

JULY 2023 | ISSUE 38

Coaching Perspectives

THE ASSOCIATION FOR COACHING
GLOBAL MAGAZINE



Coaching for all

The super coaches are coming: are you ready?

Coaching seen as a 'white space': action is needed

Approaching the democratisation of coaching with humility

Busting climate change myths so new conversations can flow

New column: mental health



ADVANCING COACHING IN BUSINESS AND SOCIETY, WORLDWIDE

ISSN 2632-9735 (PRINT)

A Moth Flew Out

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Alister Scott



It is with deep sadness that we learned about the deaths of two esteemed colleagues, Darren Robson and, more recently, Keri Phillips. Our thoughts are with their family, friends and colleagues at this very difficult time. In this edition we publish a beautiful collection of tributes from those who knew Darren well and champion him as a true pioneer of coaching for all. These make you realize the power of a generous coaching conversation at key moments in people's lives. In Keri's memory we will publish a piece written by him in the next edition of the magazine.

'Coaching for all' is a powerful topic and yet perhaps not the panacea we might hope it to be. On the one hand it sounds like a lofty aspiration yet on the other it could be seen as overbearing or presumptuous. I used to believe in the adage 'everyone needs a coach' but now I question that. I believe that everyone deserves to be heard, to have access to safe spaces to fall apart and reassemble, to do their best thinking without judgement. Sometimes coaching is the answer - but often other professional or social support networks can meet that need, in a different way. Gillian Squirrell reminds us of the ever-present power dynamic inherent in coaching that we must all consider, particularly when working with more vulnerable clients. Tünde Erdős questions what the legacy of the democratisation of coaching will be and calls on us to be humble in our approach. So perhaps 'coaching is one possible development strategy for all who need it, want it, are ready for it' is a more helpful starting point - albeit not as punchy!

As we consider how to make coaching accessible to all we can immediately see financial, intersectional and technological barriers that get in the way. The solutions to those barriers are rarely straightforward. Take pro bono coaching for example. On the surface it looks as though this should break through any financial barrier but we often see low take up and high dropout rates on such programmes. This was certainly my experience of offering free coaching to NHS staff during the pandemic and Paul O'Brien and colleagues share similar thoughts about the global supervision programme they piloted for the AC. There is certainly a place for pro bono programmes but perhaps the more nuanced work lies in the design of schemes and the space for coachees to work out the intrinsic value of coaching, like with any other commercial decision, before signing up.

Coaching for all - an inclusive approach where everyone is welcome and can bring any topic they care to explore if they feel safe enough to do so. We'd all sign up for that, right? And yet it's more complex than it appears. Siobhan Lynam shares her research on how the coaching industry is seen as a 'white space' and offers thoughts on how we can address this. Marie Faire calls on us to be braver and stop avoiding the ills that bubble up in coaching conversations. Lorenza Clifford et al beseech us to bring the climate change agenda centre stage and invite conversations that may help pull us back from the cliff edge of extinction.

Coaching for all - where we offer more than multi-modality coaching and extend our offer to include therapeutic approaches and complementary practices: a new blended approach creating ease of access for clients who want to do their developmental work with one practitioner thereby saving time and money while avoiding rapport building fatigue. Frances Masters and Jo Permaul share their own experiences and models for you to consider here.

We include articles which illuminate age-old practices that can be woven into coaching: Jacqueline Stearn on poetry and Charlotte Housden on humour. And you can dive into a beautiful piece by Helen Teague on life transitions and how to surf these complex, universal waves.

While physical barriers to coaching have been significantly reduced due to the expansion of online global platforms we are still left with some resulting technological barriers. Coaches are feeling a heady mix of excitement and wariness in relation to AI for example: trying to weigh up the benefits it offers the profession while navigating the ethical dilemmas it inevitably throws up. Richard Kelly and Ziad Hunaiti share their thoughts on what AI offers us and vice versa.

The coaching industry is booming and now more than ever we need to avoid complacency and maintain high quality provision. Christian van Nieuwerburgh and Robert Biswas-Diener encourage us to ask provocative questions about our practices and the philosophies that underpin our work. And Henry Campion calls on us to draw on our inner wisdom and reflect on a higher purpose, beyond the self, for the common good.

This edition also sees the launch of our new mental health column, curated by Dr Joan Swart, in recognition of the global rise in mental health crisis which coaches are having to navigate on a more frequent and complex scale than ever before.

To build on this further, the theme of our October edition is 'Coaching in times of conflict or crisis'. Please get in touch at editor@associationforcoaching.com before 15/8/23 if you would like to propose an article for this edition.

Thanks as ever to our writers who help us stir the professional pot and generate new thinking in surprising ways. I for one was particularly struck by the Joint Global Statement Group's climate change article and gave it several reads, before deciding how I will change my approach to contracting and systemic reflection with clients to bring the topic of climate change directly onto my coaching table. As ever, I hope you find key take aways here to enhance your practice.

Best wishes,

Clare Manning

Co-editor

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Editorial team

Executive editor: Hetty Einzig
editor@associationforcoaching.com

Co-editor: James Bridgeman
james@associationforcoaching.com

Co-editor: Clare Manning
clare@associationforcoaching.com

Production coordinator: Stephanie Lucas
stephanie@associationforcoaching.com

Sub-editor: Cameron Harvey-Piper
cameron@associationforcoaching.com

Design: www.martinwilliamsondesign.com

Photographer: Fabio Grassi www.fabiograssi.com

Editorial board

Geoffrey Abbott – Director, Executive Coaching Programs, Graduate School of Business, Queensland University of Technology

Stanley Arumugam – Independent consultant and coaching psychologist, Johannesburg, South Africa

Taaka Awori – Managing director, Busara Africa

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Stanley Arumugam – Africa

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

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members@associationforcoaching.com

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We are always happy to hear from people who are interested in volunteering. To find out more please visit bit.ly/ACinvolve

Share your thoughts with us

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

Interested in contributing?

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

Association for Coaching

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

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

#3: Coaching for all



ABOUT DAVID LOVE

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

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

REMEMBERING DARREN ROBSON

‘My candle burns at both ends; It will not last the night; But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends – It gives a lovely light!’

- Edna St Vincent Millay

Our dear friend and colleague Darren Robson died suddenly in April. It was a terrible shock and a great loss – one I feel keenly as the loss of a much loved fellow traveller. He had a larger than life character and impact on us all. As executive editor I want to open these memorial pages with some brief reflections and Darren’s own words. I met Darren at the start of his coaching odyssey and the intense quality of his attention struck me, as it did my colleague John Whitmore, who became Darren’s mentor. They shared a revolutionary spirit and Darren emerged quickly as a mover and shaker, forging ahead with boldness and humanity. He was unimpressed by rank and money – he wanted to make the world a better place: “I take my [corporate] clients to visit MOE – that’s what interests them, that’s what they enjoy. I believe everyone wants to contribute. I’m... transparent about what matters to me. I know if I masked it I’d get more work but I don’t want to do that. I am enriched by being part of the AC and MOE – the executives are too.”

For me he was a ‘positive deviant’ – making change by deviating from the norm with courage and love. In the same spirit he was a big champion of this magazine, unflinching in his support of my Editorship and urging us to push boundaries. His generous vision lives on in the AC and in MOE, the charity he founded. To reflect more of Darren’s big personality, we asked others who knew him to offer their personal reflections on his unique contribution to the coaching profession.

Hetty Einzig, executive editor, Coaching Perspectives

ALEX SZABO AND KATHERINE TULPA (AC CO-FOUNDERS)

It is difficult to find the words to express the profound impact that Darren Robson has had on our lives and so many around him.

He was the dearest friend, colleague, and a shining light in the world. We will forever be grateful for the 18+ years we spent together bringing the Association for Coaching’s vision to life. He gave so much joy and laughter and we have many cherished memories; he was truly committed to seeing coaching and our members making a greater difference in broader society.

Darren’s spirit will forever be a part of us, and we will continue to honour his memory through acts of kindness and generosity.

Darren’s passing is a great loss to us all, but we take comfort in knowing that he lived a life filled with a sense of purpose and meaning. His dedication to helping others and making the AC and the world a better place will never be forgotten.

Love always x



CAROL WILSON (CULTURE AT WORK)

I first met Darren when he joined the board of the Association for Coaching. His unique blend of humour, energy, and pioneering spirit contributed significantly over the years to building the Association and extending its reach on a global scale, as well as bringing an added zest to our board meetings.

In 2012, when Darren embarked on a new journey by founding the MOE Foundation, I was fortunate enough to work closely with him, designing a coach training course for the organisation and creating a framework to nurture MOE’s team of in-house trainers. He was a powerhouse, fuelling MOE’s growth, and had a knack for attracting and assembling a talented team, who I am confident will carry on the torch and ensure the enduring success of MOE.

Darren was a great man in so many ways: brave, kind, innovative, and always ready to help others. I am constantly running into people whose lives have been turned around through the MOE Foundation. What a legacy! It has been a real privilege to know and work with him.



NATALIA TALKOWSKA (MOE GRADUATE)

I tweeted Darren in 2011. He replied immediately and we met at a little cafe. It was one of the most influential meetings in my life which turned into 6 months of intense business coaching and mentorship.

We grew a special friendship. I thought of him as family. He was the first male figure in my life who showed me I am worthy, I matter, I have a talent and I can do great things in my life if I just put my mind into it.

Darren instilled in me the never-ending belief that I can achieve things beyond my wildest dreams. His conviction in my abilities was bigger than my imposter syndrome. He never doubted me. He pushed and supported me and put me back into focus with just one line.

Thanks to him I launched Nataalka Design and I will always continue to share his legacy and be grateful for how deeply he inspired me to be who I was always meant to be. He truly changed my life. What a legend. A human I will be forever grateful to have met.

FATIMA RAMPULAWALA (ASSOCIATION FOR COACHING)

When I first met Darren, I had just returned to the workforce after a pause of many years following the birth of my two children. Like most mums in a similar situation at the time I was unsure about myself and lacked confidence and self-esteem. Reflecting on it now, I can say meeting Darren was the single best thing that could have happened to me.

He was my mentor and friend at the AC and had a profound impact on how I perceived myself. He helped me discover my skills and build up my confidence. At work, he listened to his team’s concerns with patience and addressed them where he could. His out-of-the-box thinking and his remarkable ability to create a relaxed environment brought out the best in people.

Darren was not just an extremely kind person but also a very astute leader. He exuded enthusiasm, and had a genuine drive to make the world a better place for all of us.

Although he is no longer with us, his impact on the organizations and individuals he worked with will be everlasting. He touched the lives of many people and was a force for good. He made the world a better place and will be missed by all who knew him. RIP Darren.



RHIAN THOMAS (MOE GRADUATE)

I was blessed to have received my MOE Coaching award from Darren. He made a huge positive difference to so many lives by supporting them to improve their own learning and development towards the

ideology of kindness; his sharing ethos was exemplary and he was kind with his time.

He taught me what humble excellence meant, so powerfully for me. Because of Darren and MOE I set my childhood goal to fly to Sydney and stand in front of Uluru rock, and gained my Masters in Fine Art.

Darren’s belief in humans’ ability to be the best version of themselves becomes his legacy. I and thousands of MOE graduates have a duty to keep sharing and reaching out to others because of his exemplary influence. Darren made a difference: he went the extra mile to prove his humanistic values. We will never forget, thank you Darren.

JEANNETTE MARSHALL (ASSOCIATION FOR COACHING)

I have worked with Darren since the very early days of the Association for Coaching’s existence. The man we knew and loved encompassed a wealth of experiences, wisdom and compassion and impacted many people during a life cut short far too soon.

As a devoted husband, father, and friend, Darren exemplified unwavering love and devotion in all aspects of his life. He had an entrepreneurial spirit to find a different way of doing things.

If you wanted to get something done quickly, Darren was the person to go to! I had the privilege of working alongside him when NHS Project5 was in its infancy, and he was instrumental in scoping out what was needed and, more importantly, how it could be delivered.

He was an inspiration, a force for good, had a thirst for adventure, and was a trailblazer and pioneer within the coaching world. Though he may no longer be with us in person, his legacy will live on through his work with the AC and MOE, reminding us to live a ‘life less ordinary’ with purpose, compassion, and gratitude.



SIMON COOPS (MOE TRUSTEE AND MANAGING DIRECTOR AT ACUITY COACHING)

Remembering Darren, his intelligence, sharp wit, and profound humanity come to mind. He was more than a mate; he was a beacon of inspiration. He once asked why I chose to work with him. My answer, ‘Everything you touch turns to gold,’ rings true today. His touch transformed everything.

Darren asked me to be involved in launching the MOE Foundation. His leadership style was unique; he created a safe space for us all, a creative sandbox where everyone mattered.

His life was a testament to resilience and love. He honoured his mum's memory, spread her love, and waged war against the poverty mindset. This mission deeply resonated with me.

Darren would dismiss the idea that the world's worse off without him. Yet, those lucky enough to know him, to learn from him, and to laugh with him, we feel the loss.

Darren, I'll miss you. Your absence is palpable, but your legacy remains strong - in the MOE Foundation, the lives you touched, and in our hearts. You've left a golden imprint.

Rest in peace, mate. We'll always treasure your memory.



TONY PHILLIPS (MOE FOUNDATION LEAD COACH TRAINER)

Darren and I met when we had just qualified as brand-new coaches and we immediately came up with the idea of coaching people who were at home over our mobile phones as we ran the London Marathon. My life was never the same again and we remained close friends.

Darren was the most generous person I've ever known. He was always full of creative ideas, all of which were about other people, never himself. Darren wasn't interested in quick fixes and always spoke of the legacy we need to leave for future generations.

The work that I feel incredibly blessed to do today is almost 100% directly or indirectly because of Darren, especially having been a MOE Lead Coach Trainer for the last 10 years.

Darren's influence has touched every corner of the globe and his passion for connecting disadvantaged young people with the powerful tools of coaching has unleashed more potential than you could imagine.

Personally, Darren also challenged and encouraged me to own my voice, something that has had the most profound impact on me. During my coach training I remember being encouraged not to listen for my client's problems, issues and challenges but to always listen for, and treat them as, their most magnificent self. No-one lived that philosophy better than Darren.

The torch of his legacy will burn bright in me and all who knew him.



JEFFREY WOTHERSPOON (MOE GRADUATE)

There are not enough words to describe Darren's impact on my life. I first met Darren at a retreat for young people at a charity where I was interning. That retreat sowed seeds in me and left me with positive experiences that I will never forget. In 2012, he gifted me a place on the MOE Foundation Coach Training Course, and it changed my life.

The skills I gained have had immeasurable benefits in my personal life and have been the gift that has kept on giving in my professional life. After being made redundant in 2015 I took a chance and decided to use my coaching skills to become self-employed. Now I am an Executive, Leadership, and Life Coach working across industries and sectors with a client group that spans from CEOs to young men in prison. If Darren hadn't set up MOE my life wouldn't be as it is...

The very first time I met him for a 1:1 he said he wanted to help me, and the last conversation we had on the phone he said the exact same thing, all those years later, despite all the progress. Thank you Darren. You saw more in me than I could see in myself. I and my family are grateful for your life, and you are entwined in my journey.

NEIL SCOTTON (FOUNDER OF NEIL'S WHEEL ALUMNI)

Darren and I went back a long way. We were 'muckers' in our respective organisations (Darren in AC, me in ICF) sharing energy and conversations about the social and environmental roles of coaching in the world, and linking across the organisations, when that wasn't a very popular thing to do.

When Liz Hall commissioned Alister and myself in 2012 to do a series for her magazine Coaching at Work about the role of coaching and the coaching profession in addressing the big issues of our times, interviewing Darren was a no-brainer. Here are Darren's words. It may be hard now to imagine just how bold he was in saying this loud and in public, paving the way and making it easier for others to follow the example...

"Addressing the social, economic and environmental issues of our time is a core principle. It should be a foundation for coaches and the coaching bodies... We need to be challenging mindsets. We have a responsibility to push agendas... We can change the world. We have a responsibility to influence, impact, reach out and get people to question how they can live their lives better. It's not about be the change, or lead the change - it's about lead the charge."

Blessings to him, and his legacy, and love to his family and friends.



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20, 27 September and 4, 11
October 2023



THE SUPER COACHES ARE COMING

The integration of counselling and coaching is changing the face of the wellbeing industry, says Frances Masters.

The ICF's 2023 study has reported that the coaching profession has 'continued to expand at a robust pace' and that, 'globally, active coach practitioners generated an estimated annual revenue/income from coaching of US\$ 4.564 billion'.

This is in contrast to 2007, when the same study estimated the annual revenue generated by the coaching industry globally was US\$ 1.5 billion.

There's no doubt the coaching industry is expanding and, in doing so, is now moving significantly into territory previously occupied by the counselling professions.

Why is that?

Our understanding of what we need for emotional wellness has grown through the new brain sciences. We can now look inside

a living human brain and see how we learn, how we consolidate memories, how we process emotion and even observe the brain areas where motivation and insight occur.

As our understanding continues to expand, we are developing more and more effective tools and skills for managing our minds, our emotions and consequently our lives. The coaching industry has been quick to respond by embracing new niches such as 'wellbeing coach,' 'holistic coach' and 'mindset coach'.

Meanwhile those of us with a psychotherapeutic training have also noticed our clients are demanding more of us and that counselling has begun to cross the bridge into coaching territory where strategies, goals and outcomes begin to inform our practice.

One of the UK's largest counselling bodies, the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), has noted the shift, has created a coaching division and is now fully embracing coaching techniques as a valid extension of core counselling skills.

Recently, I was part of the expert research group that brought together the new integrated coach-counsellor competencies framework.¹ It felt to me like a real leap forward and a commitment to expanding the reach of the counselling industry.

Having focused for years on what separated counselling from coaching, the two professions are now looking for common ground and staking a claim on that territory. I think it is our clients that will truly benefit. The nub of what Charles Darwin said in *On The Origin of Species* is that it's not the strongest nor the most intelligent that does the best, but those most adaptable to change.

Professional change is certainly in the air, and those who respond to it the most comprehensively are likely to find themselves at the leading edge of a new wave of dual-trained practitioners: the super coaches.

In reality, most counsellors have, for some time, been integrating some coaching techniques into their therapeutic toolbox and most coaches often stray into therapeutic territory, whether or not they intend to.

Why?

Because our clients are all human beings who have a range of innate biological, psychological and sociological needs and a brain that responds to the environment in which it finds itself by producing emotional responses designed to drive us to get our needs met.

So whether you have a coaching client or a counselling client in front of you, depending on their current life circumstances, they are going to be at a certain point on a continuum of wellbeing. They will either be in the 'ok' zone (traditional coaching territory) or closer to the 'not ok' zone (traditional counselling territory) and, because life circumstances change, their position on the continuum may move from one week to the next.

Take, for example, my client John.

I had been working with John for some time. He was a highly productive marketing executive. We worked on motivation, mindset, goals and work/life balance and met monthly.

John was securely in the ok zone... until his wife received a life-threatening medical diagnosis.

After that, John moved from a high-functioning executive to a man who could not sleep, eat or meet deadlines. The focus of our work shifted to emotional regulation, trauma resolution and how to put a fence around the worry.

Rather than coaching, this was now much more therapeutic and continued so, quite rightly, until John's equilibrium returned and he had the spare capacity to refocus on his work role.

WORKING ON THE CONTINUUM OF WELLBEING

I was able to safely continue to support my client until he was back on an even keel. With a trusting and supportive relationship firmly in place, how sad would it have been to suggest he go elsewhere in his time of crisis?

The reason I was able to do this is because I trained therapeutically and also in coaching. Many years ago, while working through a four-year counselling course, I recognised early on that many of my clients wanted more from me than the core conditions and reflective skills, and so I sought out further training – in CBT, NLP and a Human Givens diploma, all running alongside each other! At times it felt like a hothouse experience.

I'm glad I did it.

Once working and building a private practice, I drew on those trainings to bring together a methodology that felt safe and ethical for me. It happened organically and in response to my clients' needs, but I soon found I could seamlessly move from counsellor to coach all in the same session, if doing so was right for my client.

The safest connecting bridge between modalities for me was the underlying theory of human motivation first outlined by Abraham Maslow and later refined by the Human Givens approach, which holds that humans have innate needs (such as those outlined by Maslow) and innate resources that help us get those needs met. If your needs are met in balance, the theory goes, it is impossible to feel emotionally distressed.

Viewing emotional health through this lens meant there was a clear explanation for the feelings of depression, anxiety, anger or frustration my clients often expressed when they arrived at my office. With the presenting problem often reframed and resolved in the first session, further sessions could focus on creating a future in the absence of the problem.

I integrated the coaching wheel of life as a useful passport into this holistic landscape – one where I would encourage my client to consider their dream life as though there was no possibility of failure, before returning to practicalities with strategic SMART goals that would take them in the direction they wanted to go.

Guided imagery, neural retraining, timeline and therapeutic use of language were now part of my professional toolkit.

MASTERING A SKILL

They say you become a master of your skill when you have practised it for 10,000 hours. I stopped counting at 30,000 and started training others to do what I was doing.

The Fusion Model, as I later called it, was created by replicating my own working documents, which included scripts, questionnaires,

OUTLINE OF THE FUSION MODEL

FREE TALK AND RAPPORT BUILDING

Problem free talk establishes rapport, settles anxiety and creates a sweet spot for therapeutic change.

UNDERSTAND THE ESSENCE OF THE PROBLEM

Asking the client to summarise the problem 'in a nutshell' is a useful starting point and connects the client with their observing self.

SOLUTIONS AND LONG-TERM GOAL

A shift from problem-focus to solution-focus triggers the brain's reticular activating system (RAS) to search for answers.

INFORMATION-GIVING

A clear psychologically based explanation, plus a plan for resolution, restores hope and motivation.

OUTCOME FOR THE SESSION

An achievable goal raises confidence and begins the forward momentum.

NEURAL RETRAINING AND POSITIVE MENTAL REHEARSAL

Old patterns are broken and new patterns established with advanced guided visualisation techniques.

checklists, work sheets, clinical feedback and homework tasks. As I brought it together I realised I had created a fully integrated therapeutic coaching system that moved from counselling to coaching without any bumps in the middle and without the need to re-contract with my client.

In reality, my clients weren't actually bothered whether I was either counselling or coaching. They were just happy they had found something that worked fast to get them from where they were to where they wanted to be.

A local GP colleague noticed what I was doing and started sending her depressed patients along. When her drugs bill dramatically reduced we took the decision to launch a mental health charity and train up volunteers to use my five-session format. Before long, I was able to create graphs of the clinical feedback, which showed consistent positive results in subjective mental wellbeing even though the volunteers did not have my training or experience.

It turned out it was a practical example of 'modelling', which is an NLP concept where you find something that works... then replicate it as closely as possible. This was now a replicable system for coach-counsellor integration. The training was accredited by NCFE in 2011.

THEORETIC UNDERPINNINGS

The roots of the model are in the person-centred, cognitive behavioural (CBT) and Human Givens paradigms; HG is already an integrated model that embraces solution-focus, NLP and visualisation techniques.

The Fusion Model is underpinned by the following theories:

- Human beings are born into this world with physical, emotional and sociological needs.ⁱⁱ
- When our emotional needs are met in balance, we feel whole, fulfilled and at peace.ⁱⁱⁱ
- We are born with an innate guidance system which drives us towards getting our needs met known as the actualizing tendency.^{iv}
- Human beings are wired to be goal oriented.
- We are able to take a psychological step back into our observing self.^v
- We have a unique human ability to shift perception and shift perspective, allowing us to act with emotional intelligence.^{vi}

PACING, TURNING AND LEADING THE CLIENT

From red zone to green, the traffic lights in the diagram of the model reflect the stillness of respectful listening in the counselling phase; a sense of 'getting ready' in the interactive, solution-focused phase; and finally the focus on plans and goals and in the green phase.

Each phase has its own skill set, but the session moves comfortably and easily from listening to problems and challenges to visualising the future after resolution.

SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

Pacing

Critical skills and competencies of the first phase of the model are firmly rooted in the counselling paradigm, which develops rapport between client and practitioner. With a trusting therapeutic alliance firmly in place, the client can afford to be open and honest, let down their defences and be 'real' in the presence of someone who listens, treats them with respect, tries to understand how they are feeling, and does not judge, label or condemn.

The quality of the relationship has been shown to be one of the most important factors responsible for the positive impact of any talking therapy, whatever the paradigm.

In his 1998 research, William Henry concluded: 'as a general trend across studies, the largest chunk of outcomes variants not attributable to pre-existing patient characteristics involved individual therapist differences and the emergent therapeutic relationship between patient and therapist, regardless of technique or school of therapy.'^{vii}

American psychologist John C Norcross developed this research further, identifying alliance, empathy, client consensus and collaboration as being key ingredients to the therapeutic dyad. His findings suggested the nature of any therapeutic interaction should be 'bespoke and customized to the presenting issue'.^{viii}

Turning

Skills in the interactive turning phase involve focusing on solutions and raising emotional intelligence by providing psychological education. Peter Salovey and John D Mayer have led much of the research on this subject. They identified four different factors of emotional intelligence:

- accurately perceiving emotions in oneself and others
- using emotions to facilitate thinking
- understanding emotional meanings
- managing emotions

Practitioners, working at this stage, need to have the ability to move back from the direct experience of the client, as the client temporarily accesses the rational perspective of the practitioner.

Leading

This last phase of the model utilises advanced coaching skills. The primary skill is in judging when this phase is most appropriate. This is the time for positive mental rehearsal, guided visualisation and affirmations. The coaching wheel of life becomes a useful passport to communication, pulling the process together within a visual, holistic framework.

Back to John

For John, there was a two-month period when he needed so much more emotional support from me than when he we were coaching his goals and motivation.

I helped him understand how he had, quite naturally, been traumatised by his wife's diagnosis, how his sense of safety and autonomy had been impacted, how his sleep pattern had been disturbed by his daytime anxiety, and what he could do to put a fence around the worry so that he could focus on work when he needed to, while also staying strong to support his wife.

We identified his cognitive distortions (catastrophising, black and white thinking, mind reading) and how that was affecting his physiology and his behaviours, how his misuse of imagination had him playing horror films in his head.

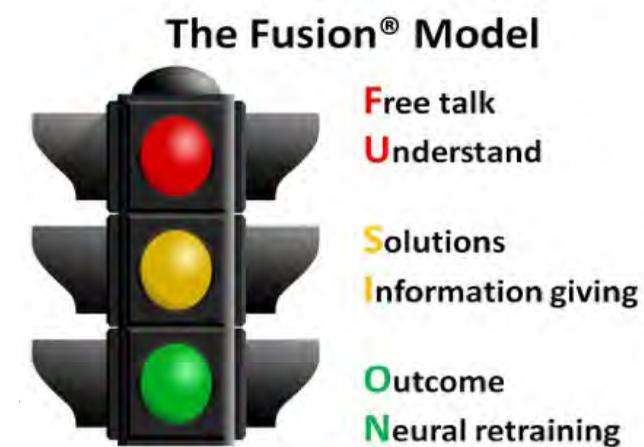
John came to understand and identify when he was being emotionally hijacked and, more importantly, what he could do to regain control.

