

OCTOBER 2023 | ISSUE 39

# Coaching Perspectives

THE ASSOCIATION FOR COACHING  
GLOBAL MAGAZINE



## Coaching in times of conflict and crisis

- The oasis of supervision: Erik de Haan
- Coaching and the AI employment revolution
- Where mediation and coaching coexist
- Managing mental health crises in clients
- How are you, coach? Fit your own mask first
- New column: equity, diversity and inclusion



ADVANCING COACHING IN BUSINESS AND SOCIETY, WORLDWIDE

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# Golden Table

Oak, solid, golden  
On the surface  
Just a table  
And yet, and yet  
Much more...

A vote of faith  
In the future  
For a time  
When we gather  
Again, drawing in...

Great minds, thinking  
True spirits, feeling  
Alike, alive, awake  
Convening, creating  
Inspiring plans hatching

Steaming soup simmering  
Hot bread baking  
Food, warmth, firelight  
Candles burning low  
Pulling us closer

Way out beyond  
The usual me-more-now  
Is this talk, cherishing  
Connection, our interneed  
Us-here-forever

And the magic  
That flows  
With inspiring purpose  
Beyond self  
A more beautiful future

It all starts  
With free spirits  
A spark, a glint in the eye  
And a golden table  
Full of the possible.

**Alister Scott**  
**18 October 2020**



*'The crisis of our time isn't just a crisis of a single leader, organization, country, or conflict. The crisis of our time reveals the dying of an old social structure and way of thinking, an old way of institutionalizing and enacting collective social forms.'*

*C Otto Scharmer – Theory U (2007)*

The world is starting to feel like it's in a constant state of crisis. As we noted in our previous edition, 'permacrisis' was the Collins Dictionary's 2022 word of the year – defined as 'an extended period of instability and insecurity, especially one resulting from a series of catastrophic events'.

We are seeing crises reaching unprecedented peaks: a global pandemic, the soaring cost of living, increasing levels of poor mental health – all against the backdrop of rapidly rising global temperatures and extreme weather, breaking records year-on-year.

Personally – as I'm sure for many – I can find it overwhelming and I often need to return to Julian Rotter's classic locus of control model to give myself a much-needed reminder that there's only so much I can myself control or indeed influence.

It seems appropriate, indeed urgent, that we consider this theme of crisis in *Coaching Perspectives* – and perhaps as we might with our clients, through exploration of our possible actions and reactions, to reframe crisis as opportunity: to act, to consider our agency, our role in what comes next.

Amongst such permacrisis globally, we see a marked rise in personal crisis – what our Deep Dive contributors in this issue, Rosie Evans-Krimme and Jonathan Passmore, refer to as the 'mental health pandemic'. Their piece reflects the latest thinking on the intersection between coaching and mental wellbeing, and offers valuable guidance for coaches on knowing our limits professionally and personally. Speaking to the latter, elsewhere in this issue Neela Pirwitz highlights the importance of coaches considering their own health and the potential for burnout.

Recently, and at pace, we see a new crisis rearing its head: that of humanity's relationship with the artificial intelligences we have created – a potential employment crisis, prompted by machines. What could the rise of AI mean for our working lives and even our very existence? Sam Isaacson believes that coaching can and should

play a pivotal role in ensuring humans take advantage of AI's undoubted benefits while mindfully navigating its many potential pitfalls.

In times of crisis we see a rise in conflict, the two arising in tandem. Conflicts of views, beliefs and values, exacerbated by the echo chambers of social media, are surfacing divisions in society, played out in identity politics and a rise in protest as individuals and groups seek to have their voices heard. In that context, this edition sees the launch of a new regular column that focuses on equity, diversity and inclusion; here Pooja Sachdev argues that we all need to build our capacity for working across differences, be they of identity, culture, narrative, or ways of being and thinking.

What of our role as coaches in navigating our clients through conflict situations in their workplaces or personal lives? Thomas and Kilmann showed that parties can enter a collaborative mode to resolve conflict. We hear views from two coaches who have experience in mediation: Tracey Fox shows us the similarities between coaching and mediation practices, while Selana Kong offers her PIN model for enabling clients to move towards a collaborative approach to differences.

In this edition we also wish to honour the huge contribution of Keri Phillips to the coaching profession. Keri sadly died in May following a short illness; yet his influence on our work lives on. In tribute we share an excerpt from *The Evolving World of Coaching*, an essay written not long before his death; his model considering the width and depth of coaching speaks directly to many of the challenges we face as human beings in the world today.

I hope you enjoy this rich edition of *Coaching Perspectives* as much as we have enjoyed assembling it. As ever, we welcome your thoughts, views and suggestions, as well as contributions: our January 2024 edition will focus on coaching leadership. If you have an idea please email [editor@associationforcoaching.com](mailto:editor@associationforcoaching.com).

Warm wishes,

*James Bridgeman*

Co-editor

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

**#4: Coaching in times of conflict & crisis**

**ABOUT DAVID LOVE**

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

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## Calling all prospective writers...

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

### January 2024 | Leadership coaching | Submission deadline: 15.11.23

How does coaching sit alongside other leadership styles? The evolution and challenges of the leader-coach; the synergy between leader-coach and team coach; leader-coach supervision. Leadership coaching using a wider ecosystem view; the development of strategic coaching. And what of coaches' self-development as leaders, given their influence on the leaders they coach? How should coaches develop their leadership integrity?

### April 2024 | 10-year anniversary of Coaching Perspectives: the past, present and future of coaching | Submission deadline: 15.2.24

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



## THE OASIS OF SUPERVISION IN TIMES OF CRISIS

‘Being Supervised: A Guide For Supervisees’ has recently been revised by [Erik de Haan](#) and is now available in second revised edition with Routledge. In an interview with co-editor [Clare Manning](#), Erik shares his thoughts on the stability of the profession and how to engage authentically with the process of supervision.

### What do you feel has changed in coaching supervision in the five years since this book was last revised?

The first development that springs to mind is the fact that supervision has become very acceptable and supported in many countries where it wasn't previously. In my country, the Netherlands, for example, people in many clinical professions, certainly in organisational professions, went to 'interview' – which is a kind of group supervision without a supervisor, where you help each other. This is not the same: there's nobody signing anybody off, there's no real rigour. And so that rigour of supervision is now much more accepted in the Netherlands and more widely in Europe.

For me the main example is the USA, though. Back in 2015, when I first launched the book in English, there wasn't much supervision in America to speak of, except in the social work and therapy professions – and that has completely turned around. They have a big training centre there, the CSA, and the ICF now recognises not just their own mentors, as they call them, but also supervisors explicitly. In terms of the practice of supervision, I don't think that much has changed. There's always new research and new methodologies. Maybe there's

also more understanding now for how hard it is for supervisees, how vulnerable and courageous they need to be.

### You describe supervision as a journey of self-discovery fuelled by uncertainty and insecurity. What are your thoughts on how we get out of our own way in supervision so that we can make the most of the process?

I had a session today where someone experienced high emotion in the group, but they stayed and they worked it through. There's also an element where you shouldn't be working with somebody if you don't feel a good chemistry, trust or attachment. So, on the one hand, you can be selective at the front end as that's important, but on the other hand, once you have committed to work with the supervisor, you need to work things through and become more and more open.

I'm also thinking about the fact that supervision often starts during training, and it's something that you must go to. You often can't choose the group you are in or the supervisor you are with. That makes it harder. Whereas later, in the marketplace, you can choose your supervisor yourself and that's very helpful.

### You talk about the importance of reflective practice and the significance of working emergently. What are your thoughts on the place of both in supervision?

In my experience, supervisees tend to settle into their own preferred way to prepare for every session. Some of them take me through a long list, while others just arrive and talk associatively. What I have found is that the first category of people, after a number of sessions, say, okay, well, this session I don't have so much and there's nothing going wrong. Now that could actually be one of the fruits of supervision: that they learn to handle lots of things by themselves and are self-supervising. And then they ask whether we can skip a session, make it shorter or have fewer sessions. Although I agree that fewer sessions might be a good idea, I also encourage them to stay with the session, not to walk away so soon, and to see what comes up or review a little bit how we have been working together. You usually go from one thing to the other and you still have a very valuable session.

I've also said to a few supervisees: if you don't have a lot going on why don't you bring your dream from the previous night to the session – that's usually very enlightening. Biographical background or dreams provide a backdrop against which we can achieve more depth when reverting to cases from practice. In the book we use reflective tasks and biographical questions to help readers create a rich canvas behind their supervision. I ask similar questions in my practice as a supervisor.

*Supervision is typically a profession that will be needed more in times of crisis, but should not itself be in crisis*

### You mention the power of endings and the importance of parting ways. As a supervisee, how do you know when it's time to move on?

That's a tough question. All clients are different. I've learned through my psychotherapy training that you need to start talking about the ending when you're about halfway through a commission. So, when an individual starts to talk about potentially ending the supervision, I assume that we might be just over halfway through. If I can see that somebody is moving into a different profession or that they have one more decade to practise, then I might say: why don't you do that decade with another supervisor? So the first hints towards an ending can come from either of us.

Then I try to be patient in terms of what our end date is. In longer-term individual supervision it may be more than a year later because it takes some time to think about endings and continuations, and the ambivalence surrounding them. Then you start talking about it more and you realise a coming-of-age feeling, of a mature person maturing further by leaving you, and that feels quite nice. Yet sometimes it can also be painful. There can be a lot of hurt and grief in the ending because somebody is really very attached to you. And after years of working together, somebody doesn't want to hear me suggest that it might be time to maybe look for another supervisor. So, I notice I am slowly getting better at talking about the ending with most supervisees.

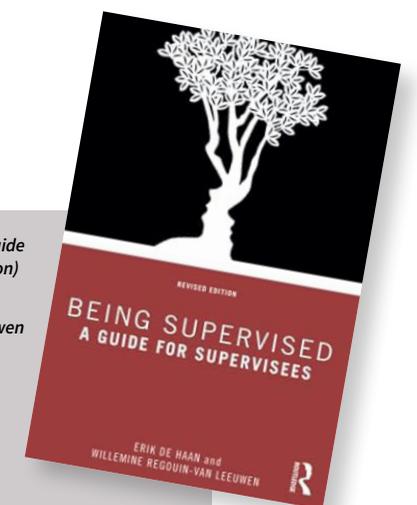
### What are your thoughts on supervision in times of conflict and crisis?

I think supervision is a signing off of the practice of another person, but underneath that it's holding the other person in a safe space so that they can bring the grime or stress from their work to a neutral and reflective environment. So, in times of crises of leadership, such as the ones we are experiencing currently in many areas – especially in the areas of climate change, war and so on – then we need more supervision because coaches are exposed to more crises. Supervision is typically a profession that will be needed more in times of crisis, but should not itself be in crisis. Medics in Ukraine, for example, may get in crisis mode themselves on the front line and then of course they still need a place where they are held because they're seeing so much traumatic material. So that's where supervision comes in and it's important that it stays calm and out of crisis.

### ABOUT ERIK DE HAAN



Erik de Haan is the director of the Hult Ashridge Center for Executive Coaching. He aims to support individuals in their search for what is right and just for themselves and for others in their organisations. He is a British Psychoanalytic Council registered psychodynamic psychotherapist with an MA in psychotherapy from the Tavistock Clinic; has (co-)authored more than 200 articles and 16 books; and sits on the editorial board of three journals. Erik is an Ashridge-, EMCC-, and ICF-accredited coach and supervisor.



**TITLE:** *Being Supervised: A Guide for Supervisees (revised edition)*

**AUTHORS:** Erik de Haan and Willemine Regouin-Van Leeuwen

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## COACH BURNOUT, AND HOW HELPING OTHERS CAN EXTINGUISH YOUR FLAME

How are you, coach? Join [Neela Pirwitz](#) in this sensitive exploration of coach burnout, how to notice it creeping up on you and what to do if you need to recalibrate.

Being a coach is an incredible privilege. Our days are built around supporting others to become their best selves and encouraging clients to resolve their trickiest situations.

While seeing clients overcome their fears, understand mental blocks and overcome blind spots can be very rewarding, it can also be very taxing. A coach often sees their client in very vulnerable states, which can carry a lot of weight. Depending on the topic, and the coach's history, this can weigh heavy on the coach's mind, even after the session. Additionally, coaches, like any other entrepreneur or employee, encounter those ubiquitous day-to-day challenges:

family, responsibilities around the house, taking care of themselves and somehow never having enough time to do it all.

As our work helps others towards living their best lives, and maybe having more coping tools at their disposal than the average person, it might seem that we would be less at risk of burnout. We should be able to manage ourselves at all times, and 'fix' ourselves quite easily, right? Better yet, we should be able to take such good care of ourselves that nothing stressful or overwhelming can happen to us. Of course, it is not as easy as that.

*The mental overwhelm caused by focusing on patients or clients, or caring for those around, us has its own term: empathy burnout*

Burnout is defined as prolonged periods of chronic stress that is not managed well, so it can impact just about anyone.<sup>1</sup> Coaching, like any profession, can be very stressful and depleting. This might be exacerbated by impostor syndrome. If a coach is struggling with stress and burnout-related symptoms it can easily feel like they are losing control. This opens the door to all kinds of intrusive thoughts: if I can't handle myself, how can I think I can help anyone else? Or, I must be a fraud if I want to guide others to live their best life when I can't even manage myself! But, the truth is, just like anyone else, coaches can face times of overwhelm and insecurity – and taking care of yourself is a very different discipline than helping someone else take care of themselves.

The mental overwhelm caused by focusing on patients or clients, or caring for those around, us has its own term: empathy burnout. Empathy burnout is especially common in people who provide guidance and emotional support to others regularly.<sup>2</sup> It can lead to disrupted sleep, irritability and anxiety.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, if not treated, burnout can lead to physical conditions such as cardiovascular disease or musculoskeletal disorders.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, we should not underestimate coach burnout. Rather, we should be prepared to prevent burnout from manifesting. To be able to prevent coach burnout, we need to be aware of the symptoms and know how to take action once we recognise them, plus keep ourselves accountable and check in regularly with ourselves to keep burnout away.

### AWARENESS

To be able to spot the symptoms of burnout, we need to be aware of them. Burnout symptoms can be divided into physical, emotional and behavioural symptoms.<sup>5</sup> The table below includes examples of what to watch out for.

If you are coaching a client and find yourself thinking that you might be on the verge of burnout, try not to let yourself spiral in the moment. Instead, take a mental note of the realisation and set aside time to reflect on it once you have a quiet moment to yourself. Doing so may feel difficult or overwhelming because of the time it will take out of your day – and the unwelcome discovery you might make – but do your best to be honest with yourself. Like with a cold, catching burnout early will be easier than having to treat it once it's in full effect.

There may be feelings of guilt that accompany the recognition of these symptoms. It can be uncomfortable to experience such setbacks as a coach and, just like our clients, we can hold ourselves to impossible standards. Unproductive thoughts can start to creep in: I can't allow myself to take a break – how will I help others if I'm out? How can I help others if I don't have control over myself? Am I just a big fake?

While this is understandable, I would like to encourage you to put things into perspective:

- If you take a break now, you might need a week or two to recover. How long would it take if you risked full burnout?
- What will be the long-term consequences of you taking the symptoms seriously, or alternatively disregarding them?

Try to be as honest as possible: you know yourself best, and every person is different, so try to see the symptoms in the context of you. That will make it easy to determine the actions you should take.

If you find yourself displaying symptoms of burnout you should always seek the advice of your primary care physician. While it is useful to be aware of what burnout can look like and what can be done to prevent it, burnout can have serious consequences on one's long-term health. Accordingly, it is best to be safe and see a doctor and/or mental healthcare professional who can help you contextualise symptoms and advise on the best treatment.

Physical symptoms	Emotional symptoms	Behavioural symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headaches</li> <li>• Fatigue</li> <li>• Compromised immune system</li> <li>• Change in appetite</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cynicism</li> <li>• Detachment</li> <li>• Decrease in motivation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-isolation</li> <li>• Decreased performance</li> <li>• Anger outbursts</li> <li>• Substance abuse</li> </ul>

## ACTION

After awareness of burnout symptoms come actions to prevent burnout. You will need to generate an action plan tailored to yourself and what is helpful to you. Don't let yourself be overwhelmed by thinking you need to include every possible activity into your new routine – doing something is always better than doing nothing.

Mostly, it will take time for the efforts to combat burnout to show their impact. But they can have long-lasting benefits and are worth implementing. Some useful practices to help prevent burnout are:

- **Yoga:** regular yoga practice can lower emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation, which are common predictors of burnout.<sup>6</sup>
- **Meditation:** mindfulness-based meditation can have a positive effect on all aspects of burnout.<sup>7</sup>
- **Having a strong social support system:** having supportive friends/family can help to prevent burnout.<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps also consider the coaching tools you use with clients. Which of these could help you decrease stress, reduce workload and re-evaluate priorities?

## ACCOUNTABILITY

Once a new routine is established, we need to stick to it. As many of us know from experience, intending to implement new habits is quite easy; following through is a very different story. Using *implementation intentions* can help with that. These allow us to plan the day, time and location of where we want to implement the habit. For example:

*Every morning, after I've had my coffee, I will meditate for 10 minutes on the balcony.*

Habit trackers can help keep ourselves accountable. Habit trackers have been shown to be successful by enabling us to keep an overview of our consistency when implementing a new habit. There are apps, trackers in print or as journals, or you can even create them yourself using pen and paper. Simply make a list of habits and write the days of the week next to them. Each time you complete the habit, you can make a little tick underneath the weekday. For the best results, though, we should implement new habits one at a time, as we are otherwise less likely to succeed.<sup>9</sup>

It can be helpful to arrange regular check-ins with yourself, just like you'd check in on your client's progress. Try scheduling a meeting with yourself to reflect on whether the habits have been working for you, whether you have found them easy to implement and what needs to be adjusted. Don't be afraid to make changes and adjust your strategy. You might notice you have more headspace to meditate in the morning rather than at night. Feel free to try it!

A helpful tool for reflection is an energy assessment. Start by listing the activities you pursue each day. These include activities you need to do, like work or cleaning, and activities you choose to do, like hiking or seeing friends. Then, assign energy ratings to each activity. These can range from -10 (full energy depletion) to +10 (completely energised). You can record these scores across a week, and then calculate the overall energy score for a certain activity by adding up the scores of each day. The goal of this exercise is to recognise which activities increase or decrease your energy levels. Is anything surprising about these scores? What kind of adjustments

can you make to raise the scores? Are there any activities you need to eliminate altogether?<sup>10</sup> Whichever activities you choose to include in your routine, make them work for you. You know yourself best, so trust yourself in doing your best to prevent (empathy) burnout.

## WE'RE HUMANS TOO

Coach burnout can be easily underestimated and is not discussed enough. Just like professionals in any other area, coaches can experience chronic stress and can be vulnerable to empathy burnout. Therefore, it is essential for coaches to be aware of possible burnout symptoms and to know how to take action if you find yourself on the track to burnout. Using these tools regularly can help you stay aware of your current state of mind and take action when needed. Only if you take care of your own wellbeing and needs can you guide others to become the best versions of themselves.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Neela is a certified burnout prevention and wellbeing coach. She helps professionals to become more efficient in how they work, create a better work-life balance, or restructure their routines and habits to prevent burnout, globally. Neela has also contributed a chapter on preventing burnout through a healthy work-life balance to *The Coach's Casebook*, by Joan Swart and Christine Guirguis. Neela's mission is to help her clients fit their work into their life, rather than their life into their work.

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# COACHING AND THE AI EMPLOYMENT REVOLUTION

Artificial intelligence is upon us whether we like it or not. Sam Isaacson makes the case for embracing disruption and working out how we will integrate AI into the human practice of coaching.

Coaching is needed as much as ever. The new generation of artificial intelligence (AI) powered tools and organisations is here to stay. As a result, industries are being transformed at an unprecedented pace, and the topic on everyone's lips is what impact that will have on jobs. Many roles are already being radically transformed as new systems are implemented. On top of that, particularly as generative AI tools are increasingly getting packaged into mainstream tools such as Microsoft 365 and Zoom, it's likely that many jobs will be eliminated entirely.

We should be bracing ourselves for a retraining and hiring crisis, and that is a classic use case for coaching.

But the nature of the change, with AI audibly knocking at the door, begs a question: what does it mean for coaching in practice? Much has been written about parallels from history when disruptive technologies have led to job reductions. Workforces look very different now from the way they did 500 and 50 years ago, and they may look different again in even five years' time.

## THE IMPACT OF AI ON JOBS

Ten years ago, a study from the University of Oxford predicted that a significant proportion of jobs would be automated out of existence.<sup>1</sup> The predictions made in the study have proved to be inaccurate to date, because the assumptions held at the time were based on the way technology had operated in the past.

Traditionally, the most straightforward tasks to automate were the most predictable and repetitive ones. The elimination of 'hello girls' through the automation of the telephone exchange is the textbook example of jobs being replaced by technology. But more complicated tasks have proven frustratingly elusive. The worlds of tax, accounting and law, for example, are based on strict rules that ought to lend themselves perfectly to traditional automation. But the complexity of how they interact with each individual organisation's structure means that people have remained employed in these roles in spite of all the innovation we've seen to date.

