenges. A. Nonymous then must be a well-equipped and highly trained expert with broad knowledge and long experience. But is A. really in contact with the coachee? Maybe the coachee got lost a few paces back, and A. did not notice on account of being too occupied with the thrill of adventure (making their way through the undergrowth instead of on a path), or perhaps the coachee simply does not feel as adventurous? Apart from engaging the coachee, A. could try and spot the sun, a landmark or a clearing (instead of keeping themselves busy with pruning bushes).

Step four: identify exemplary concepts and schemata of metaphors. Here, coaching seems to be an unusually adventurous approach to travel management, and while the journey-schema is obvious, it seems incomplete for lack of origin, destination or goal. The vegetation lends itself most easily to the substance-schema, and its sheer abundance makes it seem impossible to tame. Our coach and artist A. might value travelling more than arriving, so maybe the journey is the reward. Also, complex challenges clearly seem attractive, maybe even distracting. A task impossible to finish might be a way of never needing to arrive. Likely A. would agree to our assessment. Finally, even pointing out the slight hint of a *Heart of Darkness* theme might make A. reflect on the question of whether coaching as a concept might still carry traces of the colonialist traditions that shaped the cultures from which it arose (I would probably ask A. Nonymous to continue this line of thought elsewhere, no disrespect).

Continuing our work together and primed by CMR, distraction – by the details of difficult tasks and the comforts of not being anywhere in particular, merely somewhere along the way – would probably be much more obvious, and accordingly pop up more often. More and more often, A. would recognise the need to get some bearings when on the way, and self-moderation in the face of risk or challenge might even come in the form of soothing relief from not having to try the impossible or unfinishable all the time.

Step five: reinterpretation of the schemata of metaphors. Working with the schemata, A. would learn to notice earlier when getting carried away by some particularly inviting undergrowth challenge,

maybe even take a path (or road) instead of the hard way, or maybe try a different landscape altogether. More broadly, there would probably be more interaction with A.'s coachee on eye level in general, around which destinations, modes of travel, milestones, resting areas and so on might be appropriate. Certainly, expertise would be applied less to 'follow me' and more to 'we could...'. With a bit of a stretch, we can imagine A. Nonymous abandoning the need for adventure and bravery and becoming more approachable, and as a result less lonely (heroes tend to be alone).

We have reached our destination, our journey ends. I hope you have developed an appetite for metaphor reflection; maybe you had a few insights about yourself with the help of your own metaphor. Oh, and please make sure to revisit Lakoff and Johnson. Our ways do part for now. Farewell.

The five steps of CMR are based on the concept of metaphor-reflection:

1. Identify a metaphor and have it visualised.
2. Validate the metaphor by appreciatively taking it in and developing it.
3. Expand the illustration and reveal interpretations of the metaphor.
4. Make the metaphor conscious with respect to its exemplary concepts and schemata.
5. Reinterpret the metaphor and reuse metaphorical schemata.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Carsten Hennig is an Oxford Brookes accredited coaching supervisor who has been freelancing as a supervisor, coach and educator since 2004. He teaches systemic coaching at Berlin Business and Law School and Hamburg Medical School amongst others. His research is focused on the development of professional identity during supervisor training. Hennig has been spokesperson of the humane work and burnout-prevention division of the German Association for Systemic Therapy, Counselling, and Family Therapy for eight years. He is a board member of the German Association for Counselling.

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KWIRKEEZ



BUILDING YOUR IDEAL SELF? TRY KWIRKEEZ

Which parts of your coaching identity are your key strengths, and which are still evolving? To answer that question, **Michelle Lucas** and **Paul Sanbar** offer Kwirkeez – a creative approach to exploring our professional signature or brand.

Michelle initially worked with a children's card game called Misfits. The cards created 12 comical characters, each formed of five pieces – a hat, a face, a body and two legs (which are not always the same). While the original game was one of strategy, she developed an icebreaker to help graduates think about career choices. The exercise generated some surprisingly deep insight about their sense of self, and over time Michelle integrated the exercise into her supervision work, using it as an introductory exercise when forming new supervision groups, where coaches can get to know one another in a unique way.

As we began to do more virtual work, we considered how we could work with the characters online, using a digital whiteboard. This is how we came to collaborate together and how Paul's first whiteboard came to be. A few more iterations and facilitated sessions later, we realised that we had something great and that the characters could use an update to make them more inclusive. We went to find a cartoonist who could bring our ideas to life. The result is a set of 12 Kwirkeez. The name felt apt: we are encouraging participants to consider the 'quirks' that make them, them.

WHEN ARE KWIRKEEZ USEFUL?

As supervisors, we often support coaches in their accreditation process. One element that people can find tricky is explaining their coaching approach. The same is often true for crafting a statement for the top of a coaching bio. People get stuck. Kwirkeez offer a way

of looking at this challenge differently: the creative nature of the set can free up our thinking and help people articulate what they know more easily.

Once the basic method is understood and a person has a sense of their 'usual' Kwirkee, it can also be useful to experiment with it, holding a particular client in mind. For example, when they have experienced a difficulty with a client, which parts of their Kwirkee went AWOL? Which new parts arrived?

It can also be useful for longer-term development. Again, with their original Kwirkee in mind, which parts seem core and which parts are still evolving? Which parts are calling for more attention?

HOW DO YOU USE KWIRKEEZ?

Access to the Kwirkeez is gained via Paul's coach/supervisor Mural micro-trainings, where participants get access to two templates to use with their own clients – the Kwirkeez can be one of those templates. While sharing, facilitating and administering the whiteboard requires some training, the only requirement for the participant is that they can drag and drop elements on to the whiteboard.

While each facilitator may approach this in their own way, a typical exercise might go along the following lines:

- Step 1: Think of yourself when you are at your best and working with a client.

- Step 2: Survey all the different Kwirkeez and notice which pieces you are drawn to – which might help say something about you at your best?
- Step 3: Drag and drop the pieces to create a Kwirkee of your 'best self'.
- Step 4: Talk about your Kwirkee!

If exploring a difficult case, then add in the next steps:

- Step 5: When you think about how you were with this particular client, which pieces were the same and which pieces were different?
- Step 6: Change the Kwirkee to illustrate how you were when with this client (using drag and drop).
- Step 7: Talk about your Kwirkee now.

If exploring coach development, after steps 1-4 add in the following:

- Step A: Create a second Kwirkee about the kind of coach you hope to be in 12/18/24 months' time (using drag and drop).
- Step B: Which pieces do you notice are constant? Which pieces need to be replaced or added?
- Step C: Talk through what you could do (or not do) to help with that developmental shift.

WHAT ARE PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES OF USING KWIRKEEZ?

'The greater range of Kwirkeez characters brings diversity into the mix for those looking at their identity through a range of lenses including race, gender, fashion style, occupation and so on. It enables people like me to see characters like me. The flexibility of the 'drag and drop' process worked well for me in that there was no order set by the facilitator or system. As well as giving plenty of reflection time to make my choice and explore, I also found it curious considering my reasons for not choosing something.'

'During the Kwirkeez workshop I had double insights or realisations. I discovered things about myself when I was designing what I would look like as my best coaching self, and then had even more insights when explaining/describing why I chose what I did.'

'I can see this being useful at three levels – personal, professional and practice. Kwirkeez enable people to consider who they want to be, what qualities they want to be known for and how they might better support themselves in shining a light on those qualities.'

'I have a passion for working with the neurodiverse. I can see this tool being instrumental in helping some non- and not-so-verbal people express themselves and then discover things about themselves that will help them be more effective. It will be a great starting point for many future conversations.'

SOME HAZARDS TO AVOID

The biggest 'watch out' when facilitating this as an exercise is to remember to stay neutral. We often have our own interpretation of a particular piece, and yet the more we work with the characters the more and different interpretations we notice people assigning to them. So, avoid making any assumptions and stay open to what your client sees.

The biggest technical watch out is to get comfortable with managing the Mural technology before you attempt the exercise. If you are anxious about working with Mural it will limit the energy you have for the dialogue. Practising with colleagues and friends and getting comfortable with the technology will help create a more spacious atmosphere for your client.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Please feel free to contact either Michelle or Paul directly with any questions:

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Michelle is an accredited master executive coach and accredited coach supervisor with the AC. She believes that playfulness can bring deep insight with clients. Her value comes through combining two potentially conflicting elements. Firstly, the belief that we each have the resources within us that we need, and secondly that sometimes others can see what we cannot see for ourselves. She is an author with Routledge. The original Misfits exercise can be found in *101 Coaching Supervision Techniques, Approaches, Enquiries and Experiments*.