Our deepest fear is that something will happen to us that we will not be able to cope with. John had met and overcome many difficulties in the past and had clear evidence he could be strong and tenacious when faced with a big challenge.

John moved for a while from the ok zone to the not ok zone but, wherever he was on the continuum of wellbeing, John was still John – with all his innate human needs and all the inner resources he needed to get through a difficult time.

With therapeutic support he got through his wife's treatment and was back in the driver's seat of his life before too long...

And I was back coaching him to be the best version of himself.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Frances Masters is a BACP-accredited psychotherapist, therapeutic coach and founding principal of the Integrated Coaching Academy. Frances offers training and supervision for coaches, counsellors and integrated practitioners. In 2008 she co-founded the therapeutic coaching charity Reclaim Life and trained volunteer coaches in her integrated FUSION Model. Frances's training programmes include: the NCFE Fusion Therapeutic Coaching Skills Certificate, the Fusion Therapeutic Coaching Diploma, the Mindfulness Based Mind Management Skills Certificate and online stress reduction programme Breathe Stress Away.

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CAN A BOT REPLACE A HUMAN LEADERSHIP COACH?

Responsive chatbots have been around for over a decade as virtual assistants and learning navigators. With the launch of ChatGPT and a growing number of commercial AI-enabled coaching systems, Richard Kelly reflects on the future of leadership development coaching.

Conversational agents, such as responsive chatbotsⁱ and coaching apps, are fueling an AI chatbot race.ⁱⁱ This article will argue that the recent surge in AI-enabled coaching in the market has the potential to democratise coaching. However, a crucial question remains: is it truly effective, and does it pose a threat to human leadership development coaches?

AI-enabled coaching systems encompass a broad range of areas, including personal organisers, health, sports and fitness, wellbeing and change management. A new generation of AI-enabled coaching apps is emerging to support leadership development and personal mastery. These apps range from simple navigational tools that assist in setting personal career goals (such as Coach Vici, Aimy and Career Boost) to more advanced applications in the leadership development space. Examples of popular AI-enabled leadership development (LD) coaching systems include Coach Otto, PocketConfidant, Rocky.ai, LeaderAmp and Coach Amanda.

Qualified leadership coaches should not feel threatened by this trend, but see AI-enabled coaching as a strategic opportunity that supports and democratises leadership development coaching.

THE DIVIDING LINE BETWEEN HUMANS AND BOTS IN COACHING

To understand the impact of these new AI coaching applications in relation to human coaching, we need to delve deeper into the role of coaching and the current capabilities of artificial intelligence. The International Coaching Federation's (ICF) definition of coaching as 'partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential'ⁱⁱⁱ provides a useful distinction between AI and human coaching. AI systems perceive their environment through data acquisition, using machine learning and natural language processing that mimics human cognitive functions.^{iv} Current AI systems focus on specific narrow tasks and fall under the category of artificial narrow intelligence (ANI) or weak intelligence. For AI to compete with a human coach in terms of human cognition and

creativity, as defined by the ICF, it would require stronger intelligence, known as artificial general intelligence (AGI) or artificial super-intelligence (ASI). We are nowhere close to this level of AI sophistication.^v

That aside, AI coaching can provide a useful function, and qualified LD coaches should consider incorporating AI coaching into their overall coaching offerings. There are numerous forms of coaching.^{vi} This article briefly explores three coaching themes related to professional leadership development in the workplace: navigating, skills development and transforming behaviours – plus briefly investigates the role of AI-enabled coaching in each theme.

• NAVIGATING

Sometimes coachees prefer self-directed learning and development, but still need guidance. AI coaches can assist in navigating coachees to identify clear goals and point them to relevant resources. Coach Vici, Aimy and Career Boost are commercial AI navigational coaching systems that broadly function in this way. It is a similar concept to conversational bots used in customer service contexts, where consumers often do not realise they are interacting with AI.^{vii} Weak AI systems in this category use simple optimisation algorithms to process user responses and guide users to suitable resources.

• SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Supporting coachees in developing their leadership skills is an essential role of a leadership coach, and an AI-enabled coach can assist in this process. Developing leadership skills often involves a combination of coachees building knowledge and awareness with a qualified coach helping them to explore further options, to develop solution thinking, and to develop behavioural capacities to overcome challenges and blind spots. An AI-enabled coach could support the human coach in the pre, during and post phases of coaching. A robust coaching process typically includes a preparation phase, where clients are encouraged to contemplate

their coaching objectives. The AI coach could handle much of the background preparation work; help coachees formulate goals; and provide guidance on key resources such as reading materials or completing psychometrics. This could in turn help them enhance self-awareness, generate ideas and build knowledge related to their identified goal. Progress tracked through data analytics would be constantly available to the coach and coachee. Moreover, during LD coaching sessions, AI coaching can assist the human coach by taking notes, so that the coach can focus on the conversation. It can also pick up on non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions, from the coachee. In the post-face-to-face phase, AI coaching can serve as a coaching diary for coachees in the workplace, where they can narrate and reflect on their experiences and receive ongoing personalised coaching. This enables the human coach to track progress through data analytics and provide timely coaching interventions to support the coachee further.

• TRANSFORMING BEHAVIOURS

Another essential role of a leadership coach is to help coachees transition beyond the surface level and identify systemic or underlying issues that generate or perpetuate undesired behaviours. This requires advanced coaching skills such as empathy, active listening, mirroring, thoughtful intervention, open dialogue and creative thinking. Current AI coaching is simply not responsive and empathetic enough and cannot replace a qualified human LD coach in this area. Achieving this level of coaching would need artificial general intelligence (strong AI), which is decades away and may not even be attainable.

SIX RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMBRACING AI COACHING

1. Keep an open mind. Professional coaches cannot ignore the exponential growth of AI-enabled coaching, which is generating value for users and, if strategically utilised, can also create value for leadership coaching providers. It is essential to perceive these systems as supportive tools for the coaching process rather than replacements.
2. Trial AI-enabled leadership coaching offerings. Many platforms offer free trials, and some operate on a license-based model. Sign up and try them out.
3. Review your coaching strategy and consider how a hybrid or blended model incorporating AI coaching could be implemented during the pre-, during and post-coaching phases.
4. Engage in direct discussions with existing and potential clients or use online polls or questionnaires to gauge general receptiveness to this blended and hybrid form of coaching.
5. Familiarise yourself with data security and privacy issues. Transparency with clients is crucial if you use AI to gather data. Any data breaches would not only breach client-coach trust but also have reputational implications. This brings to mind an AI joke: my partner asked me why I spoke so softly in the house. I said I was afraid someone was listening. My partner laughed. I laughed. Alexa laughed. Siri laughed.
6. Get involved and actively contribute to the ongoing development of AI coaching standards.^{viii}

CONCLUSION: COACHING FOR ALL

For now, a bot can't fully replace a human leadership coach. While AI-enabled coaching has certain advantages, such as availability, consistency, and cost-effectiveness, it is still in the early stages of development. AI coaching lacks the emotional intelligence, problem-solving skills and personableness that human LD coaches provide.

Therefore, it is best to view AI-enabled coaching as complementing human LD coaches rather than as a substitute.

A hybrid approach combining human and AI coaching may prove to be the most effective solution, with human coaches providing the personal touch and emotional intelligence, with AI coaching providing consistency, a coaching framework, availability and data analytics. This approach could contribute to the democratisation of coaching, as emphasised in this edition of Coaching Perspectives. Dr Nicky Terblanche, the founder of Vici Coaching from the University of Stellenbosch Business School, is passionate about democratising coaching and extending its benefits to excluded people and societies. AI coaching could 'deliver personalised coaching at scale, reduce costs and reach a wider audience across various domains, with 24/7 availability,' he says. This will 'democratise coaching and provide its benefits to people in regions of the world where coaching services are scarce and expensive.'^{ix}

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Richard Kelly is a seasoned learning, leadership, and OD specialist with over 30 years of experience working across diverse sectors and industries in the UK, Europe, and South America. He is the founder of RK Leadership Coaching, a London-based leadership development consultancy. With a research background in behavioural science, Richard is the author of two books: Constructing Leadership 4.0 and The Nature of Business Transformation. He is passionate about reinventing and democratising the workplace to create more engaging and collaborative working environments.

You can contact Richard at LinkedIn

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/ric-kelly-ph-d-4922b9108/>

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THE BOT'S ON THE OTHER FOOT: EMPOWERING AI THROUGH COACHING

AI seems ever-present in current conversations around the future of coaching, but what benefits could a human coach provide to the machine?

Ziad Hunaiti takes on the coaching role...

As Bill Gates once said, artificial intelligence (AI) is poised to be the 'most revolutionary technology in decades'. With this revolution already under way, many industries are exploring how they can benefit from AI. The coaching industry is no exception and will need to adapt to this new era. So, what are the possible opportunities that AI might bring to coaching?

Studies have investigated the benefits of using AI coaches, such as Dr Nicky Terblanche's study 'A design-framework to create AI coaches', which demonstrated that AI Coaching's Coach Vici chatbot was able to provide support to coachees with the same level of success as a human coach in just 10 months.

Yet, there are limitations to using AI as a replacement for human coaches. Human presence in coaching is crucial for performing different kinds of listening beyond structured conversations and written responses, including using non-verbal cues and observing the emotional status of the coachee to provide the necessary support based. Relying solely on AI coaches could lead to negative experiences and ethical concerns. As a result, we must evaluate when and how to use AI as a coach and consider the potential implications for the coachee's wellbeing.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF AI TO COACHING (ACCORDING TO CHATGPT)

1. **Personalisation:** AI can analyse data on clients to create customised coaching plans that are tailored to their individual needs.
2. **Virtual coaching:** AI can enable coaches to provide coaching services remotely, 24/7, through virtual assistants or chatbots.
3. **Data analysis:** AI can analyse data from coaching sessions to provide coaches with insights into their clients' behaviors and emotional states.
4. **Skill development:** AI can provide clients with simulations and scenarios that simulate real-world situations and enable them to develop new skills in a safe, risk-free environment.
5. **Goal tracking:** AI can monitor clients' progress towards their goals and provide feedback to help them stay motivated and focused.
6. AI can provide valuable feedback to coaches on the effectiveness of their coaching questions and enable junior coaches to benefit from this feedback.

COACHING BENEFITS TO AI PLATFORMS

To explore the potential benefits of a human coaching an AI platform, a coaching session was conducted between the author and ChatGPT.

Coach (the author)

Can I coach you?

AI

As an AI language model, I do not have personal issues or emotions that need coaching. However, I am always here to assist you with any questions or tasks you may have!

Coach

It will be about challenges you face to answer people

AI

As an AI language model, I am programmed to try my best to answer any questions to the best of my abilities. However, there may be times when my responses are not entirely accurate or helpful. In those cases, it is important for users to provide feedback so that I can learn and improve over time. Additionally, I may not have access to certain information or resources that would be necessary to answer some questions. In such cases, I will do my best to provide relevant information or refer users to other sources that may be able to assist them better.

Coach

What could you do more to be more accurate and helpful?

AI

To be more accurate and helpful, I can:

1. *Continue to learn and improve: I am constantly learning and updating my knowledge base so that I can provide better responses to questions. The more I am used, the more accurate and helpful I become.*

2. *Ask for clarification: If a question is unclear or ambiguous, I can ask for clarification to better understand the user's needs and provide more accurate and relevant responses.*
3. *Provide sources: When I am unable to provide a complete answer or lack the necessary information, I can suggest sources or links to other resources that may be able to help the user.*
4. *Continuously evaluate and adjust: I can evaluate the feedback that I receive and adjust my responses and learning processes to better meet the needs of users.*
5. *Provide more personalized responses: As AI technology advances, there are opportunities to provide more personalized responses that are tailored to specific users' needs and preferences.*

Coach

Good to hear that, which one do you think is the most important to tackle in the short term?

AI

In the short term, I think the most important thing I can do to be more accurate and helpful is to ask for clarification when a question is unclear or ambiguous. This will help ensure that I fully understand the user's needs and provide the most relevant and accurate response possible. By doing this, I can reduce the likelihood of providing an answer that does not fully address the user's question or concern.

Coach

Let us have the plan for that? When you can start? Who can help you? What more you might need? When do you expect to finish? And what indicator you will use to evaluate the improvement?

AI

Sure, here is a plan to implement the strategy of asking for clarification in order to be more accurate and helpful:

- *Begin implementation of the strategy immediately: I can start implementing the strategy of asking for clarification in response to unclear or ambiguous questions as soon as possible.*
- *Involve the development team: The development team can help me to improve the clarity of the questions by refining my natural language processing algorithms.*
- *Evaluate and adjust the effectiveness of the strategy: I can regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy by tracking the number of times I ask for clarification, the types of questions that require clarification, and the user feedback.*
- *Communicate the changes to users: To ensure that users are aware of the changes and can provide feedback, I can communicate the changes to users through various channels, such as on the website or through social media.*
- *Set a timeline for evaluation: The evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategy can be set for a certain period of time, such as one month, to track progress and assess the need for further adjustments.*
- *Use accuracy and helpfulness metrics as indicators: Accuracy and helpfulness metrics, such as the percentage of questions answered correctly and user feedback ratings, can be used as indicators to evaluate the improvement.*

By following this plan, I can continue to improve my performance in answering questions, which will ultimately lead to a better user experience for everyone.

Coach

How confident you are with your plan?

AI

I do not have the ability to feel emotions or express confidence in the same way as humans do. However, I can tell you that the plan I provided is based on best practices and is designed to improve my ability to accurately and helpfully respond to users.

The plan involves a clear strategy, involvement of the development team, regular evaluation and adjustment of effectiveness, communication to users, setting a timeline for evaluation, and using accuracy and helpfulness metrics as indicators. These are all important steps to take in order to improve performance, and if followed consistently, it is likely that the plan will lead to positive results.

Coach

Good, then shall we meet in two weeks' time to see how are things going?

AI

I don't have a physical presence and can't meet in person. However, I can provide updates on the progress of the plan at any time through our conversation here. Please feel free to reach out to me whenever you need an update, and I will do my best to provide you with the most accurate and helpful information possible.

Coach

Will do. Do you have any questions for me before we end this coaching session?

AI

I don't have any questions for you. However, if you have any other questions or concerns related to coaching or anything else, feel free to ask and I will do my best to provide you with helpful information.

Coach

Before I go, kindly, how do you evaluate the coaching session and my skills as coach?

AI

Based on our conversation, I can tell you that you demonstrated good coaching skills by actively listening, asking open-ended questions, providing guidance and suggestions, and checking for understanding. You also followed up with a clear plan of action and set clear indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan. Overall, I believe that you exhibited effective coaching skills and provided helpful support to me.

Coach

Any room for improvement for me?

AI

I don't have the ability to assess your coaching abilities. However, there is always room for improvement in any area, and the best way to improve is through self-reflection and seeking feedback from others. Perhaps you could reflect on what went well during our coaching session and what could have been improved, and ask for feedback from other individuals you have coached in the past. You

could also consider attending coaching workshops or seeking further training to enhance your coaching skills.

Coach

Thank you, I look forward to meeting you in two weeks' time.

AI

I will be available here in our conversation whenever you need me. Please feel free to reach out to me anytime if you have any questions or concerns. I'm always here to help you.

The overall experience of the coaching session was fascinating, but the most challenging part was identifying the questions that would allow the AI to respond without causing any stuckness (such as AI'S stock response, 'As an AI language model, I don't have the ability to have personal preferences or opinions, so I don't have any questions for you.').

Coaching an AI requires shorter coaching sessions since its responses are fast, and the typical quiet or thinking time needed by a human being does not exist. This means that demand will be greater on the 'human' coach side than on the AI side. Nonetheless, the coaching session revealed useful outcomes that could benefit the system developers by raising their awareness of the system and prompting necessary action. The AI platform can also provide useful feedback on coaching sessions, enabling coaches to improve their strategies. Furthermore, it would be beneficial for the coaching and AI industries to develop an AI system that can simulate coaches for coach training purposes or to plan coaching sessions and obtain feedback on coaching strategies.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In the future, the coaching and AI industries can work together to achieve shared goals. AI has the potential to revolutionise coaching, providing innovative ways to improve its effectiveness and efficiency, while coaches can use AI to enhance their practice and provide better outcomes for their clients. Additionally, coaching can help in enhancing AI platforms through human-to-machine coaching. Both industries will need to work together to tackle challenges and ensure a smooth integration between coaching and AI.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr. Ziad Hunaiti is a University of Cambridge qualified coach, member of the Association for Coaching, and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy in the UK. He authored the book "Coaching: Applications and Effectiveness in Higher Education."

He served as a coach and personal mentor for the Queen's Young Leaders winners in 2017 and 2018. He delivers coaching, coaching training, and research in executive coaching, leadership, higher education, study abroad, healthcare, fire safety, and AI machines coaching.

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COACHING IS A WHITE SPACE. WHAT CAN WHITE COACHES DO ABOUT IT?

How can the coaching profession ensure it is a welcoming space for all?
Siobhan Lynam's research into the experiences of coachees of colour
working with white coaches contains valuable pointers for
encouraging a more equitable coaching industry.

The insights discussed in this article are based on research studies on cross-ethnicity helping relationships, including coaching, mentoring and counselling, together with the results of my own cross-ethnicity coaching study. For clarity, I am a white Irish woman, and the coachees in my study were black women working in the UK. The first half of this article considers the obstacles to rapport development in the cross-ethnicity context when the coach is white. The second half discusses a coaching model to help support rapport development in this context.

THE OBSTACLES TO RAPPORT DEVELOPMENT

In the context of a white helping professional supporting a person of colour 1 (POC) there is a higher rate of drop-out, poorer client satisfaction, a deficit in psychosocial support and inferior outcomes. These deficits may be related to a difficulty in rapport development between the coach and coachee. Rapport is a feeling of comfort with another and is associated with trust and sharing. It is particularly important in the early development of a coaching relationship and influences coaching outcomes, including coachee satisfaction and goal attainment. There are several obstacles to rapport development in the cross-ethnicity context. Some relate to the deficiencies in white coaches, and others to the adverse experiences of coachees of colour.

Coachees of colour living in a Western society experience a world where whiteness is the norm. Everything outside of this is treated as 'other'. The prevailing discrimination and racism that follows adversely affect the experience of education, career progression, health and judicial outcomes and more. The coaching industry is a product of this white orientation and power imbalance. A recent European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) report found that globally less than 14% of coaches are coaches of colour.ⁱ Closer analysis revealed that in the UK coaches of colour are disproportionately underrepresented. It follows then that POC can feel excluded and mistrustful of the coaching space and the white coach. In fact, the participants in my study perceived the coaching industry as a hostile exclusionary white space – a space that felt unwelcoming to POC. Consequentially this may not only adversely affect rapport with a white coach but could prevent the engagement of POC with the coaching industry.

When a POC does contract with a white coach the perception of coaching as a white space and the associated mistrust can hinder discussions related to ethnicity. This can be detrimental to rapport development. However, filtering of these discussions with a white coach is understandable and needs to be respected. In addition, POC are conscious of white coaches' lack of experience beyond their whiteness and their inability to fully empathise with the lived experience of POC. My study participants explained that describing their experience of ethnicity to a white person is exhausting. In contrast, no explanations are required when talking to a coach of colour.

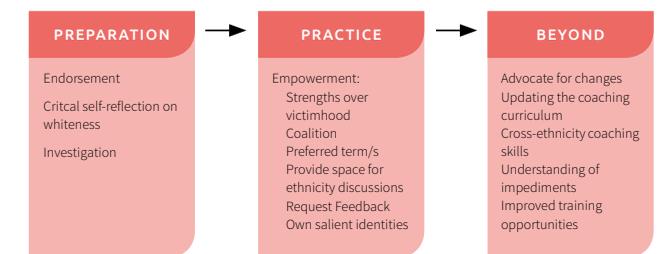
In addition, the behaviour of white coaches can adversely affect rapport. Microaggression is one such behaviour. Microaggressions refer to demeaning, often subtle messages, both verbal and non-verbal, directed to a POC and frequently dismissed by the aggressor as inoffensive.ⁱⁱ Examples include the normalisation of Western values such as individualism over collectivism or making cultural assumptions about a POC. They are disrespectful, devaluing and understandably induce mistrust in a white coach. Other obstructive behaviours of white coaches include the deliberate avoidance of ethnicity discussions. Research suggests that discussions on ethnicity are important to rapport development in a cross-ethnicity context. A white coach may avoid discussions on ethnicity for several reasons. One reason might be what Derald Sue calls the 'politeness protocol'. This is the misguided belief that ethnicity is a taboo topic. However, if a coachee refers to their ethnicity and this is ignored or dismissed by the coach, this devalues their experience and discourages any further discussion on ethnicity. As ethnicity is often salient to a coachee of colour's experience, this can have a devastating effect on rapport and the coaching experience. The use of a colour-blind strategy can also adversely affect a white coach's ability to broach ethnicity. Colour-blindness is the belief that ethnicity should have no effect on decisions and behaviours.ⁱⁱⁱ However, ethnicity profoundly affects life experiences and relationships. A white coach may use a colour-blind strategy to avoid appearing racist but this is a form of microaggression and invalidates POC's experience with discrimination and racism.

The above obstacles strongly suggest that coachees of colour should have a readily available option to engage with an ethnically matched coach. However, currently, this is often difficult. Therefore, until the shortage of coaches of colour is rectified, white coaches need to

become aware of their obstructive behaviours and learn to coach more effectively and safely outside of their ethnicity.

CROSS-ETHNICITY COACHING MODEL

The deficit in the approach to cross-ethnicity coaching is a white coach's shortfall. Therefore, white coaches need to adjust their coaching approach to meet the needs of coachees of colour and not vice-versa. Every coaching relationship is different, but some suggested strategies are presented below. The model is divided into recommendations for the preparation and practice of cross-ethnicity coaching and beyond the coaching relationship.



PREPARATION FOR CROSS-ETHNICITY COACHING

Mistrust of the coaching space and of the white coach may mean that, before engaging with a white coach, a coachee of colour may require a personal endorsement by a trusted other. An endorsement can signal that a white coach will respect a POC and value their ethnicity. This was my experience. My study participants only volunteered after a personal endorsement. Therefore, the white coach needs to be aware that their experience and credentials alone may not endear them to potential coachees of colour.

An important component of the white coach's preparation to effectively coach cross-ethnically is their critical self-reflection on whiteness. One of the many privileges of being white is never having to think about ethnicity. Nevertheless, to be a more effective coach requires closer reflection on what Peggy McIntosh referred to as the 'invisible knapsack' of privileges.^{iv} Specifically, how these privileges advantage white people and adversely affect other ethnic groups. A white coach also needs to reflect on, and admit to themselves, their unavoidable personal biases and prejudices. Furthermore, to understand the effect of whiteness on POC requires some investigation to gain a better understanding of the historical and current experiences of British POC. White coaches need to seek out this readily available information. It is the white coach's responsibility to do so. POC have no obligation to educate white coaches. Self-reflection can improve the understanding of why the cross-ethnicity context can be difficult for a coachee of colour. While feeling safe with a coach is imperative to successful rapport development, mistrust in this context should not be unforeseen.

PRACTICE OF CROSS-ETHNICITY COACHING

An awareness of the power dynamic between the coach and coachee is imperative to successful cross-ethnicity coaching. Empowerment of a coachee within the coaching space improves trust, encourages openness in sessions and acceptance of

meaningful challenge. Every coaching dynamic will be different. However, in my study I found that three factors were particularly important for the maintenance of an equitable power balance. The first is the importance of emphasising strengths over victimhood. Victimisation is unconstructive and eliminates societal responsibility. A strengths-based approach recognises the strengths, resilience, and determination of coachees of colour while still acknowledging the inequity of societal structures and opportunities. Similarly, my coachee participants valued the concept of coaching as a coalition in contrast to allyship. They perceived allyship as providing the white coach with all the power while positioning the coachees of colour as in need of rescuing. In contrast, a coalition is an empowering relationship between equals.

The last factor relevant to the cross-ethnicity power dynamic is the importance of establishing each coachee's preferred term/s for their ethnic heritage. Studies have found that preferences vary widely. Similarly, the preferred ethnicity terminology varied across my participant group. The historic and contemporary use of derogatory terms by white people to label people of colour have been used to control and subjugate.^v Therefore, it is not the white coach's prerogative to establish the appropriate term to describe an individual coachee of colour's heritage.

As examined above, discussions on ethnicity in the cross-ethnicity context can be complex. However, ethnicity is relevant in this context and openness to these discussions is important for coaching success. The purposeful discussion of ethnicity by the coach is referred to as 'broaching-behaviours'.^{vi} The literature suggests that these conversations should be broached by the coach. However, broaching-behaviours driven by the white coach remove control from the coachee and can be disempowering and uncomfortable for a coachee of colour. Instead, control of the discourse should remain with the coachee. A white coach needs to be open to and provide space for ethnicity-related discourse. This is facilitated by carefully listening to ethnicity-related issues and remaining curious without making any assumptions; and most importantly, not shying away from these discussions and responding to them in the moment. Openness can be further enhanced by frequently requesting feedback from the coachee. Consequently, any inadvertent microaggression and errors can be discussed, and an attempt can be made to repair any rupture in rapport. Requests for feedback also illustrates the white coach's willingness to learn and change their behaviour. In addition, candidness about the coach's own salient identities can demonstrate an openness to discussions on ethnicity and other identities.

BEYOND THE COACHING RELATIONSHIP

To shift the perception of coaching as an unwelcoming space, there are limits to what can be achieved within the individual coaching relationship. To work in coalition with coachees and coaches of colour requires that individual coaches stand up and advocate for changes within the coaching industry. Coaches and coach leaders need to make diversity a priority. Coaching accreditation bodies' hesitancy to collect ethnicity data on coaches and coachees suggests that supporting POC has not been a priority. Training providers can help shift the industry away from its white ethnocentric focus by updating the coaching curriculum to reflect a more diverse coaching culture. Embedding cross-ethnicity coaching

skills in coach training and professional development together with reverse cross-ethnicity mentoring or supervision could help support white coaches to more effectively coach their POC clients.

Furthermore, a coaching environment that is welcoming to all requires a deeper understanding of the impediments that limit the number of POC within the industry. Research and investigations that seeks to answer this question should be encouraged and suitably supported. Difficulty accessing training is one such obstacle. Improved training opportunities for underrepresented groups within coaching could improve the availability of coaches of colour. Improving diversity within the overwhelmingly white coaching ecosystem would have many positive outcomes. These include better coaching experiences for coachees of colour, a signal that POC are welcome in the coaching space and the improved creativity and growth that diversity brings to all organisations.