Instead, through the emergence of sophisticated AI models such as ChatGPT, technology seems to have skipped a generation. Preparing a tax return remains too difficult for a machine, but some of the more specialist tasks previously reserved for skilled professionals are now squarely in the sights of new technologies.

Software programming is a good example of this. Several generative AI tools will now create good-quality, original computer code in response to prompts written in natural language. The same is true of graphic design, marketing copy and workshop design. These roles, the ones more typically thought of as needing 'rarer' skills, are the ones most likely to experience a significant impact from the new wave of AI deployment.

The benefits are clear. An organisation could take several weeks to find a consultant, with a high day rate, to design a bespoke leadership development programme, or they could pay a tiny amount (many of these tools are even being offered for free) to get something that's satisfactory within a few minutes. Let's not pretend the quality will beat a professional – experienced assessors remain able to tell the difference – but the value for money is enough to convince many to make the switch. It's likely that organisations will increasingly opt for AI tools over humans in roles such as market research, journalism and data analytics when experience is not so important.

This reminds me of my own experience working in the accounting sector during the 2008 economic downturn. The big accounting firms significantly reduced the number of trainee hires, and three years later a dearth of qualified resources emerged. The current wave of automation threatens to magnify this crisis on a grand scale, crossing sectors and geographies. Many of the tasks most likely to be automated are those typically assigned to trainee professionals. It's as if I can hear Peter Hawkins' challenge from the 2008 crash – 'What were the coaches doing while the banks were burning?' – echoing through the years, calling us to be proactive in addressing this impending employment crisis.

*We should be bracing ourselves for a retraining and hiring crisis, and that is a classic use case for coaching*

One important part of that, for coaches, is coaching itself.

In the face of technological advancements and the potential disruption that's rearing its head, coaching has a critical role to play, even as we start to experience disruption in our own profession. As the AI revolution reshapes the employment landscape, we must be contributing actively to the future of the profession. This involves embracing the need for reskilling in our clients and in ourselves. It also means engaging actively with the evolving landscape of machine-led coaching, especially as it starts to reach more people.

## COACHING IN THE AUTOMATION AGE

The rapid advances we're seeing in AI and automation necessitate a shift in mindset for coaches. We need to reflect on our own

*It's our job to make the right trade-offs, leveraging technology to enhance our practice while ensuring the core elements of coaching remain at the forefront*

knowledge and skills in order to remain relevant and effective in supporting clients navigating a digital world. We must embrace the continuous learning we espouse, proactively acquiring the competencies that align with the demands of the evolving technological landscape.

This is of critical importance when supporting our clients, many of whom feel equally unstable as the world shifts around them. If we cultivate digital literacy and develop a solid understanding of AI and automation, we become calmer and more helpful for them as they wrestle with their own challenges and opportunities.

Just as crucially, we need to understand the concepts behind the integration of technology in coaching practices. That's different from optimistically adopting technology, but certainly includes familiarising ourselves with digital tools, virtual platforms and emerging technologies that can enhance the coaching experience. By staying informed and adapting to technological advancements, we can respond better to our clients' needs, leveraging technology tools – as we do coaching models – to improve coaching outcomes and streamline processes.

Thinking particularly about AI, the concept of augmented coaching – developed through a collaboration of human and machine – emerges as an avenue to explore. We are gaining the ability to leverage AI-powered tools and platforms to augment the coaching process. This collaborative approach combines the unique magic of human coaches with the efficiency and scalability offered by technology and AIs.

Augmented coaching might take the form of an AI-powered chatbot, which could be accessible 24/7 in a private space on a coach's website. The chatbot could provide immediate support to a client, offering reflective questions and some time to think outside of scheduled coaching sessions.

Coaches embracing augmented coaching should view AI as simply another helpful tool, rather than a replacement. While AI can handle certain tasks and provide valuable support, the human element remains essential in a coaching relationship. In some cases, a client will neither want nor need the extra support. In others, they might decide they're getting so much value that they don't need the sessions any more. It's our job to make the right trade-offs, leveraging technology to enhance our practice while ensuring the core elements of coaching remain at the forefront, and that we bring our fullest, human selves to the relationship.

## SHAPING THE FUTURE OF COACHING

Those clients who decide they'd rather use a chatbot than a human might be few or many. The decision might be made purely on the basis of cost: human coaching is prohibitively expensive for almost

everybody. As the technology develops, the simple rules of supply and demand will kick in. In addition to reskilling and appropriately embracing technology, therefore, we are at the perfect point to shape the future of the coaching profession – proactively. We have a responsibility to contribute our perspectives and insights to ensure that machine-led coaching is deployed in an ethical way with solid foundations, and that human coaching continues to develop in its value and professionalism.

Perhaps the easiest way to do that is by engaging actively in the discussions that are happening within the coaching community. It seems that every coaching conference now has sessions dedicated to the development of technology. Conferences purely focused on coaching technology have even started. My own online community, the Coachtech Collective, now has members spanning so many time zones we can't all gather at once. By fostering a culture of knowledge-sharing and collaboration, we can explore the implications of technology on coaching and drive innovation within the profession. It's much more empowering for us to disrupt ourselves.

Another important role we can embrace is advocating for ethical guidelines and standards surrounding the use of AI in coaching. By championing responsible and ethical practices, we can help shape the development and implementation of AI technologies in ways that align with the values and principles of the profession. This includes considerations of privacy, data security and confidentiality, which is a challenge when the technology relies so heavily on data to maintain its quality. It also includes the preservation of the foundational pillars of coaching, which is a challenge when there's no universally accepted definition of what coaching actually is...

Finally, we can help co-create the future of coaching by conducting research and publishing insights on the intersection of technology and coaching. As we share thought experiments, case studies, peer-reviewed papers and thought leadership, we enhance the collective knowledge base and also inspire fellow coaches to explore new possibilities and approaches.

The role of coaching is evolving and expanding. We must actively prepare for reskilling, embrace the potential of augmented coaching, and support one another as we navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by technological advancements. By staying informed, adapting our practices and contributing actively to the future of the coaching profession, we increasingly become valuable resources for our clients in a rapidly changing world.

The world is becoming increasingly digital, the integration of AI and automation demanding that we adapt and evolve alongside technological advancements. By consciously putting effort into our own mindsets and skillsets, we can harness the power of technology to enhance our practice and make an even bigger impact on our clients and the systems with which they interact, at a scale that historically has been impossible. The journey ahead may be challenging, but it's an opportunity to shape the future of coaching and ensure its continued relevance in a rapidly changing world. Together, let's embrace the future, leveraging technology where appropriate to enhance our coaching impact and shape a thriving coaching profession in the age of AI.

Sam Isaacson will be one of the speakers at the AC's digital conference 'How technology and AI are shaping coaching', taking place 9-10 November 2023. Join to experience technology in action through live demos and real-life scenarios, explore the potential of VR and AR technologies to enhance your client connections, and engage in panel discussions with thought leaders in the fields of ethics, AI and the future of coaching.

To find out more and for tickets, head to [actechfest.com](https://actechfest.com)

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Sam Isaacson is an enthusiastic coachtech thought leader and coaching consultant. He writes a popular LinkedIn newsletter and has authored two books on the topic: *How to Thrive as a Coach in a Digital World* and *Superhuman Coaching*. He is the founder of the Coachtech Collective, and works closely with the big coaching professional bodies on the development of thinking around technology and ethics.

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## THE EVOLVING WORLD OF COACHING

The author, coach, supervisor, organisational consultant and wise thinker **Keri Phillips** died peacefully in his sleep at the end of May 2023 following a short illness. Here we publish in his memory a model extracted from a longer essay he wrote in 2022, which maps the complexity of the various dimensions present during coaching.

*I met Keri just a handful of times, through our AC Manchester co-coaching forum, but in the short time I spent in his company I found him to be a kind, deep-thinking and wise human being, who always had a friendly word of advice or thinking for his fellow coaches. His warmth, humility and intellect were always a calm and reflective influence on our discussions.*

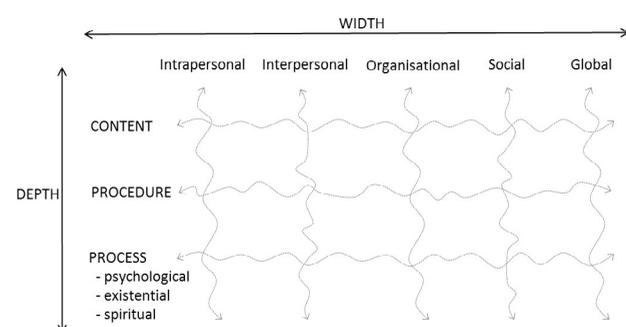
*Others on our forum, hearing of his sad death, remembered that he 'shared his experience very kindly and generously'; and was 'always rich, warm and inspiring to be with'.*

*He made a significant contribution to the coaching profession across a rich and varied career that covered many sectors, and was a leading voice in the field of transactional analysis. He will be much missed, but his contribution to our profession lives on.*

James Bridgeman, co-editor

The world of coaching has changed dramatically in recent years, particularly this century; arguably it has been a revolution rather than an evolution. The purpose of this paper is to take stock for a moment and catch breath; namely to look a little more closely at those changes, their consequences and the challenges and opportunities that arise.

Figure 1: The Evolving World of Coaching



Some words of explanation about the diagram.

Regarding the depth dimension:

- **Content** refers to the apparent stated topic of the coaching conversation, whether clear, vague or a mixture. I use the word 'apparent' because it may well change over time.
- **Procedure** refers to the coaching methods and approaches used; for example, the GROW model (goal, reality, options, will)<sup>1</sup>, storytelling, psychometrics, physical movement such as chair work, imagery/art, walks through nature and many other possibilities. It may be at a distance or face to face. The length and frequency of the sessions also vary hugely. The coaching may range from a relationship lasting many years through to a one-off session lasting perhaps an hour or even less with a 'stranger' – for example, at a coaching conference or at a drop-in centre.<sup>2</sup>
- **Process** refers to the underlying feelings and motivations, some of which may be deliberately hidden or simply outside awareness. They may relate to the 'here and now' relationship with the coach, perhaps also influenced by other emotions from the recent and/or distant past; or more simply, perhaps the reluctance or eagerness of the client to attend the coaching session. Along this psychological strand there may well be interwoven elements. Hence process also includes the existential aspect, which relates to the wider and deeper aspects of the client's life, for example identity and sense of self-worth. There might also be a legacy of intergenerational trauma.<sup>3</sup> The spiritual aspect may include the client's overarching purpose in life, its meaning and their soul in a religious or non-religious way or both.

There can be a rapid ebb and flow between these aspects, even within one session. I am also reminded that trauma can collapse the distinction between the external world and internal experience. So, my use of a depth line may be slightly misleading, because its linearity implies sequencing. Rather, there may be sudden moves from one aspect to another, such as from content to the spiritual, including U-turns and apparent dead ends.

My point about linearity also applies to the width dimension.

- **Intrapersonal** refers to one's relationship with oneself; for example, the voices in one's head and heart being loving or contemptuous and the many points in-between. They may be real or imagined voices from the past, present or future, or a mixture. The person may be unclear about the source. I am also reminded of a client speaking of 'stepping back into her own body'; that somehow, not necessarily due to our work together, she had a new, yet old relationship with herself.
- **Interpersonal** refers to one's interaction with others in an almost infinite range of settings and circumstances. I recall talking to Jacob, who told me that as a 17-year-old he and his mother worked together to redecorate his bedroom. For him it transformed their relationship because, for the first time, she treated him as an adult.
- **Organisational** refers to many different contexts within the wider culture; for example, the norms and values of one's employment and the community groups to which one belongs through choice, obligation, circumstances or a mixture of all three. I am also reminded that in the United Kingdom there are frontline staff – such as nurses, domestic workers and carers – who are needed crucially but yet are often marginalised by being less well paid and less well supported.<sup>4</sup>
- **Social** refers to the yet wider setting in terms of the broader culture in which one lives. This may include, for example, having a sense of home in many different places. Whether through choice or not, one may have developed versatility in using one's alertness and flexibility to move between many different cultures. There will also be those who have no sense of home and belonging. Also, there is sometimes the challenge of needing to have a home in order to develop a sense of self, while also needing a sense of self in order to have a home.
- **Global** refers to the still wider context. For example, there is polarisation and conflict regarding the war in Ukraine, and also significant divisions in USA domestic politics. These are themes affecting much of the world currently, sometimes overlapping. Also, locally and globally the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. There may be the relentless erosion of democracy. For example, in the United Kingdom the House of Lords is increasingly being filled with political cronies and party donors. Its credibility is fading. Again, as indicated earlier, technology can dramatically facilitate a sense of connectedness and disconnectedness, sometimes with dramatic switches between the two – from adored insider to detested outsider.

The dotted lines indicate the interconnectedness of it all and the multiplying possibilities. In the early days of management coaching, the emphasis was often largely on job performance. Over the years the context for such work has changed dramatically, including a far greater acceptance of the process dimension. More recently, the Covid-19 pandemic has brought this as a vivid presence into the coaching room in terms of death, mortality and loss more generally.<sup>6</sup> In losing a loved one, one loses part of oneself. Another example would be the almost breathtaking speed with which 'the systemic' has made its presence felt within a wide variety of settings, including the work of the Tavistock Institute.<sup>7</sup> This also includes intersectionality: the ways in which a blend of factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation and physical ability may fuel discrimination and privilege.<sup>8</sup>

The emergences of team coaching and family business coaching have also been activities in this move to a wider perspective.<sup>9</sup> The broader setting, in its many manifestations, is regarded as crucial for understanding what is or might be happening in the coaching session, whether it is taking place in a room or on a video call, or is a corridor coffee chat or a windy walk in the local park. Clearly something like the challenge of global warming has huge implications within and across all dimensions of the overview model.<sup>10</sup> One aspect is no longer being able to cling to the self-delusion that humankind is omnipotent in relation to the environment.<sup>11</sup>

*You can read the full essay on Keri's website at [tinyurl.com/evolving-world-coaching](https://tinyurl.com/evolving-world-coaching); it was also published in the open-access International Journal of Transactional Analysis Research & Practice, as cited: Phillips, K. (2023). The Evolving World of Coaching. International Journal of Transactional Analysis Research & Practice, 14(1), 16-23.*

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Keri Phillips was a coach, supervisor and organisational consultant who worked across a wide variety of sectors and disciplines, from government to banking, transport to retail and much more besides. He was a prolific writer on coaching, and his many publications on the subject can still be found at [www.keriphillips.co.uk](http://www.keriphillips.co.uk).

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## BEYOND GOOD INTENTIONS

Relational coaching takes centre stage as [David Birch](#) and [Tammy Tawadros](#) invite us to go beyond conditioned responses and understand how history is at play when we get caught up in conflict situations.

*'Reconciliation, is, at its core, a process of transformation for both sides in a conflict.'*<sup>1</sup>  
Valerie Batts

Most of us avoid conflict. When we come up against a clash of needs, opinions or principles, we tend to separate ourselves from the other person, either by blaming them (that's outrageous; how dare they; what's wrong with them?), or by blaming ourselves (this keeps happening to me; I always screw things up; I don't know why I bother). From a psychodynamic perspective, what we are doing is unconsciously defending ourselves against our feelings of anxiety or helplessness, by splitting ourselves off from the other and making it completely about us, or by projecting our culpability onto the other and making it all about them. This has the effect of absolving us (or the other person) of any responsibility for what is happening between us.

In organisational settings, these defensive routines can be amplified by structures and hierarchy, for example when a team member feels that their livelihood will be threatened if they come into conflict with their boss. In coaching relationships, the power imbalance between coach and coachee can have a similar effect; for example, if a coach takes sides when hearing about their client's controlling boss, they may unwittingly reinforce the polarising split that casts the coachee as 'all good' and the boss as 'all bad'.

Most approaches to conflict resolution seek to bridge this split by highlighting the distinction between intention and impact (your intention may have been honourable, but your impact was hurtful), or by surfacing the underpinning values and beliefs that may be at play (what's this conflict really about? What's at stake for you here?).

These ideas have become common currency in our social and political discourse. Many of us have learned to respond in ways that aim to defuse conflict (I'm sorry that you feel that way, that was never my intention), especially when it comes to disagreements about difference and identity. The trouble is, this kind of differentiation between intention and impact can divert us from what really needs our attention. As academic and author Ken Hardy points out, when we are in a privileged position we talk about intentionality, but people in a subjugated position (on account of their social difference, for example) are more concerned about consequences.<sup>2</sup> He asks us to imagine that we have unintentionally trodden on someone's toe and broken it. Do we start to go on about our intentions or do we attend to the broken toe?

In some instances, this preoccupation with intent can become a form of gaslighting (why are you making such a fuss? Can't you see how much I care about you?), reinforcing the split and deepening the sense of hurt and injustice. Although the person appears to be caring and empathetic at a social level, the implicit psychological message is: it's your problem that you feel that way – it has nothing to do with me.

Encouraging both parties in a conflict to listen carefully to one another and appreciate each other's perspectives is undoubtedly

a useful approach when mediating active conflicts. But, it is also limited. As relational coaches, we take the view that what actually happens between us, what occurs in our relationship, matters more than what one of us may have intended. As the philosopher George Herbert Mead observed, 'the meaning of the gesture is revealed in the response'.<sup>3</sup> In other words, our gestures carry meanings that are only revealed when the other person has responded to us. From a relational perspective, there is much we can learn by inquiring into how meaning is co-created between us, irrespective of intention and without getting stuck in unproductive rounds of blame and defence.

To illustrate with a personal example, one of David's coachees had a strong reaction when told at the end of the assignment that he would not be keeping in touch, but that she was free to contact him if she wanted to. His coachee felt angry at what seemed to be a dismissal of them, and angrier still when David told them that he was not intending to dismiss them, but rather simply upholding professional boundaries. It was only when he allowed himself to appreciate the validity of his coachee's response that he was able to find a place of humility and acceptance of his contribution to what had occurred between them. They too were able to recognise how their conditioned expectation – that their needs would always be overlooked – had been activated. This led to an almost instantaneous improvement in their relationship and subsequently some deeper reflection on David's part about his approach to endings in general and the ending of coaching relationships in particular.

In the coaching relationship, this appreciation of the co-created nature of conflict can open up a rich field of co-inquiry, irrespective of whether the conflict is occurring 'in here' within the coaching relationship or 'out there' in the wider organisational or societal context. Instead of seeing conflicts as problems to be resolved, we can treat conflict as a normal, everyday outcome of human relationships – which we are nevertheless prone to avoiding, suppressing or missing entirely because they are out of our conscious awareness.

*What actually happens between us, what occurs in our relationship, matters more than what one of us may have intended*

Michael Rothberg's work on the implicated subject<sup>4</sup> extends this principle of co-creation and intersubjectivity to historical conflicts and other traumas that lie buried deep within our social fabric and our psyches. Rothberg argues that we are all implicated in historical matters such as slavery, colonialism and genocide, whether or not we were alive at the time or directly involved in them. He argues that we are all participants in the complex interplay between our interpersonal relationships and the broader social, political and cultural contexts within which they occur.

Rothberg challenges the reductionism of a simplistic 'victim and perpetrator' understanding of conflict, drawing our attention to the ways in which we are all affected by these historical events.

To offer our own biographies as examples, Tammy grew up in a country that had thrived in the years immediately following independence, despite the cultural, political and social erosion brought about by decades of colonial control. Her family migrated to the UK in the aftermath of a war directly related to the geopolitical consequences of independent rule. She experienced history and the prevailing power imbalance at a very personal level, becoming an unfamiliar stranger, dependent on the sometimes inhospitable shelter of the country that had colonised hers. David gained a scholarship to a prestigious independent school, offered to children educated in the state sector. It is only recently that he learned that the original founder of the school had been a slave. Knowing this reinforced his sensitivity to his own privilege and the suffering upon which it had been founded.

These are implications that we can observe and identify, but there are many others that are out of our direct awareness, where there is no immediate or obvious connection. How are we implicated in the apartheid system in South Africa for example, or the destruction of the Amazon rainforest? Rothberg invites us to reflect on our relationships with these events and how they have influenced our identities, positions and privileges. There is an interactive, iterative process that occurs at multiple levels – personal, relational, institutional and socio-cultural – in understanding the imbalances of power, and repairing their dysfunctional and unjust consequences.

We have found that this deeper reflection on our implication in past and present conflicts and oppressions prompts us to consider our ethical responsibility to engage with different narratives, histories and uncomfortable truths. This involves accepting feelings of anger, guilt and shame, without assigning blame or bending over backwards to make amends. Instead of being something to avoid or defend against, these troubling conflicts offer an opportunity to explore and examine our differences. They can also help us to learn about how our biases and assumptions – including our sense of identity and agency – are not separate from the world we inhabit.

In our coaching work, this means welcoming all of our subjectivities and histories into the room, working with both what is known and also what is felt in our bodies. This is the work of personally and politically productive self-reflection, the work of unlearning the conditioned fear, threat and ambivalence that we may experience in the presence of the socially different ‘other’, or indeed the socially privileged. It is also about finding ways to anchor our ‘implicated bodies’ in safety and connection, and to harness the potential for relational coaching to be a powerful source of emancipatory personal and social change.