An Ingenuity + Executive Coach, coaching supervisor and hands-on visual thinking facilitator, Paul's life and career has been dedicated to effecting positive change through purposeful play, storytelling and powerful conversations. A certified LEGO Serious Play methods coach and member of the MURAL Consultant Network, Paul coaches and supports individuals, groups and teams to think and reflect not only with words but also with their eyes and hands, putting their imagination to work in both tactile and technological ways.



COACHING IDENTITY AS A PROCESS

Robert Biswas-Diener and **Christian van Nieuwerburgh** invite us to step into the evolving process of identity-making and flip the concepts of passion, goals and change.

It is tempting to think of identity as a fixed location. This is evident in the ways we describe ourselves. We tend to say, for instance, 'I am a coach' (and not 'I am a coach right now'). Further scrutiny allows us to imagine identity as a process. We evolve from childhood through adolescence and into the various stages of adulthood. We can call up memories that showcase the seeds of the people we are now. To some extent, this process orientation underlies people's desire to enter a coaching relationship. Clients harbour the belief that they are evolving or have the potential to do so.

Perhaps it is helpful to think of identity as a tension between the fixed and the changeable. On the one hand, we want to know who we are, to be predictable and to enjoy some consistency. On the other, we realise that we are works in progress and that, with effort, we will continue to grow and evolve in positive ways. We offer three counterintuitive suggestions for thinking of life in general – and identity in particular – as a process rather than a destination. Each of these is supported by theory and research and each is, in our opinion, relevant to coaching – both for you and your clients.

1. DON'T FIND YOUR PASSION

There is a strong temptation to believe that people arrive almost all at once to their passions. Superstar athletes, creative tech entrepreneurs and gifted novelists all seem to be lucky in that they have discovered their perfect fit. This makes it sound as if one's passion is like an out-of-place pair of shoes that you might trip over. Rather than finding your passion, we propose that it can be more helpful to think about developing your passion. We are not telling you to not have a passion; we're simply suggesting that becoming passionate can be a process.

Yale researcher Paul O'Keefe and his colleagues conducted six experiments to investigate people's mindsets regarding their passions. The researchers were interested in whether people had a fixed mindset ('my passion exists and I just need to discover it') or a growth mindset ('passions are cobbled together over time and with experience'). The research team discovered something notable:

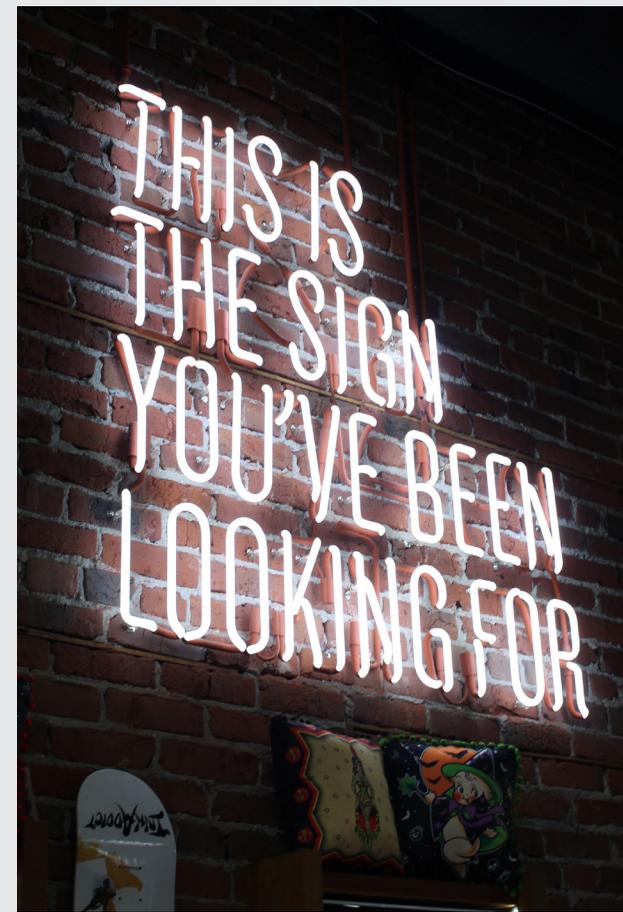
people who had a growth mindset concerning their passions were more motivated about them.

For example, if a person has a passion for painting, they will have some magical days and some slogs. On the tougher days, those people who saw passion as a process were likely to reflect on them as part of the process, and part of how they learn and develop. By contrast, the people who thought of passion in all-or-nothing terms were more likely to expect that they should have limitless enthusiasm, and that having an off day indicated it wasn't really their passion. People with growth mindsets tend to have higher levels of commitment and perseverance compared to those with a fixed mindset. You can weave this idea into your coaching practice through the types of questions you ask. Consider inquiries such as: how have your interests evolved over time? Or: which aspect of this most excites you at this particular time?

Think of identity as a tension between the fixed and the changeable

2. STOP MAKING PLANS

So much of coaching is goal oriented. We have goals for the coaching relationship and goals for each session, and clients have different levels of goals they want to pursue. This often leads to a heavy emphasis on planning. As coaches, we invite our clients to engage in careful planning – establishing markers of progress and creating mechanisms of accountability so that our clients can stay on track. This approach, according to INSEAD scholar Herminia Ibarra, is called 'plan and implement'. It is based on the idea that we can envision what lies ahead and navigate our way to the future we want, as if coaching were a psychological Google Maps.



The alternative to this common-sense approach is to be found in what Ibarra calls 'test and learn'. As the name suggests, it is a more organic and improvisational approach. People with a test-and-learn mentality engage in mini-planning that consists of single steps. They undertake real-world experiments to try things out and gather data. They can then use their learning to decide their next steps.

In coaching, test and learn can be an effective mindset for clients who want to make major shifts such as a career change, promotion or starting a business. Rather than planning everything at the outset, clients can put their toes in the water and see how it feels. For example, a senior analyst might feel somewhat unfulfilled in their job. They might long to be more active in regional policy and politics. Rather than quitting their job to take up a new career, they might consider volunteering on the weekends. Opportunities for test and learn abound: shadowing another worker, volunteering for new types of projects or taking on additional training.

3. DON'T FOCUS ON CHANGE

People often come to coaching because they want to see a change in their lives. This perspective brings with it the idea that there is a 'before' and 'after' related to that change. What if, instead, we replaced the concept of change with evolution? What if we thought of our clients as continually evolving, and that coaching sessions are like windows through which we can glimpse a brief period of that development?

In psychology, there is a concept known as the end of history illusion. In brief, it is the idea that all of your life feels like it has led up to making you the person you are right this second. In fact, people at every age of life report that they have experienced more growth in the past than they anticipate experiencing in the future. It is the idea that as we age our evolution slows. But, as the name suggests, it is an illusion.

In coaching, it might be helpful for clients to focus on the period beyond the desired transformation. This might include shifting attention to sustaining new habits, planning for the next evolutionary stage, or inviting clients to create links between the various shifts they have made throughout their lives and careers. This may include questions such as: how do you see yourself evolving over the next period of your life? Or: what needs to happen now for you to continue to evolve in the way that you would like?

Ultimately, each of these concepts – developing a passion, testing and learning, and indexing current growth as part of an ongoing pattern – is a powerful reminder that the work of coaches takes place through a process. Nowhere are these concepts more important than where we are working with issues of a client's identity. And our identities too!

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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.



SO, HOW IS YOUR WELLBEING?

When coaching around questions of identity, says **Marie Faire**, we must look after ourselves and our clients – who may reveal their suffering at any point in a coaching exchange.

One way of thinking about wellbeing is on a sliding scale from -10 to +10.ⁱⁱⁱ So how is your wellbeing today? And what has it been in your life recently? At its best? At its worst?

There is so much in the world that is potentially, or actually, effecting our wellbeing and mental health: climate change; gross inequalities and inequities; wars (Palestine, Yemen, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine); the ongoing pandemic; economic crisis (cost of living, food poverty, energy prices). Stress, fear and grief are rife.

Few of us are immune to the challenges that are all around us. We may consciously choose to do our best and to be optimistic and hopeful but, as my supervisor said to me recently, our subconscious is not so easily fooled.

It seems obvious that we need to look after ourselves, particularly if we are to be of use to others. We need self-compassion as well as compassion for others. The old oxygen mask analogy: you are wise to put your own on first.

We may not set out our stall as a mental health or wellbeing coach, yet still it would be unusual for us not to come across people who are suffering. If we are relational and attentive and have good rapport, our clients may well disclose their poor mental health to us. We may be the only person they can speak to. In the last week I have had three people bring such issues to supervision.