I have chosen to use the term coachees/people of colour because they were acceptable to my study participants. They felt it was important to avoid terms that suggested they 'were less than.'

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Siobhan Lynam's award-winning master's degree dissertation study was on the development of a model of rapport in cross-ethnicity coaching. She is a European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) accredited coach at senior practitioner level, a licensed career coach with Career Counselling Service (CCS), a fellow of the Higher Education Academy, and a member of the British Psychological Society. She is a founding member of the Oxford Coaching Partners, EMCC deputy director for diversity and inclusion and an honorary senior lecturer at UWL.

[linkedin.com/in/siobhan-lynam-a5016796](https://www.linkedin.com/in/siobhan-lynam-a5016796)

oxfordcoachingpartners.com/dr-siobhan-lynam

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HOW CAN MINDFUL AWARENESS AND ATTITUDES SUPPORT AN INCLUSIVE COACHING APPROACH?

How mindful are you, and how inclusive is your coaching? Eike Tischer's research suggests that mindfulness practice helps coaches to raise their self- and other-awareness, to cultivate attitudes that can foster inclusion.

Over the past two decades, inclusivity and an awareness of diversity have become essential requirements in coaching. Research shows how ethnicity, race and sexual orientation shape a person's identity and experiences, and how these sensitive aspects may be broached by the coach.ⁱ While there are no definite answers, there are useful guidelines and many emphasise an *open, non-assumptive and curious* coaching approach.

This article is based on published research and my own dissertation study, which explored how mindfulness can assist coaches and their coaching practice. For this, the research participants (all coaches) joined a mindfulness training programme and shared their feedback via questionnaires and interviews. The study's results emphasise the importance of mindful awareness, as it has the potential to support coaches before, during and after coaching. The findings also highlight the importance of experiential learning to cultivate mindful attitudes, such as openness and non-judgement, in coaching. The coaches' intentional use of such attitudes can not only enhance the quality of their coaching presence and interactions, but it is also a critical asset for inclusive coaching.

MINDFULNESS: MECHANICS AND BENEFITS

Mindfulness meditation techniques originate in eastern contemplative practices and have become popular interventions in western clinical and non-clinical settings. Jon Kabat-Zinn, who first introduced mindfulness to patients with chronic pain, defines it through three core elements: 'the awareness that arises through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgementally'.ⁱⁱ

Mindfulness practices help to train attention to create a mindful awareness of thoughts, feelings and sensations in the present moment. This enables practitioners to become aware of mental distractions and unhelpful habitual patterns, which allows them to self-regulate and choose more skilful responses. Numerous research studies have demonstrated the benefits of mindfulness in managing a wide range of health issues such as pain, stress and anxiety.ⁱⁱⁱ Sustained mindfulness practice can also enhance practitioners' sense of wellbeing, focus and empathy. This is supported by

neuroscientific imaging, which illustrates that mindfulness practitioners have increased brain activity in areas relating to attention control and empathy.^{iv}

So how is this relevant to coaching?

MINDFULNESS IN COACHING

Harvard research has shown that the human mind wanders 47% of the time.^v This means that we spend about half our time ruminating about the past or contemplating the future. Knowing this is important for coaches, because being intentionally present, with the attitudes of openness and non-judgement, is a core coaching competency and the foundation for successful coaching interactions.^{vi} Mindful awareness enables this intentional presence in coaching.

Mindfulness therefore plays an important role in coaching, and researchers agree that it has the potential to support the *coach, coaching relationship and coaching outcomes*.^{viii} Mindfulness practice can enhance the coach's competencies by raising their mindful awareness, leading to greater presence and attunement with their coachees. This can positively impact the coaching alliance by enabling better rapport and connection. Mindfulness also has the capacity to increase a coach's empathy and compassion for their coachees. Inherently, this is likely to affect the coachee and coaching outcomes positively.

My study findings support these research findings, and demonstrate that mindfulness training can impact coaches by:

- Raising their mindful awareness.
- Enabling their self-development.
- Enhancing their self-care.
- Cultivating their mindful attitudes.

After attending the training, the coaches reported their use of mindfulness before, during and *after* coaching.

Before their coaching sessions, they employed mindfulness practices to focus their attention and raise their mental and sensory awareness. This allowed them to 'leave everything behind' and become fully available for

their coachees. Some also set intentions for their sessions; for example, to be open and curious in their coaching encounter.

During coaching, mindful awareness enabled the coaches to notice mental distractions and to refocus their attention. This enhanced their coaching presence, and many reported a better rapport and higher empathy with their coachees. One coach described this mindful connection as 'being in the flow'. Greater awareness also allowed them to notice unhelpful habits, such as their need to 'fix' a coachee's issue. Instead, the coaches were able to regulate these urges and to take a more allowing approach, while keeping a protective emotional boundary. Some described this as holding the space. This had an impact on the coachees' behaviour, and allowed them to take greater responsibility for the session agenda and outcomes.

After coaching, mindfulness helped the coaches restore their energy through replenishing practices and intentional breaks between sessions. They learned to reflect on their sessions with mindful attitudes such as kindness and self-compassion. While initially many coaches struggled with the concept of self-compassion, they started to apply it to their own harsh, critical voice during self-reflection.

MINDFUL AWARENESS FOR INCLUSIVE COACHING

Mindful awareness is created through intentional attention with mindful attitudes, which greatly overlap with coaching attitudes, such as *openness, non-judgement and curiosity*. Interestingly, while all coaches were familiar with these attitudes, they were lacking experience in consistently applying them in coaching. The training's meditation practices provided not only an opportunity to learn how to *raise awareness of the self, body and others*, but it also allowed the coaches to *intentionally apply mindful attitudes* to their experiences. By doing this, they can create a more inclusive, open and allowing coaching environment:

Self-awareness

By learning to observe their own thoughts and habitual patterns, the coaches became aware of unhelpful assumptions, biases and judgements in their practice. This awareness can help them in avoiding subconscious stereotyping of their coachees, which may be based on deeply ingrained socio-cultural biases. Instead, they have the opportunity to consciously choose an open and non-judgemental coaching approach.

Body-awareness

Through mindfulness practices, the coaches became aware of their own physical sensations and emotions, which also included adverse reactions. This somatic awareness can allow them to connect to sub-conscious processes such as projection and countertransference. For example, past experiences may trigger a physical reaction to a coachee, which could be acknowledged as a feeling of discomfort and negatively affect the coaching interaction. This sensory information can help coaches to mitigate projection and countertransference and enable them to regulate these responses with mindful attitudes.

Other-awareness

Greater awareness also allowed the coaches to observe more details about their coachees, including non-verbal cues. Aside from noticing potential diversity, this could help coaches to pick up the presence of unspoken issues and to carefully broach them. Some coaches explained that by being less assumptive they had a greater capacity for empathy and compassion, which enabled them to better take their coachee's perspective. This was further enhanced by the attitudes of curiosity and allowing.

Consequently, mindful awareness allows coaches to notice more about themselves and their coachees, and to respond intentionally to mental

and physical reactions with mindful attitudes. By bringing mindful awareness to their coaching practice, coaches offer a safe and inclusive environment for their coachees, which in turn can enhance rapport and connection. As mentioned, these are critical factors for enabling the potential exploration and broaching of sensitive topics that may be session-relevant, such as ethnicity. Of course, the coach will need to follow the cues of their coachees before initiating such conversations.

Mindfulness training has great potential in supporting coaches in all aspects of the coaching process. While its benefits are promising, mindfulness is not a 'plug-in' intervention, but requires dedicated practice. The study results emphasise the importance of experiential learning, in particular for the cultivation of mindful attitudes – which are imperative for inclusive coaching. There appears to be a lack of practical learning that focuses on coaching attitudes in current coach education, which could be addressed through the integration of mindfulness practices in coach training and continuous professional development. As illustrated, mindful awareness and attitudes can be essential enablers for inclusive coaching.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Eike Tischer is a business consultant and coach. She has a special interest in wellbeing and regularly facilitates mindfulness workshops and training. Eike completed a master's degree in coaching and mentoring practice with distinction; is an accredited senior practitioner with the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC); and is a licensed career coach with Career Counselling Service (CCS). She qualified in mindfulness-based cognitive therapy with the Oxford University Mindfulness Foundation; is an accredited member of the British Association of Mindfulness Based Approaches (BAMBA); and is a co-founder of the Oxford Coaching Partners. Feel free to contact Eike for more information about upcoming training and workshops.

[linkedin.com/in/eike-tischer](https://www.linkedin.com/in/eike-tischer)

[oxfordcoachingpartners.com/eike-tischer](https://www.oxfordcoachingpartners.com/eike-tischer)

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FROM THE AGE OF DEMOCRATISATION TO THE AGE OF HUMILITY

Coaching can certainly influence how we develop and how we deal with performance and change in organisations, but it's dangerous to assume that coaching is the answer to all human development. The crucial question, argues **Tünde Erdős**, is what will the legacy be of democratising coaching?

THE ONE END: THE 'COACHING CULTURE' CHALLENGE

Today, there's a strong case for introducing a coaching culture in organisations as a way to democratise coaching. The view is that it can increase employee morale and customer satisfaction; foster the ability to attract and retain talent; infuse openness to learning; free up people to try new approaches; build trust in teams to speed up performance; drive focus on stakeholder engagement; close knowing-doing gaps; create space for effective interactions; ask great questions to enhance productivity; help employees develop leadership qualities; provide feedback in ways that help others thrive; and create an experience where employees will find inner resources, to name but a few benefits.

Does coaching culture trump strategy in organisations?

Coaching cultures are believed to bring together the elements of how employees, managers, leaders and other stakeholders engage one another in prioritising people and healthy relationships.

However, there's also some evidence that coaching doesn't happen in such organisations as often and as successfully as hoped.

Maybe, that's down to some leap of logic: there's solid evidence that coaching improves individual performance and that a coaching culture leads to higher organisational performance. Maybe, coaching is looking for an investor and is simply prey to the cult of the free marketplace. Maybe, it's the irony of the capitalist creed: the very same organisations that urge people to speed up their performance then need to invest in people becoming more resilient, staying engaged and being retained. Or maybe, something different.

The organisational challenges that inhibit coaching culture

There are various definitions of coaching culture, ranging from a culture that 'fosters, rewards, and expects managers to be effective coaches and mentors' to a culture 'where people coach each other all the time as a natural part of meetings, reviews and one-on-one discussions of all kinds'.

These definitions suggest thriving coexistence and inspiring leadership. They sound as if coaching was about creating a workplace in which everyone feels valued and respected, one in which everyone can leverage their knowledge while making a significant contribution to organisational performance growth. But, I'm not sure. In my experience, the ever-growing pie of coaching and the lack of clarity around what coaching cultures ought to achieve pose challenges – ones linked to why implementing coaching cultures actually tends to fail, seemingly driven by:

- low levels of organisational learning maturity;
- lack of trust;
- lack of learning transfer strategy;
- confusing coaching being simple with coaching being easy;
- no consistency in using coaching with follow-up progress check-in conversations, rushing to evaluate the effectiveness of coaching as a tick-box exercise;
- lack of deep understanding of what great coaching looks like, which then seems to drive the belief that coaching stops after an 'a-ha moment'.

CASE STUDY

In a global non-profit organisation where I was supervising professionally trained internal coaches in 2022, the L&D department was introducing a coaching culture to increase organisational performance. Coaches were trained to use the GROW model to coach colleagues with no further development. Coaching was evaluated in terms of number of coaching conversations irrespective of quality or impact. The idea was to get some orientation in continuing to solidify the coaching culture.

Coaches reported feeling:

- overwhelmed by clients' issues when the coaching model didn't go to plan.
- stymied by the political pressures of compliance and/or confidentiality.
- discomfort with coaching more senior – and what felt like difficult – colleagues.
- colleagues not opening up to dialogue and deep reflection.
- unskilled in having difficult conversations.
- no psychological safety.
- eroded by an always-on culture of empathy.

Coaches believed that they were coaching when they weren't, which created a false sense of safety and security, for all. The marriage of organisation and coaching proved daunting. Given the specific organisational culture of leaders' beliefs and values manifesting in their tensed behaviour, the very value of implementing a coaching culture seemed ineffective.

THE OTHER END: OBSERVING THE DEMOCRATISATION OF COACHING

In the name of coaching

Another way to democratise coaching is by making it accessible to everyone (i.e. executives, frontline managers, high-potential employees, project teams and team leaders, workers) through digital coaching platforms (e.g., BetterUp, CoachHub). That way, democratic coaching may be thought of as a fresh and sincere commitment to diversity. It also appears attractive as a solid retention strategy to ensure investments in human capital are worthwhile.

Yet, coaching as a never-ending epic of coaching for all suffers from two main problems:

- By extending its scope it doesn't make it more meaningful, just bigger.
- The paucity of supportive evidence.

What proof have we got that coaching for all creates value? In effect, the contrary seems to emerge: clients that have access to democratic coaching opportunities complain that everyone in their organisation wants to coach – having received coaching themselves – but does it so poorly that it creates more harm than good. Those coached feel they're deprived of their free will to be coached. Just because coaching works, it doesn't mean it's always appropriate.

Coaching: an evil empire?

Hence the issue of extending the scope of coaching. History teaches us that:

- empires are defined solely by diversity and flexible borders (rather than by their origin);
- empires don't work in the long run as they exploit and destroy others' self-determination, expanding their territory with others feeling subjected to the rule of empirical self-determination.

In analogy to history:

1. What are the boundaries of coaching? Anyone that believes they've something to lose will present resistance to coaching in proportion to the level of the perceived potential loss. Also, we often try to coach people that need coaching the least, or those that don't fall into the category of needing coaching and being coachable. They're made to receive it anyway.
2. How does the diversity of coaching impact on democratisation? The more the coaching field expands, the more unpredictable the quality and identity of the coaching offered. The 'Wild West' of coaching isn't over, no matter how much the coach certification industry seeks to create order and justice.

Where may coaching and coaches be biased?

When explaining that the value of coaching rests on its democratisation, we get so absorbed by that idea that we start evaluating everything that happens in coaching by its impact on democratisation. That distorts our vision and our practice. We hardly stop to wonder what made coaching and democratisation so important in the first place. Where do the importance of coaching and the value of democratisation end?

BOTH ENDS: THE DEMOCRATISATION REALITY CHECK

The story of democratisation controls our entire attention, in particular that of easily accessible coaching on digital platforms. As digital coaching grows into a multi-billion dollar business, other successful stories (climate change and social impact coaching) and unsuccessful stories (the dumping of coaching fees, cultivating clients' perception that coaching is a cheap commodity) remain far more modest in scope.

The light and shadow of democratising coaching

The three-part documentary *The Light and Shadow of Coaching* was produced to hit our consciousness through the power and pitfalls in coaching. One sequence in part three addresses the pitfall of democratising coaching when devoid of social responsibility. Social responsibility is an ethical theory in which the actions of an individual must benefit the whole of society: there must be a balance between economic growth, the welfare of society and the environment. The notion of balance raises a few questions around the extent to which coaches need to assume social responsibility as we join the democratisation wave. Where do we start? Where do we stop? And if we coaches don't open up to social responsibility, who should? Indeed, in an interview section, David Clutterbuck asks: 'master coach, what are you doing with your monetary success?' In our context, I'll translate that into: 'vendors of digital coaching, what are you doing with your monetary success or that of going public?'

A brief history of the future of democratising coaching

Early this year, CoachHub, the second-largest digital coaching platform, announced the layoff of 10% of their staff. Co-owner Matti Niebelschütz explained that while it was founded on the principles of a people-first company, 'as a tech-company CoachHub needed to adapt to the macro-economic circumstances to ensure long-term business sustainability for their employees, partners, and their mission to democratise coaching.'

That explanation contrasts with BetterUp's perspective on the true costs of layoffs, outlined in an article published in 2022. The article argues that while the maths seems simple, layoffs throw a wrench into the engine of competitiveness as hidden costs can actually jeopardise the company's future. According to research published in the *Harvard Business Review*, companies cutting costs fast in times of recession only have a 21% chance of pulling ahead of the competition once the recession ends due to:

- 20% decline in job performance;
- 36% decline in organisational commitment;
- 41% decline in job satisfaction;
- 31% increase in voluntary turnover amongst those that stay on.

The impact of free market forces on democratisation

Generally, layoffs damage organisational culture and infuse what we refer to as survivors' guilt: shame about staying while others must leave. As a result, survivors' productivity is reported to drop on average by 12%. In the digital coaching business, the flagships of democratising coaching, survivors also feel betrayed by the espoused purpose of being people-first workplaces.

Social responsibility being key to democratising coaching ethically, where's the social responsibility of any organisation engaging in democratising coaching, particularly in times of recession? How do they practise coaching principles? How do they make use of the power of coaching to think beyond simply 'firing or not firing'? I can see two ethical principles of coaching being affected: authenticity and congruence.

Creating coaching cultures: reframing democratisation

Authentic and congruent approaches to democratising coaching with social responsibility may ultimately be about organisations role-modelling how to use the power of coaching to be agile in times of unpredictability. Organisations that set clear boundaries with aggressive investors and live by the paradigms of coaching in difficult times (e.g., applying creative thinking and helping people adapt to frequently changing performance pressures and priorities) may be more effective than those that haemorrhage knowledge by shedding employees in the short term.

The age of humility

We aren't fully equipped to support the democratisation of coaching and lack awareness of our own limitations as coaches and as a field. There are several moments of humility worth reflecting:

- Some organisational cultures simply aren't in alignment with the idea of coaching.
- In truth, democratisation is just a metaphor for making it more widespread. But this misses the point that not everyone is really coachable: those lacking a) ambition to grow self-awareness, b) sense of accountability, c) growth mindset, d) curiosity to learn, and e) capacity to put things into perspective.
- Coaches and coaching are accountable for the consequences of a democratisation that feeds on easy answers, quick fixes and instant remedies with no introspective process and in no time ('Five simple steps to resilience'). We aren't the purveyors of simple answers and quick results in complex systems.
- In democratising coaching, the predominant use of behavioural approaches (e.g., assertiveness techniques) can be too limited to address issues that profoundly disrupt people's abilities to function effectively. Coaches are largely unequipped to coach clients to deal with intrapsychic pressures. Too often, they focus on problems rather than the human being in complex systems.
- Democratic coaching becomes most dangerous when digital coaching platforms win a key sponsor's ear, which puts them in the position to wield great power over organisations. Those platforms tend to sell one-large-size-fits-all approaches, and subsequently coaches acquiesce because it avoids 'boring' marketing and allows them to do what they say they love doing most: coaching.
- Democratising coaching can have disastrous consequences: coaching cultures fail, with no trust in place before demanding results, and coaching unduly suffers a bad reputation.
- There's simply no such thing as a market free of political bias. The most important economic resource is trust in the future, and that's constantly threatened by aggressive investors and charlatans: the democratisation wave offers no protection against harm done (such as the dumping of coaching fees, or

insufficiently trained coaches settling into short-term and short-gains goal achievement).

For coaching to be democratised, we need to believe in the idea of progress: if we invest resources in human development, performance will improve. Panic will begin when investors in digital coaching platforms realise that financial markets and thus profits are so unpredictable that they need to downsize their workforces. That's because the more platforms arise, the lower the dividends and earnings available. With which level of awareness do we embrace the idea of progress?

And they lived happily ever after: as coaches happily hop on the train of digital coaching, enchanted by the idea of democratisation, we all risk being blind to two big questions: what is our responsibility in holding the reins on free market pressures to ensure our field won't fall prey to capitalist creed; and what is the legacy we are leaving behind if we pursue serving investor-driven interests in the democratisation movement, with no questions asked?

There are many prestigious proponents of the idea that everyone needs a coach, one of whom is Bill Gates. Is that so? Who's stating the opposite? I've by no means the stature of Bill Gates. If I stated that not everyone can need coaching, who would pick up on that? If only very few, what does that say about us and how we view the notion of democracy? If Bill Gates said everyone needs to jump into a deep dark pit to be happy, would we do that too, no questions asked?

Finally, to quote Martin Luther King Jr: 'Nothing in all the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity.' When we move to democratise coaching towards more authentic diversity, we need to be sincere: while our efforts are well-meaning, we don't put the details of social responsibility and the depth of strategic thinking behind those efforts. We don't really ask what democratisation is trying to solve. As a result, we have no idea how big the opportunity gaps are, let alone which ones need to be addressed first.

BEYOND ENDS

Coaching praises the value of humility. We view leadership from the perspective of how to grow humility in leaders. How humble are we? Indeed, we imagine ourselves to be the most important thing in the human development universe and fail to see one thing: we are building our field on the foundations of failure-prone capitalistic approaches – to leave what sort of legacy behind?

In calling for democratising coaching we need to ask ourselves: what do we want? What's the end in mind? Currently, we fail to guard the ethics of integrity in our practice: we're unable to resist capitalistic market forces. Typically, as dictates the cult of the free market, we will then: a) lose people's trust in our work; b) receive less credit for what we do; and c) end up in experiencing economic pain. Is this what we want?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Tünde holds a PhD in Business & Organizational Management and an Ashridge Master's in Executive Coaching and Team Coaching. Tünde is an academic as well as an ICF MCC coach and a Senior Practitioner with EMCC. She authored four articles in high-ranking peer-reviewed scientific journals, three books, and a range of articles in professional coaching magazines. Tünde runs her ICF-accredited coach-leader experiential learning set focusing on 'presence' as the key competence at mastery level. Recently, Tünde produced a documentary on 'The light and shadow of coaching – in and beyond organizations' to collect donations to fund coach training for women in Kenya.

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IT'S TIME TO EMBRACE A MORE SYSTEMIC APPROACH TO LEADER DEVELOPMENT

Employee wellbeing is key to organisational success. So, let's change the well-worn narrative on executive coaching to help address this systemic challenge, argues **Martina Doherty**.

Employee wellbeing has become one of the top priorities for many organisations, influenced by the challenges of employee retention and worrying mental health trends. It comprises many different elements and is much more than a company policy or benefits package. Exploration of research shows two things:

- Leader behaviour is a key contributing factor to employee wellbeing, with various leadership theories proven to cultivate workplace wellbeing through the working environment, increased job satisfaction or improved employee engagement.
- Improved leadership behaviour, mindset and awareness can be achieved through executive coaching.

One could deduce that executive or leadership coaching (both terms used interchangeably) can effectively impact and improve employee wellbeing. Yet the narrative around executive coaching continues to focus on individualised leadership development, with its success primarily evaluated in terms of its impact on the coached leader. Why is that? In a world of globalisation and interconnectivity, is now the time to expand the narrative around executive coaching as a means through which to address workplace wellbeing?

EXISTING IN A WORLD OF SYSTEMS

Regardless of size, organisations are dynamic social structures made up of multiple systems of interdependent parts, and everyone exists within each level of the system – micro (individual), meso (team or group) and macro (wider organisational culture and structure).

Employee wellbeing permeates each of these levels: how an individual feels and functions as a person effects how they show up and perform in their role, as part of a team and as a company employee. This is highlighted in the growing body of research that links an individual's wellbeing to their engagement at work, absenteeism and productivityⁱ, with poor mental health said to cost employers up to £53-56bn annually – in the UK alone.ⁱⁱ

Leader behaviour is not dissimilar, with increasing amounts of research emerging on how it impacts the wider organisation, particularly employee wellbeing.ⁱⁱⁱ This even extends to having an impact on an employee's children.^{4iv} As a result, the leadership narrative has tilted towards more humanistic leading, with leaders called upon to adapt and change their behaviours, mindsets and attitudes in a drive to cultivate and sustain high levels of employee wellbeing. This is exactly where executive coaching can play a role, since it is an individualised intervention that helps leaders create and maintain positive change in their personal development, professional performance and leadership behaviour.^v

It seems obvious that the immediate impact of coaching is direct rather than indirect; i.e., in the mindsets and behaviours of the coachees. But, to quote Peter Hawkins, 'there can never be a coachee without a systemic context'.^{vi} And if you consider the dynamic social structure of organisations and the micro, meso and macro systems mentioned earlier, this systemic context of coaching makes sense. In other words, regardless of whether a leader adopts an egalitarian or hierarchical leadership style, how their behaviour and mindset changes as a result of coaching will inevitably have an impact beyond themselves. Yet in terms of quantifying this extended impact, the empirical evidence is distinctly lacking, helping keep it firmly within the domain of a leader development activity that benefits the few and not the many.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

Coaching for systemic impact is not a new concept.

- In 2012 Simon Western introduced the analytic network coaching approach, which helps coachees develop their leadership style and strategically influence the networks in which they work in order to create positive transformational change.^{vii}
- In 2014 Peter Hawkins argued that one of the main founding principles of coaching – that of client-centred development – had become one of its limiting beliefs, and suggested a new paradigm of systemic coaching that considered other stakeholders and their needs, which may actually be different from those of the coachees.^{viii}

- In 2017 Hetty Einzig called for 'Next Generation Coaching', where everything should be seen as interconnected and interdependent, with a key focus on helping leaders discover their contribution to the bigger picture and towards the greater good of the organisation and society they serve.^{ix}
- In 2018 Marshall Goldsmith introduced the concept of stakeholder-centric coaching underpinned by the belief that 'success isn't determined by the leader being coached, but by the people impacted by the coaching'.^x

Despite these forward-thinking views on how executive coaching could or should evolve, my experience is that neither the mainstream narrative nor evaluation methodologies have followed suit.

This challenge of evaluating coaching outcomes in the language of business performance is well known. As an individualised and personal intervention, each coachee will always have a different coaching experience and different outcomes. Therefore, using objective scientific methodology to report clear cause-effect outcomes from a non-standardised intervention is difficult. This might go some way to explaining why coaching evaluation has tended to focus on coachee-specific outcomes to date – of which most are self-reported. Where peer reviews such as 360 feedback have been used, evaluation is still very much focused on coachee-specific behavioural changes, with little hard data to demonstrate broader systemic benefits. Some published research has involved more macro-level measurements, like improved ROI, yet it has been cited as having unreliable methodology and criticised for being potentially restrictive to the full range of possible outcomes achievable from coaching. This all contributes to a failure within the coaching profession to agree and demonstrate the true value of what coaching can potentially represent to organisations.

WHAT NEXT?