*We gratefully acknowledge the radical hospitality and the other-wisdom of Foluke Taylor and Robert Downes, who held us and helped us to reimagine.*

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



David Birch is an accredited executive and team coach, supervisor, mediator and UKCP-registered psychotherapist. He has a background in leadership and organisation development going back to the 1990s, when he held a variety of internal roles at PwC. He joined the consulting group at Ashridge in 2000, and since 2012 has been retained as adjunct faculty at Ashridge Centre for Coaching, where he contributes to the AMEC (coaching master's) and ADOS (supervision diploma) programmes. He is an associate at Metalogue Consulting LLP and The King's Fund.



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# CONFLICT COACHING IN THE TENSIONS OF OUR TIMES

Are conflict and emotions inextricably linked? How do we move beyond a position of who is right and who is wrong? How do we start to see our own contribution to conflict? These are just a handful of the questions that [Judith Cardenas](#) and [Bernie Rochon](#) look to answer here.

Tension is the push-pull of the interaction of force that tightens or stretches, as in the exercise of muscles or relations between people. When tension or tightness is just right, all is well. If there is no tightness or tension, it might be an absence of something good/bad. Alternatively, too much tension can cause conflict, a word that comes from the Latin *confligere* – ‘to strike with’, as in ‘strike a blow’.

Throughout history, people have seemed to be in constant tense conflict when cultures, traditions and persuasions cross borders or ethnologies, and too often this has resulted in battles and wars. Our modern climate is defined by not only climate change, but also political, ethnic, economic, psychological and religious conflict. The deep-seated racial, gender, cultural and social differences that polarise people today appear to be out of the control of good governance and diplomacy. We respond to these opposing mindsets with striking blows – labels we assign to others, with senseless tensions and with conflict – leaving many humans desperate and helpless.

How can we come to grips with today’s conflicting tensions? We may take a starting suggestion from an interview with Professor Daniel Shapiro by Vitor Pamplona.

*‘Daniel Shapiro worked with diplomats in the Middle East, Asia and Europe to negotiate apparent deadlocks that threatened to stall countries and societies... Confrontations (of any kind) carry a high dosage of emotion that can lead to “vertigo” (dizziness) when parties are unable to think about anything but the conflict in and of itself... It’s necessary to be conscious of this emotional component... The first step in escaping their “divisive mindset” is to approach negotiations with thinking up ideas of mutual benefit.’*

A coaching environment is usually a personal conversation that plays a crucial role during times of conflict. There are various factors throughout the coach-client exchange; on the one hand, the coach is attentively listening and empathetic via body language; on the other, the client recalls memories in the narrative of personal storytelling. The power of coaching conversations lies in the power of the words shared in the delivery of stories and acceptance of meaning. In these sessions, both coach and client share their search for a common goal, one of bridging the tension between reality and storytelling as they address perceptions and biases of memories of experiences.

**Lead the parties to hear each other out and to reach a compelling resolution rather than a convincing argument of who is right**

Instead of striking at others with hurtful labels, clients are called to listen to their own oppositional stances with openness to a new interpretation of worth and viability. This is in keeping with Shapiro’s reference to ‘understanding how our minds work in times of conflict’. What is the meaning of this conflict? What are we fighting about?

In all this, we cannot overlook the importance of the emotional impact of conflicts, ones that feature anger, resentment and revenge. Emotions play a central role in energising the grounds for self-righteousness. The power and place of emotions is embedded in the conversation of understanding others’ position in conflict.

Many coaches suggest that emotions should be left out of the dialogue as the elephant in the room. Yet emotion is too urgent to be brushed aside. It is a solid pillar in everyone’s relations with others. Coaches must address the emotional dynamics of conversation in conflict by encouraging the recognition of emotions present at the meeting. These emotions can be tempered by a respectful demeanor, mutual trust and a positive attitude.

The coach listens to the truth of the conflict to lead the parties to hear each other out and to reach a compelling resolution rather than a convincing argument of who is right. The theme of compelling over convincing is at the heart of conflict coaching and conflict management.

The coach’s position of negotiator asks them to facilitate the initiative of alternate perspectives of conflict, assisting clients to reframe their understanding of the problem. A delicate part of the reframing is questioning how the participants in the conflict might see each other’s responsibility in their tension, without imputing any blame – revealing how misunderstanding might have been the stumbling block to collaboration.

It is here that the coach supports their clients to consider building a connection for working together on searching for a compelling resolution. A trusting rapport is a positive sign that a relationship is going in the right direction. The clients’ mutual understanding of their contributions to their differences provides the climate for cooperative listening. This is a foundational goal the coach should aim to set up as early as possible in the process.

It is fair game for the coach to outline the steps the clients can use to follow them through the coaching process, such as staying open-minded, listening carefully to one another and being willing to reframe perspectives as negotiations move forward. The coach ought to secure the clients’ desire and possible commitment to accepting the coaching process as it unfolds.

The goal of negotiating is to build a bridge back to collaboration, which is the responsibility of the people in conflict. The coach shouldn’t be hesitant in reminding clients of their own responsibility to move negotiations forward. This is the win-win result of finding how each side can discover mutual benefits through reconciliation.

There should come a point at which an exchange of questions from each participant in the process becomes open, honest and insightful, as the team searches for a compelling resolution that will be the bridge to agreement and accord.

Coaching in the tension of conflict might be a long and tedious undertaking. It is helpful to pause periodically to review progress from animosity to mutual trust and collaboration. With this rear-view look back at the succession of steps, along with the successes of each step, the coaching team can choose to pause while clients test their results with new attempts to step into a healthier relationship. Clients can choose to suspend coaching momentarily to see if early results hold fast, and return later to coaching for a refresher of their compelling success at crossing the bridge to the tranquillity of peace. We trust these thoughts have opened new possibilities for coaching clients in conflict towards reconciliation and harmony.

**The coach’s position of negotiator is to facilitate the initiative of alternate perspectives of conflict, assisting clients to reframe their understanding of the problem**

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Dr Judith Cardenas is the president and CEO of Strategies By Design, a global consultancy specialising in innovative, client-centric solutions. With over a decade of experience, she empowers leaders and organisations to achieve their vision through innovation, change and co-creation strategies. Judith holds a doctorate in education administration

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Dr Bernard Rochon is a seasoned professional with over 30 years of experience across various sectors, including higher education, corporate training and non-profit leadership. He holds degrees from Dayton University, Austin Presbyterian Seminary, St Louis University and the University of Detroit-Mercy. An accomplished author, executive coach

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Photo credit: Dawn

# WHERE MEDIATION AND COACHING COEXIST

What common principles do the practices of mediation and coaching share, and how can the two disciplines intertwine? Tracey Fox shares how she now views everything through a mediation lens, including her coaching...

I am smiling to myself as I write this article, reflecting on the irony of being someone who enjoys an easeful life and yet has built a career engaging in conflict!

Now, when I look back and connect the dots of my career to date, I can see that the silver thread is that I have always dealt with varying levels of difference.

Fresh from my studies in organisational psychology, I stumbled into the field of dispute resolution – more specifically, mediation – and now, 20 years later, everything I do is through the lens of mediation, even my coaching practice.

The conflicts can be intrapersonal (within an individual, such as in psychiatry and neuro-rehabilitation), interpersonal (between individuals, such as when working in organisational development), intragroup (within a group, such as managing differences in teams), intergroup (between groups, such as mediating teams in dispute), or intra-organisational (within organisations, such as with commercial mediation).<sup>1</sup>

Resolving conflict is such an integral part of my DNA that writing this article has been an intriguing exercise in deconstructing exactly what I might be doing differently to coaches who may not consciously use the mediation skillset. Here goes!

### CONFLICT RESOLUTION OR REVELATION?

Mediation is ‘a flexible process conducted confidentially, in which a neutral facilitator actively assists people and/or organisations to work

towards a negotiated agreement of a dispute. Both parties are in ultimate control of the decision to settle and the terms of resolution’ – as defined by the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR), a London-based mediation and dispute resolution organisation.<sup>2</sup>

I gained accreditation 20 years ago and have mediated a range of disputes, from a long-running clinical negligence case resulting in life-altering changes, to beginning the healing process for a line manager and direct report rebuilding from severed trust.

The standard format involves engaging with parties to meander through a five-phased process: from preparation to opening, exploring, problem-solving and concluding.

While coaching typically focuses on providing client-led guidance and support, I believe that incorporating mediation skills into the coaching process can elevate its effectiveness and generate a different kind of insight: both resolution and revelation. There are many similarities between the two processes:

- A focus on future possibilities, not past mistakes.
- The belief that coachees are fully capable of finding the answers to the challenges they face.
- An empathetic, non-judgemental, curious approach.
- The use of active listening skills.

In addition to this, I believe the mediation skillset offers a rich toolkit that can bring about a sense of clarity and closure. There are five elements that I use in my coaching practice:

### 1. Incorporating conflict resolution theory, frameworks and models

As far back as I can remember, I have been curious about differing responses to conflict, difference and disagreements. Over time, as I have acquired knowledge in this space, I share this as appropriate.

For one example: a coachee described a recent experience in a regular senior leadership team meeting that felt surprisingly combative. Unusually the CEO was not in attendance and the coachee felt that her previously supportive colleagues were being deliberately disagreeable to several of her perfectly rational suggestions. They were discussing how to solve a problem and my coachee suggested that as a leadership group they should discuss options themselves and then propose a few solutions to the CEO. Others in the room forcefully objected and preferred to wait for the CEO to propose and narrow down the options so that they did not waste their time. I offered to my coachee the idea of *proportional conflict composition* – a theory that recognises different types of conflict in teams:

- Task: what they have to do.
- Process: how to do something.
- Relationship: who does what and how they interact.

Task and process conflict is inevitable and indeed necessary; having different people coming together at work with differing ideas can lead to creative outcomes and actually ensure that the right decision is made. However, if this is poorly managed or continues for too long, the focus can shift from considering the task or the process to instead being felt to be personalised, leading to relationship conflict: this is never helpful.

My suggestion was to apply this framework to unpack the dynamic in the senior leadership team so that the coachee could see that what had occurred were differing approaches to problem-solving, rather than thinking the people were the problem. Instead, my coachee asked the CEO what they expected from their team. They found this an incredibly useful way to take the edge off the frustrations felt towards colleagues, and later shared the model with the CEO as a way of understanding the dynamic.

A second example is based on normalising our stress response; as a mediator, most people I meet are in incredibly stressful, unsettling states. On hearing a coachee berate themselves for ‘flirting’ with a hostile manager, I shared how human beings are (thankfully) hardwired for survival and how our incredible sympathetic nervous system drives our ‘fight-flight’ and the lesser-discussed ‘freeze-fawn’ responses.<sup>3</sup>

Author Pete Walker describes fawn types as those who seek safety by merging with the wishes, needs and demands of others. It’s an instinctive strategy we unwittingly acquire to navigate challenging situations, and involves going to great lengths to appease someone – not out of genuine kindness, or attraction as this coachee described, but rather as a coping mechanism born from past wounds. By sharing this with my coachee – not strictly a mediation skill, but more an insight into how we primitively deal with conflict – it assisted them to better understand, and forgive themselves for, their actions.

### 2. Listening with ‘ting’

Active or deep listening is the bedrock of the coaching experience. The same applies for mediation but, in my experience, the traditional Chinese character of *ting* – for ‘listening’ – embodies the whole body experience that I use as a mediator.

Whereas in Western culture the focus is to listen with our ears, *ting* reveals that listening is a combination of body and mind, complexity and subtlety. Five elements, each of them essential for taking notice of and acting upon what someone is saying:

1. Ear: to hear.
2. King: to be respectful, as if the other was royalty.
3. Ten eyes: to be fully focused, present and engaged.
4. One: to become one with the other with empathy.
5. Heart: to feel.



As a mediator, when I listen to the words of a party I hear their position: what they want, what they believe they are entitled to, their demands or rights. Listening with *ting* helps me to move beyond their stated position to what might be driving it – their interests and unmet needs, not just what they want, but also why.

I do this by tuning into what I am sensing – my impression, what are they not saying, or the meta messages – and then by bringing it to the discussion to help move forwards by using ‘I’ statements (such as ‘I get the sense that...’, ‘I feel...’, ‘I think...’, ‘I wonder...’).

Combining these elements in *ting* can enhance our listening, making it wholehearted and impactful in reaching a satisfactory resolution.

### 3. The freedom and reflexivity to adapt my approach

Alongside being a facilitative ‘container’ allowing someone to hear their own thoughts more clearly and safely, an effective mediator can also be provocative and challenging to parties when considering options for resolution. Although the mediator is neutral, they can also play the role of devil’s advocate, asking difficult questions and reality testing, especially in the problem-solving phase of the process.

CEDR teaches a range of mediator interventions, from a more facilitative approach through to being more evaluative. It is important to note that a line is drawn when it comes to providing opinions.

**Figure 1. Levels of mediator interventions**

Adapted from the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution



I regularly use reality testing and questioning the wisdom of an approach in my coaching practice, once trust and rapport has been built, with prompts such as: ‘You have said you want X, and yet you are doing Y; help me understand this.’

#### 4. A negotiation coach: assisting clients to navigate their way through complex interactions

A key focus of the mediator’s role is to help parties find a resolution. This involves recognising different negotiation styles and assisting parties to align these to reach an amicable settlement. One framework that I bring from my mediation practice into my coaching practice is principles from *Getting to Yes* – Roger Fisher and William Ury’s seminal text on negotiation.<sup>4</sup>

They suggest that instead of the traditional **positional negotiation** theory – harsh tactics, aggressive behaviour, withholding or distorting information etc. – one should embrace the methods of **principled negotiation** to increase the chances of reaching an outcome that both parties can live with. I use these principles to help coachees navigate negotiations with peers or managers. I recall a time when I was approached for an impromptu coaching conversation by an employee who had just been told they had been placed on a performance improvement plan. They were due to discuss this with their line manager the following morning and they came to me in an angry and distressed state. I recall taking them through four principles to help them engage proactively with their manager to establish how to move forwards:

1. **Separate the people from the problem:** be soft on the people and hard on the problem – in this case, avoiding personalising the outcome from the manager. This helped to de-escalate the emotions the coachee was experiencing.
2. **Focus on interests, not positions:** ‘what really matters to you, and why?’ allowed us to discuss the coachee’s ambition and long-term goal, adopting a growth mindset rather than the shame that they felt.
3. **Invent options for mutual gain:** reframe feedback away from the coachee feeling incompetent and inadequate, instead considering the benefits it will reap to both manager and coachee once acted upon.
4. **Insist on using objective criteria:** the job description was paired objectively with the individual’s output over a fixed period of time.

Understanding our approach to problem-solving and negotiation, and being able to adapt this, has proven to be very helpful to coachees.

#### 5. Neutrality, impartiality, multi-partiality

One of the strengths that enables a mediator to assist diametrically opposed people to reach a resolution is through informing parties of the principle that mediators are neutral and impartial in their approach: they will not take sides in the disagreement.

Personally, I have always struggled with these concepts as they felt detached, uncaring and passive, whereas my practice felt compassionate and invested – for all parties – and I am very actively engaged in the process.

Instead, I describe myself as being ‘multi-partial’ – authentically attending to all of the parties’ individual needs. I also use this as a coach when I am guiding someone through a difficult conversation by also encouraging working through the perspective and reactions of the other person: I am interested in the client’s needs as well as the needs of others in the system.

I feel sure that many coaches reading this will recognise these same techniques in their own practice. For me, deliberate employment of my mediation skillset has given me a framework to adapt and flex, to bring insights to my coachees.

It is an honour for me to be able to have a career that helps to bring about a sense of ease to people’s lives, either regarding their own internal struggles or others’. I will continue to draw the benefits from each field and look forward to future complementary techniques.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Tracey is a mediator, non-executive director (Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution – CEDR), executive coach (Henley Business School), lecturer and facilitator with 20 years’ experience helping people develop, manage differences and collaborate. With a BSc in psychology (Hons) and an MSc in organisational psychology, she works with UN agencies, investment banks, global social media giants, NHS trusts and regulatory bodies to bring a calm, compassionate and solution-focused approach. Additionally, she is passionate about developing confidence in aspiring leaders and is also a pro bono mentor and leadership coach.

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#### Find out more...

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# CONFLICT COACHING, MEDIATION AND GOVERNANCE IN THE WORKPLACE

Tiny incisions can bring about expansive healing.  
Selana Kong shares her insights into conflict coaching.

Mediation is a dispute-resolution process that is efficient, cost-effective and confidential. Parties have more control over the outcome compared to a court order. It safeguards reputations and relationships. Since the Singapore Convention on Mediation came into force in 2018, the enforcement of mediated settlement agreements across borders has been easier. The UK became one of the 56 signatories of the Singapore Convention in 2023. Mediation requires both disputing parties to be involved, while conflict coaching can be used with one disputing coachee.

Before qualifying as a coach, I had a full-time music career as a singer, teacher and conductor. I experienced coaching for the first time during the Clore Leadership Programme (CLP), where middle-senior arts and culture leaders in the UK are empowered to create change in the culture of leadership. Since then, I added coaching to my own portfolio career and coached many education, arts and cultural professionals in Hong Kong and the UK. In 2018, in a leadership position, I used my coaching skills to support my CEO through managing a crisis. This powerful experience inspired me to become a professional mediator, and I received my training and accreditation in professional international mediation in 2021.

I launched my coaching business in the UK in 2021 and integrated my specialisms in music, leadership, coaching and mediation to develop my niche as a conflict coach for arts and cultural executives in the UK. In a discussion with a fellow coach mediator, I reckoned that, in order to solve the problem from the source, we needed to address governance issues so that conflicts can be prevented. I completed a corporate governance diploma in 2022 and started coaching at CEO and COO levels in 2023.

## ARE YOU A PIN OR A KNIFE?

What the Chinese call *mianzi*, the concept of 'face' exists at varied levels in different cultures.

In China, prescribed social status is very important. Being challenged publicly is considered shameful. Harmony is created by avoiding confrontation. So, when Chinese people disagree, they tend to behave like a pin or a needle, as Professor Erin Meyer described in her book *The Culture Map*.<sup>1</sup> The conflict appears to be orderly and calm as people refrain from challenging someone's idea in front of a group. Instead, they use subtle hints to imply the slightest deviating perspectives from the other side.

In Western countries, different ideas are encouraged. People are taught to disagree openly to refresh their thinking. A good debate is considered an intellectual exercise. This approach is like a knife, in that it looks and sounds like a bold battle that eliminates risks, yet potentially injures relationships.

## THE PIN MODEL

I developed my own conflict coaching model, called **PIN: position, interest and need**.

The PIN model is a complex model that helps coachees get a holistic view of a situation<sup>2</sup> and come up with a new narrative by exercising curiosity and compassion.<sup>3</sup> In a nutshell, this model helps coachees to reframe their narratives and let go of **POSITIONS** so they can understand **INTERESTS** and meet **NEEDS**.



**POSITIONS** are the first level of consciousness about what we want. These are words (what we say), attitudes (what we think), actions (what we do) and emotions (what we feel). The problem with positions is that when people are in distress they say things they don't mean; they can't see biases and blind spots, they do things that are not rational or logical, and they fight, flee or freeze. People tend to focus on who's right and who's wrong, and get into deadlocks. This is why positions are usually not helpful: we need to help coachees to move to their interests.

**INTERESTS** are the second level of consciousness; I ask coachees why they want what they want. Interests include values (personal belief systems), cultures (evaluating performance, persuasion, leadership, decision-making, trust, disagreeing productively and scheduling) and concerns (core shared needs, such as appreciation, affiliation, autonomy and status). The problem with interests is that there are a million reasons why people want what they want. What helps coachees accept differences and find common ground is considering all the needs that stakeholders must meet.

**NEEDS** are the deepest and most important level of consciousness; it is what we must have. They include me (the self), you (the other party), us (a community or society) and all (the whole of life).

By the end of the coaching process, I will have helped the coachee to come up with a new narrative to reflect a holistic view of reality. They would have improved their ability to consider wider and more detailed perspectives, generate multiple win-win solutions, and meet their own needs while letting others meet their own needs.

## CASE STUDY

UK arts and cultural organisations are restructuring and downsizing in the hope that they will remain financially viable during the unprecedented economic crisis following the Covid-19 pandemic. Increased workloads and reduced budgets intensify conflict in the workplace. I recently had a conflict coaching arrangement with a registered charity (the sponsor) in England. It is an intercultural team that has recently gone through the upheaval of restructuring and downsizing. Pressure on two senior executives came from having limited time and a budget cut – with blurred boundaries arising from sharing tasks and responsibilities between team members.

The PIN model can be used with either a single coachee or multiple coachees. I adopted the structure of mediation using separate meetings (known as a 'caucus' in mediation) as well as joint meetings at various stages of the negotiation. Before coaching began, I had a one-to-one situational assessment with the sponsor

to set coaching goals. Next, I set up a coaching contract for the sponsor with agreed ethics, covering coaching model, timeframe, process, reporting and pricing. Then, I sent an 'agreement to coach', including information about their autonomy, agreed level of confidentiality, reporting, timeframe, coaching model and coaching process. Both coachees booked their first one-to-one online coaching session with me and completed the coaching agreement.