I agree with Liz Hall, Eve Turner, Rani Bora, Tyler Read and others whose research and writings conclude that a mental health condition does not mean that coaching is inevitably inappropriate.ⁱⁱⁱ In my experience it can be life-saving, as well as life-changing.

So, are we prepared for clients who are feeling scared, lost, purposeless or, worse still, hopeless?

In the July 2021 edition of *Coaching Perspectives* I wrote a short article on what to do if your client is having suicidal thoughts, following a webinar on the same topic. Much that I wrote there applies to clients who say they are down or depressed or have any other mental health issue. We know that the most important thing anyone can do, including us in our role as a coach, is to be there, show empathy and compassion, and listen. I hope any well-trained coach can do all of those.

We need to see referral as a huge success: facilitating someone to get the help that they need

As professional coaches, it is our responsibility to be sensitive to and informed of trauma and mental health. We need to be aware of the red flags and safeguarding issues, including expressions of hopelessness, isolation, current trauma and/or abuse, hallucinations and suicidal intention. We need to work within our competence and we can, and should, refer if our client needs help that is outside of our competency. It seems to me that we need to see referral as a huge success: facilitating someone to get the help that they need.

In summary: look after you. Show up, listen, have compassion, do appropriate CPD that enhances your competency and knowledge about trauma and mental health, get good supervision – and make a difference.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marie Faire has an MA in management learning and is an AC-accredited master executive coach and 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. www.thebeyondpartnership.co.uk

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AC Podcast Channel The Voice of the AC Community



As part of the Association for Coaching's (AC) 20th Anniversary celebrations in 2022, we have been exploring the journey of the AC in our latest podcast series: **AC at 20: Impact, Community and Collaboration**.

Join us as we speak to coaching leaders and professionals and learn of the AC's vision and aspirations for the future of coaching.

Follow the AC Podcast Channel to listen to meaningful and engaging conversations and gain actionable tools to support your personal and professional development.

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Working with the Body in Executive Coaching

Mondays, 13, 20 & 27 February 2023

Learn Physical Intelligence tools for executive coaching with Claire Dale and Kevin Chapman

Working with the body in our coaching is no longer a nice to have but is a vital element of a coach's tool kit.

In this webinar series Claire Dale and Kevin Chapman open up their Physical Intelligence tool kit to enable coaches who work with their executive clients to develop greater strength, flexibility, resilience and endurance in this VUCA world.

Book your spot here:
https://www.associationforcoaching.com/event/workingwiththebody_WS

BEYOND ORGANISATIONAL BOUNDARIES

Jenny Pollock and Emma Shute from Women to Work, a coaching-based business, have been working on a research project with professor of organisational psychology Penny Dick to look at women's careers.

Jenny: 'We were inspired to start Women to Work back in 2014 during a conversation over a cup of tea – the start of so many organisations – about the unfulfilled potential we saw in women all around us: brilliant, bright, capable, motivated women unable to meet their potential for a variety of reasons. Our research with Penny has been enlightening, at times saddening, but also hopeful and hugely informative for our coaching practice and the coaching work we do with women.'

Penny: 'I wanted to examine whether current understandings of "career" adequately reflect and capture the working and non-working experiences of adult women in the United Kingdom.'

Emma: 'We have a saying that is the basis of how we work together and that we realise, through this research, sums up the attitude expressed by many of the women who took part: ambitious for our whole lives, not just in our work. It's such a simple phrase but is so revealing when we reflect on our focus and what is really important to us'

We want to share some of the findings from this research into women's careers and what they tell us about how women make sense of their career paths and goals, plus what this might imply for career or work/life coaching. We hope that, by spreading the word, this research will make a difference.

The research project – supported with funding from the British Academy/Leverhulme Small Research Grants competition – involved observation of women taking part in Women to Work's work/life discovery coaching workshops, with follow-up interviews with 27 of these women, conducted on three separate occasions over a two-year period.

Here, we focus on two of the core findings of the research: how women understand success and how they arrive at these understandings; and the role of chance and serendipity in shaping women's career trajectories. We hope these insights help you to consider how your coaching practice can support women you work with who may be experiencing some of these issues.

We have a saying that sums up the attitude expressed by many of the women who took part: ambitious for our whole lives, not just in our work

HOW DO WOMEN UNDERSTAND SUCCESS?

We think it's fair to say that, for many people in our society, career success is associated with upward progression into higher-level roles, bringing with it an attendant increase in pay and status. This common notion of success was not one that resonated with many of the women participating in this study, though it did for some.

While it is definitely the case that many women rule themselves out of pursuing upward career progression due to the obligations that are often required for such pursuit (such as long working hours and the subordination of home to work) many of the women we spoke to felt that there was, in any case, much more to life than pay, status or career progression.

The women taking part in this study want fulfilment in their work and their home lives. They believe that the two domains can enrich each other if organisations are prepared to do more to support and recognise the commitment that many women show to their jobs, while also recognising that their lives at home are equally as important. If organisations encourage and reward primarily those individuals who do put work first, this may not motivate other staff to emulate these individuals. Rather, it risks alienating experienced and talented staff who have developed their own definitions of success, and who might then seek alternative employment that enables them to experience the fulfilment they consider important.

An important discussion generated by this finding has been about identifying ways to encourage women to share positive stories about themselves, their lives and their careers – practical accounts of how they have successfully challenged the norm of upward career progression. The importance of role models can't be underestimated here, as they make different ways of 'doing' careers more visible and accessible. Identifying role models whom everyone can learn from could be a powerful element to support a mindset shift.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR COACHING?

There is an opportunity through coaching to support women to think outside of conventional and traditional notions of success when they are considering their career direction and what they see as their strengths and developmental needs. Enabling the women we work with to consider their work and life holistically can help them focus on what is really important to them, their needs and wants from both work and life, and how these can be met. We hope this insight helps prevent some women from overlooking and underestimating their existing strengths and how they enable them to lead a rounded life that has meaning and fulfilment.

Often the individuals we work with feel alone in their feelings, perhaps feeling inadequate or like a failure if they aren't meeting traditional societal expectations of career success. We feel this research shows that success comes from work/life balance, and that just knowing that others feel the same can be hugely empowering to the women we work with. Sharing this message is important to us, so that women start to feel successful and define success in terms of what it means to them, valuing and trusting themselves to create the work and life that is right for them, not what we believe to be a narrow societal construct of success.

Several of the women interviewed had decided to take a risk (maybe starting their own business or moving to a less secure job) in order to experience the fulfilment lacking in their current role. Often this lack related to the amount of time or energy expected, which simply did not provide the positive emotional payback these women wanted. Taking the risk, while scary, was also exciting and liberating.

CHANCE AND SERENDIPITY IN WOMEN'S CAREER TRAJECTORIES

How many of you were asked, as children, what you wanted to be when you grew up? The question is underpinned by the idea that we develop strong ideas about our career goals from very early in our lives, an idea that perplexed and troubled many of the women taking part in this research. The vast majority of these women told us that they had never really known what they wanted to do in terms of a job or a career and that this uncertainty did not ever really go away.

Most of the women we talked to did not find themselves in particular careers by design but by default – they followed hunches and suggestions by friends or family, or simply fell into jobs as a consequence of feeling the need to have some kind of employment. They told us that their sense of who they were and what they were good at emerged from these experiences; it did not precede them.

Many told us that they had learned more about what they didn't want to do from being in jobs they found unsatisfying than learning what they did want to do from getting into jobs they thought they might be suitable for. As their various occupational experiences enabled them to learn more about themselves – their skills, their values, and what did and did not interest them – they began to develop more of a definite vocational identity; for example, more certainty about wanting to be in a technical role rather than a people-facing position.

As their various occupational experiences enabled them to learn more about themselves, they began to develop more of a definite vocational identity

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR COACHING?

Reflective practice is such an important aspect of coaching, and when considering this finding there is an opportunity to enable women to reconsider the frames they are using to view their lives. This provides an opportunity to review and reflect on every job and every role as a positive learning experience that not only reveals things to individuals about who they are and what they're good at, but also helps them reimagine themselves and their potential opportunities. This approach may create a positive mindset shift, enabling definitions of success to encompass an enriching process of exploratory self-discovery through the twists and turns of a life lived, as well as a life yet to be discovered.

One woman in our study whom had been badly bullied at work emerged from this experience with the certainty that she would never allow that to happen to her again, and a newfound sense of her own power as an individual – a certainty that played a major role in her decision to become self-employed and leave her occupation as a teacher. During the Covid-19 pandemic, this self-employment led her into making instructional videos, and she discovered a talent she hadn't known she had. Helping women think beyond what they believe they know about themselves is critical.