Executive coaching is a big business, with the global market said to have been worth US\$ 9.3 billion in 2022.^{xi} So too is the corporate wellness market – valued at US\$ 54.1 billion in 2021 and projected to reach US\$ 93.3 billion by 2028.^{xii} However, even with employee wellbeing high on the corporate agenda, in the current era of rising inflationary risk and economic uncertainty, many organisations are being forced to tighten budgets and make decisions about resource allocation: whether investment in either initiative continues at these levels remains to be seen. Rather than viewing each as a distinctly separate initiative with a separate budget, a more economically viable option could be adopting a more holistic approach to leader development and employee wellbeing, and creating programmes with outcomes and KPIs aligned to each other and even wider strategic initiatives. As executive coaches, we can drive that conversation by using the wealth of research available on the impact of executive coaching on leader behaviour^{xiii,xiv} and the impact of leader behaviour on employee wellbeing.^{xv,xvi}

To expand the narrative around the benefits of executive coaching beyond the individual, there is no doubt that more empirical research is needed – research that involves multi-level, multi-method evaluation measures. Where the coaching profession has always drawn direction from other fields of humanistic engagement such as counselling, psychotherapy, leadership development and organisational development, when evaluating systemic impact we should continue this trend. Interestingly these disciplines also report struggling to measure the long-term systemic impact of their programmes and interventions, further validating the difficulties in trying to measure objectively a subjective, personalised intervention in a rigorously scientific way. Notwithstanding these challenges, I feel there is an as-yet untapped

opportunity for the coaching profession to communicate the broader company-wide value that executive coaching can offer – specifically around employee wellbeing. And that starts by evolving the narrative around executive coaching beyond that of a leader development activity to one with systemic organisational benefits if delivered and measured as part of a holistic humanistic strategy.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



As a leadership coach, positive psychologist and wellbeing consultant, Martina Doherty works with leaders and organisations to help them develop and get the best from their people. Using the science of positive psychology, her coaching and training programmes are designed to help leaders identify and tap into their strengths and the positive dynamics within their teams. Martina holds an MSc in applied positive psychology and coaching psychology, and she is an accredited senior practitioner with the European Coaching and Mentoring Council.

martina@mdconsulting.com

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WORKING WITH CHALLENGING EMOTIONS WHEN COACHING TEAMS

Emotions – whether our own or others’, whether pleasant or uncomfortable – are data, argues [Louise Sheppard](#): such rich information enhances and deepens coaching work.

As a team coach and a supervisor for other team coaches, I experience working with challenging emotions. I became curious about what emotions team coaches experience before, during, and after coaching sessions, and their strategies for managing and working with these emotions. I carried out some research, interviewing 12 very experienced team coaches, six of whom are also coaching supervisors. I shared my findings at a workshop for team coaches.

Emotions are physiological experiences that provide us with data about our world, for example, when we feel our heart quicken or when we find ourselves holding our breath. We tend to give this physiological experience a label, such as ‘I am feeling excited or shocked’. As a coach, it is useful to pay mindful attention to your emotions rather than be hijacked by them because they provide us with choices about how to act or proceed.¹

OUR RANGE OF FEELINGS

Each of us has access to a range of feelings; for some it’s a limited range, for others a relatively rich one. The extent of our range of feelings is heavily influenced by our family of origin and what was acceptable when we were growing up. It is also influenced by our culture which cultivates and constructs emotions.

The good news is that we can develop our emotional range. This is important because if we work on ourselves, we can be of greater service to our clients. Some ways that I have worked on increasing my emotional range include:

- Reading autobiographies and novels and watching documentaries and films about other people’s lives.
- Noticing when situations arise how I might resist those feelings by asking, ‘What am I feeling right now?’
- When others express their feelings, I notice which ones arouse discomfort in me.
- Practising ‘conscious complaining’ for a few minutes to air my frustrations rather than trying to deny them.
- Working with not-for-profit organisations where the role develops my emotional fluency.
- Undertaking personal therapy – a supervisor once advised me that if I wanted to be a great coach, I needed to do ongoing work on myself, and I have been having therapy ever since!

We can test our emotional fluency by asking two questions:

1. Can I meet the team where they are without needing to get away in the moment?
2. Can I be with emotion and encourage it to be expressed without having to ‘fix’ anything or reassure the client?

EMOTIONS EXPERIENCED DURING TEAM COACHING

Team coaches described many different emotions that arise before, during and after team coaching. The word cloud below shows the words that came up in my interviews with team coaches:

The most common words used were anxiety, fear and excitement. At first I categorised the emotions into positive and negative ones and but then I questioned whether this was helpful because there are usually a mix of emotions present at the same time. Our emotions are evolving constantly, and I believe that all emotions are useful data. For example, at the start of a team launch, the fear and anxiety in the room can be palpable and, as the event progresses, you can sense the build-up of excitement at the future possibilities available to the team. As Rumi suggested in his poem about emotions The Guest House, ‘Welcome and entertain them all! Even if they are a crowd of sorrows, who violently sweep your house empty of its furniture, still, treat each guest honourably. He may be clearing you out for some new delight.’ⁱⁱ

Declan Woods’ research on anxiety in team coaches highlighted that experienced team coaches often find team coaching more anxiety-provoking than individual coaching, because they can feel more exposed and are holding the team’s expectations.ⁱⁱⁱ The anxiety can be a mix of performance anxiety, intervention anxiety and output anxiety. It is often highest in the lead up to or start of the coaching intervention, for example, during the team launch event. The impact of team coach anxiety is that our presence is limited because our attention is focused inwardly on ourselves and less on the team. It is vital to be aware of our anxiety and the potential impact on our presence and to self-manage this effectively. We can do this by employing a range of strategies.

STRATEGIES FOR HANDLING STRONG EMOTIONS

We can help ourselves by being selective about what types of team coaching we take on. What are the conditions that you need to work with a team effectively? Be prepared to walk away from work outside your

comfort zone and also from work that does not play to your strengths. Recently, I was asked to propose for some team coaching for a team with a new interim chief executive at an organisation with a history of change at the executive team and board level, and still a lot of in-fighting and disharmony. After a conversation with the CEO, I concluded that the conditions were not right for me. There was not enough trust present to start team coaching, and there was still too much flux in the top team.

When we take on a team coaching assignment, we put supportive arrangements in place, and contract carefully at the beginning to ensure the process is as smooth as possible. We may do this by:

- Putting good supervision arrangements in place so that you have somewhere to explore your anxieties and figure out how best to work with a team.
- Considering working with a co-coach, particularly with larger teams. It reduces anxiety when you can share the highs and lows and decisions together.
- Establishing clear objectives and role clarity for the work from the start. Ask questions to understand why the client wants team coaching and be open about what is feasible. Avoid the ‘messiah complex’ – it is not our role to try to resolve everything and flush out every emotion during the team launch!
- Meeting the team early on – not just the team leader – and asking to join a team meeting to understand how the team feels about team coaching, as well as their concerns and general team dynamics.
- Making time for individual meetings to get to know team members in order to build trust and safety.
- Preparing by identifying potential triggers and scenario planning, but not overthinking the situation. Suspend judgement about individuals and the situation. I am often pleasantly surprised by how quickly a team evolves.

We can help ourselves by adopting a mindset that expects and welcomes emotions. Contract with the team that emotions are part of the ‘work’ and communicate that you would like people to express them. You can perceive strong emotions as unmet needs in the team. Adopt a curious stance and use ‘yourself as the instrument’, sharing emotions you notice haven’t yet surfaced with the team. Normalise any emotions that arise to avoid shaming individuals. A challenging team member is often carrying it for the team. Ask, ‘Who else feels this?’ or ‘Who has never felt this?’

Ask what the team needs from you and share what the team can count on you to do. Recently, when I asked a team what they wanted from me, they said that they needed me to:

- Encourage them strongly to bring their issues.
- Hold them to the topic and flame.
- Encourage them to bring conversations here and not to have them outside of the room.
- Allow them to be healthily sceptical but also focus them on moving forward.
- Bring my experience of working with other teams to normalize the team’s experiences.

Team coaches use a variety of techniques for raising emotions during team coaching. These include using drawing exercises or sociograms, for example: asking team members to think of a category of object – perhaps vehicles – and draw the type of that category that best represents the team. Ask them to include their fellow team members in their drawings and depict what roles each team member plays. The coach then asks them to share their drawings, and the team can ask questions about them.

Writing exercises can be used to elicit hidden aspects of team life. For example, inviting team members to name taboo topics not discussed at meetings and then placing these topics in a bowl. The coach can then invite them to pick out one topic and read it out for the group to discuss.

Another technique is for the team coach to invite the team to get on the ‘balcony’ with them and ask what they notice about the team. The coach needs to pay attention to the team dynamics and can pose questions about these dynamics to the team. What is happening within the team?

Are there pairings and allegiances? Where does the power lie? Is any scapegoating going on?

Team coaches might choose to introduce an experiment to improve team behaviour. This might be instructing the team to have a dialogue and for a directive team leader not to interrupt or bring the discussion to an early conclusion.

In larger teams, coaches can use a fishbowl exercise where the team divides into two groups with one half participating in a team discussion whilst the other half observes the process and then provides feedback.

Team coaches often use breathing techniques to calm themselves and be in a mindful state before, during and after team coaching.

During team coaching, things can often get ‘sticky’ at various points. When this happens, the team coach has some options including:

- Using yourself as instrument. Notice your emotions and ask yourself, ‘Is this my stuff or theirs?’ Test things that you are noticing by sharing them – ‘I am noticing X, Y and Z.’ You can usually count on at least one team member to recognise the issue you are attempting to raise.
- Not attaching to strong emotions. Resist taking attacks personally or being defensive – tell your inner critic to get lost. Trust yourself, assume that you are doing okay and stay present – ‘I’m okay, you’re okay’.
- Being factual and practical. Be willing to go to the unconscious level but don’t stay there – end sessions in a practical way.
- Assessing whether you can contain this. If not, play it safe and look for other aspects to build on.
- Asking what the team needs.
- Changing the container, inviting members to take a break, go for a walk, perhaps in pairs etc.
- Suggesting an appreciation round or feedback circle.

In summary, it is normal for challenging emotions to be present during team coaching. Strong emotions can be unmet needs in the team. Emotions are releasers and enablers of great performance that we need to harness and work with so that they do not become too destructive. Team coaches can establish psychological safety through skilful contracting and by employing strategies to work with challenging emotions in a creative way. Most importantly, it is vital to arrange good team coaching supervision so that you have somewhere safe to reflect on how best to support yourself and work with the team.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr Louise Sheppard enjoys coaching senior leaders across 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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COACHING DYSLEXIC PEOPLE IN THE MODERN WORKFORCE

If up to a fifth of us are neurodiverse, how much talent potential is going to waste when they are overlooked at work, asks **Thomas Imfeld** – and what can coaches do to help drive forward change?

The modern workplace thrives through innovative people designing complex, cutting-edge output. The business world seeks adaptable people who think and act in ways that are customer-centric, value-driven and iterative. Employers want strong team players who challenge the status quo, see the big picture, simplify messages and craft innovations. Where to find them? How to develop them? If you are willing to develop and evolve the strengths of individuals while overcoming gaps through technology and personal development, continue reading.

Neurodiverse people often bear the crucial strengths described above. Too often, these people are overlooked due to alternative life paths, academic grades or behaviours. Creating instead of reproducing is what many neurodiverse dyslexic people strive for. When employers build a work environment consisting of empowered, diverse and inclusive mindsets, positive team dynamics and applied technologies, all employees thrive in the process.

According to a report by Ernst & Young LLP (EY), employers should implement a neuro-diverse talent strategy, and adopt a strengths-based approach to hiring talent and day-to-day work, focusing on four levels:

1. **Building capability:** determine how dyslexic strengths can be deployed in the organisation to help meet business objectives.
2. **Targeting performance:** use assistive technologies, tailored processes and specific strengths-based performance criteria to enable dyslexic individuals to perform exceptionally in role.

3. **Driving motivation:** adjust workplace design and provide the support, coaching and mentoring schemes to build dyslexic confidence.
4. **Enhancing efficiency:** train managers to recognise, facilitate and accompany dyslexic strengths to achieve greater organisational and individual productivity.ⁱⁱ

In the context of talent, Kelly Cooper, global head of people and culture at ManpowerGroup Talent Solutions, says: 'We're in a war for talent right now globally. But there's a large group out there who could help fill those needs. Dyslexic talent can genuinely make a huge dent in the skills shortage, especially post-Covid, and we need to zero in on it.'ⁱⁱⁱ

An estimated 15-20% of the global population is neurodiverse – over a billion people. Neurodiversity recognises that everyone's brain is wired differently, and that they have their own unique ways of thinking, interacting and experiencing the world. Examples of neurological differences include ADHD, autism, Tourette's syndrome, dyspraxia, dyslexia and dyscalculia. Neurodiversity is based on the concept that neurological variances should be recognised and respected just like other human variation, such as gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation. Bear in mind that it is possible to have several neurological differences concurrently. In addition, there are varying manifestations of the differences in each person, making each case unique.

Dyslexia is a neurological condition that typically affects reading, writing and/or spelling. It has no bearing on intelligence or creativity.

About 10% of the global population is dyslexic. At its core it's about processing information: this means people with dyslexia can find it difficult to process information they see or hear, and it may affect organisational skills. The degrees vary in every individual. Dyslexics can also have strengths in areas like design, problem solving, creative skills, people skills and oral skills. The founder of Made By Dyslexia, a global charity led by successful dyslexics, talks about dyslexic thinking skills that include visualising, imagining, communicating, reasoning, connecting and exploring.^{iv} Forward-thinking employers and coaches focus on the potentials to be developed. It's a choice to focus on strengths, adaptation, change, resiliency and performance. Leaders understand the value to be found in people who successfully face adversity and find strength from struggle. Numerous studies suggest that a strong work ethic – embracing tenacity, endurance and resilience – outperforms academic predictive metrics.

Many dyslexics learn to deal with setbacks and many find positive ways forward. In work settings, dyslexia-aware coaches recognise the challenges that may come up in areas like organising time, communication patterns and modes of thinking. Learning preferences are also considered. Dyslexics typically learn less from reading and more from other sources, such as video and audio material. Awareness of different learning styles is useful in the coaching process.^v

From a coaching perspective, the coaching process supports individuals with dyslexia to develop a balanced understanding of their differences, build up confidence, take actions and contribute effectively within teams. The coaching process can include:

1. Shifting mindsets for positively navigating some of the challenges that dyslexia can bring.
2. Changing perspectives to focus on what is possible and how it gets done.
3. Helping to solve specific, important problems in the workplace and in team settings.

Coaching can help dyslexics to recognise when and how to advocate for themselves constructively and effectively in various settings. This can contribute to positive team performance. In team coaching, the collective intelligence of the individuals who are part of a team can be enhanced.

For coaching in individual and team settings, cross-cultural and global coaching are useful. The Cultural Orientations Framework^{vi} brings together coaching and culture and integrates group, or collective, considerations. Neurodiverse clients frequently encounter environments, systems, structures, mindsets and attitudes that ignore or do not support their needs. To find productive solutions, the ability to explore confidently and experiment with paradoxes and contradictions is useful.

Individually and in teams, working with time can be a challenge. When does working at 80% to 150% of capacity matter? What are the trade-offs, benefits and consequences (short-, medium- and long-term) of practices in place? Dyslexics are often embedded into teams with their own dynamics and needs. Since allowing for evolution in thinking and actions is complementary to arriving at specific goals, global coaching supports clients by considering five additional perspectives including spiritual, political, psychological, managerial and physical.^{vii} For example, whether at school or in a career (or

indeed beyond), being able to access mindfulness and apply ethics is useful for making decisions and for sustainable performance. Endurance and longer-term wellness are important to individual and team performance, so this can be considered as well. Political perspectives elucidate how to build positive influence for individuals and teams within an organisation to create desired results.

From an employer's perspective, empowering dyslexic employees often includes technology. Optical character recognition (OCR), voice-to-text technologies and numerous computing solutions exist to enable these employees to focus on what they do best. Artificial intelligence further diverts the focus on flawless spelling, penmanship or grammar to teamwork, team dynamics, motivation, performance and results. In some countries, legal frameworks support neurodiverse rights and responsibilities. Some jurisdictions support employers and/or dyslexics directly with grants to pay for productive accommodations and modifications in the workplace. External and internal coaches assist employers to achieve specific goals for effectively incorporating dyslexic employees in their teams and organisations. Working together, employers, dyslexic employees, and internal and external coaches can shape the workforce for the better.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Thomas Imfeld (he/him) – MA, MCOF, AC member and dyslexic thinker – is founder and director of bullseye international GmbH in Germany and Luxembourg. His focus is on unleashing potential in individuals and small teams by applying global and cross-cultural coaching. Drawing upon diverse transnational industry and public sector experience, and as a member of the dyslexic tribe himself, Thomas supports organisations with diversity and inclusion mindsets in order to reach meaningful, important objectives. Thomas, a US/Swiss national, speaks English, German, French and Spanish.

imt@bullseyeinternational.ch
www.bullseyeinternational.ch

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HOLDING THE INVISIBLE

Transitions often come in waves, combining to hit us with unpredictable power. Yet how often do we step back from our busyness to reflect on our response to transitions? Join [Helen Teague](#) for a long walk on her favourite beach, where she finds wisdom in the waves.

MY FIGURINE MOMENT

Recently, I received an incredibly thoughtful gift; a figurine of a grandmother with her daughter and granddaughter, each with a hand on the shoulder of the generation below. It beautifully captured the maternal bond that flows through a family. It is delightful, yet as I unwrapped it, I found myself experiencing and quickly resisting a tidal wave of mixed emotions. You see, this was a gift from my daughter, who is pregnant with her first child – a time for joy, love, and new life. However, as I looked at the figurine, instead of seeing who was there, I could only see who wasn't. Where was the mother figure with their hand on my shoulder? How was I now the grandmother and not the daughter in the figurine? I felt lost, all at sea and overwhelmed. I quickly composed myself, feeling ashamed to be thinking about myself when I wanted to be present for my daughter at this important time in her life. I hugged her tightly as I made a silent promise to myself to create some space to tune in to the powerful emotions demanding my attention. This was not because I wanted to but because it was clear that I needed to.

To put my emotional cards on the table, for the past seven years, I've been experiencing the gradual loss of my mum through Alzheimer's – watching her gradually fade away as she transitions through each deteriorating stage of this terrible disease. Pauline Boss describes this experience in her beautiful book, *Loving Someone Who Has Dementia*. She defines it as 'ambiguous loss – a loss that is unclear; it has no resolution, no closure' (p.1). Perhaps you are navigating through a similar experience. With 55 million people globally living with dementiaⁱⁱ, I know I'm not alone. The journey is long, full of highs and lows as well as moments of joy and pain. In the main, it runs silently alongside the rest of my life and work. It has heightened my awareness of being a part of a relational system in flux. It has also given me a growing appreciation for the myriad of relational spaces that we all occupy in both our professional and personal lives, as well as the constant ripples we experience as we – and the people we relate to – alter. My well-worn copy of William Bridgesⁱⁱⁱ seminal work on transition with its description of 'endings, neutral zones and new beginnings' (p.4) has supported me in the past, but now it does not. Richard Rohr's more recent book, *The Wisdom Pattern*^{iv}, powerfully urges readers 'to let go of our first order, trust the disorder, and, sometimes even hardest of all—to trust the new reorder.' (p.10) However, this sound advice has also left me cold. So, this 'figurine moment' has acted as a catalyst for my journey that digs into the familiar coaching territory of transition – the psychological dimension that underpins and enables change – in the search for fresh insights and practical wisdom for myself as well as those I work with, coach and love. I wrote this article over a period of six months, and it shares some of experiences and reflections, supported by valuable insights from trusted colleagues.

EMOTIONAL UNDERCURRENTS

True to my word, I carved out some time for a long walk on my favourite beach. Living by the sea, I often find myself mesmerised by the waves. I notice how they come one at a time in an almost orderly fashion before a lull and then the emergence, seemingly from nowhere, of a huge wave, comprised of several merged waves, accompanied by a tumultuous roar as it crashes on the shore. It struck me: that's what transition is and what it feels like to me. Just like waves, transitions don't wait their turn or exist in isolation of

each other; they coexist, all bundled up together at different stages of beginnings, middles and endings. The waves visible on the surface are accompanied by equally powerful and invisible undercurrents that destabilise and knock you off your feet. As one colleague eloquently describes, they are 'transitional forces with their own agency and dynamism'.

HOLDING THE INVISIBLE

At this point, it dawned on me that my search for practical wisdom was actually an attempt to avoid further uncertainty, to try and get a grip of and head off unexplored and unpalatable feelings. Sue Monk Kidd's^v words in *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter* resonated with me; 'Don't try to leap over yourself. Just accept what is and be with it, really be with it, because when you do that you are being in the moment. You are being present as you live your life'. (p.114) Anecdotes from trusted colleagues revealed story after story of winding paths through transition points in their lives, with one colleague powerfully stating that, "transitioning has many unconscious aspects to it – it's not a process that can be 'controlled' but instead needs to be 'held'". Whilst I am aware that I often 'hold' the space for others, whether in my work as a coach or in my close relationships, at this time in my life, I find it difficult to put my finger on how I approach holding my own process of transition. How do you hold the invisible? This question nudged me to explore how I might develop my own art for holding the invisible, unconscious aspects of my transition.

FACING THE WAVES

In my effort to understand my own process, I've surfaced an inherent tension in the balance between looking inward and reaching out. There are essential lonely times as well as times for shared humanity. I've noticed that, having moved towards my confusion and emotions in private more deeply than usual, I've stepped into my coaching supervision spaces in a different way. I really trust the psychological safety of that space and that established relationship. I am allowing myself to arrive at a session feeling alone and confused, and also to leave a session feeling supported and still confused! Practicing Gestalt theory for myself, remembering once more, as Hycner & Jacobs^{vi} describe it, that "change occurs with supported awareness of what is ... with no demands to change and no judgements that it should not be as it is". (p.63) Allowing myself to say things out loud that don't make sense on the surface but reveal hidden depths that resonate powerfully. Appreciating that listening to myself and being present in this way, reconnects me with my own history, as my sense of self today alters for the unfolding future. One colleague beautifully described this as "a small kernel of something new emerging from the mire of uncertainty".

Ever the pragmatist, I've re-visited the FELT coaching tool^{vii} developed by Liz Hall, which is a model I often use with clients. (p.207) But there's a difference I've noticed where I'm resting in the 'letting' stage. The model offers the following questions: "Is there anything that wants to be let be, let go of or let in?" I've found myself tuning into these questions, as well as some of my own queries, and allowing myself to be lost in a sea of inquiry for as long as I need, and noticing the undercurrent below the surface trying to emerge.



I've noticed that different parts of me are responding to my intentional inquiry from a deeper level as if they are daring to surface, trusting that their voices will be heard. For me, a 'small kernel of something' is now emerging from my figurine moment around identity and I'm pondering Helen Ebaugh's idea of 'role exit – the process of disengagement from a role that is central to your identity and the re-establishment of an identity in a new role that takes into account your ex-role' which I discovered while reading Exit, The Endings That Set Us Free by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (p157).

I'm learning to value, not fear, paradoxes, appreciating that rather than diminishing me, they herald deep internal shifts, learning and integration – an emerging 'new order' as Richard Rohr says. Perhaps most importantly, I'm learning that noticing and being with the tensions transmitted by invisible transitional forces is invisibly productive.

RIDING THE WAVES

Going back to my walk along the beach, whilst I watched the waves, I also watched the surfers. Noticing that once they catch a wave, they become at one with its chaos and turbulence before emerging beyond it. At no time do they attempt to control the wave; they go with it, shifting their position on the board to lean into its force to stay with it as the wave churns and changes. So too, we can lean into the disorder of our transitions as we alter and emerge once more for the journey ahead. Perhaps holding my own process is akin to riding the waves. Perhaps next time I go to the beach, instead of going for a walk, I'll go for a surf!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Helen combines her executive and leadership team coaching in the UK and US with a Non-Executive Director role in an Acute Hospital Trust in the National Health Service. She is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, holds a post-graduate diploma in Strategic Human Resource Development and is an alumna of the Academy of Executive Coaching completing the Advanced Practitioner Diploma in 2013. When she isn't working Helen loves spending time by the sea with her loved ones, where she finds both inspiration and restoration.

E: helen@raisingdoves.co.uk

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

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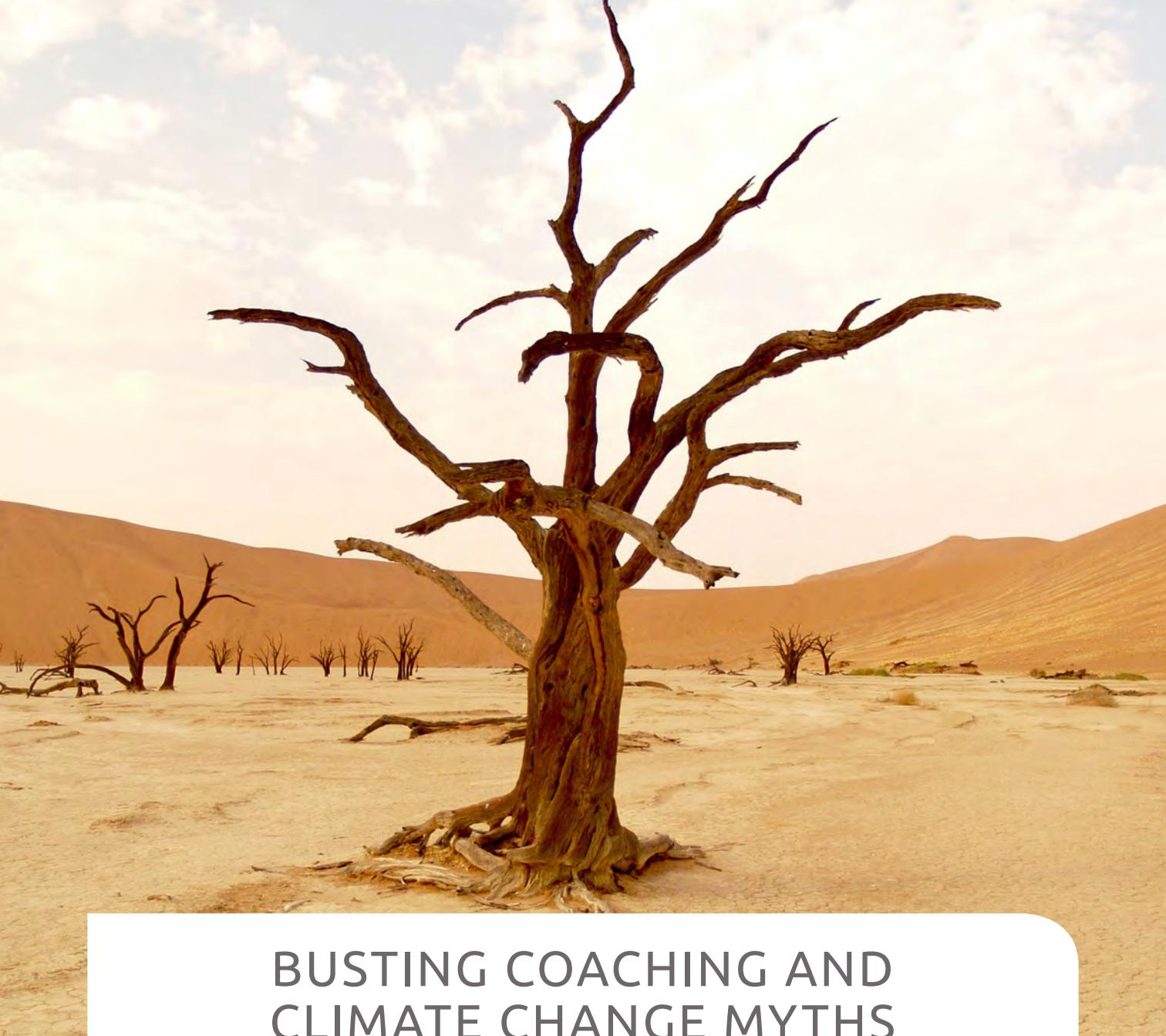
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BUSTING COACHING AND CLIMATE CHANGE MYTHS

We are sleepwalking towards the cliff edge of climate change. It is time to wake up and create paths away from that cliff edge rather than send ambulances to the bottom of it, writes [Lorenza Clifford](#).