The PIN coaching process is flexible because the nature of conflict is complex and sometimes involves multiple individuals. I began with one-to-one situational assessments with each coachee. I listened to their perspectives, checked perceptions, and asked questions about personal background, team dynamics, organisational culture and context. When appropriate, I invited both coachees to joint coaching sessions to share perspectives, set priorities, generate options and settle agreements. Typically, there would be another separate one-to-one session to discuss sensitive issues. One-to-one conversations are confidential, and the level of reporting is agreed in advance. In the final joint session, I helped the coachees to improve offers and check realities before making a final settlement agreement. An interim progress report and a final report were submitted to the sponsor. Typically, the process takes three-to-six months.

## CONFLICT COACHING USING A PIN

In my experience, conflict coaching is like a pin and not a knife. Carefully crafted dialogues – in the same way as Chinese acupuncture – can heal inflammation, recirculate communication and create new energies for moving a conflict situation forward. It leads to new opportunities to improve governance, and future conflicts can be proactively avoided. I strongly advocate a holistic approach to integrating coaching, mediation and governance for sustainable business development.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Selana is a British Chinese who lives in Llangollen, North Wales. She is a trustee of the International Eisteddfod and a Clore fellow who is accredited in corporate governance, professional international mediation and relational dynamics coaching. She is currently the AC regional coordinator for Canada and Greater China, and the managing director of the International Dispute Resolution and Risk Management UK Centre. Selana sings with the North Wales Opera Studio.

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Photo credit: Adam Griffith

## COACHING WITH CANINES

Can the introduction of animals bridge the gap between coach and coachee and improve the conditions for engagement in the coaching process? Gillian Squirrell shares the results of a four-year coaching programme for women mandated to drug treatment.

This is an account of how we developed a coaching-based programme for women mandated to drug and alcohol treatment in a northern Californian county not far from San Francisco. Ironically perhaps, it took place deep in the wine country and was housed in a residential unit created from a barely converted inn and licenced restaurant. The programmes ran over a four-year period, six-to-eight times a year, with some cohorts of participants progressing into workplace coaching at the local Humane Society.

Collectively those in treatment could be described as in conflict with multiple systems, often those of their families and friends (who either wanted desistance or were supporting ongoing substance use), plus societal norms and the criminal justice system. Many were in conflict with themselves, experiencing a sense of shifting values and personal identity as they confronted the challenges of treatment and crisis, struggling with their own and others' conflicting demands and wants.

Being mandated to treatment is far from being offered a get-out-of-jail-free card. It is often used as a segue from jail to living within the community, perhaps in supported housing, with reporting requirements and monitoring, and with expectations of being employed and paying rent. The mandated treatment element, the filling between the layers of jail and community supervision, does not offer much of a gooey centre. There may be some softer touches – wearing one's own clothes and having better bedding than in jail, having opportunities for greater family contact, and more freedoms and access to community resources such as NA and AA meetings, shops and college, housing and employment advisors. However, these are often risky and double-edged soft touches. For example, family relationships and partnerships need attending to, untangling, and reframing or even closing down, and there are often temptations to revert to previous habits, plus pressures to conform to the values of families and friends.

The success rate for those mandated to treatment is hotly debated. Some research suggests success rates are extremely low.<sup>1</sup> Working with the Prochaska and DiClemente model of change,<sup>2</sup> it's fair to say that many participants will have been railroaded into treatment before they have even climbed aboard the carriage of contemplation, or even pre-contemplation. Knowing of the low success rate snaps at the heels of those engaged in such work as participants, treatment workers and managers. Some participants will make it through treatment and then fail; for others, the failure will come during treatment, and of course some succeed. The work of the treatment regime – groups, one-to-one counselling, house meetings and room inspections, engaging with community resources such as NA and AA meetings, job-finding programmes, and having progress reviewed against treatment milestones – is onerous and not to be underestimated.

Taking coaching into such a culture may be at odds or cause tensions. Coaching explicitly foregrounds individual choices and possibilities and often operates on the basis of clients as naturally creative, resourceful and whole. Such constructions may seem the antithesis of fixing those who are broken according to treatment protocols and a plan that has in place structures and sanctions to militate against failures or to capture slips, and even malefactions should they arise. All this is of course against the background noise of failure rates, mandated compliance and a threat of returning to jail.

*Animals are consummate teachers of what it means to be present. They are clear communicators and purveyors of direct feedback*

Women often become entangled with the criminal justice system as a result of economically motivated crimes: prostitution and soliciting, shoplifting and thefts, scams, kiting and fraud, assisting in burglaries, and carrying and sale of drugs. Often the engagement in activities that end in sentencing are part of their relationships with men. Engagement in drug-taking and alcohol abuse is often a result of abusive relationships, mediating violence, trauma, insecure housing, and managing childhood traumas and abuses. Such is the interpretation and theorising of Stephanie Covington and colleagues, in what is described as relationally based motivation to crime and substance abuse.<sup>3</sup>

So, let's pull some of these threads together. I wanted to take coaching into a treatment setting, offering something different from the other experiences that women mandated to treatment would receive as part of their care package. While entanglements with the criminal justice, carceral and treatment systems, or past choices or forced directions, could be construed as maladaptive or self-destructive, this was not the sum of who these women were. Working with Covington's relational theories on the pathways into offending and substance abuse, I thought centring the coaching on broad themes such as developing trust in self and others, exploring communication, self-esteem and self-efficacy<sup>4</sup> would be useful antidotes to previous lived experiences.

Incorporating insights from research, I determined several criteria around which to structure the coaching:

1. A key element was to upturn the time that we spent together and integrate some animals into the coaching dynamic, my thinking being that many prior experiences had involved pressures to conform or to take detrimental paths, and that many human-made systems had let these women down. To explore communication, self-efficacy and relationships with non-human animals would be to overturn expectations of being let down by human agencies, and to create alternative opportunities to engage and to learn.

In this instance, dogs were the animal of choice.<sup>5</sup> Dogs are widely recognisable and engaging – many people have a story to tell that involves their dog.<sup>6</sup> It was assumed that a programme working with animals might offer a lower bar to entry and engagement than one I offered by myself as a coaching-based intervention. Coaching was easier to experience in the company of a familiar animal, with the impacts of the coaching experienced somatically as well as explored through discussion.



Photo credit: Leleada Krozhen

Research suggests that exposure to dogs releases oxytocin in humans, a hormone inducing relaxation, stimulating feelings of trust and trustworthiness of other humans,<sup>7</sup> and acting as an all-round feel-good hormone. In such states, people may become more receptive to novel experiences, open to challenges and better able to process and learn. As key elements I wanted to explore were communication and trust, this help offered by the animal assistants was likely to be of enormous value.

I assumed the presence of the dogs would cut through any 'front'. They would, I surmised, stimulate a group culture of compassion and caring,<sup>8</sup> and the desire to work well with and not harm the animals,<sup>9</sup> which would, I again surmised, carry over to working with each other.

The presence of the dogs would be novel and normalising, and have a therapeutic value in an environment and at a stage of life that could feel stressful and highly monitored. Engagement with animals is always more successful when they are offered quiet, consideration, clear communication and clearly formulated uncluttered intentions. They need people to be focused, grounded, respectful and present.

Animals are consummate teachers of what it means to be present. They are clear communicators and purveyors of direct feedback. The dogs, with no axe to grind, did not care about anyone's past, and would simply respond to the emotional and communication environment each individual participant created and offered. The dogs could be trusted for their feedback in ways that participants may have found more difficult had it come from a human source.

2. To develop a programme for successive groups of self-selecting volunteers. Groups offer 'support in numbers' and allow participants to reap the benefits of working with emergence. The group format allows the potential for both in-session and between-session encouragement of individual insights and individuals taking planned actions. It was posited that having the crucible of a group would help support learning about and the development of trust and communication.

*Research suggests that exposure to dogs releases oxytocin in humans, a hormone inducing relaxation, stimulating feelings of trust and trustworthiness of other humans, and acting as an all-round feel-good hormone*

Having a programme allows for sequential development of ideas and concepts, revisiting experiences and re-examining significance.

3. The coaching was to emerge from experiential learning activities, some of which would be one-to-one with another human and some with the women working in pairs with a dog. All activities were bookended with discussion and on-the-hoof coaching. There was some teaching about another species and how to work well and safely with them.<sup>10</sup> Experiential learning offers the chance to observe one's behaviours and defaults and those of others in a neutral microcosm.

The programmes had outcomes such as:

- Improved communication and listening, and being less afraid to focus on another being – human or canine.
- Becoming aware of the emotional states of others, both canine and human, through learning how to read body language and other cues.
- Understanding and becoming aware of individual default assumptions and behaviours, plus how this may hobble communication, trust and self-belief.

- Appreciating clear and less jumbled communications by thinking more about the other and about intention. This involves reducing complex asks, considering what might really assist the other, and having a belief that another might be interested in interacting.
- Appreciating that others, both canine and human, could be trusted and could work in concert towards a common goal.
- Experiencing success in learning activities and breaking down its component parts.
- Developing a bodily understanding of presence and stillness.
- Experiencing curiosity and wanting to set up others, themselves and the dogs to be successful.
- An experience of and sense of self-belief and self-reliance to solve problems, communicate and to work effectively with others.
- Experiencing feelings of care and nurturing.

The programme was initially considered highly eccentric in the treatment setting and potentially disruptive. It was kept on a short leash until it demonstrated its efficacy. The effective dovetailing of coaching with treatment activities and ethos was underscored by commentary from the treatment team. They spoke of the ways in which they experienced their clients as being more insightful and engaged, as making links between what happened in their coaching sessions and their behaviours in the treatment community, and in relating to others and solving problems beyond the treatment centre. The participants often spoke of how they carried their insights into the daily life of the treatment centre and into their lives beyond treatment. They spoke of better relationships with their children and families, being able to be clearer about what they wanted to express.

The various iterations of the group coaching programme became an integral part of the treatment centre's offer.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Gillian Squirrell has worked as a researcher, lecturer, curriculum developer and manager within universities, and 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 practising and accredited coach (CTI and ICF), accredited in several models for coaching, she has a 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 individuals and communities not usually accessing coaching.

1. Coveiello, D et al. (2014) Does Mandating Offenders to Treatment Improve Completion Rates? Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment. 44(4). 417-425
2. A widely accepted and utilised model for thinking about behavioural change is that of James Prochaska and Carlo DiClemente, who developed a cycle of Five Stages of Change (1983) used in social work and various rehabilitation settings, placing the responsibility for change with the individual, but acknowledging the importance of the process of assisting people in thinking about change, helping and supporting them to access change resources and appreciating that change is not always likely to progress as a simple delineated cycle, but one where individuals might stall at points or spiralling off track at certain points to rejoin at other times.
3. Covington, S. (2007). The relational theory of women's psychological development: implications for the Criminal Justice System. Zaplin, R. ed. (2007). Female Offenders. Mass. Jones and Barlett Publishers Inc.
4. The women who volunteered for the programme did so after a large group session where they met a potential social therapy dog, explored the idea of coaching and a group coaching programme, and spoke about what they would like to explore and would find useful as skills or qualities to develop. There was a pre-programme design and an ongoing taking stock of what was useful or needed to be dialled up or down.
5. The most common animals for various coaching and personal development programmes are dogs and horses. For organisational and team coaching work, the animal of choice tends to be a horse. Various animals can be employed, from livestock through exotics, though the latter tend to be observed rather than interacted with. Green centres and the broader outdoors are also used in coaching. The emphasis of the work is on embodiment or somatic coaching.
6. It was notable how many intense stories there were about relationships with animals. They were trusted childhood or adult friends and occasionally there were stories about shattered bonds with animals. The collective introduction sessions to the coaching programme and working with dogs of course left some uninterested, but many were encouraged to join in sharing stories and enjoying the normalcy and novelty of a dog being present.
7. Research suggests various windows of 10-25 minutes of interaction with a dog, depending on the research, for the effective release of oxytocin. See, for example: Olmert, M.D. (2009). Made for Each Other. Philadelphia: Merloyd Lawrence Book Group; Beetz, A. Uvnas-Moberg, K. Julius, H. and Kotrschal, K. (2012). Psychosocial and Psychophysiological Effects of Human-Animal Interactions: The Possible Role of Oxytocin, Frontiers in Psychology, 3. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2012.00234; Julius et al (2013). Attachment to Pets: An Integrative View of Human-Animal Relationships with Implications for Therapeutic Practice. Oxford. Hogrefe Publishing.
8. Serpell, J. (1996). In the Company of Animals. Cambridge. Canto notes that animals can bring out nurturing feelings because they present almost as dependent children.
9. There was a vetting of the group membership over the multiple years that iterations of the programme ran. It was important to bear firmly in the forefront of mind that dogs who engaged in this work had to be safe and that their welfare and wellbeing was as important as anyone else's. Working on human-animal interactions introduces other complexities and considerations. More information can be found at [www.gilliansquirrell.com](http://www.gilliansquirrell.com).
10. Animal welfare and wellbeing when working in such contexts is paramount. Teaching participants to recognise signs of stress, for example, is important for the animal's wellbeing and for everyone's safety. It's an element of teaching or instruction that has natural spin-offs into discussions of individual stress and stressors, their antidotes and how group members might look out for one another.

# DEEP DIVE!

## COACHING AND PERSONAL CRISIS: MANAGING MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE RISKS IN COACHING

Photo credit: Jeremy Perkins

**Rosie Evans-Krimme** and **Jonathan Passmore** explore the continuum from high mental health to high mental illness and offer guidance to coaches on how to navigate it, with a particular focus on identifying suicide risks and referring clients accordingly.

We all have mental health in the same way that we have physical health. The World Health Organization (WHO) views mental health to be an integral component of our overall health, and define it as 'a state of well-being in which an individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.'<sup>1</sup> This definition acknowledges there is more to mental health than the restoration of it. There are also benefits to the promotion and protection of mental health. This shift in perspective throughout the Western world has echoed across the health sector, therapy and coaching. In this article we explore mental health issues in coaching, plus how coaches can better identify and manage suicide risks in their coaching practice.<sup>2</sup>

### THE MENTAL HEALTH PANDEMIC

Mental illness continues to be stigmatising and disabling, with depression recorded as one of the world's leading causes of disability.<sup>3</sup> An estimated 5% of adults suffer from depression worldwide; this equates to around 374 million people.<sup>4</sup> Mental health issues are not spread evenly, however: some groups of people suffer more than others.

Covid-19 has had a profound impact on mental health and resulted in an increase in psychological distress.<sup>5</sup> This increase results from measures such as quarantine, social distancing and self-isolation, which are associated with increased loneliness, social isolation and entrapment.<sup>6</sup> Another consequence of the Covid pandemic was

disruptions to mental, neurological and substance use services.<sup>7</sup> The WHO reports that around three-quarters of school and workplace mental health services were either wholly or partially disrupted.

To counteract the disruption and adverse impact of Covid-19 on mental health services, many countries and organisations responded by adopting digital solutions, such as telephone-based or videoconference services, to replace the need for in-person services.<sup>8</sup> The combination of the global pandemic deteriorating people's mental health, reduced accessibility of mental health services, and an increased accessibility of coaching delivered through technical platforms<sup>9</sup> has led to a boom in interest in coaching for mental health and wellbeing.

While the growing number of applications of coaching is generally viewed as a positive development, there are concerns over the safety of people with mental illness engaging with coaching.<sup>10</sup> For example, encouraging clients with clinical depression to set goals beyond their capacity is detrimental to their recovery.<sup>11</sup> This is in part due to the huge variation in the level of mental health training amongst coaches, so coaches may fail to recognise subtle signs of mental illness in their clients.<sup>12</sup> We believe that coaching should explicitly exclude the treatment of mental health disorders unless coaches are explicitly trained in managing clinical conditions. This perspective is based on the current state of health coaching research, which confirms a lack of research into the effectiveness of coaching for mental health<sup>13</sup>, as well as our own view that few coaches have adequate training or support to work with clinical

conditions. Although coaching is showing promising psychosocial outcomes in areas such as quality of life, self-efficacy and other indicators of mental health,<sup>14</sup> research remains limited on the impact of coaching on mental health.<sup>15</sup>

Coaching is not a replacement for mental health treatments, and coaching practitioners need to be clear on their professional boundaries and how to respond appropriately when a client presents with mental illness. At the same time, coaching can play an important role in the mental health pandemic as a proactive and preventative tool that enhances mental health and wellbeing in the general, non-clinical population.

### WALKING THE LINE

#### The 'grey area' between coaching and therapy

While coaches may believe they focus on dreams and desires, leaving counsellors and psychotherapists to work with damage and distress, the reality in many cases is not clear-cut. Many clients live with both dreams and distress, and their state fluctuates day-to-day and throughout the days. If statistics are correct and one in four people have mental health issues (currently or in the past), it's pretty likely that most coaches have one or more such clients.

But like all conditions, mental health issues are on a continuum, from historical (i.e., in the past) and mild, to severe and clinical. They include a wide range of different conditions, which each create their own effects. A starting point is to better understand this variety.

#### The risk of causing harm to clients with mental health disorders

Mental health disorders include illnesses such as major depression, anxiety disorders, psychotic disorders, personality disorders, substance misuse disorders, self-harming behaviours and suicidal ideation. Mental illness can severely impair a person's overall functionality, characterised by a danger of harm to self or others, and serious impairments to judgement, mood, relationships or occupation.<sup>16</sup> When considering the coaching process, mental illness can reduce a person's

capacity to make choices and be self-determining,<sup>17</sup> in addition to leading to low levels of intentional goal-striving.<sup>18</sup> This can lead to a power imbalance in the coaching relationship that can negatively impact the strength of the working alliance.<sup>19</sup>

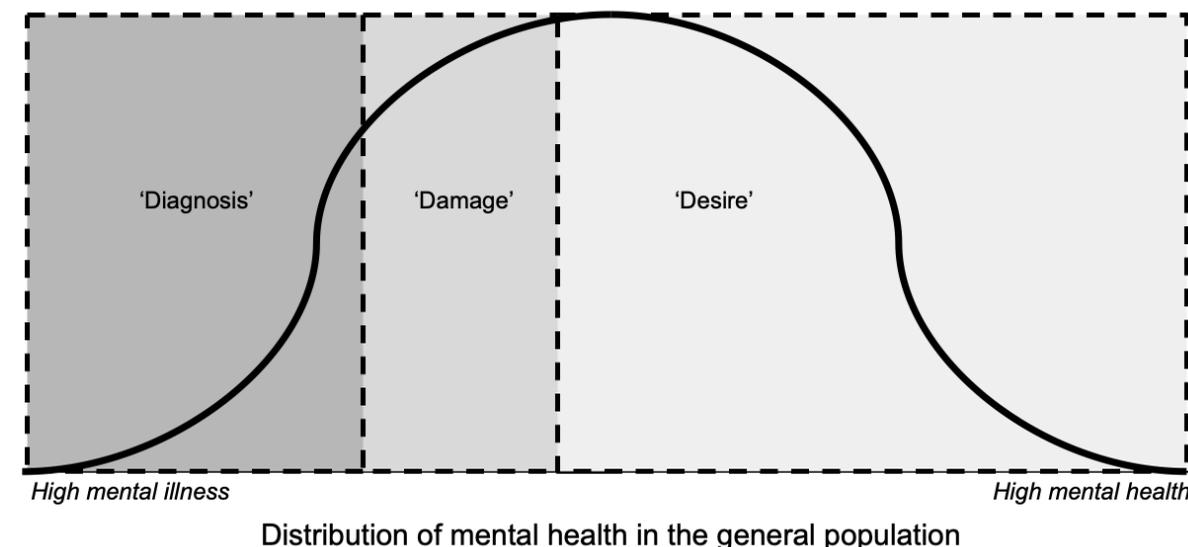
There is also a risk of indirect harm caused to those around the client, such as their family members or colleagues. It's helpful for coaches to consider how to prevent these occurrences by remaining within their competency level and making continuous assessments throughout the coaching engagement about the client's suitability for coaching, referring to another helping profession where appropriate (see 'How to refer coaching clients to other helping professionals'). Programmes such as Mental Health First Aid England's training offer professionals the opportunity to develop their mental health literacy and may be a valuable tool for coaches.<sup>20</sup>

#### For whom is coaching most appropriate?

Considering the concerns over the safety of people with mental illness engaging with coaching<sup>21</sup> and the lack of research into coaching for people with mental health disorders<sup>22</sup>, we argue that coaching is not appropriate for people with clinical mental health disorders. However, Anthony M Grant highlights the crossover between counselling and coaching populations, which suggests that some experienced and relevantly qualified coaching professionals may be able to work with clients who experience subclinical psychopathologies.<sup>23</sup>

In his 3D model (Figure 1), Jonathan Passmore identifies three distinct groups along the distribution of mental health in the general population: diagnosis, damage and desire.<sup>24</sup> **Diagnosis** refers to the clinical population, where a client needs to receive treatment for their mental health disorder by a mental healthcare professional and recover, which could take months or years. **Damage** is the poor mental health, also known as languishing, that the general non-clinical population will experience at some point in their lives and can recover from with little to no additional intervention from a helping professional. Clients in the **desire** phase tend to be experiencing middling-to-high levels of mental health and wellbeing, and this is where coaching is most appropriate.