Emma: *'For us all, this has been an enjoyable, interesting and insightful piece of work, and one that informs our coaching practice. With Penny we hope to share the research findings far and wide to support individual women to feel empowered – empowered to consider success in a way that is meaningful to them with confidence and self-belief, and in the knowledge they are not alone.'*

Penny: *'We hope that this article has given a brief insight into the research, and importantly into women's understandings of their careers and work-related experiences.'*

If you would like to be involved in this ongoing work, we have a community of practice (CoP) that you would be welcome to join. The purpose and scope of a CoP is to work collaboratively to identify issues we can work on together and agree actions we can take.

For more information, email Professor Penny Dick at p.dick@sheffield.ac.uk or Jenny and Emma at info@womentowork.co.uk.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Penny Dick (above left) is a professor of organisational psychology at Sheffield University Management School. Her long-standing research interests are in gender inequalities in workplaces and how to understand these in ways that embrace the diversity of women as a group, including their race, religion, class, motivations and goals. Penny worked as a practitioner psychologist for several years before her academic career, which has sharpened her concerns with trying to render academic ideas accessible and applicable.

Coaches Jenny Pollock (above middle) and Emma Shute (above right) are founders and directors of Women to Work, a business that works with organisations and individuals with a special interest in coaching for personal and professional development, resilience, women-only initiatives, and coaching and mentoring for all. Emma and Jenny were inspired to start Women to Work when having a conversation about the unfulfilled potential they saw in women around them: they knew they wanted to make a difference if they could. They're proud to have run women's development programmes in both the public and private sectors; to have designed and delivered various group coaching workshops; and to have supported many individuals with varied backgrounds and motivations via one-to-one coaching. They love what they do and are passionate about how coaching can help the people they work with to see new horizons that best fit their values, helping them to feel positive, motivated and able to create a fulfilling professional and personal life.



Marketing Made Simple

Quarterly through 2023

Marketing Made Simple is a new Member Benefit Programme designed in collaboration with marketing experts Frances Khalastchi and Simon Batchelar

Frances and Simon will bust some marketing myths, inspire you, and get you more clear, confident, and creative about putting yourselves out there.

Our quarterly workshops will focus on the following themes such as social media, creating community, platforms, designing coaching products and programmes. Plus how to create and repurpose your marketing content to save time and reach more people.

Book your spot here: https://www.associationforcoaching.com/event/MarketingMadeSimple_Community_Platforms



Creating the Reflective Habit

Wednesdays, 28 June and 5, 12 and 19 July 2023

Build your personalized reflective practice with guidance from Michelle Lucas

Reflection is a process which enables us to see more than we saw at the time. Yet, in a world of "busy", reflective practice often falls to the bottom of the list.

In this webinar series, Michelle Lucas will share the mindsets and ingredients needed to help you create a reflective habit - a programme supported by a new book of the same title, is here to help.

Book your spot here: <https://www.associationforcoaching.com/event/reflectivepracticeWS>

THE READING ROOM

Sarah David and Lizzie Bentley-Bowers have selected works that they have found usefully provocative. We hope that you will find within them a useful blend of support and challenge as you consider the theme of identity.

For all those with an internal dialogue over the multiplicity of perspectives concerning our leadership and coaching, we highly recommend **The Future of Coaching** by Hetty Einzig. For us, there are so many powerful questions in this book from which leaders and coaches can reflect on their current and future roles and practice. 'Are we alive to the voice of

our own conscience, and what does it say to us? And to what degree should the coach be transparent or even overt about their values base?' Einzig's observations are compassionately offered, giving readers the opportunity to receive and reflect on provocations that can land anywhere on a scale from affirming to insightful to devastating. She challenges the relationship between our lives within and beyond work, and the role of coaches as disruptors.

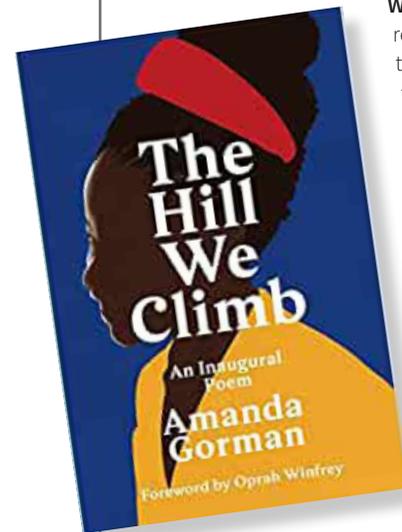
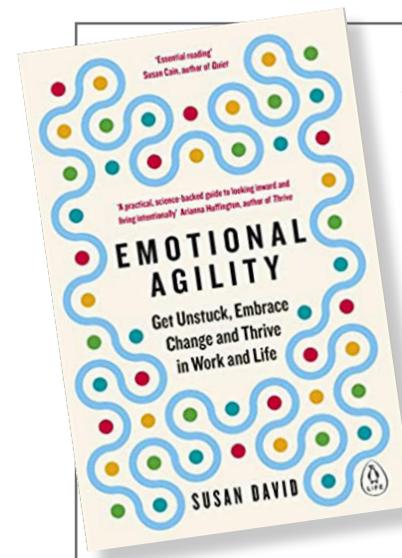
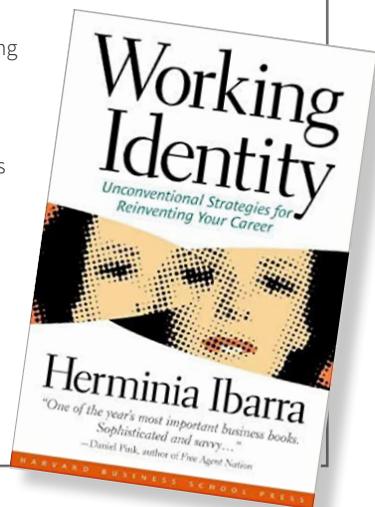
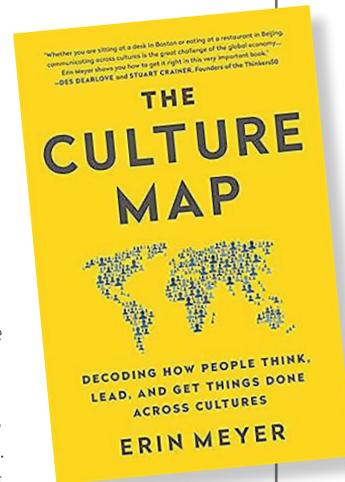
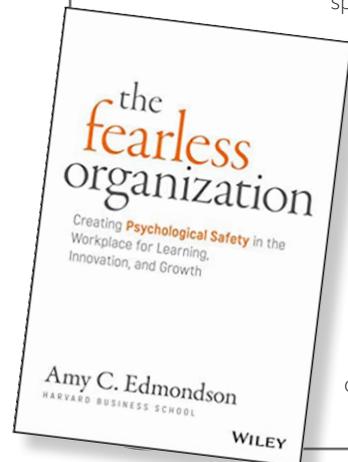
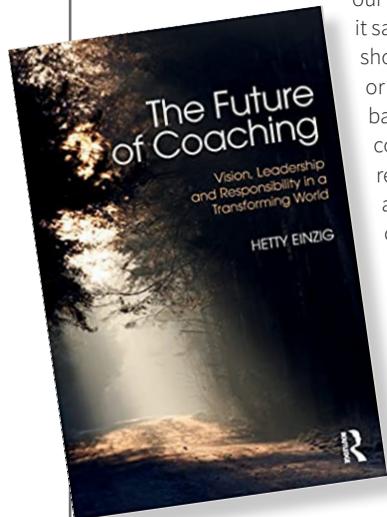
For navigating change and for courageous conversations with others

and ourselves, the starting point is arguably psychological safety. This is a term that, despite increasingly being framed as a desirable or indeed necessary skill of leadership, is in our experience more often spoken about than actually prioritised and practised. Every time we return to Amy Edmondson's

The Fearless Organization we find new insights into what psychological safety is; what it is not; what is made possible by the presence of psychological safety; and, importantly, some ways to develop it and foster climates in which 'people feel safe enough to take interpersonal risks by speaking up and sharing concerns, questions or ideas.'

We see the world how we see the world, and for coaches and leader-coaches working in global organisations there is a need to raise not only awareness of but also sensitivity to how we are being experienced by others. **The Culture Map** by Erin Meyer reminds us of the importance of going beyond a necessary basic respect for individual perspective. Meyer draws on extensive research and multiple examples from her own and her clients' experiences to illustrate how vital additional layers of awareness of cultural difference are. Building trust, persuading, influencing, agreeing, disagreeing, listening and interrupting are just a few of the interactions that are influenced by cultural differences. Meyer reveals that although we might be open-minded and open-hearted, without a more nuanced knowledge of our differences we risk missing the opportunity to fully recognise, respect and lean into those differences.