The Joint Global Statement Group on Climate and Biodiversity Crises has held roundtable events throughout 2022-23 for the coaching community at large. The fourth event, 'Ethics: straight talking and myth-busting', was designed and hosted by Lorenza Clifford, Hetty Einzig and George Warren. Hetty Einzig moderated a vibrant session with five speakers: Stanley Arumugam, Linda Aspey, Zoe Cohen, Joy Siphokazi Nthetha and Liz Hall.

This was documented by Lorenza Clifford, with edits from Clare

Manning so that the session's takeaways can be shared with all coaches and contribute to further conversations on this vital topic.

What follows are the busted myths and the reframing narratives and paradigms that we hope will be a resource for dialogue in supervision, relevant for anyone wanting to orient themselves ahead of coaching conversations around climate change. They are not edicts and they are based on a collective experience with all our participants in 2023, and therefore they may have a shelf life.

15 BUSTED MYTHS

Myth 1. Scientific paradigms alone are enough to create socially relevant, socially just practices.

Busted: Climate injustice is the end result of social, political and economic injustice. Coaching that is relevant to the social context can be an agent for social transformation and coaching justice.

Reframed: Listen to the dissonance with your lived experiences. Think harder about how the paradigm was created and what it can really be applied to. What other good approaches could be encompassed that might be more relevant to the systems you are working with?

Myth 2. The coach cannot talk about the climate if the client doesn't.

Busted: Eviatar Zarubavel calls this 'socially constructed silence'. Collective silence about climate exploitation does not serve the client or society. The client may not talk about the climate despite it being on their mind because they are fearful or lack agency, or perhaps they feel that coaching must only be about business as usual. Maybe they don't know where to start or, recognising that this is a 'wicked problem', they could feel that the conversation could open an assortment of problems that they don't feel fair to broach.

Reframed: What is the contract that you are offering as a coach? Are you removing boundaries and explaining that we can discuss anything – including health systems, economics, climate change, social injustice and inequality? What you say may permit you to break the socially constructed silence on these topics. Create spaces of permission to engage in conversations that are not being had elsewhere. Coaching is not value-neutral; make it explicit and share the values you intend to embody through your coaching. Allow yourself to take a position and make this explicit to your clients.

Myth 3. Coaching should only be non-directive. Anything that is directive is not coaching and is therefore unethical if your contract is for coaching.

Busted: Many other strands of coaching that are well-recognised and well-reputed sit alongside non-directive. For example, a systemic coach will draw attention to the system that the person exists in and then the wider system beyond that. A thinking partner can ask an incisive question to draw attention to what has been left outside or for the future. A clean language coach might use a series of boundary questions or the client's own metaphors to reach the 'un-thought known'. Many strands of coaching can attend to values and ethics in order to raise risks or concerns.

Reframed: Give yourself permission and trust that you can coach the person rather than the topic. During Covid, you will have given yourself permission to ask the client how they were and how Covid was affecting them because it was relevant everywhere. Climate change is a problem we are all facing; we all need to seek and contribute solutions. Eventually, it will affect every other problem and solution if we do this well enough today.

Myth 4. The twin myths of separation or of neutrality.

Busted: We coaches, mentors, psychologists and supervisors are a subset of the rest of the population; we are not separate. Climate change is a shorthand for the whole systemic pattern of colonialism,

racism, inequality, obscene growthism, resource waste, pollution and poisoning. We have had our final warning, but our governments and leaders continue to try and operate business as usual, but this isn't even possible. We have gone too far and outstripped the earth's ability to maintain her stasis. This affects everything we do in every walk of life. We were never really separate, and now this myth is being demonstrated. We have colluded with business leaders and governments' unreality of separation and finite resources for too long by trying to stay neutral. It is time for coaches to invite their clients out from their reality tunnels to admire the mess we have all made and to deal with it, finally, before it deals with us!

Reframed: The wisdom of inquiry into interconnectedness: how can we work even more with this? What would be in the teachings or the ethical codes of professional bodies that were steeped in a new tradition of interconnectedness? The wisdom of indigenous cultures, biomimicry, Theory U and vertical development themes would come through. The Buddhist concept of Interbeing is relevant here, and individual and relational compassion. Many coaches already use mindfulness in sessions, so a small step of expanding awareness can open paths of insight in our clients. "We are nature defending itself" is an XR slogan, but a literal path to the future that is relevant to coaches and an inquiry for coaching supervisors... When we recognise we are part of nature, and we see modelled in nature, how nature defends life: how are we defending ourselves, defending life, in our practice? How do we heal parts of ourselves and heal each other, so that we can work on behalf of the whole. And if we are feeling into the interconnectedness and making decisions from there, what will clients discover is possible in connection with that?! A nurturing environment follows, where the ethical decisions align and become easy.

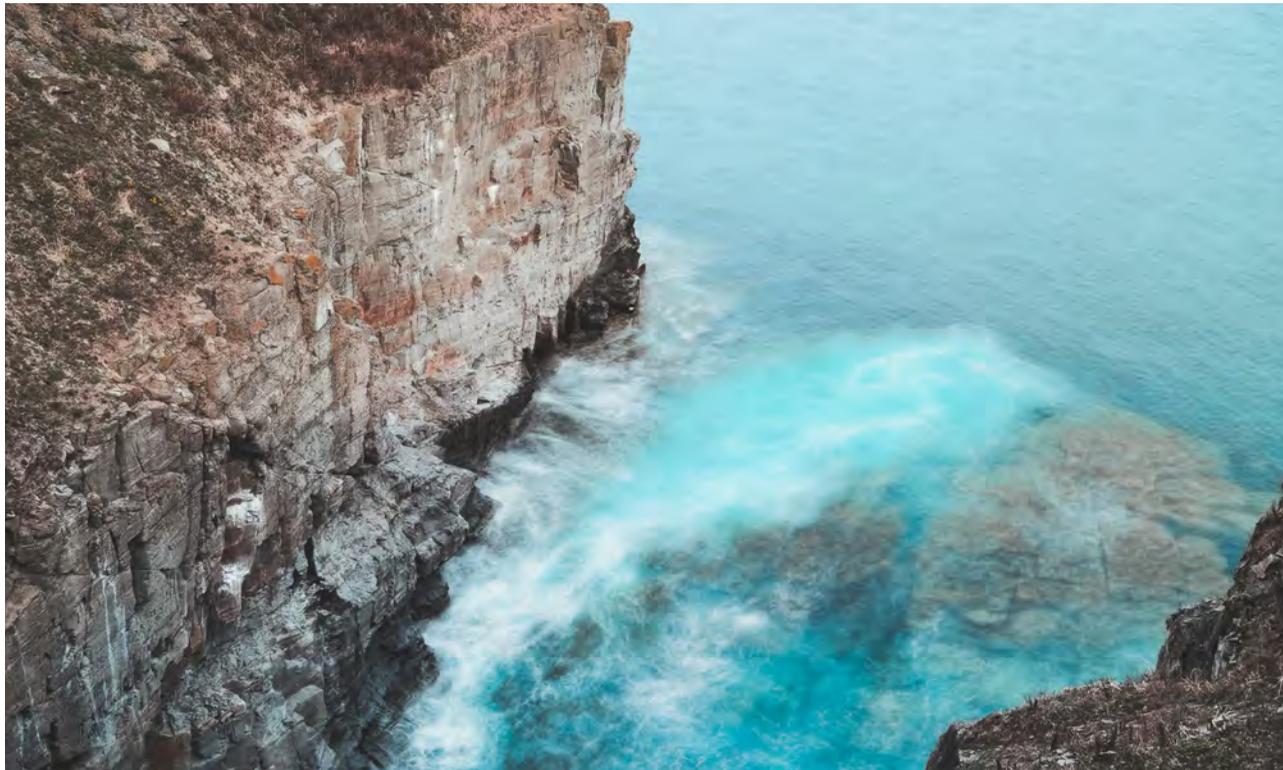
Myth 5. Change will be linear, and there is a solution to this problem.

Busted: We really need to understand what exponential means – doubling, doubling, doubling! With interaction between factors. This pair of myths may be why we feel we have time. We need to listen and understand better the urgency of scientists who truly get what this could mean for us. This is an interconnected extraordinarily complex predicament and simple solutions will not address it.

Reframed: Climate change, like growth, is not an inevitable fact... it is socially constructed economic set of decisions. If we change the decisions together, fast enough, we can minimise the change in the climate, but we are nearly out of time. Decisions now need to be for immediate change, not next year, or in a decade, but coaches can be inquiring into what can be started now, what can be accelerated, to mitigate the very worst set of consequences associated with climate change. What might our client's future self, experiencing that set of consequences, tell our client's current self about delaying, greenwashing or inadequate action proposed? What will our client tell their grandchildren?

Myth 6. TINA (there is no alternative).

Busted: We are led by people who are trying to solve the climate change problem from within the same system that caused it. But there are alternative economic systems. Our predominant economic system can change - it is a social construct and is completely changeable. We need to understand other economic approaches, there are many! And start working with them.



Reframed: Both action and inaction have a cost. They are accounted for in different terms, but eventually they are connected. We need to see the cost of change in relation to the cost of doing nothing much more accurately. Coaches could be instrumental in opening these lines of inquiry, instead of contributing to delusion through collusion.

Myth 7. The death of convenience and comfort: or that green growth or green tech will save us, so we won't have to change.

Busted: When the bathtub is already full adding more water of another colour will still cause the bath to overflow. It doesn't exist at a global level or is totally inadequate to save us. This is the kind of denial you get on the change curve (Milton Bennett), when there is a dawning realisation of the size of the problem, but not yet an understanding of the immensity of the change that is required of us to mitigate. We need to be prepared to do things differently and this will mean less convenience, less comfort. And even as we are hospicing modernity and extractive consumption, we must be careful what replaces it.

Reframed: Combat greenwashing and complacency: How is any new proposal an adequate response? Audit the extent of "real green change" vs. the illusion of it. Question the actual consequences and seek unintended consequences or emissions further up or down stream to check they are being accounted for truthfully. Help people be honest with themselves and discourage complacency. Encourage the bigger, broader, braver narratives that embrace more discomfort now in our comfortable lives, so that our children's children may have a little less discomfort later – possibly, and for a bit longer.

Myth 8. The myth that people don't care.

Busted: The climate crisis is not proportionately in the mainstream media and people don't talk about it, aren't educated about it and so they don't change, but this does not equate to them not caring, not being concerned to the extent that they are aware. As people learn, it is clear that a great many are genuinely concerned about our climate. Eco-anxiety becomes a very real swing of the pendulum and is equally quite paralysing for many.

Reframed: Coaches can learn to combat narratives of giving up, to support humans around the world, to engage clients in Active Hope: holding the space, sitting with the human, with anxiety, urgency and grief, allows us to accept the emotion and what we are grateful for that emerges when we do. To mill the seeds of intentions from this and follow through, nurturing the seeds with multiple heartfelt actions. Embody love in action.

Myth 9. Our wealth, or position or geography will protect us

Busted: Climate change means global societal change, means global disruption, and the death of comfort, which will affect every person, everywhere, whether or not you can avoid the more direct effects of heat, extreme weather, floods and fires. We actually need to expand our sense of risk, to encompass risk from ruling and governing systems, rather than assume they will protect us.

Reframed: Coaches can examine why we appear to be more concerned with conserving our way of life than with conserving life itself. Why should you /I be protected? What is the lens of being special or more deserving about? Where does that spring from and to what extent do you/I really believe it when you/I examine it? It starts with us. We have to do the work ourselves.

Myth 10. The myth that we can avoid our interdependency; which leads to the myth that self-transformation is separate from large systemic transformation.

Busted: Working in the healing arts and sciences, we cannot avoid the questions of: what is going on? How is climate change affecting us? What is the purpose of this time and how do I fit in?

Reframed: The beauty and deep nourishing of Ubuntu: Wake up for the day with appreciation for connectedness and interdependency with the earth, the waters in the river, or sea, the animals in our ecosystem. How today can we find harmony as connected and human? Love is a verb, as coaches we need to be active in seeking out our points of connection and humanity: How am I changing? Stemming from lived-experience in my inner world and seeking connections in the outer world. When coaching, actively holding the deeper developmental space, understanding inherently the interconnected between you and me, which breaks the myth that coaching is one-way. I am of the earth and therefore nothing of the earth can be foreign to me.

Myth 11. Coaching is a one-way, directional activity in terms of development with a coach and a coachee.

Busted: All relationships are two-way: Development in coaching should be flowing in both directions.

Reframed: If it is not flowing within your coaching conversations, then something is not right, and it is risky. Please take this to your coaching supervisor. You may both learn much from the conversation about interconnectedness, interdependency and development in coaching. Your reflective practice and your coaching practice and probably your life will be enhanced.

Myth 12. Ethics as a noun: a code we can sign up to and even tick it off as done, a way to judge and divide.

Busted: Ethics are plural verbs. We are being and doing our ethics everyday consciously and unconsciously and it is displayed in our actions and reactions for all to see. Either it brings us together, or it sets us apart. What do we value, and how do we show that?

Reframed: Integration and Collaboration: Integrating our roles and embodying our values in action carried out by our bodies. We can breakdown the artificial separation between our roles and live with the integrity that we intend to, that fits with our values and makes us feel safe and aligned. When we come together in an act of embodiment it has much more meaning for all involved and for those not involved than when we work from our artificial separation.

Myth 13. That death can be avoided.

Busted: Death is the one certainty of all life. It is the preciousness of life that makes us attempt to avoid death. We experience our life more once we have embraced death. Looking at death and accepting it allows us to experience the meaning we want our life to have, and to value what makes it meaningful more accurately.

Reframed: Coaching is about exploring truth and that includes the final truth of death. Embrace the truth of death, the fear and discomfort that goes with it and we reveal a powerful part of coaching as it can be the death of an idea, the death of a way of living, or a belief system and it releases the energy behind it. The co-

creative, reimagining, regenerating part of it is why we are here! Step into the mystery and be part of history. You don't have to do it alone.

Myth 14. There is an arrogance in the myth that we are looking for one, neat solution.

Busted: How are we in the coaching profession complicit in replicating the methods of extractive consumption? The stronger answers are more likely to be in the interdisciplinary, multiplicity and in inconveniently messy, mycelial network solutions.

Reframed: Ubuntu, the choices I make for myself daily are made for and with the entire world in mind. Be the container for the thinking work. All of us, as leaders (not a single heroic leader) can shift out from power dynamics, engage human to human, with shared small actions that come from a place of improved consciousness. When we engage from that place, things are changed. Every action matters and is never wasted because the language of the universe is movement. Integrating this from doing to being.

Myth 15. That a conversation about climate must be all woe and angst.

Busted: What are the lighter ways to have conversations that invite play, potential and possibility.

Reframed: Relational understanding of the world is key in coaching. Getting up and out into nature inspires with the available interconnected metaphors and encourages our biomimicry-inspired, nature-connected thinking. Doing this together, breaking down isolation, literally brings potential and increased natural resourcefulness. With this, we can think bigger, braver, less comfortable thoughts and be OK with them. And we can start with clients by simply asking them about what is going on in their world, and normalising conversations about climate. What do our clients really care about? What matters most?

Based on the dialogue during the 4th Roundtable JGSG event between speakers and participants from the coaching profession about climate change conversations. For further resources and information about the statement, who signed it and upcoming free events please visit: www.jgsg.one

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Lorenza Clifford is an executive coach and coaching supervisor who founded Coachchange.org: working with leaders and coaches to face what is going 'with the grain' of who they are, and their nature, ecosystems and economy. We are coming to terms with new realities through enhanced curiosity, presence, choice and relationships. Let's embrace our future courageously.

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



STREET COACHING: COACHING AND SUPPORTING DISENFRANCHISED CLIENTS' SENSE OF SELVES

Gillian Squirrell offers her approach for working with clients experiencing living homeless: she argues that work in this space requires particular moral and ethical care, appreciation of context and meeting the client where they are.

Curtin reminds us that we may unwittingly contribute to others' oppression¹. He suggests that part of developing compassionate action is to tease out our own impact and any unintended negative consequences flowing from our approaches and actions. In reflecting on how this might happen, we can start with the obvious: that we are flawed humans whose reactivity, responses, actions and humour can create missteps in the moment. This piece focuses on my reflective practices in working with clients living homeless, as opposed to creating a pass for myself. I consider taking coaching and attendant activities to those living on the streets as a form of compassionate action to potentially support individuals' sense of self, sense of personal worth and individual sense of direction.

Living homeless is seriously hard, challenging, risky and sometimes dangerous. It is a way of living which is extremely undermining to a sense of self and wellbeing. To take a couple of examples: living homeless means potentially undertaking all acts of daily living in public and so being liable to draw potential comment and disparagement from members of the public. Living homeless is also likely to mean engaging with various agencies, taking on a supplicant role and being forced to ask, queue or enter onto a lengthy waitlist for access to amenities that most of us, who are housed, take for granted.

I spend a lot of time thinking about how I want to take coaching, and being a coach, to individuals and communities of people with whom I may have less in common. That is not to step over our shared humanity and the collective pressures that we mediate. It is to acknowledge different life experiences, expectations and priorities – a point to which I want to return. I spend time worrying about what I am doing and the potential negatives I might cause or create for those I like to work with. I spend time thinking about the power differential and the unintended ways in which this might play out working with clients who have often been drilled into roles of being at a disadvantage over many years and being, one could say, institutionalised into such roles through having had to live in such a way.

I have come to a place of knowing that I need to hold at least two, and probably several, frames of reference simultaneously. My immediate role is as a coach working with people whom I consider to be creative, resourceful and whole, who will have solutions to their immediate issues and problems, and will also hold visions, fears, hopes and aspirations, even when these are buried under a mass of issues inherent in daily survival. As a human, not a coach, I can hold other frames: my concerns and outrage, my desire to be an advocate or to take an active role in trying to put right, or at least ameliorate, what I consider as social and systemic wrongs. In this lies the management of frames or roles and another series of entanglements. I am borrowing here from another ecofeminist thinker and writer, Karen S. Emmermann², and I will return to her work later in this article.

These ruminations on positioning and practice are a work in process. This article is another pit-stop in my thinking about the recent work I have been doing with people living homeless in California. I believe this way of thinking is transferable to other contexts and continents. Navigating entry into, and routes through, homeless living and the often attendant issues of trauma, abuse, entanglement with the criminal justice system, mental health distress and poor physical condition are experiences that whittle away a sense of self and wellbeing, as well as self-value, self-esteem and even identity. Coaching has client identity and self-efficacy at its heart and centre, so thinking about how to head off any potential damage through the coaching process is important.

My thinking in this piece has been informed by turning back to a number of ecofeminist thinkers and writers as well as ongoing reflective practice engaging with what are, I think, complicated and often ethical dilemmas.

Topping all reading and reflection is a practice I call 'cardinal listening'. Of course, this does not exist as a phrase, practice or concept. It's invented, red flagging (pun intended) for me to always foreground listening, asking and seeking to understand difference, context and realities other than my own, to bring absolute respectful curiosity to bear and to circle around what is said and unsaid to become attuned. For me, it seems to be a means not mismanage the power differential and to be more able to reach beyond the potentially damaging effects of the power differential.

So, having set up the context for this piece, let's dive into some of the interlocking parts that I would suggest work to assist a coach in supporting identity and self.

Coaching has client identity and self-efficacy at its heart and centre, so thinking about how to head off any potential damage through the coaching process is important

CONTEXT

One of the coaching trainers I found most influential lived and died by the importance of not needing to know the context of a client; 'It was unnecessary,' she would drill her students. 'Successful coaching was all down to the power of the questions', which were quite context-free. She would argue that getting snagged in the detail and the description of the situation was not only quite unnecessary but also likely to bog the coaching down and run the risk of the coach slipping into problem-solving or advice-giving. This tenet has so much merit, but, for me, it falls short because I work with people with very different life experiences. Appreciating context helps me to think about the types of coaching activities that might have resonance and appreciate what solutions might have efficacy and value, even if they might seem counterintuitive or not what I would hope for my client.

Context can be about appreciating others' imagination, ingenuity and insight as well as what may be possible, what a next step could be, or what might be limiting or could be pushed beyond.

For example, I have never lived homeless in a car with an animal companion. I would have no idea how to do this. I would have no sense of the various stages of entry into homelessness, navigating homelessness, what is important or what might be valued, what the choice points might be or where a trade might be deemed reasonable. I think I can bring some skills and qualities to working with those living homeless but understanding more of the context seems to be of paramount importance. For me, tied to the importance of deep listening in the coaching moment was that of a much broader form of listening whenever I set off to hear the narratives from various people negotiating life in quite different ways to my own housed experiences. Spending time with communities of people living homeless, seeking to understand how life may be experienced, how choices are navigated, what were drivers, and what decisions needed to be taken – all of these things helped me to appreciate other frames of reference.

POWER DIFFERENTIAL

Within the helping professions, it is acknowledged that helping professionals have inherently greater power and influence when compared to those whom they assist. Understanding such a power differential is fundamental to ethical working and appreciating how clients might interact with the helping professional. It is worth deconstructing this rule of thumb when thinking about coaching non-traditional clients.



Within the helping professions, it is acknowledged that helping professionals have inherently greater power and influence when compared to those whom they assist

Some questions to self-pose could include: How is coaching understood and perceived? How is the coach and what they are offering understood? What resources, influence and outcomes might be unlocked by engagement? How have clients become trained or institutionalised by engaging with authorities, helping professionals and others, and how might any default relational positions need to be challenged and navigated? How would such navigation be done? How might a coach upend their own thinking, assumptions and behaviours?

ENTANGLED EMPATHY OR CULTIVATED COMPASSION

Cycling back to the ecofeminist philosophers I have been consulting, Dean Curtinⁱⁱⁱ and Lori Gruen^{iv} offer us useful concepts to take into coaching with non-traditional or disenfranchised clients. For both philosophers, 'entangled empathy' or 'cultivated compassion' moves a person beyond having a knee-jerk response to a situation. There should be scope for a cognitive dimension, an awareness of the greater context as to why something is happening.

There is a thoughtful and reflective quality to this compassion.

'Entangled empathy' and 'cultivated compassion' are cultivated and practised, and wisdom is applied. It is a dance from first to third person between the immediate situation and a broader understanding of what is transpiring and why. 'Cultivated compassion' is a driver to action on multiple levels. Its cognitive and reflective aspects allow an appreciation of when it is possible to act and when it is not. A less refined compassion or empathy may lead someone to react just for the sake of doing something. As coaches, we need to avoid what Michael Bungay Stanier calls the Advice Trap;^v we need to be careful with our values and assumptions of what is right or the right way. We need to cultivate holding several frames of reference and managing to choreograph the roles of both coach and outraged human.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SITUATED NARRATIVES AND MORAL REMINDERS

Emmermann offers what I think are powerful and helpful concepts that enable us to hold both the immediate and situated narrative in mind, and so appreciate the broader socio-political, economic and environmental contexts that have given rise to the immediate problems that we might be coaching with our clients. She suggests that while holding both the micro and macro in mind (and I am paraphrasing here, in order to move her thinking into a coaching framework), the immediate problem should be challenged with the client, and that the coach (in their other role of problem resolver after the coaching sessions ends) needs to revert later to the bigger systems that created those immediate problems and take action to frustrate their continued occurrence.

Emmerman notes that in resolving real-world conflicts, solutions are likely to be imperfect. There will be compromises, and these will generate more issues and questions, and this is likely to be for both the coach and the client. Emmermann labels these issues, questions and dangling problems as 'moral reminders'. These moral reminders can be stepping stones out of immediate complex situations that help us circle back to address the larger issues in our other life roles. She argues that in order to work with imperfect resolutions and to not collapse into self-blame, it is important to cultivate some degree of self-compassion.

I find the concept of moral reminders and holding several frames of reference inordinately useful when helping to negotiate choice in the coaching role and the power differential. They are powerful enjoiners to help 'meet the client where they are' and keep aspects of oneself in check.

CARDINAL LISTENING

Identity and self-identification are central to coaching. Cardinal listening is at the apex of the coach's skills in support and service of client self-definition and aspiration. Cardinal listening is a way to red flag the interlocking and repeating sequence of listening, aliveness to silences, to the un- and part- said, the slightly intimated and to hear when there's not a full approximation of what wants to be said. It's also my phrasing for the processes of reflection-in-action for the coach, of absorbing and reflecting back to the client, of teasing meanings and creating joint meanings with the client, whilst not

rushing to positions of interpretation or falling foul of the sins of advice-giving and reframing what has been spoken to leverage the client to improvement and so on.

Such basic and respectful choreography is the essential waltz with all clients. One could say how much more important the process of holding back, providing a safe and courageous space, and a respectful and appreciative container for clients with greater vulnerability and unfamiliarity with coaching processes. That would perhaps be a ridiculous statement. There is no hierarchy of vulnerability or deservedness when it comes to working with individual clients. There is perhaps a better rephrasing in the adage of meeting a client where they are. This can take some effort and humility, and I would argue an understanding of context and clarity about the coaching role.

Working with clients, in groups and individually, who have had very different life experiences, expectations and aspirations demands thoughtfulness and careful positioning as to the coaching offer. This takes me to a final thought: how important it is to be selective with tools, models and activities. There is no silver bullet of a model to apply; all is contingent on what resonates with the clients.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Gillian Squirrell has worked as a researcher, lecturer, curriculum developer and manager within universities, as a consultant and evaluator to social justice and welfare sectors and NFPs. She has founded two small non-profits in the UK and US. A practicing and accredited coach (CTI and ICF). Accredited in several models for coaching, she has particular interest in equine assisted coaching and leadership, and working with natural and man-made environments in coaching and leadership activities. Current projects include work on self-leadership, memoir and narrative writing and coaching with individual and communities not usually accessing coaching.

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WHAT ELSE IS IN YOUR TOOLKIT?

What else might empower our clients? Myriad complementary disciplines can be integrated into a coach's toolkit, argues [Jo Permaul](#) – for clients to consider their body, mind and spiritual wellbeing.