Figure 1: distribution of 3D model along the mental health continuum<sup>25</sup>



## Identifying mental health issues

It is not the responsibility of the coach to diagnose a mental health disorder, but coaches can benefit from enhancing their understanding and ability to recognise potential problems that may benefit from a referral to a healthcare professional. Table 1 shows possible warning signs of mental illness and offers reflective questions that coaches can consider when assessing potential warning signs of mental illness.<sup>26</sup> It is based on the clinically used mental state examination<sup>27</sup>, and

consideration should also include an assessment of the level of the client's impairment to their daily functioning, the amount of time these issues are present and the impact on their progress in coaching. If uncertain, coaches can share and explore with their supervisor, and refer to Passmore's guide on referrals<sup>28</sup> for the most common mental health issues, which are: anxiety, depression, eating disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse or addiction, suicidal ideation and thought disorders.

**Table 1: potential warning signs of mental illness**

Adapted from Cavanagh and Buckley, 2014, p.410

Factor	Questions
Appearance	Does the person dress in an expected way? Has the person engaged in personal care? How does the person move? How is the person's body language?
Behaviour	Is the person's behaviour unusual? Is the person excessively agitated or lethargic? Does the person engage in repetitive behaviours? How congruent is the body language with what they are saying?
Mood	Does the person's mood fluctuate significantly with no apparent cause? Is the person overly optimistic or overly pessimistic? Is the person apathetic?
Thoughts	Is the person preoccupied or fixated with a particular situation or event? How clearly is the person communicating their thoughts? Is the person rational in their thoughts?
Perceptions	Is the person's perception of their world normal or abnormal? Does the person appear to hear, see or feel phenomena that are not visible from your own perception?
Intellect	Has the person's intellect changed over time? Is the person as 'intellectual' as you expected given their education, role, history? How present and active is the person when you meet or connect with them? Does the person appear to struggle to engage with or answer questions?
Insight and judgement	How self-aware is the person of any of the above? How does the person explain any signs you have identified?

## Ethical contracting that considers mental health

Ethical contracting includes an assessment of a client's suitability for coaching. As 25-52% of people engaging with coaching present significantly high levels of psychological distress,<sup>29</sup> an initial 'screening' should become standard practice for all coaches. The coach must use this opportunity to assess whether the client's goal or topic – especially when regarding wellbeing – is within the scope of the coaching relationship, the coach's competency level and their formal training (for example as a psychologist).

The following BE WELL model of ethical contracting for mental health offers an overview of the core areas that coaches need to consider when contracting around mental health or wellbeing topics.

- Be clear about professional qualifications.
- Explore the mental health or wellbeing goal/topic.
- What is the impact of the topic on the client's daily life?
- Explain the difference between coaching and psychotherapy/therapy/counselling.
- Listen to the client's preferred route for mental health support.
- Look out for risks of discrimination and conflict.

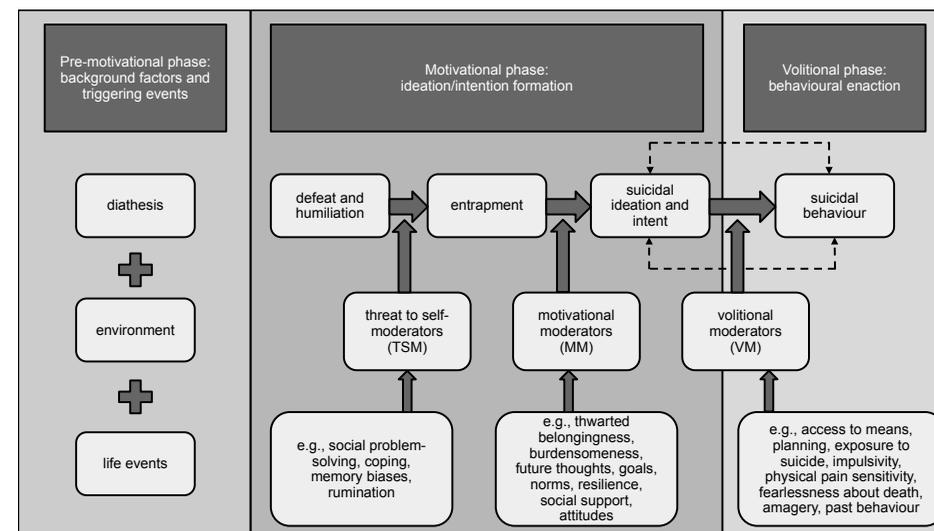
## Recognising suicidal ideation and behaviours

One model to describe the biopsychosocial context of common pathways to suicidal behaviour is the integrated motivational-

volitional (IMV) model of suicidal behaviour.<sup>30</sup> It describes three phases (Figure 2) in which suicidal ideation and behaviour may emerge: the pre-motivational, motivational and volitional.

**Figure 2: the IMV model of suicidal behaviour**

The integrated motivational-volitional (IMV) model by O'Connor and Kirtley, 2018, p.2



The pre-motivational phase is when suicidal ideation and behaviour may emerge and is when practitioners can identify individual and environmental vulnerability factors and potentially triggering negative events. Higher levels of perfectionism and socially prescribed perfectionism have been consistently associated with suicide risk and the likelihood of feeling defeated when faced with an interpersonal crisis. Low socio-economic status and early life adversities can further contribute towards an individual's risk of suicidal ideation and behaviour. However, negative life events

are a potential risk factor at any stage in life. Table 2 provides an overview of the psychological risk and protective factors for suicidal ideation and behaviour that coaches can monitor as part of their risk of suicidal ideation and suicide assessment. In identifying pre-motivational factors of suicidal ideation and behaviour, coaches can assess which clients are more likely to be susceptible to the threat to self (TSM) or motivational moderators (MM) outlined in the motivational phase, and have planned pathways to mental health support if needed.

**Table 2: psychological risk and protective factors for suicidal ideation and behaviour**

Adapted from O'Connor and Nock, 2014, p.77<sup>31</sup>

Personality and individual differences	Cognitive factors
Risk: hopelessness, impulsivity, perfectionism, neuroticism, extroversion Protective: optimism, resilience	Risk: cognitive rigidity, rumination, thought suppression, autobiographical memory biases, lack of belonging, feeling like a burden, fearlessness about injury or death, insensitivity to pain, inability to problem-solve or cope, agitation, implicit associations, attentional biases, defeat, entrapment Protective: future thinking, goal adjustment, reasons for living, sense of belonging, ability to problem-solve or cope
Social factors	Life events
Risk: social isolation, exposure to deaths by suicide of others, modelling, contagion, assortative homophily, social transmission Protective: social support	Risk: traumatic life events in childhood and/or adulthood, physical illness, other interpersonal stressors, psychophysiological stress response Protective: social support, sense of belonging

The motivational phase focuses on the relationship between the core constructs of defeat/humiliation, entrapment, suicidal ideation and suicidal behaviour. Perceiving that there is no escape from defeat and/or humiliation, such as social rejection or loss, is a close predictor of suicidal ideation. However, the absence of threat to self (TSM) or motivational moderators (MM) contributes towards the increase or decrease in entrapment translating into suicidal ideation. For example, unemployment has been shown to affect an individual's feelings of hopelessness or entrapment, which increases the risk of suicide, yet not everyone who is unemployed will feel suicidal. These predictors should be red flags to coaches, who can turn towards their supervisor for support on how to best respond to their client. When there is an urgent need to discuss a client's wellbeing, supervisors can contract with their supervisees the option to speak within hours rather than waiting for the next planned session. Coaches must assess honestly the need to

terminate or delay coaching in the best interest of the client and refer to an appropriate helping professional.

The volitional phase outlines the transition from suicidal ideation to suicide attempts and suicide itself. The volitional moderators include: access to means, planning, exposure to suicide or suicidal behaviour, impulsivity, physical pain sensitivity/endurance, fearlessness about death, mental imagery of death/dying, and past suicidal behaviour. Table 3 offers some questions that practitioners can reflect on to assess if and how many of these factors are present. If the client shares any information that confirms one of these factors, then the coach must ask about suicide in a direct but sensitive manner. Asking individuals about suicide has been shown to be beneficial to those at high risk and does not increase the risk of suicidal ideation or self-harm.<sup>32</sup>

**Table 3: volitional moderators within the IMV model and reflective questions for coaches**

Adapted from O'Connor and Kirtley, 2018, p.5

Volitional moderator	Question
Access to means	Does the client have ready access to likely means of suicide?
Planning ('if-then' plans)	Has the client formulated a plan for suicide?
Exposure to suicide or suicidal behaviour	Has a family member, friend or colleague engaged in suicidal behaviour?
Impulsivity	Does the client tend to act impulsively or in the spur of the moment?
Physical pain sensitivity/endurance	Does the client have high or increased physical pain endurance?
Fearlessness about death	Is the client fearful about death? Has this changed?
Mental imagery	Does the client describe visualising dying or a time after death?
Past suicidal behaviour	Does the client have a history of suicide attempt or self-harm?

The purpose of identifying these risk factors is to consider how they interact with one another in complex ways and how they potentially increase an individual's vulnerability to suicidal ideation and behaviour. Practitioners embody their ethical practice in doing so, because they are taking responsibility for their client's welfare and can safeguard them more effectively. However, there are a number of dilemmas that coaching practitioners face when a client is at risk of self-harming or suicide. On occasion, the coaches' or therapists' own personal and ethical beliefs may conflict with their legal and professional responsibilities when responding to a client threatening suicide or self-harming behaviour. As a result, coaches must become aware of how their biases may conflict with their ethical and legal responsibilities.

### How to refer coaching clients to other helping professionals

It is imperative that coaches refer clients to other healthcare professionals as needed. There are occasions when breaching confidentiality may be necessary, and this poses a potential ethical dilemma for coaches, as confidentiality is an essential ingredient in coaching. It must be noted that breaking confidentiality to protect

the safety of a client or others is rare; however, coaches must be prepared to effectively manage these situations.

In the coaching agreement with the client and potential third parties, such as the sponsor, coaches can clearly state the circumstances in which they will break confidentiality. The non-negotiable circumstances include risk of serious illegal activities and harm to the client or others. Coaches can include circumstances such as: the referral to a healthcare professional when mild-to-severe mental health problems arise; in the cases of physical illness; and when the topic is outside of the coach's competencies.

### Awareness is the key

In this article we have explored mental health and how it can, on rare occasions, play out in suicide or self-harming behaviours in coaching. By enhancing our awareness as a coach, we can ensure we are best-placed to identify and manage these risks in our coaching practice.

*This article is based on Chapter 13: Ethics in Mental Health in WA Smith, J Passmore, YL Lai, E Turner and D Clutterbuck (eds.), The Ethical Coaches' Handbook: A guide to developing ethical maturity. Abingdon: Routledge.*

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Jonathan Passmore is a chartered psychologist and executive coach. He has written and edited over 40 books and 250 scientific articles and book chapters over the past 25 years. He is a professor at Henley Business School and senior vice president EZRA-LHH.

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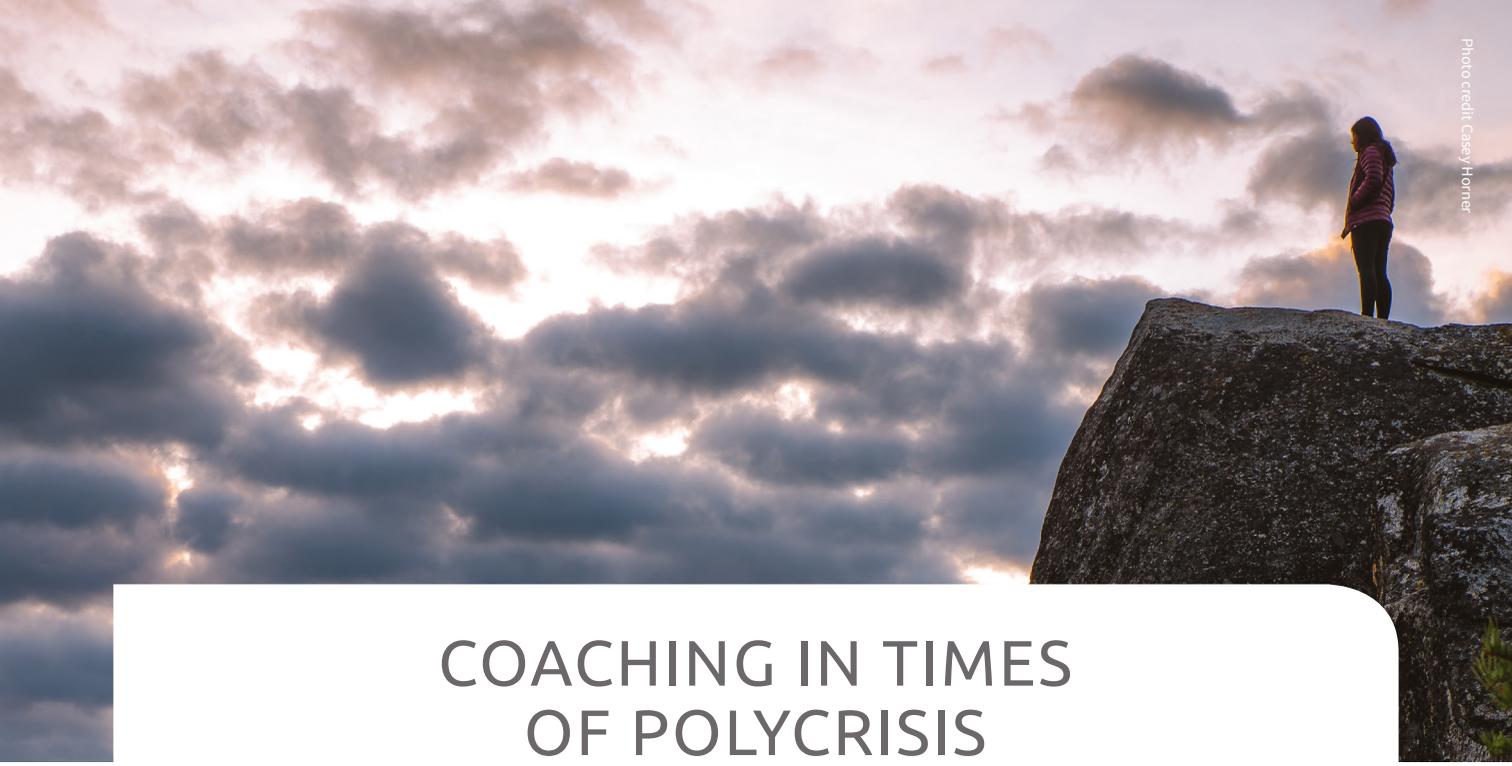


Photo credit Casey Horner

# COACHING IN TIMES OF POLYCRISIS

The world is at breaking point, tensions are riding high and emotions are boiling over. What can coaches do to help a new dawning? **Lisa Turner** shares her chakra evolution model to help us make sense of it all.

If there's one thing that coaches do well, it is offering support during times of chaos. When the going gets tough, the tough call on their coach for support.

It is my prediction that demand for coaching and personal development is going to rise rapidly due to the increase in number and severity of challenges faced by individuals and leaders that we're likely to see in the coming years and decades.

To understand the cause of these difficult times, I offer a model that we can use to understand the past and present, and extrapolate to predict what might be to come.

The model explains the current chaos as a polycrisis, and describes the kind of coach this current moment is going to demand. Times of great uncertainty offer times of unprecedented opportunity.

## THE POLYCRISIS

Why is it that, despite our being able to produce more food than ever before, people are still starving? Why is it that we have better medical expertise than ever before, but that we seem sicker than we've ever been? Why is it that, despite more opportunities available to more people than ever before, people are still struggling, trapped in poverty? Despite growing awareness of the devastating effects of issues such as wealth inequality, gender inequality and racism, they remain rife in most societies.

We are facing not one issue but many crises: ecological, cultural, economic, financial, geopolitical, psychological and spiritual in nature. Fuel, climate change, war, racism, gender inequality, wealth

inequality, ecosystem collapse, mental health and on and on.

We are in a polycrisis; a period of multiple, overlapping and interconnected global crises that our entire planet faces.

The interconnected problems are unsolvable on their own. Like playing whack-a-mole, one problem solved seems to make another worse. If we optimise the economy, we trash the planet. If we address climate change, we create an energy crisis.

We can't solve any of the single issues without making things worse somewhere else. To make any difference anywhere and everywhere, we must take a bigger perspective, to think at a higher level.

Cue the coaches, who step in, wearing their capes and carrying the consciousness-raising superpowers.

## THE SOCIETAL CHAKRA EVOLUTION MODEL: THEOS

My background in science taught me many useful things: critical thinking, the importance of labelling your calculator (especially when around students) and the ability to spot patterns in chaos.

The pattern or model I referenced earlier, which I call THEOS (The Evolution of Society), suggests civilisation is at a tipping point, where we are being invited to evolve to a higher level of consciousness, our 'conscious tipping point'.

The model describes the activation of the chakras of society. Chakras are usually applied to the individual. For reference, here we're applying this to the developed world.

*We can't solve any of the single issues without making things worse somewhere else. To make any difference anywhere and everywhere, we must take a bigger perspective*

Don't panic if you're not into Eastern spirituality or indeed any kind of spirituality. This model requires no belief or dogma; instead, we approach it as a metaphor to support the sensemaking of this complex situation.

### What you need to know about chakras:

- They're not 'real', rather they're non-physical energy centres.
- They originate from Eastern spirituality.
- There are seven main chakras.
- They are each associated with an area of the body.
- They represent qualities, emotions, behaviours and experiences.

### The story so far

By the middle of the 20th century the population of the developed world had been ravaged by two world wars, a great depression and a pandemic. Food, housing, and the very basics of survival and security were in short supply.

Society demanded, and got change: in the UK developments included the National Health Service, social security, pensions, council housing, increased food production and improved farming yields.

#### **This is the base chakra being activated: security, structure and stability.**

With this activated, people had the basics for survival; food and shelter, a safety net and structure. These secure foundations then fostered creativity, music, fashion, innovative lifestyles and the 60s sexual revolution of free love.

#### **This is the sacral chakra being activated: sexuality, creativity, pleasure, flexibility.**

In the 80s, a financial boom reshaped values, prioritising individual wealth and success. Delayed gratification was out; people sought immediate rewards. The era of me, I, and 'I want it now' was epitomised by Madonna's song *Material Girl*, opulence in TV shows like *Dallas* and *Dynasty*, and comedian Harry Enfield's 'Loadsamoney' character. Greed ceased being taboo and became good.

#### **This is the solar plexus chakra being activated: identity, will, control and individuality.**

In the 90s, therapies, healing and life coaching surged in popularity. Suddenly everyone was in therapy and sharing their experiences of the latest modality. It became a time of emotional exploration, open hearts and group hugs, fostering love and care.

There was an outpouring of love and caring for others, the environment and Mother Earth herself.

#### **This is the heart chakra being activated: love, compassion, empathy.**

The internet's popularity exploded in the '00s, introducing us to smartphones, Google, YouTube, social media and more. Suddenly everyone's talking and listening. We had more access to more information than ever before.

#### **This is the throat chakra being activated: expression, communication, information.**

Which brings us to now, the eve of the next chakra being activated – the third eye. The third eye represents wisdom, vision, discernment and insight. It's followed by the crown chakra, bringing inspiration, unity or super consciousness, non-duality.

### THE DRAWBACK

During this journey, you might have noticed another pattern in the model: the drawback. Before one chakra activates, the previous one becomes excessive, coupled with a lack of energy in the next to be activated.

In the 40s and 50s, the activation of the base chakra stemmed from lack, as basic survival needs were not being met. The rigid societal restrictions of the 50s, dictating a predetermined life path from school to job, marriage, children and eventually the grave, suffocated creativity and joy, sparking the rebellious sexual revolution of the 60s.

The almost communal level of sharing triggered frustration among those seeking instant gratification and those unwilling to share or wait, which in turn fuelled the activation of the solar plexus in the 80s.

The excess focus on money and materialism from the solar plexus, coupled with burnout and stock market crashes, triggered a yearning for something more. The outpouring of love and the longing for expression opened our hearts in the 90s.

All these emotions found an outlet for expression through social media, provoking the throat chakra to open as we shared everything with everyone.

Which leads us to where we are now – the excess of the throat chakra.

An endless stream of information and emotional expression, shared and shouted without checks, and amplified by artificial intelligence, fuels a massive outpouring of communication without wisdom or discernment, creating the chaos and confusion we see today.

### HEAD VERSUS HEART

The throat chakra creates a bridge between the head and the heart: the heart feels; the throat conveys information. There is information, but no discernment. What we feel is expressed.

Much of the chaos we see right now is the result of the excess of the throat chakra, which is coupled with a wide-open heart chakra, but without the wisdom of the third eye. When the third eye activates, we will witness more vision, reason, discernment and wisdom.

Until then, how someone feels about something carries greater weight than whether the facts support it. This is the very definition of a conspiracy theory: when someone persists and insists something

is true, even in the face of irrefutable evidence to the contrary. Confirmation bias sets in.

This imbalance between heart and head – caused by a lack of reason, wisdom and vision, coupled with an excess of emotional decisions and actions – can explain much of the madness we see today.

Much of the polycrisis is caused not by an evil elite running the world, but by the emergent properties of systemic failure. Artificial intelligence, nothing more than excess information, might speed up what we do, but it lacks wisdom. The crisis we can now see is a sign of the third eye opening, showing us the breakdown of dysfunctional systems optimised for only one blinkered outcome at the expense of others. This is our conscious tipping point, where we are being called to evolve to a higher level of thinking.