We turn next to those moving through career changes, redundancy or retirement, or who are supporting someone navigating such changes. Full of insight, guidance, pertinent questions and prompts for reflection, Herminia Ibarra's **Working Identity** is the book Sarah has most recommended to her clients across 15 years of coaching work. Ibarra's gift is to share a multiplicity of stories of career exploration and to exhort the reader to create their own stories too; in her own words, without a 'compelling story that lends meaning, unity, and purpose to our lives, we feel lost and rudderless'. Ibarra displays deep empathy for the possibility that a career change can be 'a time of confusion, loss, insecurity,



and uncertainty', while leaning into the concurrent possibility that it could be the best thing that ever happened, going on to provide tactic after tactic to navigate these potentially parallel experiences.

In the context of the challenges and opportunities the theme of identity presents, a resource we have found particularly useful is **Emotional Agility** by Susan David.

Empathising, adapting, responding (rather than reacting) and being ok with whatever comes our way are just some of the facets of leading and coaching that benefit from us being able to name, get comfortable with and flex between a full range of emotions. By developing our emotional agility, David offers a way to 'ensure that we're not just making a living, but also truly living'.

A closing quote from **The Hill We Climb** by Amanda Gorman reminds us of the work done and the considerable work still to do to foster inclusion. It encourages us not only to reflect, but to act as members of society within our roles as coaches and leader-coaches to create the conditions for all to thrive:

'And so we lift our gaze, not to what stands between us, but what stands before us...

... for while we have our eyes on the future, history has its eyes on us.'

We'd love to hear your thoughts on our choices, and to hear what would be on your reading list for the topic of identity. As well as getting in touch through social media, we are delighted to be launching 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 first session is on Friday 10 March 2023 at 1pm GMT. 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.

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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.

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PODCAST REVIEWS

Suzy Hunt and Lisa Robyn Wood from the Coaching Cast share their top picks of podcasts that focus on identity.

Suzy's choice

The Redundancy Podcast with Dave Watts - Don't look back in anger: your emotions following redundancy, in conversation with Paula Gardner

27 February 2021, 19 mins, Apple Podcasts and Spotify

The Redundancy Podcast is a podcast supporting those facing the challenges of finding employment as an older worker. In this episode, host Dave Watts talks to Paula Gardner, a career psychologist and coach, on the emotional response we likely experience when faced with redundancy and her strategies for dealing with this career transition. The emotional response to redundancy isn't something I've consciously considered before, and yet in my opinion the stories and tips Paula shares here are applicable to all. Don't let the title of this podcast put you off: it's full of golden nuggets useful for people in any age group navigating redundancy.

Paula shares a captivating story about her father. Upon facing redundancy and retirement he decided to become a gamer, pivoting his career from management into online gaming aged 62. This changed Paula's own view on retirement and redundancy. It signalled the start of something new and positive for him and their family, something that Paula takes into her work as a career coach. I found this a really uplifting, motivating and positive story. Redundancy doesn't have to signal the end of your career: it can be the start of something new and exciting.

Paula and Dave explore the emotions often experienced during redundancy, specifically shock. That initial shock of losing your job, the shock of losing your day-to-day structure and often your identity and/or purpose. Feelings of denial, anger and sadness can play out, finally circling around to a stage of acceptance. Paula points out that that feeling of acceptance can take a while to achieve, and that there is often a roller coaster of emotions in reaching that point – and that is perfectly fine. Why? If we take the time to feel and accept those emotions, to process the past, we are less likely to make panicked decisions on how to move forward. So, my main take-away was: if you're facing redundancy or career change, or are working with a coachee who is, then creating a safe space to process what is happening and to 'feel the feels' is a healthy and often-missed stage in the process of moving forward.



Next up is searching for meaning and visibility, especially for those in the later stages of working life. Paula and Dave explore the importance of searching for that next meaningful step, which can sometimes be overshadowed by the 'life clutter' found at this life stage – health conditions, generational caring responsibilities and so on. A key take-away for coaches: coachees in this position may not give themselves permission to follow their passions or their gut feeling, creating a protective approach of self-disablement.

Searching for that meaningful next step in your working life post-redundancy takes time. It isn't something that can be forced; it is a process and, although sitting pondering in a coffee shop with a brand-new notebook is a lovely and valuable thing to do, you won't change things overnight, and neither should you want to. Paula concludes that where you are now is still somewhere in your journey, and that you have to trust the process. I for one found it reassuring and comforting to hear.

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

1. *Work, Actually* with Kate Chaundy
2. *The Flourishing Introvert Talks* with Joanna Rawbone
3. *The Invisible Gift* with Andrew Kitley
4. *My Career Crisis* with Ruth Barnes and Sue Ahern
5. *The Redundancy Podcast* with Dave Watts

Available on Apple Podcasts and Spotify

Lisa's choice

The Invisible Gift with Andrew Kitley - Season 3 finale: The Neurodivergent Coach with Nathan Whitbread

27 July 2022, 56 mins, Apple Podcasts and Spotify

Neurodiversity is a hot topic in the workplace at the moment – or 'sexy topic' as Andrew and Nathan prefer. As someone with a dyslexic younger sister, combined with my passion for supporting people to be their best and their true selves, I've been intrigued to learn more about what this means and what is changing in the workplace to better support those who are neurodivergent.

Andrew Kitley was told from a young age that his dyslexia was a disability that would make it impossible for him to flourish in life. Multiple successful businesses have since followed, and Kitley has learnt to view his dyslexia not as a disability but as an invisible gift that has enabled him to be a creative, independent thinker, resilient to failure.

Kitley's podcast invites guests to discuss a range of topics that celebrate perceived disabilities and transform them into possibilities.

Nathan Whitbread is a coach who works with neurodivergent individuals in the workplace and those who manage them. He works both one-to-one and in groups, which he believes is crucial in opening up the conversation around our differences: the key is moving beyond simply acknowledging them to celebrating them, for it's precisely those differences that drive us forwards to deliver innovation.

Whitbread explains that neurodiversity has its roots in autism but has evolved to include a subset of individuals that are classified as neurodivergent – those who think significantly differently, either genetically or medically, or who have acquired this through life events, for example as a result of PTSD.

While writing this review I read a study conducted across London by the Diversity Project. It detailed that over half of

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 to learn more.



respondents – all of whom were classified as neurodivergent, either with autism, dyspraxia, Asperger's syndrome or ADHD – had hidden their neurodiversity from their employer; 37% believed that it could harm their career. Whitbread, unsurprised by these findings when we spoke over Zoom as I put this review together, agrees that awareness is the biggest step to achieving change. We discussed how the first steps are simple; having a conversation and employers encouraging that it's ok not to be ok, and truly embracing individuality and difference. Employers who want to genuinely achieve inclusivity and support neurodiversity, Whitbread says, must approach it in all areas: from their recruitment process, to onboarding, to training and development, to day-to-day operations respecting and incorporating individuals' needs. Whitbread finds that the individuals he works with are 'disabled by their environment', and that the right conditions have not been put in place simply because the conversation has never been had.

From a coach's perspective, Whitbread believes boundaries are crucial; knowing what you're qualified to work with and not; being aware; and not being afraid to ask questions. Coaches should prompt the thinking that enables change. Whitbread cautions to avoid 'neuro-washing' – all talk no action. It's the changes being delivered that will make the difference.





IDENTITY WITHIN THE COACHING RELATIONSHIP

Co-editor **James Bridgeman** attended the seventh Ashridge Relational Coaching Conference in September 2022 – an exploration of the multifaceted concept of identity and its complex dance with relationships, coaching and being.

It was by chance that we discovered that the preparation for this issue of *Coaching Perspectives* coincided with a similar topic at this conference, yet it is hardly surprising. As you will be aware, the events of recent years have led many to reflect on their identity, whether as coach, as client or as human.

It is in this context that the manicured grounds and wood-panelled rooms of Hult Ashridge, in the south of England, welcomed over 100 coaching professionals (with others joining online) to an exploration of issues surrounding identity in the coaching relationship. We've all discovered how to be in relationship online over the past couple of years, for better or for worse. Some of us have found it a revelation, others remain unconvinced. Yet how refreshing to be reminded of the simple power of being together in a space, in person, to reflect, debate, discuss and above all listen to others.