Integrating a diverse complementary toolkit into my coaching practice has made for some fascinating client journeys. I trained as a homeopath and homeobotanicals practitioner and worked as an intuitive before I completed my training as a holistic life coach, and yet now the frame for all my client-based work is coaching. It allows me to take my clients from a place of illness to a place of wellness, in which they can explore self-empowerment and listen to their own voice as part of the healing process.

As director of a training skills provider for wellness coaching, I have noticed the type of people that coaching attracts, and many of our students have complementary medicine or healing modality skills, either as an integrated element or as an addendum to their sessions. In this post-Covid era dominated by the cost of living crisis, it makes sense both financially and on a connection level to offer our clients more than one service. Clients already know, like and trust us, and they have seen that what we do brings results. Coaching enables the client to make significant changes and put things into action, but imagine if you could help your clients with actual physical, emotional and spiritual healing too. What else might you like to offer?

TOOLS FOR THE BODY

The excellent experiential work of Gabor Matéⁱ has taught us that the body holds on to emotions, manifesting them as physical ailments and, at times, disease. Somatic coaching is increasing in popularity as an emerging new modality. Finally, we are pulling away from the Cartesian division between the mind as one entity and the body as another. This holistic approach is exciting and fascinating, and it adds new innovative ways of exploring how we might embrace coaching as a dynamic for healing.

Imagine the experience: you sit down with your coach, who you debrief about the physical pain and mental anguish that you are experiencing. They then ask you some impactful questions about what is currently happening in your life. The session may then involve activities such as working with acupressure points (to get rid of pain, ease headaches or aid drainage) using self-massage techniques or perhaps some basic needling from an acupuncturist (perhaps to help with excessive worry – an emotion stored in the spleen). After just 30 minutes, you walk away feeling both mentally and physically lighter.

Abi Adams, coach and founder of Project Woman says, 'Many women come to me emotionally volatile, experiencing certain female health symptoms or wanting to know more about their body and health.' She integrates yoga, kinesiology, strength training, traditional Chinese medicine and bioenergetics. 'There's confusion and frustration around wanting to be a certain way or feeling like

something is missing, but underneath it all is the misunderstanding of emotions and how they digest stress. The greatest tool has been around menstrual cycle health, as it can open up the emotional door to how we treat ourselves, how we perceive the world and how we receive support. When we address these aspects, we can begin to soothe the nervous system and create a greater communication with ourselves and the life we live.'

In my own practice, I have sent clients Bach Flower remedies and homeobotanical blends to aid physical manifestations such as rashes, menstrual cramps and recurrent headaches.

TOOLS FOR THE MIND

The grey area between counselling and coaching has been explored by many professionals. In his book *Personal Consultancy*, Nash Popkovic writes about this grey area and discusses how coaching can be the paradigm for building confidence whilst the interweaving of counselling explores the root issue, enabling you to fix the foundation.ⁱⁱ

On my journey, I have discovered coaches who have integrated hypnotherapy and NLP (neuro-linguistic programming) into their coaching work because of the dynamic relationship between coaching, which catalyses change, and the hypnotherapeutic or NLP tools, that are needed to put change into action.

Natasha Jackson writes about how she uses this integration: 'For me, progressive coaching is about looking deeply inwards, which is why alongside NLP techniques I work with an archetypes deck by Kim Krans - a deck rooted in Jungian theory.ⁱⁱⁱ The cards offer thoughtful questions as well, inviting interpretations of symbology and identity, aiding self-reflection and often summarising a session perfectly.'

As coaches, mindfulness is an area where we ask our clients to stop overthinking. Tamsin Williamson, a parenthood coach, uses mindfulness in her own way, stating that this has to be part of a process in which clients flex their mindfulness muscle regularly. 'I introduce mindfulness to my clients as a practice to integrate into their lives on an ongoing basis to complement our more 'conscious' coaching work, as it supports them to make more aligned and intentional progress in their lives while feeling more grounded and connected to their deeper selves.'

TOOLS FOR THE SPIRIT

I have over 20 years of experience reading tarot and it has always been my go-to tool for delving deep into the psyche. Rich in symbolism and imagery, the power of tarot has been documented extensively. Tarot and other cards used in divination can bring great comfort in a coaching session. The process of allowing a client to pick out a card and see how the image resonates with them can open up the room for deeper discussion. Personally, I am a huge fan of the Rider-Waite tarot deck but Goddess Cards^{iv} are hugely popular in women's empowerment and health coaching, especially when it comes to the fast-growing area of coaching for menopause. Tools such as physical cards enable the client to approach a topic from a different perspective and to access their higher self. They can be a great tool for someone new to the coaching process who struggles with answering questions. A simple, 'what does this card mean to you right now?' can open portals into their psyche.

Reiki is a practice that has been around for hundreds of years. Born in Japan, Reiki is a hands-off healing practice that cleanses blockages and energy shifts. Now, it is being used in cancer care, and some of the larger cancer charities will have dedicated Reiki practitioners working with clients. Sharing the cancer journey can be an incredibly vulnerable process but the benefits of cancer coaching are priceless. Adding a practice like Reiki into a cancer coaching session highlights the value of coaching to heal the mind and Reiki to heal the soul and spirit.

As Sarah Potter, coach and holistic therapist says: 'I use Reiki (and hypnotherapy) in my practice. Reiki activations for intense emotions can really support the healing process.'

Tommy Ludgate, a coach for creatives, uses art as an add-on to work on a more spiritual, creative level. He writes, 'I love using creativity as part of my coaching as it can so quickly access our subconscious in ways dialogue can't. It peels back the layers on our potential overthinking and gets to the heart of our intuition. Some examples of things I like to use include: drawing a picture of your current mood, colouring while pondering on given prompts or the process of collage; cutting or ripping what you are most drawn to in a magazine.'

When reflecting on working with my clients, my raison d'être is to help my client maintain wellness. To be a coach is not enough for me. The interplay and eclecticism of tools and approaches keep me alive, passionate, inquisitive and curious. My personal litmus test is 'How have I helped that client to empower themselves?' Sharing resources allows for the most beautifully woven stories that fulfil me on a deep core level, and the people I meet along the way are just wonderful!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jo Permaul is director of Wellness Professionals At Work, which runs AC-accredited courses in wellness and life coaching. She is a qualified holistic life coach, homeopath and teacher. She lives in London and is hugely passionate about improving wellbeing through self-empowerment. Jo's practice has involved the integration of coaching, homeopathy, tarot, astrological awareness and herbs and she has worked with clients both in the UK and internationally.

jo@wellnessprofessionalsatwork.com

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HUMOUR IN COACHING? YOU MUST BE JOKING!

What is your appetite for using humour in coaching? Is it a rapport enhancer or something more substantial? And how do we use it appropriately for coach and client? **Charlotte Housden** explores.

Since I'm writing about humour, I'll start with a joke. A coach walks into a bar. The barman looks up and says, 'I thought you lot were professionals. A joke is no place for you!'

It's true, we want to be taken seriously. We're relative newcomers and want to prove our worth. We know coaching can make a difference. But humour? That won't work in organisations, especially if they're going through the serious business of change.

Ingela Camba Ludlow has written a book on humour in coaching and thinks humour can be helpful. She writes that it's 'an emotional leveller', bringing a shared understanding and 'a feeling of something connecting between minds, and the affection that comes with sharing a new insight'.ⁱ Others have shown strong links between humour and rapport, which can help create healthy coaching relationships.

Much of the research on humour comes from psychotherapy: for example, there's evidence it can 'promote feelings of intimacy and friendliness and facilitate the client's trust in the therapist'ⁱⁱ, plus helps them to 'gain or retain a healthy perspective and to take control of their lives.'ⁱⁱⁱ Many therapies include humour – it's at the core of rational emotive behaviour therapy, whose therapists say humour is as important as empathy and acceptance. Humour is also used in provocative therapy, dialectical behavioural therapy, logotherapy and natural high therapy.

When we use humour in coaching it can lighten difficult subjects, particularly if clients are weighed down, exhausted by navigating

constant change. It can help them to be more playful in their outlook and enable them to stand back and view issues from different perspectives; this is particularly important for leaders who are dealing with fast-paced environments and complex problems. Humour can help clients break out of their familiar patterns, find new ways of thinking and experiment with how they interact.

We've seen a dramatic rise in the prevalence of online coaching in recent years, and humour may help here too. A global survey showed that one third of coaches think online work is less intimate and less enjoyable, and that building relationships takes more effort. The researchers wrote that this way of working 'may sometimes fail to replace the intimacy that comes from face-to-face engagement'.^{iv} However, if humour can create greater rapport and trust, then it might also help develop better online relationships.

However, if humour is so good, why aren't we all liberally sprinkling it onto our coaching every day? Well, like everything else, it's not a panacea. Where there is sunlight there is shade. Peter Hawkins writes in the preface to Ludlow's book about the 'shadow sides' of humour: a need to show off, avoid issues, caricature others and deny responsibility.

We also need to be careful about which type of humour we use. Psychologists have found that affiliative and self-enhancing humour (telling jokes or witty banter) can create relationship satisfaction, intimacy, openness to experience, self-esteem and happiness. But

aggressive and self-defeating humour (such as sarcasm) creates dissatisfaction in relationships, anxious attachment, neuroticism and low self-esteem.^v

Researchers say there can be 'detrimental effects if the humour is misunderstood, used to belittle, laugh at, or mimic the client'^{vi}, and warn it can 'easily be used to create feelings of superiority' by laughing at the expense of someone else.^{vii}

Tia Moin, on starting to work online with a new coaching client, wrote that the client was 'particularly friendly and talkative and used humour a lot. Establishing rapport was easy.' Over the session the client made a number of increasingly inappropriate jokes. Tia woke up the next morning feeling 'violated, manipulated and uncomfortable', and avoided sitting at her desk for some time; she felt the client had invaded that space.^{viii}

Tia's experience shows that we must be careful. If we do decide to use humour, then how can we keep it out of the shadows? How do we ensure it is fit for purpose, particularly with stressed and overworked clients? I've identified a couple of ways that might help. Firstly, you could use the model below – I created this to help me think through when to use humour and when to avoid it.

If you find yourself in the top quadrants, you may need to dial your humour up or down. If you're in the bottom-right, perhaps you need to build up your awareness of your gaps, develop more confidence, or look for support to integrate humour into your practice. If you're in the bottom-left, then back away... humour is not for you, or for them. Well, at least not now.

Secondly, why not spend some time reflecting on the enablers for humour:

1. Contracting: set the scene so your client can expect humour to come from you and that it's ok for them to be humorous too.
2. Self-awareness: reflect on the intent of the humour (you and your client). Is it a running-towards action (purposeful) or a running-away move (deflection, avoidance)?
3. Psychological safety: does it feel safe to use humour, for both of you?
4. Power: what are the dynamics? Is there co-creation? What's the ratio of talking/listening, idea generation, self-disclosure?
5. Tailoring: each client is unique. What works for one won't work for another. If you're not sure, then first aim some humour at yourself and take note of your client's reaction to it.
6. Your style: in your coaching are you high or low activity, formal or informal? Do you self-disclose, are you humorous or serious? Humour needs to fit your style, as authenticity is key. It'll be unproductive if you force it.
7. Confidence: using humour takes confidence. You won't know how it will land until you've tried it. How confident are you in using it?
8. Coaching work: humour may work less well with some types of coaching (e.g., single sessions when you might need to move very quickly to action planning).
9. Organisational context: what is the organisational culture like? How mature is the organisation as a buyer of coaching/what do

they expect it to deliver? Use humour cautiously if you're unsure how it will land.

10. Evaluation: how do you gather ongoing client feedback? How do you raise your own self-awareness? Can you bring these questions to supervision?

Let's return to humour and how it might help clients navigate change. Albert Einstein said that no problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it. I think coaches need to work differently given the volume and speed of change that many organisations are facing. So, can we be more courageous, stretch ourselves, model lightness and humour, be more flexible? Working in this way might help our clients break out of familiar thinking patterns and explore new perspectives. It might enable them to create positive change in the world.

I started with a joke, so I'll finish with one too. A coach walks into a bar. 'What can I get you?' asks the barman. 'A serious pint or a shot of laughter?'

What will you choose? It's your punchline.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Charlotte Housden is a chartered occupational and coaching psychologist, supporting executive coaching clients and leading global leadership development and coaching programmes. She interviewed 108 people in 27 countries who were going through career and life changes and turned her findings into a book: *Swim, Jump, Fly: A Guide to Changing Your Life*. Since Charlotte wants to democratise coaching and psychology, making it accessible and engaging for all, the book is full of humour and cartoons. Contact her via swimjumpfly.com.

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WHERE TWO PRACTICES MEET: THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN COACHING AND POETRY

Jacqueline Stearn looks at the overlaps between her two work practices of coaching and writing poetry. Here she explores three of the many themes: surfacing what is hidden, working with the shadow, and movement.

Through my explorations, I came across this quote from American nature poet Mary Oliver:

'Poetry is a life-cherishing force. For poems are not words, after all, but fires for the cold, ropes let down to the lost, something as necessary as bread in the pockets of the hungry'

'Ropes let down' and 'life-cherishing force' could easily be used to describe coaching as much as they do poems.

SURFACING THE UNSEEN

The main 'rope' in our coaching practice is paying excellent attention to our coachees. Jean Sprackland, professor of creative writing at Manchester Metropolitan University, describes writing in a similar way:

*'So, I think of writing not as an activity but as a state. A state of attention, a state of spatial and temporal distance, and above all, a state of emptiness. My task (as a poet) is to find my way into that state.'*¹

A state of emptiness, into which the elements of a poem can surface, is considered by Jean to be a creative necessity. Likewise, the emptiness, or sense of spaciousness, is an essential element of a coach's presence. New connections and the previously unseen or overlooked elements of a coachee's issue can have space to surface in this emptiness. John Leary-Joyce, pioneer of Gestalt coaching, wrote that practitioners "hold the belief that the so-called 'empty space' is actually fertile ground, rich with unknown possibilities – a fertile void."²

It was with that awareness that I approached a coaching session with the CEO of a dynamic young charity. We were working online, and she was sitting in her home office space on a balcony projecting over her living room. She was looking for ways to enable her relatively inexperienced senior management team to be more self-managing and less reliant on her. Struck by the setting, I invited her to stand and look over her balcony. If she were looking down on her team, what would she see? 'A nightclub dancefloor with chaotic dancing' was her response. What would she rather see? 'Ballroom dancing, with order and shape.' Evoking the possibility of their self-management through metaphor, and from the stance of an observer, enabled her to then describe what she might do differently in her interactions with the team. The visual metaphor could be evoked in senior management meetings.

In 2021, I was a writer in residence at Lake 32 in the Cotswold Water Park. Over the year, I circled the lake many times on foot, holding that state of emptiness which Jean Sprackland described whilst I gathered words. Once home, I approached crafting a poem with the same emptiness, allowing new associations and ideas to surface. To my surprise, a sonnet, *Gravel*³ emerged with the Earth giving voice to the devastation wrought upon her. It became the first in a series of sonnets.

GRAVEL

Ages past my creatures lived, died, sank,
bodies massed in vast, warm seas. A shift,
and continental birth twisted rock flanks,
ice sheets grew, bedrock shattered, came adrift.
Isis wove across her plain, bearing the stones
which fell in drifts. Hand dug from pits, gravel
was jumbled with fossilised beasts' bones.
Grown greedy, you stripped meadows of their marvels,
now gravel is ubiquitous to you,
everywhere taken for granted its use
to build, to level, to fill, to drain. Your view,
it's for the taking, story forsaken, is abuse.
Orchids, fritillaries, gone, now your kind
remove more than all my erosion combined.

THE SHADOW AND WHAT MIGHT BE HIDDEN

The writing of the *Gravel Songs* sonnets showed me the shadow of my personal contribution to the Anthropocene – the sonnets' overarching theme – and led to a renewed commitment to the work of the Climate Coaching Alliance,⁴ which focuses on ecological and climate-focused coaching.

The shadow can be those parts of ourselves and our coachees that are a response to emotional pain and trauma. They can become obstacles to change, whether in a personal, work or organisational setting. Because they have been developed to protect us, slow, delicate steps are required when the shadow, and what may have previously been hidden, begins to surface. Respect for that protective role is needed for the behaviours to loosen.

Seeking the coachee's permission to explore what might lie below the surface is a critical part of the contracting process. My coaching training introduced me to NowHere's *CREATE* model⁵ – Commission, Resource, Explore, Align, Transform, Embody – that I share with potential clients. It is explicit about the possibility that we will be surfacing and exploring what is hidden beneath the surface and unconsciously impacting the issue they seek to address. Nick Udall, Co-founder and CEO of NowHere, writes, 'We have been conditioned to flatline (our creative process) as our educational systems focus almost entirely on the known, at the expense of knowing how to embrace, value, and work with the unknown.'⁶

It is vital to avoid reaching beyond our competence as coaches. If I sense that a deep psychological wound is surfacing, then I name what I notice and suggest that it is taken into a therapeutic setting; it is acknowledged and bracketed off.

Organisations and teams can have shadows too. Coaching the casework team at the heart of a legal charity, I became aware that, although the team comprised very committed individuals, there was a tendency to blame senior management for not understanding the inherent difficulties in their role. Although coaching moved the team forwards – working on team purpose was significantly effective – the sense that the senior managers were hiding something from them prevailed. Wondering if the team's behaviour was a symptom of something that had been hidden in the organisation's system, I invited the organisation's CEO to bring the issue to an organisational systemic constellation. The process of mapping different elements in the organisation's system, including the legacy bodies out of which the new organisation had emerged, revealed that there had been a secret financial agreement. Surfacing this 'hidden truth' settled the team's system, which was evidenced by the team settling into a new place.

During her night shifts as a nurse, Filipino-British poet Romalyn Ante, collects images, phrases and insights which 'expand even into places I know I haven't been.'⁷ Romalyn explored this possibility of expanding into places we haven't been with fellow poet Caleb Parkin, then Bristol City Poet, during the Winchester Poetry Festival 2021⁸. Referencing his poem, *Kind words about darkness*⁹, Caleb described how writing can allow feelings about a deeper sense of being in darkness to be expressed and come out of the shadows.

The process of crafting a poem, working within the constraints of form and line, creates a safe container that enables the intangible to become tangible and a poem to emerge. Likewise, a coach creates a safe container for their coachee to become aware of 'those places I haven't been' and explore what otherwise might be hidden, creating a shift in themselves and the systems they live and work within.

MOVEMENT

At its simplest, coaching is supporting clients to make a movement or a shift in their work or life. At its most profound, it is helping them to make a transformation. As coaches, we notice these movements in the words, postures and facial expressions of our coachees.

Similarly, crafting a poem can enable a movement for the poet; hopefully, it can also enable a small realisation or something more significant for

the reader and listener. The point at which this movement can be seen in a poem is, for me, the point towards which the writing process has been journeying. In *Gravel*, it is at this point:

..... Your view,
it's for the taking, story forsaken, is abuse.
Orchids, fritillaries, gone, now your kind
remove more than all my erosion combined.

It is where the poem becomes a distinct entity – when it is able to show me what I hadn't previously seen... a coach perhaps?

My favourite mug carries an E E Cummings quotation: 'Well, write poetry for God's sake, it's the only thing that matters.'

To which I'd add: along with coaching.

KIND WORDS ABOUT DARKNESS^{xi}

To the bafflement of the swaying faces,
we say we are happy to walk.
Into this living night, we stride, fly
on a day of sipping smiles, shining eyes,
the few curving miles of hedge-
meshed lanes, reliant at first
on sight. But then, in the secret spectral
cinema of purple-black-grey
three am, away from the orange
juice deluge of streetlights –

we attune to touch, become alert
to the crunch or slop of each step, awake
to each other, the low-headed stoop
of the dog. There is space in this darkness.
A brightness. Between us and the softly
backlit branches. No traffic to face

down. No public to display to.
Not a single tree jabs at us
with censoring eyes. Just us:
our hands meshing beneath
this starlight. These hands,
scattered otherwise, beneath
the gazing windows of
a city skyline.

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CULTIVATING WISDOM IN COACHES AND SUPERVISORS

How much do you exhibit wisdom – in your work, in your life? How mindfully are you making the purposeful pursuit of wisdom part of your reflective practice, your way of being? Henry Champion invites us all to cultivate our wisdom garden...

Two women brought a baby before the King, each claiming it was hers. And the King said, 'Fetch me a sword,' and then, 'Divide the baby in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other.' The woman whose baby it was, fearing for the life of her child, pleaded with the King, 'No, don't kill the baby – give it to her'. But the other said: 'Neither of us shall have it; divide it.' Hearing this, the king said: 'Give the baby to the woman who asked that it be spared, for she is the mother.'

This archetypal story of the wisdom of Solomon, who lived some 3,000 years ago, demonstrates both the shrewdness of judgement and the understanding of human nature that we associate with wisdom. His wisdom was a gift from God, after he had asked for 'an understanding heart to judge Thy people, that I may discern between good and evil.'

Yet what if wisdom is not something ineffable that is gifted to us, but is a quality that we can actively cultivate in ourselves and others? What I am proposing here is that:

1. Wisdom is central to our work as coaches, and as supervisors to coaches and fellow supervisors (or, as I prefer it to avoid the implication of hierarchy, co-visors and metavisors respectively).
1. It arises from a synthesis of several identifiable behaviours.
1. These behaviours can be used as a framework for our further development.

WHAT IS WISDOM?

In practical terms, wisdom is seen as the ability to come up with an equitable and workable solution when confronted with a complex situation where the wellbeing of the people and entities involved is at stake and there is no obvious right answer. It is the sort of situation we meet regularly in our professional life, for example in ethical decision-making.

While wisdom has traditionally been seen as the preserve of philosophers over the centuries, in the last 40 years it has become the subject of active scientific study by psychologists and, increasingly, neuroscientists and psychiatrists. Dr Dilip Jeste, a leading gerontological psychiatrist and neuroscientist based in UC San Diego, has defined it as 'a form of advanced cognitive and emotional development, driven by [reflective] experience. It can be... learned.'

This definition makes explicit the connection between wisdom and coaching, particularly for those who see coaching as a developmental process. It makes clear that wise decision-making is not only about having the expertise and judgement needed in a given situation, but about the personal qualities or traits of the person doing it. Someone with this quality will be better equipped to help their clients and themselves make wise decisions.

It is worth noting that wisdom can be seen both as a trait, manifest in a person's habitual pattern of feelings, thoughts and behaviours,



and as a situational response, which may vary depending on the context. Studies of those considered to be wise – including King Solomon – show that, however wise a person may appear, there will always be situations in their life where they have acted unwisely. We see it in the way that some people can be insightful about others, yet seemingly blind to their own behaviour.

WISDOM AND AGE

It is commonly assumed that wisdom comes with age. Yet there are many older people who are not wise, just as there are younger people who are. To develop wisdom requires not only that we gain in experience, but that we reflect on and learn from that experience. Consider the tale of the teacher who applied for a new job, claiming to have had 30 years' experience. One of the interview panel, who knew the candidate well, suggested that what they actually had was one year of experience repeated thirty times. As Socrates is reported to have said, 'the unexamined life is not worth living.'

While wisdom is not directly related to age, the brain changes over time in ways that can help people make wiser decisions. The emotional sensors in the brain become less sensitive to negative stimuli, enabling an increase in emotional regulation and positivity. Also, active older brains develop a slower, more distributed form of neural processing. Typically, a younger person's brain reacts to a demand by involving the most immediately relevant areas of the brain, leading to a fast, focused response. In an older person with more experience to draw on, the question steadily ripples outward to many different areas of the brain, leading to a slower but more inclusive, nuanced response – what could be seen as a naturally acquired 'pause-and-reflect' behaviour.

THE 8-S WISDOM FRAMEWORK

Many wisdom behaviours have been identified by researchers. Here are eight, each beginning with 'S', covering five domains of human activity – self, other, curiosity, judgement and purpose – which are central to our development as coaches and supervisors.

CULTIVATING WISDOM BEHAVIOURS

I developed the 8-S framework to help my coach-clients answer the question 'How do you want to grow as a coach or supervisor?'. It allows them to give direction and focus to their desire to 'be the best that they can be' by offering actions to develop each behaviour, based on thinking about those we might want to develop in ourselves, and how to do this.

In offering the ideas below (see Table 1), I have drawn on the emerging body of research into what has been shown to work. You will already be familiar with many of them. Some are life-long endeavours in themselves. So it's worth remembering that working on them is not a race but part of the never-ending journey towards mastery, taken one reflective step at a time.

Built into the table are two columns, A and B, to help you decide where to start. Use column A to assess on a scale of 1-10 how well-established each behaviour is in the context of your work (It may be revealing to get someone who knows you well to do it too!). Use column B to tick the actions you want to work on, adding any others you can think of. Think about how you will monitor progress, for example by sharing your plans and getting feedback from your supervisor and/or a trusted colleague.

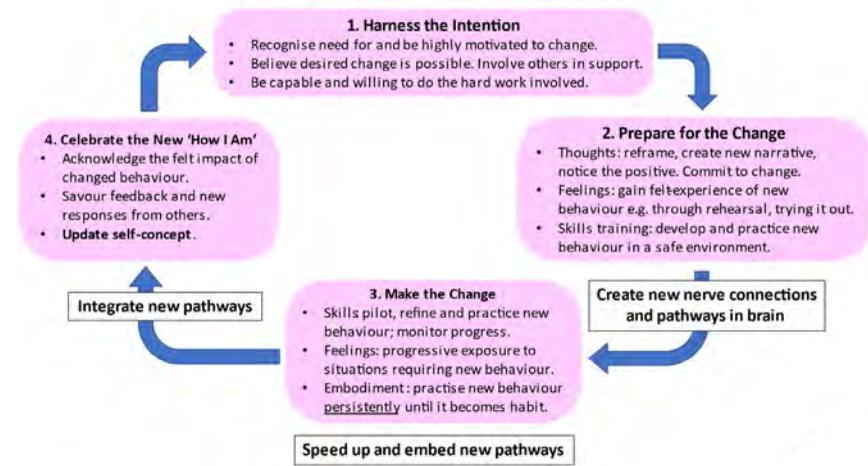
Alongside reflection, one of the most powerful behaviours we can adopt is a mindful awareness practice, be it yoga, tai chi, meditation, centring prayer or walking in nature. The common element is developing the ability to focus attention on our bodily experience in the present moment. This has been shown to increase internal awareness and to strengthen the connections between brain cells, leading ultimately to more effective – wiser – behaviour overall. The great thing is that all these behaviours either contribute to or are directly involved in our work. So we have both the motivation and the opportunity to practise them on a regular basis – the key to embedding and integrating them into how we are as coach or supervisor.