### EVOLVING TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF COACHING

This model explains the polycrisis, and begs the question what next? How can we move through and beyond this tipping point? What role does coaching play in this?

Coaching and personal development have gone through their own evolutions, like a video game that keeps levelling-up, adapting to the ever-changing needs of individuals hungry for personal and professional growth. Coaching has evolved over time, giving rise to four distinct levels or generations:

#### 1. First generation: achievement catalysts

Coaching's origins lie in sport, where the focus is on improving performance through behavioural change. This first generation enhances performance, achieves goals and ultimately aims for victory. It uses tools like SMART goals or the GROW model. It's helpful for boosting success and guiding clients to become champions in their personal and professional lives. This approach addresses the solar plexus, emphasising action needed for material results.

#### 2. Second generation: inner explorers and emotional sherpas

In the second generation, we acknowledge how our inner emotional landscape influences external outcomes. This coaching level goes beyond actions to leverage inner resources. Coaches help clients navigate through their stories, problems and challenges, integrating and reconciling inner parts. The heart chakra level of coaching addresses, heals and harnesses the emotions driving our actions.

#### 3. Third generation: jedi masters of mindset

Third-generation coaching adopts a process-centric approach, focusing on thought processes and mindset. Techniques like NLP, CBT and other cognitive approaches exemplify this emphasis. The coach delves into beliefs, values and motivations rooted in the mindset. This coaching level correlates with the throat chakra, centred on communication and language.

#### 4. Fourth generation: radiating presence, ascension architects

The fourth generation of coaches is where true magic happens. This level focuses on presence and non-duality. These mystical beings understand that clients aren't broken; they are awakening to higher levels of consciousness. The coaches help clients transcend into those new levels of awareness.

This generation of coaches operates at the third-eye level, embodying visionary leaders who create consciously for the greater good and the long-term benefit of all. It involves emergence, unfoldment, transcendence, self-realisation and the beauty of true authenticity.

The coaching game has come a long way, and the fourth generation of transcendent coaches is now called for. An essential aspect of a fourth-generation coach is their ability to navigate through all four levels depending on the client's needs and desired outcomes. They seamlessly transition between the levels, adapting their approach to best serve the client in each moment.

### BEYOND THE TIPPING POINT

From this side of the tipping point, it is impossible to see beyond it.

A fourth-generation, transcendent coach can guide clients to embrace non-duality – what people seek and what society needs to transcend the polycrisis. We require a higher level of being, where individuals see themselves as part of the whole and where their actions serve the collective's highest and long-term good.

Now is the time for the conscious coach to guide us through our conscious tipping point.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr Lisa Turner is the founder of CETFreedom, a spiritual and consciousness-awakening organisation specialising in training professional coaches and practitioners in conscious emotional transformation (CET). Lisa developed CET, a psycho-spiritual methodology for releasing trauma and rebuilding neurology for success, after being trafficked and kept as a house prisoner by a paedophile for five years in her teens. CET can heal in a matter of hours what can take other therapies years to achieve. With a PhD in mathematical modelling, Lisa applies the same scientific rigour to understanding emotions and how we can evolve through raising consciousness. Lisa is the author of five books, one of which is currently being developed for film.



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# SWIM JUMP FLY: A MODEL FOR CHANGE

Some people breeze through change, while others get stuck. Some have an appetite for mixing things up, while others prefer regularity. What could you learn from interviewing over 100 people all navigating transition? **Charlotte Housden** reveals all.

If we boil down why clients come to coaching, it's for change – to alter something in their life or address a challenge they didn't invite. In times of conflict, don't we all need to shift how we live or work, or the lenses through which we see the world?

I have always been interested in how people tackle change, why some glide through it and others become stuck. So, during 2019 and 2020 I interviewed 108 people navigating shifts, many of whom were working through conflicts. One participant said she was 'stressed and working long hours and my health was so bad. My mental health wasn't great either... To get comfort I'd go shopping and buy jewellery or drink alcohol.' Another had to deal with a significant health issue: 'we've got to do it very quickly, otherwise you'll lose the use of your right leg' was the urgent advice from his surgeon.

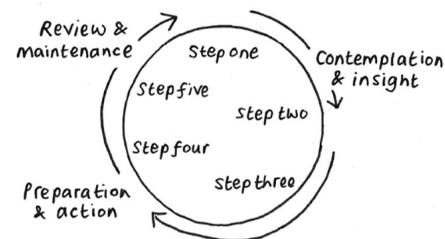
Over a year I recorded 75 hours of conversation, then analysed these using thematic analysis<sup>1</sup>, identifying 18 key themes. Working through the data I discovered things that helped – and others that hindered – participants' progress, for example:

- Many described 'running away', which prevented them from 'running towards'. This meant they often ended up in a similar position to the one they were initially in, sometimes one that was worse. I wondered whether sitting longer in reflection, building awareness of purpose and direction, might help.
- The size of the change interviewees wanted to address. Some were more risk averse, which didn't fit the distance they wanted to travel. Was there benefit in addressing the gap between the size of change and their comfort with change?
- Many participants beat themselves up about lack of progress, but when they focused on qualitative aspects, such as how they felt, they saw real shifts. I thought assessing both might be useful.
- A number also shared insights about the 'what' versus the 'how' of their shifts. For example, some spent time trying to alter jobs or careers radically, only to realise that how they managed their work was more important than what work they did.

- Resources seemed to be key to success; when participants lacked them, it was much harder. I wondered whether an initial audit of resources might be useful.

- Experimentation was important – trying things, taking small steps, focusing on iteration. However, some threw themselves in, spending time and money on a new direction only to discover it wasn't as hoped for.

As I reflected on all of this, I wondered whether amplifying the helpful aspects and addressing the hindrances might help others to navigate change successfully. I developed a new approach, building on James Prochaska and Carlo DiClemente's transtheoretical model<sup>2</sup> and Stephen Palmer's PRACTICE model<sup>3</sup>, creating a simple process that supported people working on their own (e.g., those who couldn't afford to hire a coach). For professionals it served as a looser model, more focused on avenues for exploration.



The Swim Jump Fly five-step model of change

Am I nearly there yet?  
Am I nearly there yet?  
Am I nearly there yet?



Charlotte Housden Consulting Ltd

Over the last few years I've been sharing my findings through a coaching blog, a podcast and a book.<sup>4</sup> Having researched the benefits of humour<sup>5</sup>, I decided to write the book in a light-hearted way, including hiring an illustrator to draw cartoons to reinforce the messages.

Since January 2023 I've been focused more on professionals, running a series of workshops to explore the model, helping coaches practise using it and offering time to reflect on how it might work with clients. Here are the five steps we work through:

- Step one: WHY and WHERE (purpose and destination)
- Step two: WHICH (size of change and comfort with change)
- Step three: WHAT and HOW (type of change)
- Step four: WHO and WHEN (planning and experimentation)
- Step five: HOW MUCH and HOW WELL (evaluating progress)

These are the prompts we use in the coaching pairs:

## STEP ONE

**WHY** (purpose): What makes this change important for you? What's your motivation to shift? What are the benefits?

**WHERE** (destination): What will be different when you've reached your goal? What will you see, hear, feel or think once you arrive? How will you know you've got there?

**Tip:** Participants often focused on 'where' and spent less time on 'why'. Bringing both into the discussion can help clients gain more purpose and energy at the start of a coaching partnership.

## STEP TWO

**WHICH** (size of change): How far do you need to shift? Is it a small, medium or large change? Does it require swimming in familiar waters, jumping a small distance or flying far away?

**WHICH** (comfort with change): How do you generally deal with change? Are you risk averse? Do you really love big shifts? How do you feel about this specific change?

**Tip:** This can lead to useful discussions about the fit between size of change and comfort with change. When the gap is big there are opportunities to focus on smaller steps, being more realistic about timeframes or changing the goal itself.

## STEP THREE

**WHAT** (what they're doing): What needs to change? For example, if you're trying to get fitter, what kind of exercise are you focusing on? Do you need to shift from jogging to swimming?

**HOW** (how they're doing it): Do you need to focus on the 'how' of your change? You might like your work, but not endless meetings or being in the office every day, preferring either to be at home or work on your own. Which parts of the 'how' don't work for you right now?

**Tip:** Participants focused mostly on the 'what' and tended to forget about the 'how'. Bringing both into the conversation can be helpful.

## STEP FOUR

**WHO** (might help them): Who have you got in your family/friendship circle/network that can help? Where are your gaps? How can you recruit more people to help you?

**WHEN** (order/timing of activities): What will be your first step and when will you take it? What is your second step and when will you take that?

**Tip:** Participants often jumped into 'when', such as planning actions before they had thought through resources – their 'who'. Reversing the order could be helpful.

## STEP FIVE

**HOW MUCH** (quantity of progress): How will you measure your progress in terms of quantity? For example, will it be how many roles you've applied for, or the miles you've run? What data can you collect to demonstrate your progress?

**HOW WELL** (quality of progress): How will you measure your progress in terms of quality? This can be more subtle, such as looking at how well you're sleeping, how your self-belief is growing or what you're learning about yourself.

**Tip:** Quantity is easier to measure than quality and is often the first thing clients attend to. If they aren't seeing the numbers shifting, it can be helpful to switch to measuring quality for a while.

At this point in the workshop we reflect on what was expected versus unexpected, and what coaches found familiar versus what was new. We focus on how the approach fits with their coaching philosophy and style and how they might weave it into their practice. We also discuss who they might use it with and when that first opportunity might be.

If you found the Swim Jump Fly approach interesting, why not ask yourself these questions too?

## 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 wants to make coaching and psychology accessible, and so is exploring how coaches consume academic research and ways to make it more digestible for practitioners. The first three chapters of *Swim Jump Fly* are available to download from [swimjumpfly.com](http://swimjumpfly.com). Contact Charlotte via LinkedIn or [ch@charlottehousden.com](mailto:ch@charlottehousden.com).

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Pooja Sachdev



*To be more effective and ethical as coaching practitioners, I believe we need to build our capacity to work with and across deep differences – differences in identity, culture, narrative, in ways of being and ways of thinking*

# EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN COACHING PRACTICE

Welcome to our new column on diversity, equity and inclusion, by **Pooja Sachdev**. She invites us to look in, out and around as we coach with courage and care.

A few years ago, I was talking to a coach about my extended family.

Although the purpose of the coaching was to help me manage my professional career (I was building up my consulting practice at the time, while juggling a corporate role with raising two small children), I wanted to give her some background and context on my life.

While discussing the dynamics within my family, I shared how I felt obliged to invite certain relatives (whom I didn't know well) to stay at my house when they were visiting the UK. I said it was inconvenient to host (because of how busy I was) but that it had to be done.

I recall how shocked she looked. She didn't comprehend why I felt this obligation, and brought up the importance of boundaries. Her view was that it was my house, and that I should have the freedom to decide who stays there. Of course, that's true and boundaries are important. However, she had failed to notice that I was making a choice about who stays at my house – it just wasn't the choice she might have made. There was an assumption about what I might be feeling, what I needed and what was important to me. The advice I was given didn't gel with who I was and my social context.

I believe this disconnect was down to a cultural difference.

In the USA and the UK, we tend to focus on individual uniqueness and personal needs more than in Asian countries, because Western culture is generally more individualistic and less collectivist.<sup>1</sup> This doesn't mean that individual needs don't matter in Asian cultures, but often our group memberships and our relationships take precedence over the individual.

With this context and conditioning, the inconvenience of hosting a distant relative genuinely mattered less to me than the security of my wider family relationships and my sense of belonging in them.

Now, I'm not claiming that this is true for everyone or for every situation. However, what the coach missed was an important aspect of my socio-cultural identity, and they didn't stop to consider how she and I might view the situation differently through that lens.

This is just one example.

There are many ways in which coaching and coach training, as it stands, reflect a particular set of cultural values and assumptions, often rooted in Western ways of thinking (in my example, individualism and personal power). This can lead to the belief that 'Western therapy doesn't work on Eastern minds', as a character from the Netflix series *Beef* put it!<sup>2</sup>

The profession has grown out of specific schools of study, ones that may not be relatable or accessible to people from different backgrounds or ways of thinking – not only in terms of culture and race/ethnicity, but also class and economic difference, age, disability, religious beliefs and so on.

In conjunction with this (and perhaps because of it), there continues to be a lack of diverse representation in the coaching industry in terms of who provides coaching, who receives/can access coaching and how coaching is delivered.

This not only limits the reach and impact of what we do: it also goes against the *inherent purpose of our work*, which is to remove barriers and enable people to fulfil their potential.

To be more effective and ethical as coaching practitioners, I believe we need to build our capacity to work with and across deep differences – differences in identity, culture, narrative, in ways of being and in ways of thinking.

*While I want my ethnicity to be noticed and considered, I don't want to be defined solely by it*

## UNPACKING 'DIVERSITY'

When we talk about diversity, the focus is often on certain aspects (race, age, gender or other key strands). However, there are many other ways in which we are different from each other that have an impact on how we relate. This includes identities we are born with (birthplace, skin colour, appearance, socio-economic background) plus those we might acquire (education, wealth, accent, religious beliefs, being a parent/carer). Our multiple identities intersect and take on different levels of salience in different contexts.

When you consider this wider definition of diversity, there is no coach-coachee relationship that is *not* diverse. We are all similar to and different from each other. We all face the challenge of how to navigate our differences with openness and care.

When it comes to the coaching relationship, there are two kinds of behaviours that I've noticed get in the way of doing this effectively:

1. Downplaying difference (which can lead to 'covering').
2. Having a singular focus on one aspect of identity (which can lead to stereotyping).

## DOWNPLAYING DIFFERENCE

When we work with a client who is visibly different from us, there is a tendency to gloss over the difference. We enjoy finding similarity with others because it makes us feel more connected. We might (consciously or unconsciously) downplay our differences: for example, taking a stance such as 'I don't see colour' or 'gender doesn't matter'. This isn't always helpful, because it can send a message to the client to hide away or shut down important parts of themselves.

People from traditionally marginalised or under-represented groups already tend to mask aspects of who they are to fit into mainstream working culture.<sup>3</sup> My kids sometimes notice the way I put on a different (more 'British-sounding') voice when I'm on work calls, compared to when I'm speaking freely at home. A new parent once shared that she resisted talking about her child with colleagues, even though parenthood was the most significant experience in her life, for fear of not fitting in to the work culture.

If clients feel the pressure to 'cover'<sup>4</sup> in a coaching setting, it blocks true connection. While we can't force clients to discuss certain parts of their identity (and nor should we), we can signal that we are ready to listen if they choose to do so.

## HAVING A SINGULAR FOCUS ON ONE ASPECT OF IDENTITY

On the other hand, it is also important to recognise that we are not just one thing.

My racial identity (Indian) is salient in my current context of living and working in the UK and it's an important part of who I am.

However, it's not all I am. I'm also a woman, a 46-year-old, twice-immigrant, parent, writer, coach, poet, over-thinker and introvert! If the focus is always *only* on my racial identity, I miss out on being seen for, and being able to express, other aspects of the whole, complex human that I am. While I want my ethnicity to be noticed and considered, I don't want to be defined solely by it.

## DEVELOPING AN INCLUSIVE COACHING PRACTICE

So, how can we approach diversity in a way that helps to build connection and inclusion?

The answer is not to assimilate or ignore difference, nor treat everyone the same, and neither is it about trying to become an expert in every culture. It is about creating spaces where difference is recognised and welcomed – but not fetishised or stereotyped – and where power is acknowledged.

In my practice, I have developed a three-part approach to this: looking IN, looking OUT and looking AROUND.

### 1. Looking IN: acknowledge that we are not neutral

The first step is an acknowledgement that, as coaches, we are not neutral. We are susceptible to the same human biases and conditioning as everyone else. We need to be aware of (and able to suspend) our own assumptions so that we can be open to understanding the lived experience of the client – without imposing our own frames of reference.

Questions to consider:

- What are the basic cultural values and beliefs that drive how I work, and those that I expect? Where do these come from? Are there alternative ways of thinking?
- How is my identity/background different from my client's? What might this block me from seeing or hearing?
- What assumptions am I making about my client and their world? Where are the gaps in my understanding?

## 2. Looking AROUND: understand systemic inequities

We cannot aspire to equity and inclusion without being aware of cultural and systemic inequities and power, both in the coaching space and beyond.

We need to remember constantly that the client sitting in front of us might have a very different lived experience and different frames of reference – they may have experienced barriers that we might not even be aware of. Some examples:

- LGBTQ+ employees are 30% more likely than others to have experienced workplace harassment and 22% more likely to have felt nervous or stressed at work.<sup>5</sup>
- CVs with stereotypically White names receive at least twice as many call-backs than identical CVs with stereotypically Black or Asian names.<sup>6</sup>
- In the UK, disabled workers are more likely to be in severely insecure jobs (27% compared to 19% of non-disabled workers).<sup>7</sup>
- 65% of neurodivergent employees don't disclose their condition for fear of discrimination, which prevents them from getting the necessary adjustments to do their work successfully.<sup>8</sup>

Systemic inequities affect our opportunities and options; what resonates with and works for one person might not play out the same way for another. Coaching offers a space to explore systemic issues and untangle what is and is not in the client's control.

Questions to consider:

- What systemic inequities might be at play in the issues my client is facing?
- How can I acknowledge the role of systemic issues while also giving my client a sense of agency?

- How are systemic (cultural) patterns of power reflected in how we relate to each other in the coaching? How can we level this?

## 3. Looking OUT: tread with courage and care

Ultimately, it is up to clients to decide what aspects of themselves they choose to share. Talking about marginalised aspects of our identity isn't always easy, and it's not something we can demand or expect. Building trust to do so may take time.

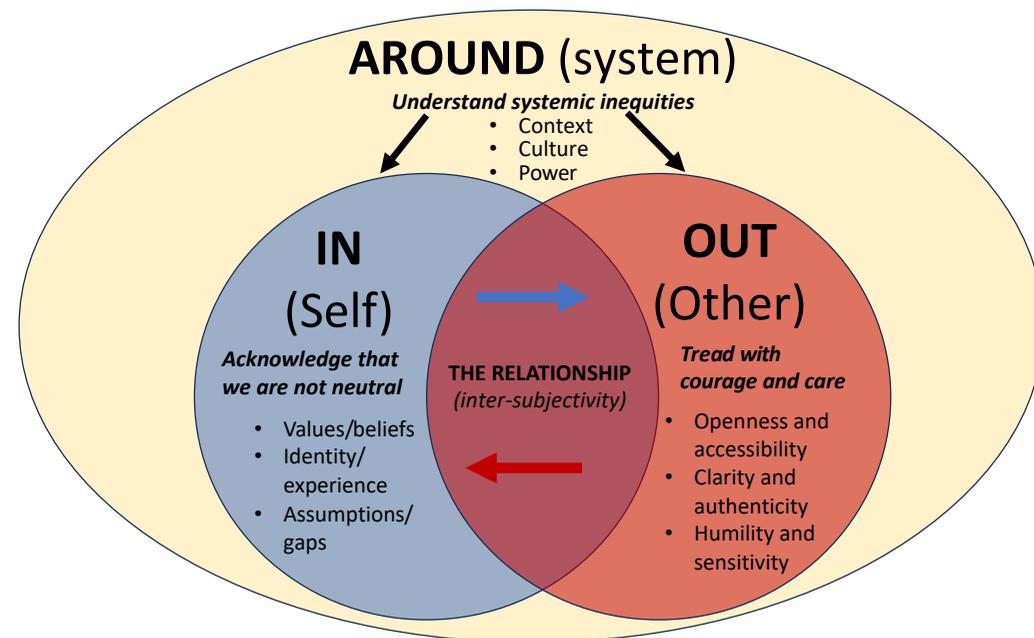
However, we can open the door by asking brave questions, and by not glossing over seemingly awkward or difficult subjects like race<sup>9</sup> when they do arise. In the words of Melody Hobson: rather than colour-blind, we need to be colour-brave.<sup>10</sup>

Questions to consider:

- What steps can I take to make my practice more open and accessible to people from different backgrounds?
- How can I be clear about where I stand on issues of diversity and equality: verbally, in my marketing material and so on?
- How can I overcome my fear of saying the 'wrong thing' and approach difference in a way that is sensitive, authentic and that serves the client?

When we are working across diversity in coaching we won't always 'get it', and we won't ever fully know what it is to *be* another person. But we can stand alongside our clients and explore together with humility, empathy, courage and curiosity.

My hope with this column is to create a space where we can all challenge our assumptions and widen our perspective – in, out and around – in order to create the best possible chance of true connection and change.



Three-part approach to developing an inclusive coaching practice (© Pooja Sachdev/Rewire Consulting. Sept 2023)



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pooja Sachdev is a co-author of *Rewire: A Radical Approach to Tackling Diversity and Difference*, published by Bloomsbury and described by an FT reviewer as 'the most refreshing approach to diversity I have read'. She is a coach, counsellor and consultant and the founder of Rewire Consulting. Specialising in organisational development, diversity and inclusion, and leadership, Rewire helps build positive work cultures that enable people, teams and organisations to fulfil their potential.