The morning keynote from Dr Isha McKenzie-Mavinga ('An ethical promise to the theme of Black Lives Matter') created a powerful reflective space for a packed room. Sharing her personal story of her own identity history – African-Caribbean, Catholic, Jewish

and more – she invited her audience to understand the impact of everyday racism as trauma. Examples ranging from footballer Anton Ferdinand to the lawyer and author Alexandra Wilson, to powerful personal memories from her own career ('I was the token Black') helped to illustrate the 'interruption of going on being' that victims of racism experience.

In a call to action for the room and the industry, McKenzie-Mavinga outlined three steps to tackling this systemic problem head-on:

- Educate yourself about racism
- Commit to tackling racism
- Build a more inclusive future

Beyond these steps, she invited coaches to ask themselves key questions as 'tasks for the supporter': how will you explore your coaching attitude? How does your code of ethics support and include antiracism? As a closing reminder, and perhaps a note of caution to those reflecting on their identity, a quote from activist Linda Bellos: 'If you don't know who you are, someone will tell you.'

Corrupt power is widely assumed by leaders, used to divide and to maintain injustice, material gain and lack of connectedness to others. Next has to be a sharp focus on power and leadership as growing out of the inherent, combined with growth, attending to the greater good.

Dr Talia Bar-Yoseph Levine

A rich and vulnerable dialogue opened up in the room following the keynote. Questions arose around how to take action and how to reflect on our role and responsibility, alongside observations on the notable ongoing presence of white privilege in the coaching industry, and therefore the room.

I then opted for Anthony Kasozi's thoughtful exploration of stories and experiences of identity, subtitled 'Who may I choose to be?'. If we heed Bellos's words, then making a mindful and purposeful choice about our identity – or multiple identities – enables us to be clear about their value and impact on others. We explore some of the themes that arose in Anthony's session in a wide-ranging interview on pages 6-9 of this edition.

Following the welcome opportunity to meet and discuss the morning's learning over lunch, the afternoon opened with Professor Mark Stein's fascinating keynote, which focused on identity and revenge in leadership. Revenge, he asserts, is everywhere – religious texts, classical literature, Shakespeare, Hollywood, international politics – and therefore it can often crop up in the workplace and our families. Using the tragic yet endlessly fascinating example of the Gucci family's descent into vengeful, ultimately self-destructive behaviours, Stein argued persuasively that such actions are not only in reaction to the 'other', but also enacted against the projected, hated qualities of the self perceived in others.

My view is that neurodiversity and cognitive difference are assets to innovation and systems thinking in organisations, but that many organisations are being held back due to outdated working cultures that prevent neurodiverse leaders from thriving. I am continuing to think about my own identity in relation to the perspectives I heard at the conference, the similarities of our humanity and how to raise awareness of the value of difference.

Helena Territt

So what? Stein has seen similar (if less fatal) scenarios play out in organisations: the same emotions, the same patterns, the long-standing rivalries that can create bitter resentment. Leaders, said Stein, have the power, the voice, the authority and the resources to enact revenge. They may act for themselves or on behalf of others. In coaching, as ever, awareness is key: awareness of the coach in watching for warning signs; awareness of the leader in recognising the risk; and awareness of both of how coaching could help to release emotions before they lead to vengeful actions.

In the afternoon I attended Charlotte Goedmakers' presentation of her research into the cyclical, constantly changing professional identity of executive coaches: both as individuals – how they distinguish themselves from their colleagues – and as a collective – how they distinguish themselves from other helping professions. We were encouraged to reflect upon our own identities and how these have morphed over time, in a continuous process of becoming.

As the day drew to a close, a final space for reflection drew together a panel of speakers from the keynotes and breakout sessions. What next? A sense of discombobulation arose from the complexity of the issues we had explored. 'Taking ourselves lightly is heavy,' observed one panellist. Another recognised the value and necessity of accepting one's own vulnerability, and the importance of dialogue in combating the silencing of others and one's own self-imposed silence. Beautifully, this remark encapsulated the bruised yet quietly determined mood in the room: 'I am braver leaving than I was when I walked in, ready to face the complicated and tough decisions ahead.'

There has been a lot of research on professional identity, but not into the profession of executive coaches. The conference showed us that we can use many lenses to explore the relational, contextual and dynamic concept of (professional) identity. The challenge is how to honour this diversity, while at the same time defining the area to be researched. To use a definition would fail to appreciate that multiplicity. So, how to explore professional identity without making it static, but instead keeping it lively? How to let the individuality that is inherent in identity speak at the same time as making it relational and universal? What kind of research method would be suitable to cover these issues? What's next? More questions than answers!

Charlotte Goedmakers



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James is co-editor of *Coaching Perspectives* magazine and is a coach, mentor, trainer-facilitator and leadership consultant with 20 years' prior experience in digital transformation, broadcast and journalism. He trained as an executive coach while at the BBC, coaching leaders internally for several years before leaving to focus more fully on executive and team coaching. He is studying for a master's in applied positive psychology and coaching psychology at the University of East London. He is director of Bridgford Consultancy, providing people skills and leadership training to major corporates.

COACHING FOR OPTIMAL ENERGY

Clive Steeper applauds the depth and timing of a book that encourages us to understand and manage energy levels in new ways.

The concept of energy isn't new, nor for that matter is executive coaching. However, combining the concept of energy and executive coaching is relatively new, and the depth to which author Viv Chitty goes in this interesting book makes it ground-breaking.

From the outset, the book has a depth and quality of research that makes it a truly valuable coaching book, both as a reference and as a stimulus for coaches to consider how they look upon and manage energy in the coaching relationship.

In many respects, the timing of this book could not be better. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and of generational differences means that how we manage our energies is perhaps more important than ever.

Although this book has an impressive breadth of research and may at times, for some readers, have the feel of a textbook, I compliment the author on the balance they have struck between academic roots and what I suspect for many readers will be the pragmatism of executive coaching. Chitty demonstrates a high degree of empathy for her audience and understanding of their environment.

The book is rich not only with information, but also detail to support the author's findings. Throughout the book the reader can create a better and perhaps more complex understanding of the role and influence that energy plays in their working lives, as well as that of their coachees'. It may even have relevance away from the workplace too.

The contents section is well thought through and offers some situational/scenario titles, which help the reader to zoom in on specific conditions or questions, especially when referring back to the book. The chapter headings are:

1. The concept of energy and how it manifests in executive coaching
2. Influences on energy
3. Why address energy and the role of the executive coach in doing so?
4. The journey towards a holistic way of addressing energy with the client
5. Addressing physical influences on energy

TITLE: *Coaching for Optimal Energy: A Guide for Executive Coaches*

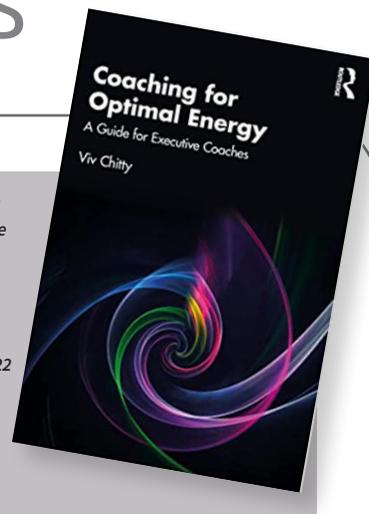
AUTHOR: Viv Chitty

PUBLISHER: Routledge

PUBLICATION DATE: July 2022

PAPERBACK PRICE: £24

ISBN: 978-0-367-51576-8



6. Psychological: working with emotions in the context of energy
7. Psychological: working with cognitive influences on energy

There are scenarios and diagrams of models that will help coaches to understand, reflect on and plan for how they might approach the concept of energy in coaching differently.

Personally, I also found the book helpful in that it led me to reflect on what may have been lying at a secondary or tertiary level of some of my coachees' and supervisees' issues and challenges. To that end, I would add that this book is a must read for all coaching supervisors, so that they can be better informed and help their coachees to consider how the concept of energy is affecting – or not – their coaching!

As Chitty concludes: 'the conscious consideration of personal energy levels, and the taking of action, in a sustainable way, will help clients work towards achieving optimal energy, be aware of how it feels when the energy is not up to more and understand the implications.'

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Clive Steeper is a qualified executive coach and coaching supervisor with over 2,000 hours of coaching experience. Prior to becoming a coach, Clive enjoyed a successful career as an MD/CEO, growing a number of international businesses in the UK, the USA and southeast Asia. Today he also competes in motorsport and is a five-time championship winner in sports prototypes. Clive is co-author of four popular business books: *Risk*; *Motivating People in a Week*; *Cope with Change at Work*; and *The Personality Workbook*. He is a regular contributor to *Coaching Perspectives*.