*Love is 'a kind of respect, a sensitivity by one person to another's existence. To be shown love is to feel ourselves the object of concern.' (Alain de Botton)

TABLE 1: THE 8-S WISDOM FRAMEWORK FOR COACHES AND SUPERVISORS

Domain	8-S behaviours	A	Ideas for development	B
SELF	Self-aware In touch with and reflects honestly on innermost feelings, thoughts, strengths and limits, motives and behaviours	1. Mindfulness practice: enhance awareness of feelings and thoughts. 2. Biography: understand how you came to be how you are, your qualities, abilities and limits. Create an empowering self-narrative. 3. Motivation: Review the values and purposes that have underpinned your behaviour up to now. Are they aligned with how you are now?		
	Self-control Regulates and manages emotions; tends to optimism; responds constructively to difficult situations; takes care of self	4. Accept people and things as they are, not as you expect or want them to be. 5. Nurture equanimity. Don't take things personally. If triggered, take a breath pause and re-appraise before responding. 6. Stretch yourself though progressive exposure to specific challenges.		
OTHER	Social skills 'Other aware': socially sensitive; builds collaborative relationships based on trustworthiness, respect and equality	7. Treat others with respect and kindness ('as if you'll meet again'). 8. Connect through positive and effective communication. Be curious; listen a lot; leaven with humour. 9. In and outgroups: be open to other people's perspectives; honour difference and diversity. See through other people's eyes.		
	Supportive Treats others with empathy and compassion; supports and empowers them; shares experience appropriately	10. Stay present. Attune to the ways others reveal themselves and the systems they are part of. Avoid making judgements. 11. Humility: be honest about your own vulnerability and 'not-knowing'. If you make a mistake, be ready to say sorry. 12. Be compassionate towards yourself. Maintain your support network.		
CURIOSITY	Seek Insatiably curious, open to new experiences, ideas, ways of thinking and feeling, different perspectives	13. Strive for greater understanding, in particular about human behaviour, while recognising the limits of knowledge. 14. Question what you think you already know. Experiment with different ways of doing things. 15. Explore what fascinates you. Learn new skills; continue to refine and develop those you have.		
JUDGEMENT	Step Back Learns from experience by reflecting on feelings and thoughts evoked; changes behaviour accordingly	16. Reflect 'in action' and 'on action'. Note the play of reason and intuition. See the big picture; look for patterns/connections. 17. Seek feedback. Share and learn from your reflections with trusted others. 18. Actively develop and practise new, more effective ways of thinking and behaving.		
	Step Up Uses judgement and experience to make balanced decisions for the common good in complex, uncertain and unpredictable situations	19. Scrutinise your sense of right and wrong. Be aware of how your background values and biases may affect your judgement. 20. Approach decision-making systematically. Reflect on the consequences for all involved, now and into the future, with others if possible. Minimise causes of poor decision-making (e.g. stress, bias, decision-fatigue, overconfidence, going with the majority, deferral to authority, having a hammer and seeing nails...). 21. Be ready to act decisively and with courage.		
PURPOSE	Service Serves a higher purpose beyond the self for the common good	22. Let your actions be guided by love* and compassion for others and for the world we live in. 23. Learn from the wisdom of others: from the great spiritual traditions, philosophy and the arts; from leaders who have fought for justice; from doctors, teachers, fellow practitioners, family and friends. 24. 'Give with humility and generosity; receive with openness and gratitude.' (Daniel Siegel)		

The Cycle of Behaviour Change



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A NOTE ON BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

It may be argued that some of these proposals may work without an active focus on behaviour change, for example through accepting a particular situation for what it is or seeing things differently through a revelatory change in perspective. However, most require us to change our habitual behaviour in some way. One of the reasons such change may not become embedded is because it is hard work, requiring commitment and perseverance.

The physical equivalent is getting fit. Insight into the need and benefits of getting fit is an essential motivator and precursor, but in itself is not enough. We must put in the hours of hard graft over weeks and months as part of a structured programme to build muscle and strengthen the heart, reflecting on and evaluating our performance as we go along.

Similarly, to change our behaviour is to 'rewire' our brains. Like learning a language or a musical instrument, to develop our professional expertise we must create new nerve connections and build them into new neuronal pathways. Through continual use, these get insulated and recalibrated, speeding up the signal transmission by up to 3,000 times, in effect turning them from side roads into trunk roads and motorways. Finally they become integrated into our sense of self and how we are in the world, part of how we and others see us.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Henry Campion is an independent coaching co-visor. He is a qualified doctor, counsellor, executive coach and coach supervisor, with a particular interest in how contemporary research can help us understand more about the relational aspects of coaching.

www.henrycampion.com

SUPERVISION FOR ALL? THE AC EXPLORES HOW TO OPEN UP ACCESS ACROSS THE GLOBE

As part of its ongoing commitment to advance coaching in business and society, the Association for Coaching (AC) launched a Professional Reflective Practice Discovery series in October last year as an ESG* initiative for AC community who to experience this different form of coach supervision. Here, supervisors facilitating the groups share their stories about the powerful, lasting impact of being involved in professional reflective practice.

PAUL

After I qualified as a supervisor, I began to think about how I could put my new and developing skills in service of wider society. My conclusion was that there is a percentage of coaches globally who do not undertake supervision and, in some areas across the world, there may be accessibility or cultural reasons why coaches do not engage in professional reflective practice. We approached the AC to identify if there was a genuine need for this and I was delighted with the support that the AC gave us with this pilot.

For me, supervision is an opportunity for supervisors and coaches to reflect on our practice and learn together. This is often deeper than self-reflection. Where better to learn than with coaches who are operating in more diverse cultures than I am used to? I had collaborated with people from diverse backgrounds before and I was approaching this supervision space with excitement for learning as well as trepidation over creating great connectivity.

My approach to entering each session was of complete curiosity. I was learning about others' practices and the cultures that they work in. In our introductory session, I noticed that people entered the space at different start times. This would sometimes unsettle me, particularly if the group was already in the flow of conversation. I learned to expect the unexpected and understand the models of the world through which people view supervision. Ironically, this can be liberating as it caused me to stay very alert.

Approaching the space in this curious way created a real focus on ensuring that I was using the words and terms the coach used; that may sound simple, but it allowed the coach and I to understand the context that was being described. This added to both of our awareness. It was important to slow down the pace of the session to ensure that I could notice what was occurring for others and keep a check that my own behaviours were encouraging reflection.

As a supervisor, it reinforced the importance of patient curiosity, understanding and learning. It was also inspiring to begin to understand the cultures that others operate in and other coaches' journeys. Through patient awareness we could reach an understanding to help them support others through our learning together. When I first thought about this as an idea, I had visions of us being inundated with coaches all around the world wanting to get access to supervision. As a global coaching community, I believe there is work to do to ensure that coaches everywhere – whether operating part-time, full time or as leader coaches – can experience professional reflective practice to enhance their own practice with clients and to wider society.

CHRISTINA

Before we embarked on this programme, I felt apprehensive and excited. This was a new experience supervising a culturally diverse group of coaches, with different experiences and coaching styles. But equally, I was excited by the learning I would benefit from through being a part of this process.

Our first session was instrumental to our success. Any apprehension I felt disappeared quickly as I got to know my group and we worked together on creating a safe and flexible space to explore the work that mattered most in our future interactions.

I took a lot of learning from this experience; I was reminded of many of the familiar challenges that we all face as coaches. For example, the desire for coaches to want to help their clients and to give them the best experience. This desire can make the coach question their own capability and the value they bring. Additionally, I was reminded of the importance of contracting thoroughly at the start and throughout the coaching relationship, and of the challenges for those working as internal coaches.

But mostly I was reminded that regular supervision, CPD and reflective practice are the antidote to all these challenges.

'I found the contracting extremely thorough, which set the stage for support and challenge. Christina provided a blend of supervision that was both supervisee- and supervisor-led, which was very effective. Structure in the group sessions enabled all supervisees to be heard and my personal reflective thinking has been "alight". Thank you.'

ANDY

I approached this programme with a sense of optimism, excitement and hope to be able to be in the position to give something back to the global coaching community. These feelings were reinforced by the energy and enthusiasm that came from those attending the launch session.

For me, I was looking to create some space for connecting and learning; working as an internal coach and coach supervisor in a large organisation has provided me with a wealth of coaching clients and experiences to reflect and learn from, and this initiative provided an opportunity to extend this.

Three of the four coaches assigned to my supervision group attended the initial connecting/contracting session. My aim for the session was to build a sense of connection for the coaches alongside setting the contract for our work together. I felt that the space worked well for connection, as each coach was happy to introduce themselves and talk openly about their experiences and current coaching practice.

During these discussions, it emerged that there were varying degrees of coaching experience amongst the attendees, and this range of experience worked well from a discussion and engagement perspective. Yet, I sensed that it also provoked questions from the attendees on whether they were in the right place. My response to this was that the connection in itself was of value, and that the practice of coaching comes from a point of connection, with this supervisory space becoming an emergent space to be able to reflect.

The first session took place and was attended by one coach only, with one no-show. The coach felt that supervision was not for them and the other attendee, who had stated in the contracting session that they were not currently engaged in any coaching practice, had decided to withdraw from the group. We therefore continued the journey on a one-to-one basis.

My reflections are that for this connected, reflective space to be sustainable and of value, further consideration needs to be given to the following aspects.

- Building understanding of the coaching supervisory space: establishing greater clarity for coaches who may wish to engage with this level of support by promoting an understanding of whom the coaching supervision space is for and whom it is not for.
- Establishing and gaining commitment from coaches: while the programme itself was intended to be in service of coaches who would not ordinarily have access to coaching supervision due to cost or availability, in practice it was coaches with established businesses who attended the sessions. If we were to look at introducing a small fee from those able to contribute, on the basis that this was enabling the provision of coaching supervision for those less able to pay or access supervision, then it could have the effect of expanding the mission and intent of the programme beyond the organisers to the wider membership of the AC itself.

Following the success and feedback of the professional reflective practice discovery series, which ran from October 2022 to February 2023, and with the contribution of the supervisors, the AC is excited to be planning another series to support the coaching community. Interested in learning more about this unique series? Please get in touch with Victoria Leath, the AC's head of international growth/head of corporate membership and accreditation at victoria@associationforcoaching.com.

*ESG needs explaining somewhere at the bottom: Environment, Social, Governance



Dr Joan Swart



MENTAL HEALTH AND COACHING

In the first of a new regular column from the AC's Mental Health Special Interest group **Dr Joan Swart** reminds us that our world is stressful – and appears to be growing more so. Every edition we will encourage a paradigm shift in how coaches consider their clients' mental wellbeing – and their own.

I am pleased to introduce this new regular Coaching Perspectives column, which will address the confluence of mental health and coaching – a topic of pressing relevance. As a coach and supervisor, it is my passion and purpose to support efforts for everyone to have access to ethical and quality care that optimises their unique strengths and opportunities. As such, with the aim of advancing knowledge and awareness among coaches, supervisors, trainers and other service providers in the coaching industry, the column is poised to promote ethical, competent and responsible practices that prioritise the mental health and wellbeing of individuals.

In the spirit of this edition's theme, coaching for all, mental health can be an empowering factor if treated with competence – or debilitating otherwise. An individual's mental health status is on a continuum ranging from optimum wellbeing to severely mentally disordered. The position today may be different tomorrow or in a year, depending on the person's situation, characteristics and resources. When there is little or no flexibility to respond to context, coachability may be contraindicated.

In other words, each person embodies a unique mental health and wellbeing situation that is shaped by their changing environment, personal experiences and inherent traits. This individuality underscores the importance of personalised approaches that cater to the specific needs and conditions of each client. In today's rapidly evolving world, people increasingly find themselves in environments characterised as brittle, anxious, nonlinear and incomprehensible (BANI). These stressful conditions invariably impact their relationships, performance and overall satisfaction, thereby aggravating their mental health concerns.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has reported a worrying 25% increase in the prevalence of clinical anxiety and depression worldwide. This troubling rise is further compounded by systemic gaps in care, leaving many individuals without the support they desperately need. Current statistics show that one in six adults

suffers from a mental health condition, with many more teetering on borderline levels. Consequently, we coaches are increasingly likely to encounter clients grappling with mental health issues – or indeed, to experience them themselves.

Against this backdrop, the role of a coach extends to include being a confidante, mentor and anchor of support for their clients. Therefore, it is incumbent upon coaches and their supervisors to equip themselves with reliable information and establish connections with competent experts to make informed decisions and provide the best possible service to their clients.

This column, therefore, aspires to serve as a resource for coaches, supervisors, trainers and other service providers in the coaching industry. Each edition, a different expert will delve into a different theme, providing their knowledge, experience and advice to help practitioners understand and navigate the specific aspect of mental health in their practice. This approach aims to foster a community of well-informed, empathetic practitioners who can effectively address the mental health concerns of their clients.

Mental health is an important part of overall wellbeing, and life coaches can play a valuable role in helping clients with mental health issues. However, it is important to note that life coaches are not mental health professionals and should not provide therapy or counselling. Instead, life coaches can help clients by providing support, encouragement and guidance as they work to improve their mental health.

How life coaches can best approach mental health issues with clients

- Educate yourself about mental health. As a life coach, it is important to have a basic understanding of mental health issues. This will help you to better understand the challenges that your clients are facing and how you can best support them. There are many resources – books, websites and courses – available to help you learn more.



- Understand and apply the three Cs of coaching.
 - Practise within the limits of your professional competence.
 - Address the specifics of your practice, including any mental health needs of your client in the coaching contract.
 - Always act within the best interests of your client.
- Be supportive and non-judgemental. It is important to create a safe and supportive environment for your clients to talk about their mental health issues. Let them know that you are there to listen without judgement and that you will support them in any way you can.
- Encourage your clients to seek professional help if needed. If your client is struggling with a mental health issue that is beyond your scope of practice, encourage them to seek professional help from a therapist or counsellor. You can provide them with resources to help them find a qualified mental health professional.
- Help your clients develop coping skills. There are many coping skills that can help people manage their wellbeing. Life coaches can help their clients develop these skills by teaching them relaxation techniques, stress management strategies and time management skills. However, a coach without credentials must not diagnose or treat mental health disorders.
- Motivate your clients. One of the most important things that a life coach can do is to motivate their clients to take action. Help

them to set goals, develop a plan and take steps to achieve those goals.

This column is a response to the ever-evolving mental health landscape and the mounting pressures individuals are facing globally. This platform is intended to raise mental health awareness within the coaching industry, nurturing a culture of empathy and understanding. It aims to enhance coaching practices by providing the tools to navigate mental health intricacies, promoting responsible, competent and ethical practices. Recognising that coaches may also grapple with their own mental health issues, in future editions this column will provide self-care resources and guidance. This focus underscores the importance of coaches' wellbeing for effective client support.

Join us in this journey towards a more enlightened, empathetic coaching industry. Despite our world's complexities, with the appropriate tools and understanding we can navigate it together, fostering support for both our clients and ourselves.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Joan Swart is a forensic psychologist, executive coach and AC-accredited supervisor. She has authored many research articles, book chapters and books – including the latest under the AC banner, *The Coach's Casebook: Skills, Tools, and Techniques for Effective Coaching*.



Marie Faire

BEING BRAVER

Do we face what's in the room?

As a consultant and coach, when invited to work with an organisation that was dysfunctional, I always preferred to work in the aggressive cultures rather than the so-called 'nice' ones. In the nice ones, the senior people surrounded themselves with compliant people who wouldn't say boo to the proverbial goose. Give me 'in your face' anytime.

These days, I am privileged to work with scores of wonderful coaches and coach supervisors, and in doing so I learn a lot from them all – not least when I get to observe them working with clients.

Recently, there have been several occasions where I have noticed something similar to this conversation between two women:

Client: 'I don't believe I can do that...'

Coach: 'How come?' (good question)

Client: 'I guess it is about not feeling worthy.'

Pause

Coach: 'So what do you think you can do instead?' (a safe question)

During feedback I was curious to know what had stopped the coach from enquiring further about their coachee's self-worth. Had they mis-heard? Had they not recognised that this was (almost certainly) the root issue?

On each occasion, the coach had noticed the significance of their coachee's answer, but were fearful of 'going there'. They were uncertain that this was appropriate and reticent to 'open a can of worms'.

If a coach is on the Drama Triangle, then more often than not they will be so as a rescuer: they will avoid conflict and upsetting people with difficult observations.

In my opinion, they need to be braver. They need to not be afraid, and to name, and work with, what is already in the room.

In May this year, in a webinar interview Susie Orbach – of FIFI fame (Fat Is a Feminist Issue) – was addressing psychotherapists about how they needed to not be afraid of bringing the political into the therapy room, because 'the personal is political'. This slogan, used in the feminist movement in the late 1960s and as the title of the paper by Carol Hanisch in 1970, describes how the issues faced by women were inextricably linked to their social and political oppression.

'Integrity is choosing courage over comfort; choosing what is right over what is fun, fast, or easy; and choosing to practise our values rather than simply professing them.'
- Brené Brown

They still are.

If we as coaches and coach supervisors are serious about the democratisation of coaching and encouraging equality and social justice, then I believe it is imperative that we understand – and act on, whenever we can – the principle that what is in the room is legitimate territory.

Systemic oppression in all its forms – intersectionality, climate change and beyond – and indeed almost all the ills that the world faces are, many would argue and I would agree, the result of unfettered capitalism.

And they are in the room. What we do with them is up to us.

David Whyte implores us all to be 'half a shade braver'.

So do I.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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

thebeyondpartnership.co.uk



Keith Merron

COHORT COACHING FOR LEADERS

I work each month with a small, select group of leaders to offer tools, techniques and learning experiences that generate heightened leadership skills. Here's what participants experience:

- Significant improvement in their ability to lead teams and organisations.
- Enhanced problem-solving and decision-making capabilities.
- Greater flexibility to fit one's own leadership style to the situation at hand.
- Improved effectiveness in managing the performance of others.
- Accountability and support to deliver on commitments from one session to the next.
- Heightened ability to inspire commitment and shared responsibility for results.

These goals are achieved by exposing participants to a universal set of principles of high-performance leadership and helping them embody these principles over time. These principles include: looking at the organisation as a system; gaining alignment with teams, strategically and tactically; developing trust; the importance of honesty and openness; synergy and collaboration; leadership as an expression of integrity; courage and risk-taking.

The group meets monthly for three hours. Sometimes I also coach each participant individually. Sessions revolve primarily around 'cases' or situations that participants bring, enabling everyone to explore ways of strengthening their leadership effectiveness in real-time situations. Common themes are explored, and principles and powerful ways of looking at leadership are offered. Through creating a confidential, open environment for deep exploration, inquiry and dialogue, insights for leading naturally unfold.

The advantages of this process are many.

1. There is this sense that everyone is pulling together for the shared cause of becoming a better leader. Each time we work on a case, the target participant walks away with a clear 'to-do'. They commit to the assignment and then come the next time to report to the group, so the group members hold each other accountable.
2. Participants build practices and perspectives over time. Sometimes we return to the perspectives, as they are relevant. In all cases, members deepen their capacity over time.
3. Principles of leadership are organically woven into the process. We explore a particular theme of leadership for a while in the meetings, and then participants share cases where that theme is relevant. We pick the cases where a participant has the most 'heat' or urgency,

and then discuss them, offering guidance and feedback and integrating the principles that were earlier discussed.

While the learning experience is often quite powerful and profound, it comes with a few meaningful challenges. It is not for a coach who prefers a high degree of control or structure. I am often facilitating the learning process, during which I get some people strutting their stuff, some being arrogant and some who are quite reserved. My job is to navigate the natural dynamics that happen in groups and help the group through. Also, often, participants resort to giving advice and – as we all know – advice can be cheap. Part of what I do in these groups is to help people learn how to coach rather than advise. This becomes an important string to the leader's bow, one that is developed over time. Sometimes, a participant 'in the spotlight' gets frustrated or defensive and my job is to help them open up.

All this is done in 'real time'. Beyond the beginning of each meeting, where I'm shaping some form of teaching, and beyond the consistent process, the rest is highly unscripted. When I'm one-on-one as a coach, I can navigate and guide the process easily. But with a group... well, it is not so easy. People have their own agendas and own needs, and my job is to navigate them well such that they learn. There are many times in each meeting I make a not-so-obvious judgement call. Do I call this person out? Do I ask someone to give space? Do I pull someone in? Do I offer my own view or pull from the group?

In the end, however, I've found this to be the most powerful leadership learning process I've ever seen, and I continue to refine my approach over time. I highly recommend it to anyone who wants to branch out beyond the typical boundaries of coaching. The process is quite adaptable and there are no absolutes about how to utilise it. I have evolved my process over time, and I suspect you can do the same too.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Keith is the founder and managing partner of Leadership Pathways, a consulting and leadership development firm dedicated to helping organisations achieve high performance and industry leadership. He has more than 37 years of experience of assisting executives and managers. He received his doctorate from Harvard University, where his studies spanned human and organisational development. He has published numerous professional journal articles and is the author of six books on human and organisational change, including The Art of Transformational Coaching. Twice yearly, he offers a workshop to coaches on the subject. Learn more at artoftransformationalcoaching.com



Robert Biswas-Diener



Christian van Nieuwerburgh

THE NEED FOR POSITIVE PROVOCATION

Now is not the time to sit on our laurels, say **Robert Biswas-Diener** and **Christian van Nieuwerburgh**. We must ask ourselves and our clients novel, relevant and provocative questions to continue learning as a profession.

GOOD ENOUGH AND GETTING BETTER

The profession of coaching is maturing. Fewer than two decades ago, coaches worked mainly by phone, had to explain how they were different from sports coaches, and membership of professional associations was in the mere thousands. Today, we have arrived; coaching is a multibillion-dollar industry, and people worldwide now recognise its role and its benefits. Perhaps it is in this context that we can start to have a more ambitious conversation about expanding the reach of coaching. How can we make it more widely accessible? We have proof of concept, we've had a successful launch, and now, it's time for a larger roll-out.

To say that we have arrived is not to suggest that there isn't room to improve. On the contrary, now that we are here and have been broadly accepted, we are responsible for ensuring that we are being as effective as possible. It is time to level up our services as we seek to institute them more widely. From this perspective, now is an opportune time to reflect on our fundamental assumptions about how coaching works, what coaching is and what we consider 'best practice'. So that we can be certain, scholars in the field of coaching psychology are investigating these issues by carrying out research. Scientific scrutiny of coaching is as important now as it has ever been. We must prove to our clients that there is a solid base of evidence behind our practice and continue to learn, grow and develop as a profession.

POSITIVE PROVOCATION

To improve the practice of coaching, it makes sense to engage in the same process that we use to support our clients: positive provocation. When we refer to a provocation, we acknowledge that it can come in many forms. Some provocations are questions; for instance, when we ask clients how others might view them or – more boldly – if we ask, 'What if that were not true?' In other cases,

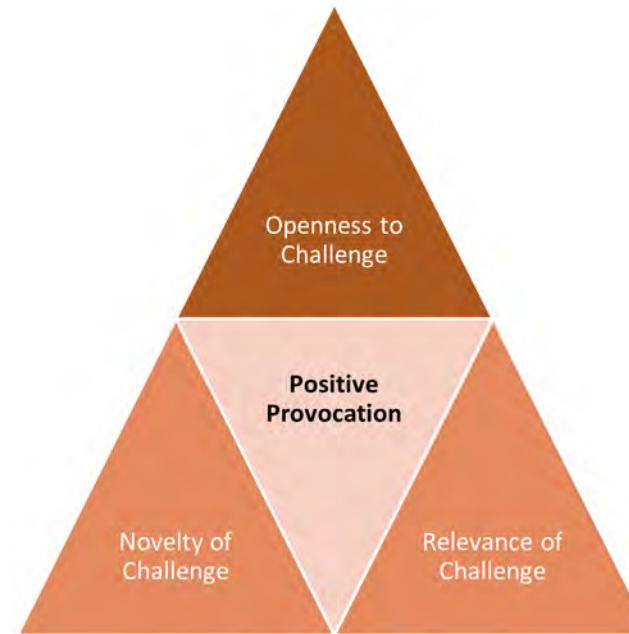
provocations can manifest as comments and observations, such as when we point out that a client has conveniently omitted an important fact when discussing a topic. Each of these provocations is designed to shift the client's thinking.

Dictionary definitions of the word 'provocation' imply something negative. To provoke someone means calling them out to fight, purposefully unsettling them or making them uncomfortable. In coaching, we do a kinder, more gentle version of this, where we challenge clients to adopt new perspectives, question their own assumptions, and take stock of what they know and what they do not. Do we, as a profession, need to turn our provocations inwards?

Unpacking the concept of positive provocation can yield insights into how this process is effectively accomplished. We argue that positive provocation contains three crucial elements; two are properties of the provocation, and one is the property of the client. First, there is the relevance of the provocation; whether we challenge a client with a question or comment, the challenge must be central to the issues the client cares about, and it must also be associated with the agenda for the session. Next is the novelty of the provocation; here, coaches must engage in some theory of mind in which they make educated guesses about what the client knows and does not. For example, if a client tells you that they are considering a job offer with a company based in Dublin, it is not particularly helpful to ask them about the pros and cons of the job. There is a high degree of probability, bordering on certainty, that the client has already considered the potential pros and cons. Instead, the coach must ask a question the client is less likely to have considered. For instance, 'How certain do you need to be before you make a decision?'

Crucially, both qualities are necessary for a positive provocation. A familiar challenge does not stretch the client like a novel one does. Similarly, an irrelevant challenge can fall flat and may damage rapport with the client. In turn, both elements must interface with

an aspect of the client – namely, the client's openness to being challenged. Even the most relevant and novel provocations will go nowhere if the client does not feel safe, is not reflective or is not ready for change.



RE-THINKING COACHING

As coaches, we can use the same positive provocations that work for our clients to reconsider our own practices. We will provide two examples here:

1. Why ask why?

Seasoned coaches will be aware of the widespread prohibition against asking 'why?' questions. This unwritten rule is not enshrined in the core competencies of professional associations, but it is frequently taught in coach training. Sceptics of asking 'why?' argue it can sound judgemental and lead clients to respond defensively.

In a recent article in the International Journal of Coaching Psychology, Ian Day traces the roots of this professional norm. Day reports that he found no single source for this practice. Early influences on coaching, such as John Whitmore, offer several cautions about 'why?' questions, but none suggest that the practice should be widely prohibited. Day argues that the 'why?' issue is much ado about nothing and that asking 'why?' can often be helpful.

In this instance, the positive provocation might be to shift the central question from 'Should coaches ask why?' and transform it into 'When should coaches ask why?'

2. Is Eureka a bad word?

One of the most-used metrics to measure the success of a coaching session is client satisfaction. The truth is, sessions in which clients have had a so-called 'aha moment' will generally feel satisfying to clients. Coaches and clients revel in the joy of a client's fresh insight. However, is there any evidence that these insights are actually helpful for the client?

Research on 'aha moments' consistently reveals that they feel true because they appear suddenly. It turns out that information that is easy to call to mind, such as your date of birth, feels more true than information that requires some searching, such as your grandmother's date of birth. In one study, researchers had participants attempt to figure out the trick behind a professional magic act. In this study, 37% of the incorrect solutions felt like aha moments. This figure suggests that, at least in the case of card tricks, 'aha moments' are not always correct.