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Margaret Walsh



# MENTAL HEALTH AND COACHING: THE IMPACT OF TIME

How do our past experiences and future hopes have an impact on our present moment? How might you change your relationship with time? What impact might this have on your mental wellbeing? **Margaret Walsh** takes us on a journey through time.

Time is a precious resource. Our lives are bound up in unique timelines, which are always evolving. Our past, present and future get entangled and influence our thoughts, feelings and behaviours in the here and now. Being present with this awareness all the time can stir challenging feelings such as anxiety, and overwhelm our senses. At times, it can feel easier to tune out and detach, whether through binge-watching TV, scrolling on our phones, playing computer games or misusing drugs or alcohol. Doing so helps to suppress that ever-present tension and anxiety, and to create a disconnection from the self, at least for a while. However, something that is suppressed has not gone away and may come out in different ways; distorted thinking can create feelings of anxiety and fear, prompting challenging behaviour. This complexity of being human effects our mental health and so enters the coaching relationship.

As coaches, we need to remind ourselves that the individual client is not an isolated entity. At a societal level, there is much anxiety within the world: global conflicts, cost of living crises and a climate emergency (to name but a few). There is a strong sense that time is running out to save our planet, on a 24-hour news cycle. At an organisational level, cultures often emerge that are driven by the profit-motive or towards high levels of productivity. The latter manifests into routines of back-to-back meetings on 'urgent matters', with no time to prepare properly or follow up. This can create a hamster-wheel norm, which becomes the autopilot.

When this is the case, there can be a disconnect from our bigger goals in life. We can lose our sense of self and inner guiding voice in the noise and demands of the modern world.

Invariably, there is much more taking place in coaching than what appears at first. It may look as though there is a linear conversation in pursuit of a single goal. At times, this may be all that is needed. However, we humans are not wholly rational and analytical, with a single, cognitive-track existence. We are emotional beings, influenced by our pasts and hoped-for futures in the present moment. It is important that coaches understand the dynamic nature of how time is present in the coaching process. Coaching frameworks, such as John Whitmore's GROW model, can be rushed and thus miss out on valuable information, if used in a mechanistic way. These frameworks have their place, but there is a fellow human being present, and one that may benefit more from being carefully listened to and understood; in doing so, they can grow in self-awareness and be more conscious of how they behave in the world, especially in their use of time.

A psychologically safe and ethical coaching space is a prerequisite for a client to slow down and be sufficiently curious to explore their context. Listening at a deep level helps clients to pay attention to the dynamics at play, considering how they manage time with to-do lists, key performance indicators, life goals and so on. A skilled coach



works to raise awareness and encourages a compassionate review of unhelpful patterns of behaviour. With insightful questioning, the client's autopilot responses can be identified, leading to more conscious choices being made.

Some coaching work facilitates a client moving through an in-between or liminal space. The word liminal comes from the Latin root *limen*, which means threshold. Time can be suspended in this space, perhaps in order to re-evaluate core beliefs and identities. This is where we make time to consider the fundamental questions of our existence to integrate new ways of being. As the client grows and develops with greater self-awareness, there is scope for greater self-authorship. Coined and defined by the American psychologist Robert Kegan, the terms refers to the ability to look at the world around us and seek deep within ourselves the development of our own opinions.<sup>1</sup> It allows individuals to rely on their own beliefs to make decisions. Inherent within this development model is the notion of a secure foundation and a trusted inner voice.

Knowing we only have a finite time in life can be either a depressing thought or one that emboldens us to live a life that is right for us. This means using our time to best reflect how we want to live and be in life. It is life-affirming to consider that coaching can influence this and assist with helping clients notice and address mental health issues. This responsibility should not be taken lightly, and coaches need to ensure they are knowledgeable, skilled and always paying attention to ethical practice. Knowing when a mental health issue is outside the capability or competence of a coach and referring on to a counsellor or other healthcare professional shows the maturity and ethical practice of the coach. (For more on this topic, see Rosie Evans-Krimme and Jonathan Passmore's article on p34-39).

The following are some ideas of how coaches can work in psychologically deeper ways and incorporate some of the ideas addressed in this column.

## Gaining insights into a client's relationship with time

- How busy is your client? Notice the language they use when they describe their feelings of being busy and probe accordingly.
- In what ways does the allocation of time in a client's life reflect their values and aspirations?
- Which activities do they prioritise or make time for?
- What greater balance can a client bring into their life? Explore the space for reflection and implementing sustainable learning, where knowledge is co-created, shared and renewed to empower a better future.

In this process, coach supervisors have a key role to play in ensuring that ethical practice is observed. The suggested question areas below facilitate coaches to think more deeply about their practice.

## How supervisors can support coaches' use of time

- How comfortable is the coach with silence, enabling clients to think about some of the ideas in this column?
- What is the coach's own process when thinking about their relationship with time? Are they well-balanced in work and life? Does the coach work in ways that are aligned to their values?
- How does the coach use the time available in the coaching space? Are there specific phases in the session, and what happens within these spaces? Notice how time is used in the supervision session. Does this reflect the most important parts of coach development?

For those who would like to extend their knowledge further, taking an interest in research from neuroscience is strongly recommended. The role of the unconscious is important to recognise, with as much as 95% of our thoughts, feelings and behaviours coming from this place, which remains largely unknown to us.<sup>2</sup> Coaching could help to facilitate making some of the unconscious conscious. This would be very beneficial to our sense of agency and mental health.

*This is a regular column around coaching and mental health, curated by Joan Swart of the AC's Mental Health Special Interest Group. For more information, contact Joan at joan@associationforcoaching.com.*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Margaret Walsh is a psychotherapist, coach and supervisor. With a background in human resources, Margaret balances pragmatism with humanity in her work. She is particularly interested in creating space within her work for clients to deepen their self-awareness and make ethical choices to maximise their potential.

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***At an organisational level, cultures are driven towards high levels of productivity, which manifests into back-to-back meetings on 'urgent matters', with no time to prepare properly or follow up. This can create a hamster-wheel norm, which becomes the autopilot***



Keith Merron

# CONFLICT RESOLUTION IS MORE THAN WIN-WIN

In a dog-eat-dog world a win-win can feel challenging to achieve. What if there was a different way to emerge from conflict – one that creates a shift on a systemic level? **Keith Merron** explores.

To understand how we, as transformational leaders, guide people through conflict, it might serve to look at the evolution of conflict and wonder what might become. For most of history, conflict was a win-lose game. Victors and the defeated. Perhaps, also early on, as city states emerged, so too did the idea of diplomacy, which, in essence, seeks to find a compromise. In the mid-1800s, Frederick Hegel, standing on the shoulders of some great philosophers, introduced the notion that all human progress is a result of the dialectic. He asserted that all conflict was based on a debate or tension between a thesis and an antithesis – a thesis being a point of view and an antithesis being its opposite. We often argue and debate when in conflict and yet, the key is the search for a synthesis, something that rises above the plane of the polarities between thesis and antithesis. The essence of that synthesis is a win-win.

This idea of the importance of seeking a win-win has been quite popular in the past 50 years, especially since the work of John F Nash Jr, whose story is depicted in the wonderful movie *A Beautiful Mind*. In 1951, Nash came up with a theory showing how collaborating instead of competing is a better way to live for both individuals and everyone as a whole, and then proved it mathematically. In one stroke of genius, Nash changed the course of history. His work earned him the Nobel Prize for Economic Sciences in 1994 and, in my estimation, is one of the central principles that have the potential for teaching us how we can heal our planet.

Up until Nash's discovery, the world held steadfastly to the simple notion that it is a dog-eat-dog world, and that the only ways to get ahead are to trample over others or to protect oneself from being trampled. In such a world, we attack and defend. Nash didn't believe in that world and proved it mathematically, coming up with what is now famously known as the Nash equilibrium.

In Nash's view, the idea of a dog-eat-dog world is merely a belief. If everyone plays the game of dog-eat-dog, based on the belief that it is the only way to play, then the world becomes a dog-eat-dog world. In this world, some people might temporarily win while

others lose. But to Nash, it was obvious that when people play the game of life in this way the net effect is zero – some do get ahead, while others are left behind.

## CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

Nash was not satisfied with the prevailing view of the world. He was a gentle soul and seemed to see things rather differently. In his view of life, in the long run, no one gets ahead in a dog-eat-dog world. If each keep playing the game of win-lose, neither wins: at best, it is a standoff. Instead, thought Nash, what if they cooperated instead of competed? In Nash's view, then – and only then – there is a possibility of both parties winning. Such an outcome, however, depends on trust; the moment one person doesn't trust the other, they stop collaborating, and the other sees that person as untrustworthy, and is forced to compete in return. They are now back in a dog-eat-dog world and the net sum is once again zero.

To achieve a net positive outcome, according to Nash, requires that both parties hold steady in their efforts to collaborate. If they do, no player can gain advantage through a unilateral change of strategy, and they maintain what is now referred to as the Nash equilibrium.

A simple example of Nash's brilliant thinking is what is known as the prisoner's dilemma. In this fictional situation, two conspirators – let's say it is for car theft – are arrested, and separated into different rooms where each cannot know what the other does. They are then offered a deal by the police: if you confess and testify against your accomplice, we'll let you off and throw the book at the other guy – let's say 10 years in prison. Moreover, if you do so, we'll give you a much lesser sentence, let's say five years in prison.

If both conspirators refuse to rat out the other, the police have less to go on and they might be freed. If, however, one rats the other out (not trusting their agreement) to gain favour, he wins and the other loses. If they both rat each other out, they both lose. But if they can trust each other, both are better off.



*As a facilitator of working through conflict, I have found that the most powerful thing I can do to change the dynamics is to invite learn-learn*

## THE FUTURE OF CONFLICT

The history of conflict can now be written as simply this: from win-lose, to compromise, to win-win. Now let's take it further. What is the future of conflict? I am going to suggest that it is learn-learn. When two parties are in conflict, they strategise, negotiate and manipulate (often unconsciously) to gain favour. As a facilitator of working through conflict, I have found that the most powerful thing I can do to change the dynamics is to invite learn-learn. When both parties enter conflict with a desire to learn, not only is win-win more likely but the parties can grow from the conflict as well.

This is exactly how I set up my facilitation with Matt and Julia. They were embroiled in a powerful conflict that had ripple effects throughout their organisation. They had tried to work it through, but they were at a standstill when they asked for my help. After listening for a while, I could tell that each was negotiating with the other, but not seeing the deeper learning available for themselves and for the organisation. I then suggested that we orient towards learning in the process of helping them through. The goal was no longer win-win: it was learn-learn. This invited them to join in with the goal of growing, both individually and with each other. Growing, after all, is the goal of transformational coaching, so introducing the importance of it early on was essential in helping them through the conflict.

In the beginning, I asked them to share their view of the other and the situation. I asked the other to listen with an open mind and an open heart. They did so amply. Then I asked them to step back to try to understand the conflict as a dynamic. There we explored how each had a pattern that triggered the other, and that each had a coping mechanism that, in effect, threatened the other: learning and growth were not emerging. I then invited them to get vulnerable and own the whole drama. Each was willing as long as the other

was as well. Along the way, I offered observations and insights. This is often how I work when helping people through conflict. Even if I'm working with only one person, on one side of a conflict, as soon as I ask them how they might learn and grow in the situation the mindset changes, and more adaptability and agency emerges.

In the end, Matt and Julia worked it out, and they felt grateful for the journey. It took about five hours to get through (about four sessions) and then another few hours to help them solidify their agreements with one another.

To create win-win, you need a mixture of the following: openness of all parties; a desire to reach win-win; trust; and both parties caring for the other's wellbeing.

But to create learn-learn, you need more. That's possible, if you invite it in.

## 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](http://artoftransformationalcoaching.com).



Robert Biswas-Diener



Christian van Nieuwerburgh

# ALLYSHIP: HOW COACHES CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

What is allyship, and how may it relate to coaching? **Christian van Nieuwerburgh** and **Robert Biswas-Diener** explore how coaches could be seen as, and see themselves to be, allies for those who are marginalised in the workplace or society in general. They offer seven prompts for coaches to consider in order to become better allies.

The concept of allyship is particularly important in a world experiencing great social tensions. Allyship is when someone actively supports the rights of people who are marginalised. Allies challenge behaviours, processes and systems that are biased against certain groups of people. Coaches, similarly, are often driven by a desire to make things better for others. It may be helpful, then, to consider the question of how coaches might serve as allies. Indeed, coaches are particularly well-placed to be effective allies because of their skills and training.

There are two primary ways that coaches can make a positive contribution to the cause of allyship. First, we can employ our coaching skills, experiences and ways of being to become excellent allies in our personal lives. Second, we are called to reflect on how we can increase access to coaching through our professional roles. For example, our language can influence how members of marginalised groups perceive coaching, and our policies can remove obstacles to accessing coaching:

- **Language:** are you describing coaching in ways that acknowledge systemic issues and that engender trust in marginalised people and communities?
- **Ideal client:** when you think of your ideal clients, do they include people from marginalised communities?
- **Advertising:** are you advertising services in ways that will reach minority groups and marginalised people?
- **Fee-setting:** are you using scholarships, sliding scales, pay-as-you-go structures or other policies that might remove economic obstacles to coaching?

## BECOMING AN ALLY

We know that many of you are already active as allies. Thank you. Whether you consider yourself an ally already, or it is something you want to be more engaged with, we hope that this article will boost your commitment to this important cause. Here are seven suggestions for being an effective and impactful ally.

## ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR PRIVILEGE

The first step is to acknowledge that you have certain *unearned* privileges and advantages in society. In other words, you benefit from existing laws, policies, norms and power structures. Therefore, you have fewer impediments to success and thriving than other people. Accepting this will highlight unfairness and injustice in our societies. It may be helpful to engage in reflective practice to identify and acknowledge the privileges that each of us has.

## LEARN ABOUT INEQUALITIES

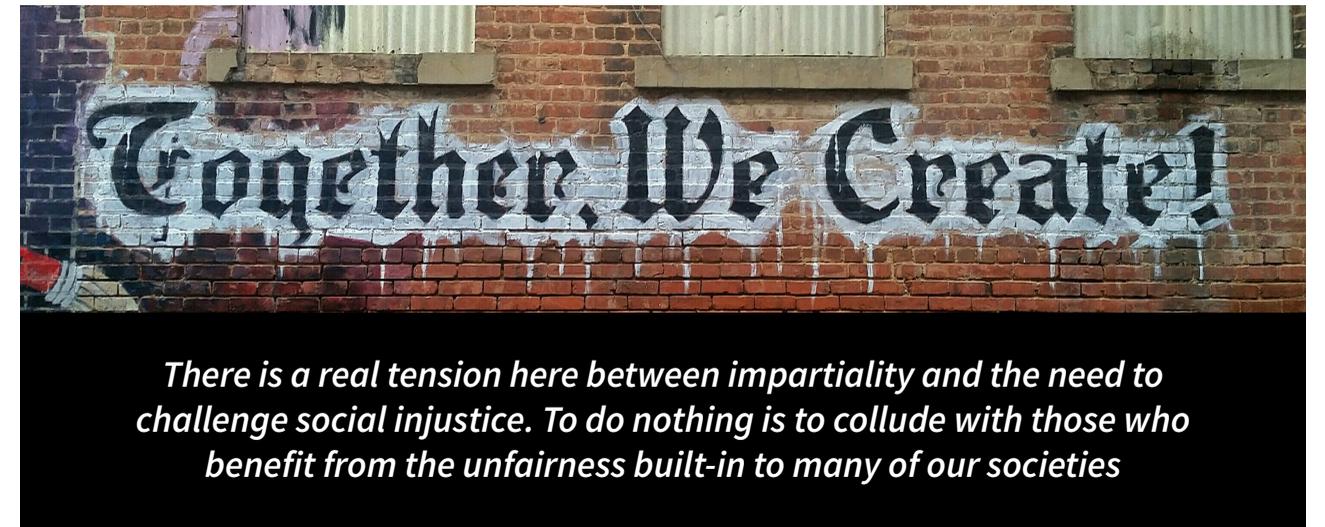
Make the effort to learn more about the experiences and challenges of other groups. This might include learning history (or alternative history), engaging with minority artwork, reading biographies or listening to minority narratives. Remember that it is unfair to pass the responsibility of raising awareness of racism, sexism and other discriminations to those who are victims of such discrimination. The best coaches are able to harness their natural curiosity, and this is a worthwhile topic into which to direct that interest.

## LISTEN WELL

Allies need to be able to listen respectfully and authentically to people who are marginalised. Although good listening is essential to all coaching, it is particularly important with marginalised clients because it creates a forum in which they have a voice. Find ways to make it obvious that you will be a good listener who will respect and acknowledge people's lived experiences.

## INVEST TIME

Effective allies commit time and effort towards creating fairer societies. For example, an ally would ensure that people from marginalised groups are included in their networks, and recommend people from under-represented groups for influential roles and publicly acknowledge their achievements. Coaches are very good at allocating time to clients, so it will be a case of recognising allyship as a project that is important for everyone.



*There is a real tension here between impartiality and the need to challenge social injustice. To do nothing is to collude with those who benefit from the unfairness built-in to many of our societies*

## EMPATHISE

This is critical because it is such a powerful way of connecting with people. Showing empathy demonstrates that you have an interest in the experience of people and groups who are disadvantaged or marginalised. Coaches bring a level of comfort and experience with being empathetic that will clearly be helpful in their role as allies.

## SPEAK UP

To be a good ally, showing empathy is not sufficient. It is necessary for people – especially those who are not the victims of social injustice or discrimination – to make their voices heard. Unfair processes, biased systems, discriminatory behaviours and hateful speech should be challenged when it is safe to do so. Coaches are aware of the idea of ‘backbone and heart’ – and will know how to be courageous on behalf of others. There is a real tension here between impartiality and the need to challenge social injustice. To do nothing is to collude with those who benefit from the unfairness built-in to many of our societies.

## TAKE A STAND

To be an effective ally means that you are committed to diversity, equity and inclusion. Being an ally is not about rescuing others but about standing up for what is right. By regularly reflecting on ethics and professional standards, coaches can develop a very clear set of principles and take steps to ensure that our profession is as free of bias as possible.

## SHOULD WE BE ALLIES?

We have written this article as if the idea of coaches-as-allies is a foregone conclusion. Perhaps it makes sense to pause and ask whether it is appropriate for coaches to be allies. Some sceptics have argued that coaches should be wary of inserting their own politics into their professional relationships. To this, we answer that injustice is a social, rather than purely a political, issue. Coaching is about supporting people to flourish. We have an inherent interest in societies and organisations that support, rather than hinder, personal and professional growth for everyone. Allyship simply reflects a coach's desire for a just and equitable world.

More importantly, it is a behavioural demonstration of that sentiment. There is nothing we see in allyship that would erode the integrity or effectiveness of coaching.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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 USA, South America, the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Australia.

Dr Robert Biswas-Diener is a thought leader in positive psychology coaching. He holds a doctorate in psychology, and 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. He has trained coaches at Positive Acorn for a decade and has run workshops for professionals in 25 countries. He lives in Portland, Oregon (USA), where he draws or rock climbs every day.



Marie Faire



# CONFLICT: AN INESCAPABLE FACT OF LIFE

Conflict is inevitable. Sometimes, we can't even agree with ourselves. We need to face it and speak out, says **Marie Faire**.

*'Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the ability to cope with it'*

Mahatma Gandhi

In the English language, there are at least 45 synonyms for conflict (maybe you know more, please let me know). Like with sex and death – other taboo subjects – we often use euphemisms to avoid naming conflict.

So where are you in relation to conflict?

On Stephen Karpman's drama triangle (in which three roles in conflict are portrayed: persecutor, rescuer and victim), where do you get hooked? If you are typical of the many coaches I know, then you are likely to be conflict averse and, without conscious effort to avoid being so, prone to rescuing. Not surprising really – most of us got into coaching because we like to help people. Of course, what we all rationally know is that being a rescuer causes just as much conflict as being the persecutor or victim.

Over the years I have done a lot of work around speaking truth to power, a subject dear to my heart. Most of us have learnt from (early) childhood how we should behave when there is conflict. Some learn to be aggressive: 'It's a dog-eat-dog world'; 'Get them before they get you'. Many learn that they should be compliant: 'Don't rock the boat'; 'Don't put your head above the parapet'; 'Nobody likes a troublemaker'; 'Everyone has to get along'; and (my favourite), 'If you can't be nice, be quiet'. None of these messages help us deal with conflict in a mature, assertive and peaceful way.

While aggression is rarely constructive, it is overt. Being afraid or avoidant of conflict only colludes. In a previous column I confessed

that I prefer downright, in-your-face, aggressive cultures to those that are nice, for this very reason.

I was incredibly fortunate to have trained in the mid-90s with the late Marshall Rosenberg. At that time, Marshall had been working in Rwanda and the Middle East, but originally he worked with individuals as a psychiatrist and it was this that led him to his global work. His process for conflict resolution – non-violent communication – starts by acknowledging and defining the conflict and understanding the underlying needs at play. This applies equally to NLP (neuro-linguistic programming), parts work and IFS (internal family systems) too. And all of this requires compassion for all the parties involved, no matter what or who – be they internal parts, couples, organisational departments, gangs or countries.