COACHING AND SUPERVISING THROUGH BEREAVEMENT

Grief is all around us and will show up in our coaching and supervision sessions. This compassionate book shows us a way forward, says Paul Heardman.

What do we do if someone we are coaching or supervising dies? What practical and ethical issues might we face? And how might the emotional impact affect our fitness to practise? Perhaps few of us have contemplated such challenging questions. But this ground-breaking new book invites us to do so.

Menaul and João describe how bereavement can be caused by losses of many kinds – including redundancy, retirement, divorce or ill health. While such topics often surface in coaching, the underlying grief they might trigger can still be taboo. This book unpacks ways to become more aware of how bereavement can show up in both coaching and supervision, and how to support clients ethically and appropriately.

The authors draw deeply on Edna Murdoch's insight that 'who we are is how we coach'. Through powerful case studies from coaches and supervisors (including themselves), Menaul and João demonstrate that how we each relate to loss, endings and bereavement will likely have an impact on how we respond – sometimes unconsciously – when these issues surface in our practice. Hence, the ongoing importance that our CPD encompasses our personal as well as professional development.

The book explores navigating boundaries between coaching and counselling or therapy, particularly around when it might be appropriate to refer a client on to another professional. It addresses fitness to practise when we ourselves face bereavement. There are useful references to ethical codes, including reminders of ways to support our own self-care. Practical suggestions are offered on organisational recontracting if bereavement surfaces in that context.

We learn how familiar lenses – such as the drama triangle, attachment theory and neuroscience – can all be applied to support bereavement in coaching and supervision. For example, the authors invite coaches to consider exploring their own attachment patterns in supervision: 'the more we examine ourselves, the more we can be in service to our clients.'

TITLE: *Coaching and Supervising Through Bereavement*

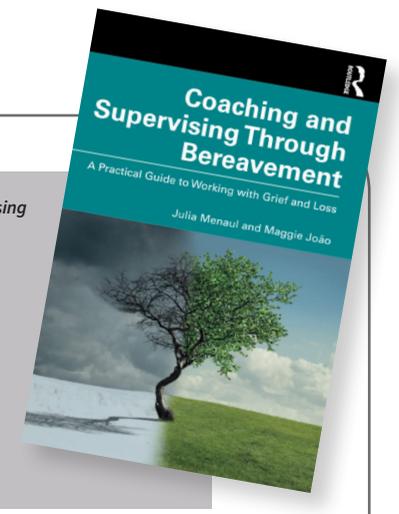
AUTHORS: Julia Menaul and Maggie João

PUBLISHER: Routledge

PUBLICATION DATE: October 2022

PAPERBACK PRICE: £30

ISBN: 9780367540715



This compassionate book shows how none of this is about getting rid of grief, but rather facilitating space for what wants to emerge. This can then open the door to post-traumatic growth. As Eve Turner writes in the book's introduction, Menaul and João 'provide a non-judgemental approach ... that creates hope and resources for a brighter future.'

The authors also acknowledge the wider systemic lens, drawing on Peter Hawkins' seven-eyed model to point to how bereavement can show up in the face of the ecological and climate crisis. As Helen Macdonald reminds us, it is now 'really hard to write about the natural world without writing about grief'. Given this context, the practical insights contained in this book are all too timely.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Paul Heardman is an APECS-accredited master executive coach and EMCC-accredited coaching supervisor. He is a member of the AC's special interest group on supervision. Paul has a master's degree in coaching from Henley Business School and postgraduate qualifications in both one-to-one and group coaching supervision. He writes regularly on coaching and supervision topics.

ACTIVE HOPE

Hope can become an inspired practice in the face of the great unravelling of our times. George Warren encourages us all to be brave, dive in and find wisdom in this inspiring book.

Ten years ago Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone co-authored a beautiful piece of work that has inspired, encouraged and awakened many who read it. That includes myself. It draws on the wisdom of Macy – a deep ecologist, systems theorist, Buddhist scholar and environmental activist – and Johnstone – a specialist coach and trainer in resilience and wellbeing. The book set out to grow our individual and collective capacity to make a positive difference in the world, and it helped me find my strength, voice and courage to turn further towards practices that support the flourishing of life.

It is bittersweet to review this new edition. I'm sad that a new edition of the book is still needed. Ten years ago the authors passed on wisdom in the hope of preventing societal collapse and climate disintegration. Now this edition opens with a recognition that these are underway, in much the same way that humanity is slowly accepting that keeping global temperature rise below 1.5C will not happen.

At the same time, I'm connecting with a sense of gratitude and hope. Gratitude that this new edition is here. Gratitude that it gives further scope to talk about the beautiful work and teachings contained within it. And gratitude for a spiritual and practical roadmap of what I and you and everyone we know can do to 'face this mess we're in'.

And hope. Hope, as the authors say, as a verb and not a noun. Hope as a practice and hope as a practical tool that we can bring to any situation to help us increase the chances of making our desired outcome more likely.

I was delighted and excited to discover what updates and new thinking the authors have to share. This edition includes a conversation about decolonisation, and its important role in addressing problems we face today and will continue to face tomorrow.

The last decade has witnessed a rise in populism, attacks on democracy and a sustained threat to the integrity of institutions. We seem to be existing in an increasingly polarised and angry world. So I appreciate that the authors touch on the toxic polarisation that local, international and digital communities are experiencing – and what we can do about it.

TITLE: Active Hope (revised edition)

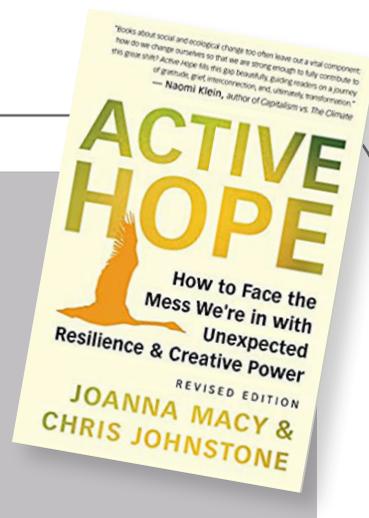
AUTHORS: Chris Johnstone and Joanna Macy

PUBLISHER: New World Library

PUBLICATION DATE: June 2022

PAPERBACK/ PRICE: £16

ISBN: 978-1-60868-710-7



This book probably isn't for you if you want to continue to experience this 'great unravelling' with an objectivity. It probably isn't for you if you want to keep your true feelings and emotions stifled. It probably isn't for you if you want to continue to collude in systems and practices that provide harm to every living thing on this planet.

For everyone else, this book probably is for you. It is one of the kindest, wisest and most profoundly helpful books I've ever read. I'm honoured to be writing this review and I encourage you to familiarise yourself with this text and, like the seeds of a dandelion flower, go forth and share it with others.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

George Warren is an executive coach, supervisor and mentor coach. He is a member of faculty at the Academy of Executive Coaching, where he co-created one of the first climate change coaching courses – Coaching in the Climate Crisis. He sits on the AC's UK leadership team, and he has recorded two podcast series for them, including two conversations with Chris Johnstone (episodes 47 and 107). He can be followed on LinkedIn or through his newsletter, Slowing Down, at tinyletter.com/georgewarrencoaching.

THE TRANSFORMATIONAL COACH

Rob Kemp explores the challenge laid before us by Clare Norman to unlearn old scripts and consider developing a new coaching mindset. Which will you choose?

Clare Norman writes that we must unlearn and let go of old scripts to achieve mastery in our coaching. The unhelpful mindsets that we may have 'absorbed' are outlined, chapter by chapter, along with recommendations for what might replace them.

Norman highlights some of the learned behaviours, habitual thinking and attitudes in our coaching that we have inherited from various places: our upbringings, our schooling, our peers and our coach training to name a few. The idea that we should regularly examine and challenge our practice is one I would fully support – we should look first to our own paradigms, constraints, conditioning and learned attitudes before asking our clients to do the same.

The perspective shifts described (83 of them) are often full-on turnabouts in thinking and orientation – for example, from more is more to less is more. This shift involves moving away from the urge to do more, and say more, which can get in the way of the client's thinking process.

While the book is aligned with International Coaching Federation (ICF) core competencies (and by association the mentor coaching process), many of these potential shifts – or at least the topic areas – will show up in supervision of many forms.

Coaches interested in developing themselves in relation to the ICF core competencies will find direct links between topics and competencies (plus, the competency framework is included in full in the first appendix). In general, though, all coaches can benefit from challenging their working assumptions and learned behaviours.

Whether we identify with the 'old mindset' that Norman positions for us, or whether we choose to inhabit the new mindset suggested for us, remains a matter of personal choice. Regardless of the choice, the key is that we work on our limiting thoughts and beliefs, with appropriate others and on our continual development as coaches.