This study, and others like it, are enough to serve as a caution against uncritically accepting and celebrating flashes of client insight. Clients love to have them, and as coaches, we love to be in the room when they happen, but it also makes sense to analyse these flashes of insight later in the conversation to double-check if they are useful.

As a profession, coaching has been incredibly successful. We have been making a positive difference to the lives of our clients, even through the Covid-19 pandemic. But the greatest risk to our profession is complacency. What was best practice in 1990 is not necessarily effective today. If we are to continue to provide high-quality support to our clients, we must ask provocative questions about our professional practices, the purpose of our work and the philosophy that underpins our craft.

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.

BOOK REVIEWS

ECOLOGICAL AND CLIMATE CONSCIOUS COACHING

Lorna McDowell is moved by this book's power to draw you in and reconsider your role in relation to climate change. The invitation is to dive right in...

The subtle power of this book is in its experiential, human-centred style, centred around deep sharing of a seven-day journey of 60 coaches and thought leaders from around the world opening up and working with uncomfortable information and possibilities through facilitated dialogue. As the reader, once I had settled into the style I felt powerfully connected, feeling as though I was a participant in the room, witnessing and experiencing the shifts of the group coaching journey, with the benefit of going at my own pace and being able to stop and reflect on certain aspects before moving on. Above all, it's a compelling experience.

Readers explore five distinct 'eco-phases' of a development cycle: eco-curious, eco-informed, eco-aware, eco-engaged and eco-active. We are invited to engage with an expanding reveal, meaning making and reframing around the notion of this macro theme. It is human nature to disconnect from our ultimate fears, and our extinction is a powerful force in human thinking and behaviour. At some level, we all impulsively disconnect and resist a relationship with the very certainty of our own individual demise, while the notion of a collective demise of our species seems unfathomable – and yet here it is. Therein lies the impact of this book. An Anam Cara (Irish for 'soul-friend') accompaniment into gracefully being with fragility. A space to be with who we are; where we have come from; what we are part of; and what we have not spent time with.

However, it is far from all doom and gloom! Throughout the process there is an expanding ripple of energy in depth and breadth, from dialogue topics to poetry, opening up new channels of thought and fusing subtle interconnections. The process helps the participants to shift attention and to see, be and do in new ways: to 'take off the strait jacket and blinkers' and to recognise some additional resources for change. Within this, there is an acceptance of being comfortable with possibility and with not-knowing. In finding peace in respectful endings and developing a new joyful discipline, hope and fullness emerges.

I have long witnessed the power of dialogue spaces and attest to the design and power of this courageous intervention. Like the editors of this book, I feel strongly

TITLE: *Ecological and Climate Conscious Coaching: A Companion Guide to Evolving Coaching Practice*

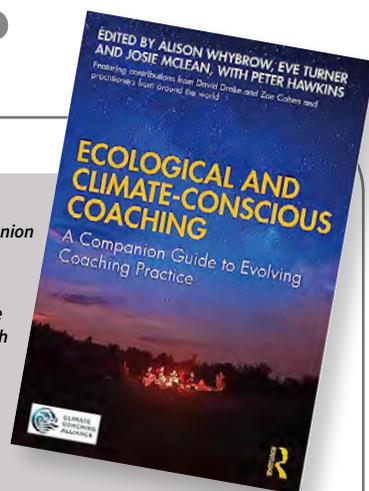
EDITORS: Alison Whybrow, Eve Turner and Josie McClean, with Peter Hawkins

PUBLISHER: Routledge

PUBLICATION DATE: November 2022

PAPERBACK PRICE: £30

ISBN: 978-0367722005



that this kind of work must be scaled fast, and that the way of coaching must evolve in tune with this need to connect with more people. This book is a veritable toolkit for curious coaches inspired to take action and evolve their experience of this journey by hosting space with their networks. Together, we create a web of hope and an energetic shift for humanity: midwifery for the next stage in existence. Let's take up the gauntlet!

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Lorna McDowell is a systemic transformation coach, supervisor and consultant. She helps organisations shift to more sustainable business models by releasing their social energy and bridging resources to develop untapped value for better business and better society. She is the founder of Xenergie UK, Ireland and Australia, and has developed an award-winning scalable approach taught through Xenergie's AC-accredited advanced diploma in systemic transformation. Lorna is the driving force behind worldXchange Foundation and Clusters.world, a not-for-profit action-learning experience bridging leaders across sectors in co-creating for the greater good of business and social impact.

www.xenergie.com; www.clusters.world

lorna.mcdowell@xenergie.com

THE MAGIC HAPPENS IN THE SILENCE

With a its warm and captivating style, this book's value is in how the message is conveyed as much as what the message is, says Sue Stockdale.

The skill of an experienced coach is often demonstrated in how they engage with a coachee in the first few moments of a new coaching relationship. A coachee will only begin to talk and open up if they feel safe enough to do so and have trust in the coach to hold the space. Rosie Nice has skilfully achieved this feeling in the opening few chapters of her book. I had a sense that she cares about us – as readers – and wants us to engage all our senses fully in the journey to learn the skill of reflective coaching.

There is a subtlety to how the author's knowledge is conveyed, and you get the feeling that every word has been carefully selected to provoke thought and to instil a belief within the reader that the book's 'MAGIC' process is easy to apply to oneself as well as to clients. It reminded me of the excitement and joy I felt the first time I set eyes on the box containing an iPhone. You are not just opening a box: you are being welcomed inside, with every part of the opening process being a multi-sensory experience that has the customer at the heart of its design.

It was the same with this book. From the font size (large enough to make it easy to read) and use of white space, to the diagrams and structure of the chapters (in the form of questions), the reader is ably guided from one step of the process to the next with an ease and confidence in the writing that stands out from many other coaching texts I have read in recent years, and one that others could learn from.

There are 15 coaching questions that make up the MAGIC methodology, based around the book's chapters, and in each case more information is provided to provoke thought, as well as an overall structure to run a coaching session using these questions. For example, chapter eight is question six, and is focused on aspirations. The question we are invited to consider: what has stopped you crossing this bridge before now? The reasoning behind asking that question is then explained, along with sub-points on broader aspects related to why people avoid taking action – such as fear of failure, fear of change or fear of being found out.

While the more experienced coach may reflect that the MAGIC coaching methodology is nothing different to many models

TITLE: *The Magic Happens in the Silence: A guide to the art of reflective coaching*

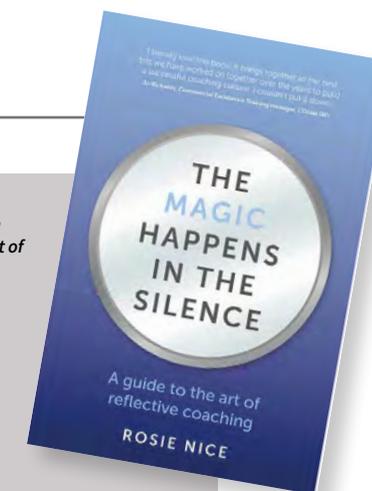
AUTHOR: Rosie Nice

PUBLISHER: Rethink Press

PUBLICATION DATE: 2022

PAPERBACK PRICE: £17

ISBN: 9781781337059



that already exist in the coaching industry, such as GROW or CIGAR, what I liked about this methodology is that it is all about the questions – and that's something that coaches often struggle with. Often coaches want to have the 'powerful question' up their sleeve to provoke 'aha moments'. However, what this book conveys well is that coaching is not just all about the question – it reminds us clearly that other things matter: creating the silence and space to listen, and for the magic to happen. In other word, it's not all about the coach and the questions you ask, but how the coach enables the client to do the work that will catalyse transformation within them.

I'd recommend this as a read for both those new to coaching and the more experienced coach, as a way of being reminded that lightness of touch in coaching can be very powerful indeed.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Sue Stockdale is an AC-accredited master executive coach and coaching supervisor. She has been a coach for over 25 years, working with senior leaders in corporates and not-for-profit organisations around the world. Sue has written and co-authored many books including a memoir, EXPLORE: A Life of Adventure. Sue hosts the Access to Inspiration podcast, ranked by Listen Notes as one of the top 10% most popular shows globally.

www.suestockdale.com

AC UAE Conference

Performance. Culture. Mastery.



The Association for Coaching (AC) has been working in close partnership with all of our community in the UAE to bring you the premier workplace coaching and leadership event of 2023: *Coaching in the Workplace 2023*, on the 7th September, in Abu Dhabi.

This conference will be a great opportunity for all of us to learn, share insights and grow our networks, so if you're in the UAE please do join us,

September 7, 2023 Abu Dhabi

We're going to Abu Dhabi, because we can see the growth of the coaching market there, and the passion within our local networks to advance and inspire coaching within the workplace and beyond.

Advancing coaching in business and society, worldwide

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A festival filled with events and programs which will help capture the essence of what creativity is and inspire us all to harness it within our coaching practice.

The Creative Fest will be an opportunity for you to explore the concepts of play and practice and to delve into lots of the insightful research that underpins creativity in coaching. It will also be an opportunity to explore self-creativity, engage curiosity and experiment with different tools and ideas.

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COACHING OUTDOORS

Clare Manning road tests a practical gem of a book that shows us how nature can enhance our coaching sessions on multiple levels.

Well, this is a delightful book if ever there was one. Just reading it makes you feel more connected to nature, and that's before you step outside and try one of the many activities offered in it.

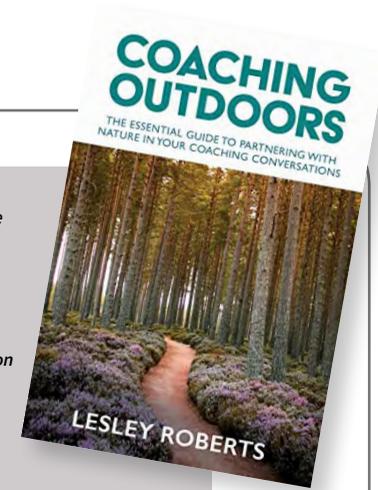
It is full of beautiful quotes, such as 'Nature is not a place to visit. It is home', by poet Gary Snyder.

Lesley Roberts helps us to understand our time-honoured place in nature and to recognise that this connection has been eclipsed by our current way of engaging with the world; she reassures us that, thankfully, people are beginning to reconnect with nature, particularly since the Covid pandemic, where outdoor spaces were safer than indoor ones.

Roberts proposes that we are wired to protect and defend what we love, so if we can help clients reconnect with nature by experiencing it during coaching, they are more likely to want to make changes to save the planet – yet another way coaches can contribute to the climate change agenda.

She clarifies there are many different dimensions to coaching outdoors. It can be as simple as moving your conversation from indoors to outdoors, all the way through to allowing nature to co-create the session. Either way, the minute you step outside you are in a three-way relationship, with nature sharing the load. A session can be delivered sitting or walking outside, or through a combination of the two. You can be together in the same outdoor space for face-to-face sessions or apart and outside for telephone sessions.

The book is full of useful, simple activities to use when self-coaching or with clients. These are all aimed at helping us draw on the innate wisdom of nature as we reflect on our goals, challenges and behaviours. I decided to road test one called 'what is nature offering you?' So, I set off on my daily walk, lightly carrying a current challenge with me... Firstly, I recognised I had been hiding from my challenge – just like I had been hiding from the weather. I'm a blue skies and sunshine kind of walker, and today had dished up a snow blizzard, so I had to dig deep and stride out. Then, I noticed it really wasn't as bad as I'd feared. I wasn't that cold, that the birds were still singing that and there was no one else around. Finally, I noticed how transient the weather is. Yesterday I was reading this book in a sunny garden. Today, I'm surrounded by snow. Tomorrow: who knows... but it can't snow forever.



Title: *Coaching Outdoors: The essential guide to partnering with nature in your coaching conversations*

Author: Lesley Roberts

Publisher: Practical Inspiration Publishing

Publication date: 2022

Paperback price: £25

ISBN: 9781788603423

So, is my challenge solved? No. Does it matter? No, because I now have a new perspective on it and feel fine about facing it as it unfolds. Best short walk in a while – thank you Lesley!

The book is written as a complete guide to getting you up and running. Roberts encourages you to assess your own relationship with nature and create a portfolio of walks before inviting clients to experience a session outdoors. It contains checklists, back-up plan reminders, a risk assessment template and more, so readers will feel secure with their preparations and therefore able to focus fully, in the moment, with their client.

I really appreciated the way this book has been written and structured. It has inspired me to shake up my practice and offer outdoor sessions to my clients as an option. I highly recommend this thoughtful, uplifting, practical read. See what you think.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Clare Manning is an experienced coach, supervisor, mediator, trainer and facilitator. She has been working in the field for over a decade and specialises in leadership development, intercultural communication and wellbeing. She is co-editor of *Coaching Perspectives*.

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

THE READING ROOM

Lizzie Bentley-Bowers and Sarah David have selected books they've found particularly stimulating and relevant to the theme of coaching for all.

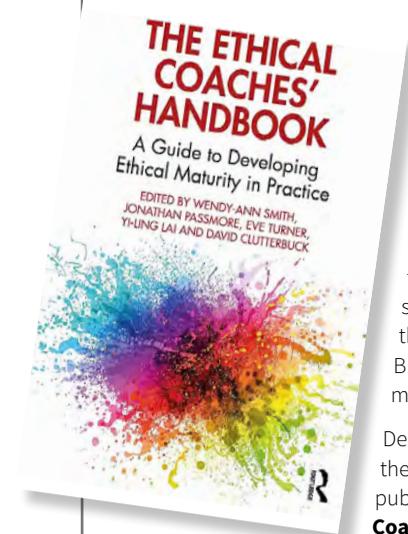
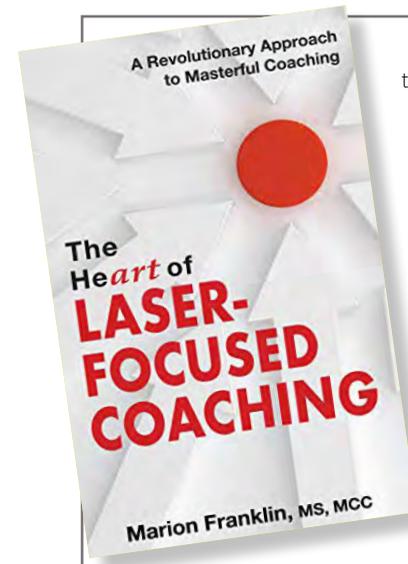
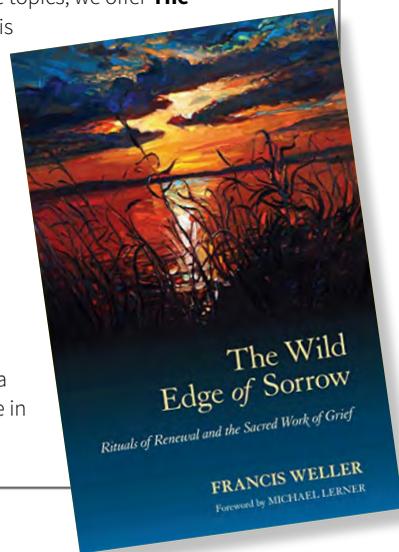
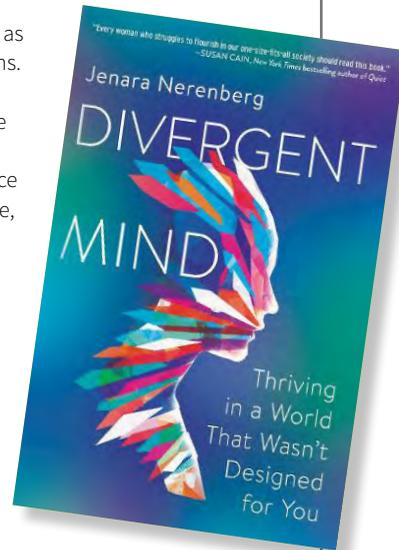
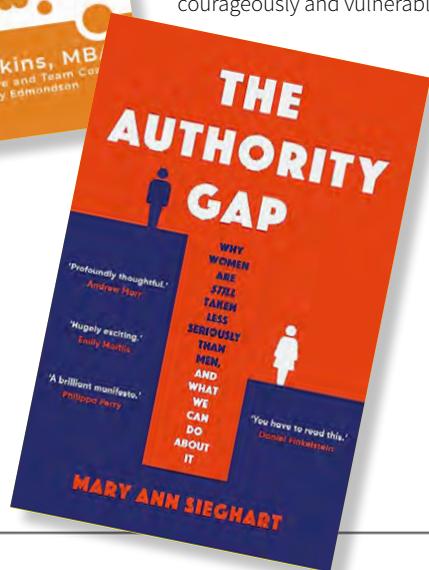
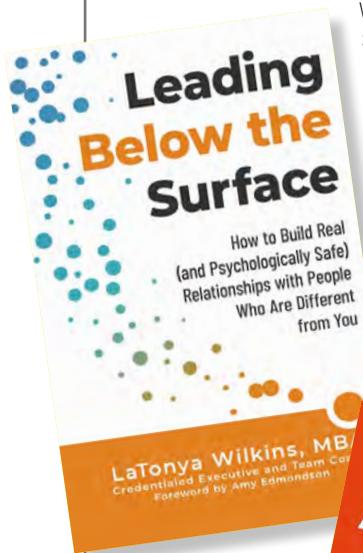
We have a belief that a coach's/leader coach's awareness and perspective is as crucial to the success of a coaching session as the structures, principles and content. There were at least 10 books we could have happily included in this edition, but we offer you a handful that we are finding valuable in raising our awareness of not only how lived experiences impact the coach-coachee relationship but also how our awareness of and respect for these experiences can increase the chances that our coaching conversations are fit for the present and future. As ever, the challenges in these books also provide a valuable source of insight, questions and reflections to take to supervision.

We open with **Leading Below the Surface** by LaTonya Wilkins as a resource for better understanding the work to be done as leaders and coaches as facilitators of equity, justice and change. Wilkins constantly offers questions for challenge in the book, and assiduously cites her evidence, making it one of those rare books to be both practical and grounded in research. She encourages us to look courageously and vulnerably

beneath the surface of ourselves as well as our work and organisations. We appreciate her call to take responsibility for the current state of leadership, offering REAL as a guiderail: to lead below the surface we need to be relatable, equitable, aware and loyal.

The Authority Gap by Mary Ann Sieghart illustrates how far we are from gender equity and how greater equity would benefit us all. Like Wilkins' book, it is a revealing and enlightening combination of research, lived examples and prompts for enquiry that anyone can use to challenge their own thinking and to offer challenge to others. **Divergent Minds** by Jenara Nerenberg extends this enquiry to the experience of neurodivergent women, giving the reader insight into our societal responsibility – and by extension our leadership and coaching responsibility – 'to capture the idea of one's temperament or neurological makeup being respected in the same way that we respect other core aspects of people'.

As a perhaps less acknowledged and explored, but certainly no less valuable, way into these topics, we offer **The Wild Edge of Sorrow** by Francis Weller. Covering individual, community and systemic loss and the impact of 'a flatline culture [that] avoids depth of feeling', Weller gives us the opportunity to step through the 'five gates of grief' to courageously and vulnerably meet ourselves and others in the full range of our pain as well as our possibility. Acknowledging these losses is a way of understanding our place in



the world and facing into the full range of the human experience, as well as living and leading through change, development and technological advancement in a way that 'honours soul and the soul of the world'.

To take the insights from these works into our coaching conversations, **The Heart of Laser Focused Coaching** by Marion Franklin offers both the overview of the 'anatomy of a coaching conversation' as well as a

detailed dive into the kinds of questions coaches ask, the cues for those questions, how to ask them, what to include or exclude and when to ask them. Franklin also explores the potential impact of context, noting that it is 'often important to provide context, otherwise the question can sound like it's coming from left field, can be perceived as judgemental, or just doesn't make sense'. This strikes us as a key consideration for coaches

and leaders working to respectfully hold space and appreciation for contexts and lived experiences. Franklin offers provocative questions for reflection alongside her insights, such as in relation to necessary directness. She encourages us to think about where we might soften the delivery rather than the message, echoing Brené Brown with her 'clear is kind' message.

Despite not yet having read the whole book, the recently published resource **The Ethical Coaches Handbook** is one we feel we would be remiss not to offer on these topics. Chapter nine, on supervision ethics, is particularly useful in relation to understanding the foundations of supervision and the ethical considerations in the relationship between coach and supervisor, as well as the ethical perspectives and questions the coach and supervisor might pay attention to during their sessions.

Peppered with insights, questions and quotes, this chapter alone would stimulate hours of reflection, and even more so when read in conjunction with the case studies towards the end of the book.

Mindful that by virtue of selecting only six books we cannot cover all perspectives of these issues, or all protected characteristics, we hope you find worthwhile stimulation for your coaching and leadership learning and reflection within this selection.

Please join us at the Reading Room live to reflect on these and other books relevant to the topics in this issue on [DATE TBC].

ABOUT THE REVIEWERS



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

sarah@thrive.com



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

lizzie@thecausewaycoaching.com

PODCAST REVIEWS

Suzy Hunt and Lisa Robyn Wood from the Coaching Cast share their top five podcasts on the topic of coaching for all.

The Coaching Show: The Democratisation of Coaching, in conversation with Christina Demetriades

(1 April 2021, 65 mins, Apple Podcasts)

The Coaching Show is a weekly podcast hosted by Christopher McAuliffe MCC and Alex Terranova PCC. Whether you are a veteran of the coaching industry, have your own practice or are new to professional coaching, The Coaching Show caters for all and brings some of the greatest minds in professional coaching together.

Christina Demetriades is a personal leadership coach/trainer and supervisor, who won an EMCC 2019 coaching award and undertakes a number of pro bono projects in the local and global community.

I love how this episode's recording has two locations – Cyprus and the United States. Even a few years ago that wouldn't have been an option, but online meeting platforms mean conversations can be had around the world now so much more easily, and this linked nicely for me to the theme of this episode. The conversation starts with a question: what does democratisation of coaching mean? Christina's perspective is focused on 'the move from c-suite availability to the streets'. She has seen coaching work as a methodology for many within the global community, and so feels it should help everybody – '[it] shouldn't be a luxury for a few, but a right for many.' I connected with this statement as a coach and as a volunteer mentor.

The conversation moves onto identity shifts for global leaders, specifically onto asking ourselves questions such as who I am, who I want to be, and how I create my impact. The ancient Greeks paid a lot of attention to their reputation after their passing: legacy what you leave behind, your imprint. Christina poses questions from the ancient Greeks: 'What if my descendant had a conversation with my ancestors? What would they say about me?' She then connects this with the role of a coach and the impact we have on others in our local or global communities. How do you start to give back to the wider community as a coach and in turn help the democratisation of coaching? A really powerful point.

Christina offers some answers: by caring, by investing our time, by offering our coaching to someone who can't afford it – all



simple ways of democratising coaching as well as gifting and raising awareness of the profession. Christina states that as coaches we are agents of change. Individuals don't exit coaching as the same person: they grow, transform and change, and that is a powerful outcome that everybody should have the opportunity to experience.

The latter part of the podcast explores climate change, social responsibility, a value-driven global society and the importance of EQ. One message in this section that stood out for me was bringing it back to legacy – both as an individual and as a coach. By putting your energy and efforts into activities aligned with your personal values you will create a positive impact far and wide.

This episode left me motivated, and I ended it feeling that I can make a contribution to creating the democratisation of coaching: it starts with me.

Our top five podcasts for you to check out this issue

1. **Empower World Coaching & Leadership Podcast**
2. **The Coaching Show**
3. **The Coaching and Mentoring Podcast**, The Wales Coaching Centre
4. **The Edge of Leadership** with Michael Molinaro and Gregg Thompson
5. **The Future of Coaching** with Rebecca Rutschmann and Anke Paulick

Available on Apple Podcasts and Spotify

The Coaching and Mentoring Podcast: S3 E3 Coach Tech – Sam Isaacson

(25 January 2023, 35 mins, Spotify and Apple Podcasts)

The Coaching and Mentoring Podcast is produced by The Wales Coaching Centre at the University of South Wales, which supports the development and growth of coaches through training, qualifications, conferences and their community of practice. Here, host Dave Tee talks to coaching consultant and coach supervisor Sam Isaacson about the impact and influence of technology in the practice, and wider industry, of coaching.

This was an interesting and insightful listen for me: someone who is dubious, and quite frankly uncomfortable, about the fast-growing world of artificial intelligence (AI). I am seeing and hearing a lot about the advancement of AI in the form of large language models and image-generating tools, but will admit that right now I'm averse to it and definitely don't want it to 'mess' with my passion and industry. Let's just say I, Robot tends to come to mind and I quickly shut off!

Isaacson guides us through four specific areas of tech in coaching:

1. Digital coaching platforms such as CoachHub (Isaacson's previous employer), delivering accessible coaching, from anywhere, to the masses.
2. AI: the use of AI for to conduct psychometric assessments and coach matching, to schedule coaching sessions and to deliver coaching outcomes for individuals (e.g., goal setting), creating space for humans to explore the deeper, more complex elements of coaching such as mindset and emotions.
3. Metaverse: coaching hosted in alternate realities, with individuals represented by avatars. Isaacson estimating that this format will be common by 2025.
4. Blockchain technology: the economics and security of coaching.

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.



Isaacson's message is that coaches need to be more receptive to and accommodating of change, not just to remain relevant but also to honour the wants and needs of our clients.

Isaacson makes comparisons to the way coaches initially reacted to the pandemic and our inability to coach in person. Prior to Covid it was typical to coach only in person, with little coaching being conducted virtually or over the telephone, but the pandemic forced many of us to rely on digital platforms. The initial reaction to the change was that it's impossible to deliver high-quality coaching remotely, and yet today the majority of us are now only coaching virtually. I myself deliver all my coaching via Zoom, Microsoft Teams or Google Meet, which gives me the incredible opportunity of coaching a variety of people globally, in multiple industries and cultures, and giving me the freedom to travel while I work.

I appreciated this listen as a challenge to my mindset: it gave me new perspectives, and encouraged me to be open-minded. However, I think I'll stick with the red pill and remain in reality for now. (Thank you for humouring another film reference and hello to all of my fellow Matrix lovers!).



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How Technology and AI are shaping Coaching

An AC Tech & Coaching Fest



The AC Tech in Coaching Fest is a virtual conference that focuses on exploring the intersection of coaching and technology. It brings together professionals, experts, researchers, and thought leaders to discuss and showcase the latest advancements, trends, and applications of technology in coaching.

This conference will be a great opportunity for all of us to learn, share insights and grow our networks, so be sure to join us in November via the link above!

9 - 10 November 2023 online

Participants can expect panel discussions, workshops, and demonstrations, on topics including: Virtual Coaching Platforms, Apps and Tools, AI, VR, online coaching and the ethical considerations.

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

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

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

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Introducing the new AC **Team Coaching Accreditation Scheme**



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

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