The challenge that has been laid before us is to be enquiring about our way of thinking and being as coaches, and to be open to changing our minds!

TITLE: The Transformational Coach: Free your thinking and break through to coaching mastery

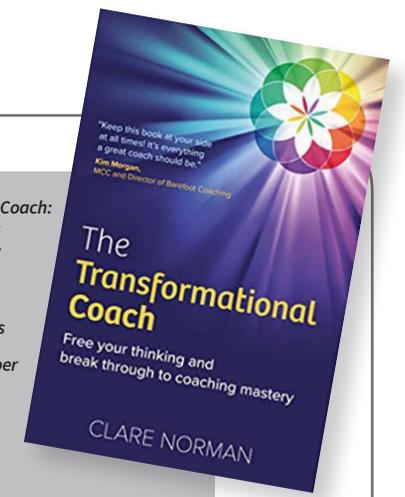
AUTHOR: Clare Norman

PUBLISHER: Right Book Press

PUBLICATION DATE: September 2022

PAPERBACK PRICE: £20

ISBN: 978-1912300822



ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Dr Rob Kemp is head of accredited coach training at Barefoot Coaching. After a corporate career, Rob dedicated his professional life and learning to coaching – first through a postgraduate certificate (2005), then an MSc (2013), and then as a doctor of coaching and mentoring (2021). Having practised as a coach for almost two decades, Rob is now developing other coaches through training and supervision. He can be reached via rob@barefootcoaching.co.uk.

Enquiry & Research Special Interest Group

Join us every 6 weeks for a workshop or informal presentation and discussion with guest speakers.

Our themes for the academic year 2022-23 are threefold:

1. Coaching identity and developing practice.
2. Working with non-traditional coaching clients - thinking about the language and presentation of coaching and supporting client identity and well-being.
3. Cultures of coaching - working within and across diverse cultural, occupational and ethnic groups referencing language, practices and presentation of the benefits of coaching.

For more information please contact accreditationadmin@associationforcoaching.com

The Recognized Accelerated Pathway (RAP) Route to Accreditation

Demonstrating your Commitment to Coaching

Our new Recognized Accelerated Pathway (RAP) route is a simplified process for coaches and executive coaches who have already achieved an EMCC accreditation or ICF credential.

The AC Accreditation team is here to support you through this process. The Scheme will:

- Recognize that pre-accredited/credentialed coaches have already demonstrated their competency to coach with a commitment to continuing professional development.
- Build upon existing competencies and coaching experience by demonstrating their personal approach to their practice.
- Encourage reflective practice and coaching supervision to apply that approach.

The applicant guide and other material is available on our website and can be found [here](#)

Calling all Training Providers!

Find out about our Supported Accelerated Accreditation Scheme (SAAS)

The Association for Coaching (AC) is working with Coach Training Providers with AC Accredited Coach Training Programmes so that their students can follow an Accelerated Accreditation Pathway working towards their accreditation whilst in training.

We will support your organization to adapt your programme to ensure that your students can complete and record evidence for key sections of their accreditation application whilst undertaking your training course.

organization@associationforcoaching.com

Dates for your Diary 2023

January

Tuesday 10 January

18.15 GMT/ 19.15 CET

UK - Virtual

Cultivating Resilience Through the Power of Words

- *Kate Jenkinson*

Monday 16 January

09.30-11.30 GMT

Virtual Co-coaching Forum

Wednesday 18 January

18.15 GMT/ 19.15 CET

UK - Virtual

Coaching and Bereavement in the Workplace

- *Julia Menaul*

Friday 20 January

10.00 GMT/ 11.00 CET

UK - Virtual

Masterclass - Simplifying Coaching: Great Beginnings

- *Claire Pedrick*

Tuesday 24 January

12.00 EST

USA - Virtual

Listening In

Wednesday 25 January

18.15 GMT/ 19.15 CET

UK - Virtual

How to Build a Pipeline of New Clients Without Using Social Media

- *Lisa Farr*

Tuesday 31 January

Live Coaching Demo

Optimize Your Coaching Potential with mBIT

- *Sarah Fletcher*

February

Thursdays, 2 and 9 February

The Team Coaching Revolution

- *Alexander Caillet*

Mondays, 13, 20 and 27 February

Working with the Body in Executive Coaching

- *Claire Dale and Kevin Chapman*

Wednesday 15 February

18.00 AEDT

Australia NSW

A Crackerjack Party to start the Year!

Friday 17 February

Podcasting for Coaches: Live Q&A

- *Rob Lawrence*

Thursday 23 February

Money Mindset: Clearing Limiting Beliefs

- *Jeremy Lazarus*

March

Thursday 9 March

Transformational Coaching Live Coaching Demo

- *Clare Norman*

Friday 10 March

The Reading Room: A Conversation about Books on Coaching and Identity

- *Sarah David*

TO BOOK, PLEASE VISIT OUR EVENTS CALENDAR
www.associationforcoaching.com/events/event_list.asp

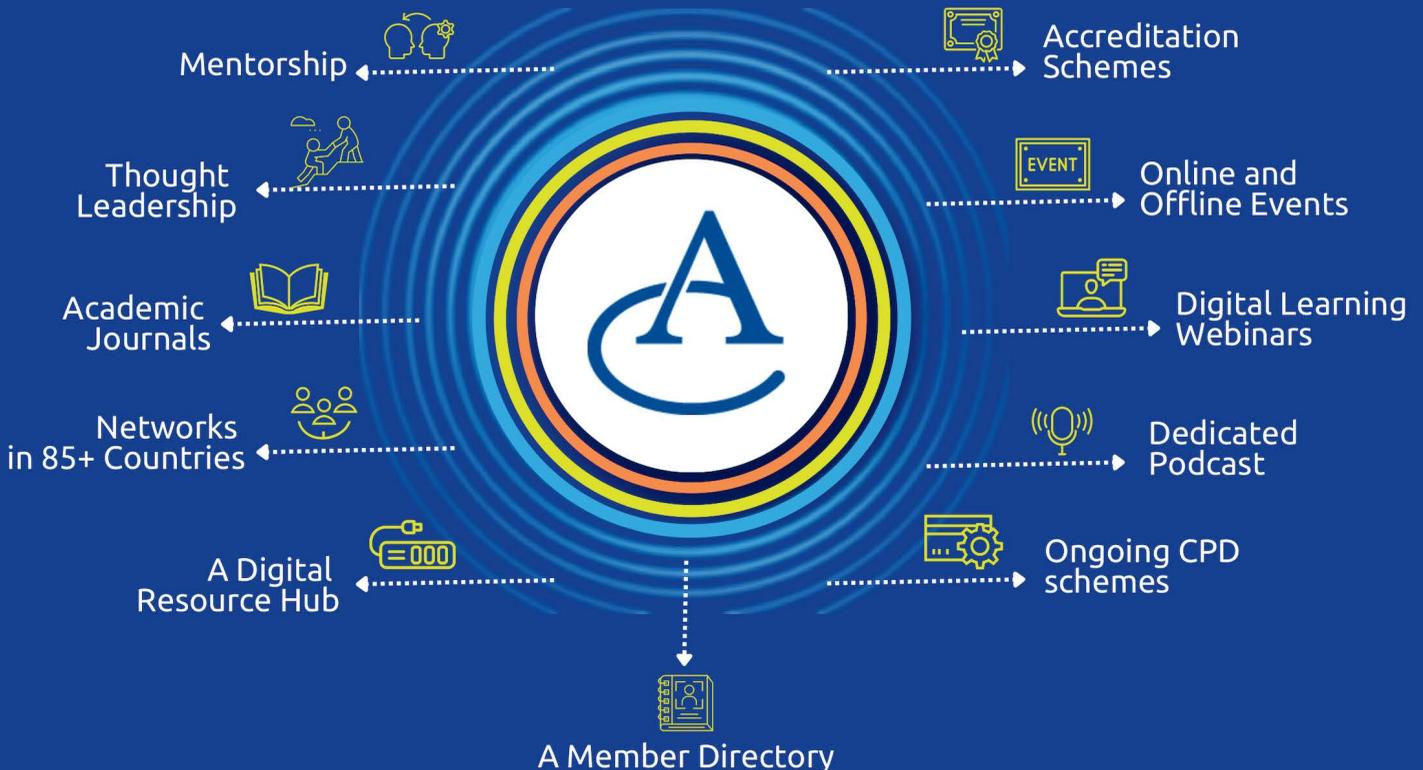
 events@associationforcoaching.com

 +44 (0) 333 006 2676

 www.associationforcoaching.com/events

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

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