I would suggest that compliance and passivity are almost always greater enemies of peace and collaboration than conflict. Without honest dialogue and the willingness to acknowledge and address differences, we end up with divisive polarisation, winners and losers, and the road to fascism – indeed, the world in which we are currently living.

We all need to face conflict, to speak out, speak up, disagree and, at the same time, remain compassionate.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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

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## THE ETHICAL COACHES' HANDBOOK

*Join Alister Scott on his journey through a hefty tome that encourages you to get comfortable with being uncomfortable and to widen your ethical lens.*

In a world beset by major social, economic and environmental challenges, the impulse to act ethically in any profession or role is to be encouraged – and this book makes a major contribution not only to the intellectual exploration of this complex topic, but also in its emphasis on ethics as embodied practice. We are all on an ethical journey, whether we like it or not. We are more or less ethical, depending on our awareness, conscious thought and effort – or their absence.

In an era of political polarisation and a growing denial of the value of evidence, we coaches need to be especially vigilant of the ways in which we can become uncritical or unwitting pawns, credulous in a bigger power game where the already powerful know all too well how to play or exploit others to accumulate even more wealth and power. Our sole consolation? That we have had a slice of the pie while the world burns.

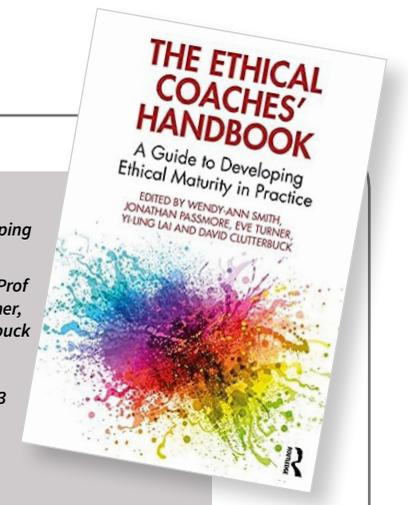
For those who are doing the work of exploring their ethical edges, weaknesses and growth areas, this book will be an affirmation, some of it familiar, much of it challenging. It is a hefty tome – you may only wish to invest if you are committed to putting in some substantial hours! Alternatively, you may spot a chapter or two that particularly attract you.

The foreword sets a beautiful tone, at once intellectual, accessible and affirming. I was pleased to see its author, Tatiana Bachkirova, resist relativism, while learning from the benefits of postmodern reflexivity – a willingness to question our assumptions and examine our own thinking, theories and practices as well as those of the organisations and power structures that frame much of our existence.

As Bachkirova points out, to be ethical requires being trustworthy, and it takes work to develop the three necessary components of trustworthiness: competence, honesty and reliability.

The trouble that soon emerges is that long philosophical debates over thousands of years have failed to pin down a solid definition of ethics. This leaves us potentially in a relativistic vacuum, where each person or organisation can come up with their own definition – and change it if it is no longer convenient. Many of the chapters struggle with this issue, and indeed name it as one of the noble struggles at the core of ethics. The essence of ethical practice is to reflect on our challenges, doubts and experiences, and then act to change things.

I would argue that central to any ethical practice are two things: compassion for all life, and what I've come to call your 'clear, inspiring, shared purpose beyond self'. Both of these challenge us to take ourselves out of the centre of our reflections, consider the wider consequences of potential courses of action, and commit to the wellbeing of all people and all of nature. This is in contrast



**TITLE:** *The Ethical Coaches' Handbook: A Guide to Developing Ethical Maturity in Practice*

**EDITORS:** Wendy-Ann Smith, Prof Jonathan Passmore, Eve Turner, Yi-Ling Lai and David Clutterbuck

**PUBLISHER:** Routledge

**PUBLICATION DATE:** April 2023

**PRICE:** £33

**ISBN:** 978-1032234632

to the way that most conventional definitions of success have been constructed – deliberately narrowed, deliberately exploiting other peoples or natural systems for short-term material gain. The catastrophic consequences of such approaches are now becoming clear at scales from local to global.

Coaches are implicated in all of this; as several authors here point out, we can be fairly sure that there are coaches earning a pretty penny in all of the world's most exploitative enterprises and governments. In response, the book offers practical tools, such as a useful six-step framework for approaching ethical challenges and a thorough review of the APPEAR framework. These tools are considerable reward for the reader who manages to push through some fairly abstract, heavy and repetitive material that offers a theoretical basis for the rest of the book. Perhaps it would have been more reader-friendly to put the case studies first, to draw us immediately into the practical ethical dilemmas that coaches face?

Specific chapters about ethics in aspects of coaching add to the substantial breadth of this handbook, including: note taking and record keeping; team coaching; psychometrics; mental health; and transnational assignments. I particularly value the chapter on positive ethical practice, which provides inspiration to reframe the predominantly negative, preventative, risk-avoiding approach to ethics in professional practice.

A review can only scratch the surface. Overall, I'm impressed by the book's breadth, depth and organisation. The editors have done an amazing job of convening a redoubtable set of authors and curating their content, performing a valuable service for all who wish to think deeply about coaching ethics and be more ethical in their practice and life more generally.

To paraphrase that great philosopher Kermit the Frog: it ain't easy being ethical. But the struggle goes to the heart of what it is to be human – and a thoughtful, evolving, effective professional.

## ABOUT THE REVIEWER

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

# PODCAST REVIEWS

**Suzy Hunt** and **Lisa Robyn Wood** from *The Coaching Cast* share their top picks of podcasts that focus on coaching in times of crisis.

## Suzy's choice

### Coaching Conversations: Coaching in a Time of Crisis

(14 April 2020, 33 mins, Apple Podcasts and Spotify)

*Coaching Conversations'* hosts, Paul Marks and Dr Thomas Yates, share their knowledge, experience and expertise around professional coaching. Whether you are new to coaching or have years of experience, this podcast will inspire your learning journey as a coach. It certainly did mine!

This episode was recorded during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, and although things have moved on since then, the tips and insights offered here are still applicable today when coaching in a crisis situation.

The episode starts by touching on the importance of self-care for coaches when coaching through crisis. It is vital for coaches to spend time on themselves, ensuring they don't bring their own negativity, stress, uncertainty and anxiety into coaching conversations. Marks and Yates offer the listener tips to manage this, such as practising mindfulness, positive focus and meditation; these help coaches to accept and acknowledge their own feelings first before diving into understanding others' emotions – emotions that are often big and consuming when in a crisis situation.

The conversation then flows into what we might expect to see within coaching conversations in times of crisis. For example, expect to see conversations charged with anxiety, stress, emotions and the need to find control. Marks and Yates believe that the role of listening becomes even more critical when in a crisis situation, as the need to be heard is heightened. The role of the coach is often to help people process their own thinking, creating a mental space for them to express themselves aloud. Additionally, for the coachee to hear what they are expressing reflected back at them is often a big step towards helping those facing a crisis feel calmer and reclaim that all-important sense of control.

The conversation moves onto how coaches can help coachees manage emotions and the idea of people being 'emotionally hijacked' when dealing with crisis. I found this insightful, with both hosts offering tips to help coaches build their coachees' awareness, regulation and management of their emotions by using techniques that tap into the prefrontal cortex of the brain. The aim is to remove the self from the emotions, examining the situation in a different way using a different part of the brain. This part of the podcast is a particularly fascinating listen, delving into the psychology behind the brain's response to a crisis.



We then hear of the importance of short-term, bite-size goals in a crisis, and are offered a great question to support a coaching conversation. The hosts keep things simple, clear and achievable, with tips for helping to create the energy, momentum and desire to keep moving forwards in a crisis situation.

This episode is an easy listen. Regardless of where you are in your coaching journey, you will be surprised by how much you learn in half an hour!

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

1. **Get Coached 360** with Chris Ippolito. How to Succeed in Times of Crisis
2. **Coaching Conversations: Coaching in a Time of Crisis**
3. **Transforming Trauma: Trauma-Informed Leadership Coaching** with Prashant Goel
4. **Growth Beyond Trauma Podcast** with Hannah McKimm
5. **Coaches Rising Podcast**

Available on Apple Podcasts and Spotify

## Lisa's choice

### Transforming Trauma: Trauma-Informed Leadership Coaching with Prashant Goel

(23 March 2022, 51 mins, Apple Podcasts and Spotify)

Type 'trauma' or 'coaching' into whichever provider you use to search for podcasts and a plethora of material pops up. This particular podcast spoke to me for two reasons; 1) the title and the idea of 'transforming trauma' sounded positive and productive; and 2) this episode references trauma-informed leadership coaching, which I'd never heard of, nor ever considered, so I had to learn more.

The *Transforming Trauma* podcast is produced by the NARM Training Institute. NARM stands for the neuro affective relational model, which was developed to address attachment, relational and developmental trauma by working with the attachment patterns that cause life-long psychobiological symptoms and interpersonal challenges.

In this conversation, leadership development specialist and NARM practitioner Prashant Goel shares the work he's done with leaders and leadership teams in correlation with trauma and connectedness.

Goel experienced his own complex trauma during his childhood, which triggered a coping strategy based on succeeding to ultimately replace the scarcity of love in his childhood home with the love and connectedness in his school and education.

Goel developed into a high achiever with a successful career, but on reaching his 30s found an absence of purpose, meaning and satisfaction. Through self-exploration and discovery he identified the impact that childhood trauma had had on his approach and experience of life, and sought to reconnect with his authentic self. Through his journey of renewed self-learning, knowing and discovery he learnt about NARM, and chose to train in the practice to enrich his future career in leadership and team development, and to help and support others.

Goel shares his experiences of working with teams and exploring systems: those within organisations; those we bring into our

#### 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](http://thecoachingcast.co.uk) to learn more.



organisations through our cultural and community experiences; and those we are born into, which shape who we are. Through facilitating and supporting in a safe environment, Goel presents questions and exercises to enable individuals and teams to approach these areas with curiosity and openness, in doing so learning what information can be gathered to enable the creation of stronger connections and more effective, successful group outcomes.

I found this podcast challenging to follow, partly because of the poor sound quality, but also because the two individuals tend to talk around the practice of NARM and the topic of trauma like two old friends, speaking in a knowing, familiar language that excludes the listener. This means the episode is a little inaccessible at points – unless you too are experienced in NARM. However, a key realisation and learning for me was that trauma can be caused or triggered by an absence of something, and not necessarily the presence of something. My highlight is Goel discussing this topic of scarcity and its relationship to trauma towards the end of the episode, and I would recommend tuning in for that alone.

Learn more about NARM at [narmtraining.com](http://narmtraining.com) and Prashant Goel at [pgoel.com](http://pgoel.com).

#### AC podcast channel



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# BOOK REVIEWS

## POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY COACHING IN THE WORKPLACE

**Mihaela Diaconu welcomes the arrival of a publication that illuminates a wide range of positive psychology approaches designed to help teams and individuals thrive.**

The introductory text to *Positive Psychology Coaching in the Workplace* on Springer.com describes a book of contributions that 'represent a truly international scholarship and bring together complementary perspectives from the fields of positive psychology, coaching psychology, organisational psychology, organisational scholarship, neuroscience, education and philosophy.'

It is the most comprehensive, up to date, go-to work for coaches that are interested in improving their practice with evidence-based approaches from positive psychology and beyond. It fills a major gap in this area, supporting coaching professionals to help leaders, teams and people generally in the workplace thrive by developing positive practices and behaviours.

The book's 1,000+ pages are filled with academic research references, case studies, theories, basic concepts, models and frameworks, discussing multiple topics from various perspectives, notably those of the coach and coachee.

One doesn't need to be a psychologist to find high value in improving one's practice by using tools and ideas from this textbook. You could turn to any chapter or subject of interest, dive in and use the ideas right away; each chapter provides analysis and insight from a theoretical standpoint, approaches the subject from a practical perspective with suggestions of where the ideas would be best applied and what kind of coachee might benefit, and includes a case study.

This textbook is comprehensive, well-structured, engaging, and rich with tools, suggestions, examples and ideas; it covers almost any type of coaching from a positive perspective – it even explores how we could use Lego® Serious Play® in one-to-one coaching in chapter 24.

Notable as well are the creative tools recommended and the various novel ways to coach. Take chapter 15, for instance – on systemic awareness coaching and using film as a coaching tool for leadership development – where the authors provide a very detailed case study using the movie *Rabbit-Proof Fence* that provides a profound medium to explore what systemic awareness truly is.

**TITLE:** *Positive Psychology Coaching in the Workplace*

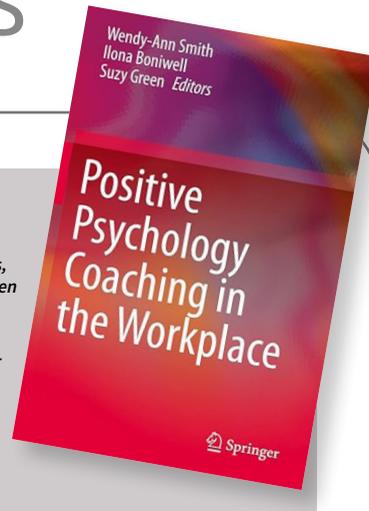
**EDITORS:** Wendy-Ann Woods, Ilona Boniwell and Suzy Green

**PUBLISHER:** Springer

**PUBLICATION DATE:** October 2022

**PAPERBACK PRICE:** £35

**ISBN:** 978-3030799540



The systemic approaches to coaching for positive outcomes don't stop at the level of being creative in how we might approach leadership development, but go further to look at ways to support teams to adapt (chapter 16) and how to coach positive leadership during disruption and crisis (chapter 17) – discussed with an organisational culture lens in mind.

All chapters end with an invitation to reflect through asking some deeply reflective questions, a conclusion, discussion points and suggested reading – plus of course long lists of thorough references.

I will likely use many of these tools with my clients for many years to come; it is certainly a most worthy investment for coaches, learning professionals and leaders that are interested in supporting the people they work with to thrive. I would take advantage of this format to thank the authors and editors for creating this valuable textbook for us, helping us enrich our knowledge and practice!

### ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Mihaela is an organisational psychologist who focuses on leadership, people and organisational development/effectiveness as a coach, facilitator and consultant. Mihaela's mission is to support humans to flourish at work and build thriving workplaces and communities, using business psychology principles – one conversation, one experience and one process at a time. She is a certified corporate and executive coach, is a certified business psychologist, has an MSc in organisational psychology and is currently undertaking a doctorate in evidence-based HRM at Birkbeck, University of London.

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## AGEING UPWARDS

**Have you stopped to consider what you think about ageing, in yourself and in others? Dr Rob Kemp recommends we take some time and dive into a book with plenty to say.**

'It is time to challenge our collective story about ageing and stop looking at it as a binary. It is not that we are either young or old. We are somewhere in between, depending on the context.'

Berit Lewis's words in the introduction of *Ageing Upwards* set the scene and position from which this book emanates. Soon after, the idea is introduced that we are happiest when aged 80. This is motivational for a 55-year-old – that the best is yet to come, according to Lewis.

I don't want to go too deeply into the evidence base for this claim, as there is no consensus. In fact, it seems rather controversial if you follow Berit's own reference to a David Blanchflower paper published in 2021, which cites numerous publications that refute the idea. I will leave it to you to make your own mind up about that evidence. For me, aged 55, I hold it as a possibility, rather than an objective fact – albeit one that I want to be true.

More important than objectives truths and the positivist paradigm is the reframing of ageing itself.

The reframing of the old and young dichotomy.  
The challenge to how we see what success is in ageing.  
From avoiding to embracing.  
From mindlessness to noticing, noting and knowing.  
From wandering to attention.  
From experience to savouring – and the practice of attentional control.  
From getting older to growing older.

Lewis tackles a vast array of subjects in this book, including health, activity, social connection, seeking purpose and a plethora of other areas that will be interesting to coaches.

I have been interested deeply in the idea of life stages and transitions for many years now – and that is my primary interest in this book. There are many ways of describing life stage; from Levinson, to Sheehy, to Donald E Super, and in ancient and classical literature, way before any of them were born. But being able to describe a stage or transition is not the same as offering a view on how to improve the experience (albeit some of the authors mentioned do offer views on successful transitions).

**TITLE:** *Ageing Upwards: A Mindfulness-Based Framework for the Longevity Revolution*

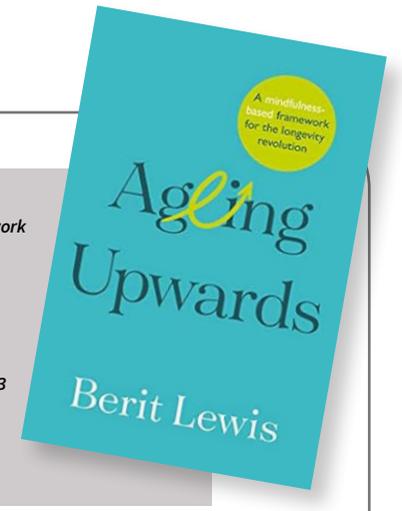
**AUTHOR:** Berit Lewis

**PUBLISHER:** Practical Inspiration Publishing

**PUBLICATION DATE:** April 2023

**PAPERBACK PRICE:** £15

**ISBN:** 978-1788604338



I think that is where this book adds real value for coaches – it highlights some areas where we might want to focus attention in working with clients. For fans of 'wheels of anything', there are some great prompt categories here – which may lead to some deep and interesting conversations.

We have an ageing population that will work longer, into expanded and elongated life spans. It's incumbent on coaches to work in these areas and become familiar and adept with some key ideas – including our own attitudes towards ageing in ourselves and others.

Am I a massive mindfulness fan? No, not really (I hear gasps at that heresy). Did that get in the way of my enjoyment of the book, and from taking significant things from it? No. In fact, it may well have just tipped some scales for me in revisiting mindfulness – so thank you for that, Berit Lewis. In any case, *Ageing Upwards* goes beyond mindfulness – and has made a great contribution to challenging what we all think about ageing in more broad terms.

I found myself flipping between views of myself and others while reading this book – as an ageing person, as a coach, and then thinking about client work and 'others' in general. I suspect many who read this book who 'do what we do' will have a similar experience... and I couldn't agree more with Lewis in her call for us to choose our own mindset (in many ways). Anyone who reads this book will think it worth the time – if you do so, I believe you will grow older, not just get so.

### ABOUT THE REVIEWER

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

## THE MYTH OF NORMAL

**Eleanor Thorne appreciates the biopsychosocial approach of a book that explains how trauma shapes modern society.**

*The Myth of Normal* provides a comprehensive review of contemporary research into the links between trauma, illness and modern society. The book is split into five sections loosely following a biopsychosocial approach. Part one covers the interplay between our biology, health and illness. Part two covers the impact of our childhood and childhood trauma on experiences of health and addiction in later life. Part three gives an in-depth appraisal of addiction, and provides some new ways of thinking about mental illness. Part four provides further deep analysis of society, plus of the impact of culture and modern politics on individual experience and collective trauma. Lastly, part five offers an inspirational look at how individuals and society as a whole can move towards healing and reshaping our relationship with health and illness.

I enjoyed Gabor's mix of research, interviews and insights into his experiences as a doctor working with individuals across issues such as addiction, mental illness and childhood trauma. As a coach I found his use of the biopsychosocial model particularly helpful. All too often in coaching – and psychology more generally – we tend to see individuals in terms of the issues they are experiencing and how they impact on their work or life. However, we can fail to consider the impact that traumas, large and small, have had or are currently having on people's experiences. I liked the way Gabor took a holistic view of the individual rather than relying on a purely medicalised view of trauma and mental health. It was interesting to read the evidence for how society, community, culture, politics, race and early childhood experiences can all contribute to an individual's experience of trauma throughout their lives. The last section of the book, on healing, felt inspiring and positive in what felt like otherwise quite a depressing view of modern society.

There were a few aspects of the book that I disliked. Some of the ideas felt convoluted and anecdotal. A lot of material was covered – which made it feel as though the breadth of topics covered came at the expense of depth. There were also speculative comments about celebrities that lacked evidence, which I felt did not add to the conversation.

**TITLE:** *The Myth of Normal: Trauma, Illness & Healing in a Toxic Culture*

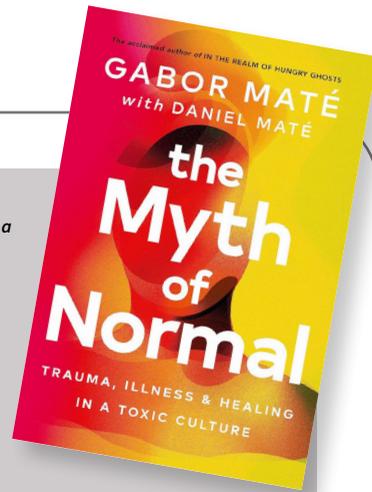
**AUTHORS:** Gabor Maté with Daniel Maté

**PUBLISHER:** Vermilion

**PUBLICATION DATE:** 15 September 2022

**HARDBACK PRICE:** £25

**ISBN:** 978-1785042713



### ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Eleanor Thorne is a psychology researcher and coach specialising in helping people with chronic health conditions to thrive in the workplace. Eleanor is the founder of Example Coaching and Consulting, and provides coaching and training to organisations in managing health in the workplace. Eleanor also has a passion for advocating for better women's health provisions in the workplace and has carried out research helping to support those experiencing PMDD and menopause at work.

[www.examplecoaching.co.uk](http://www.examplecoaching.co.uk)



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.

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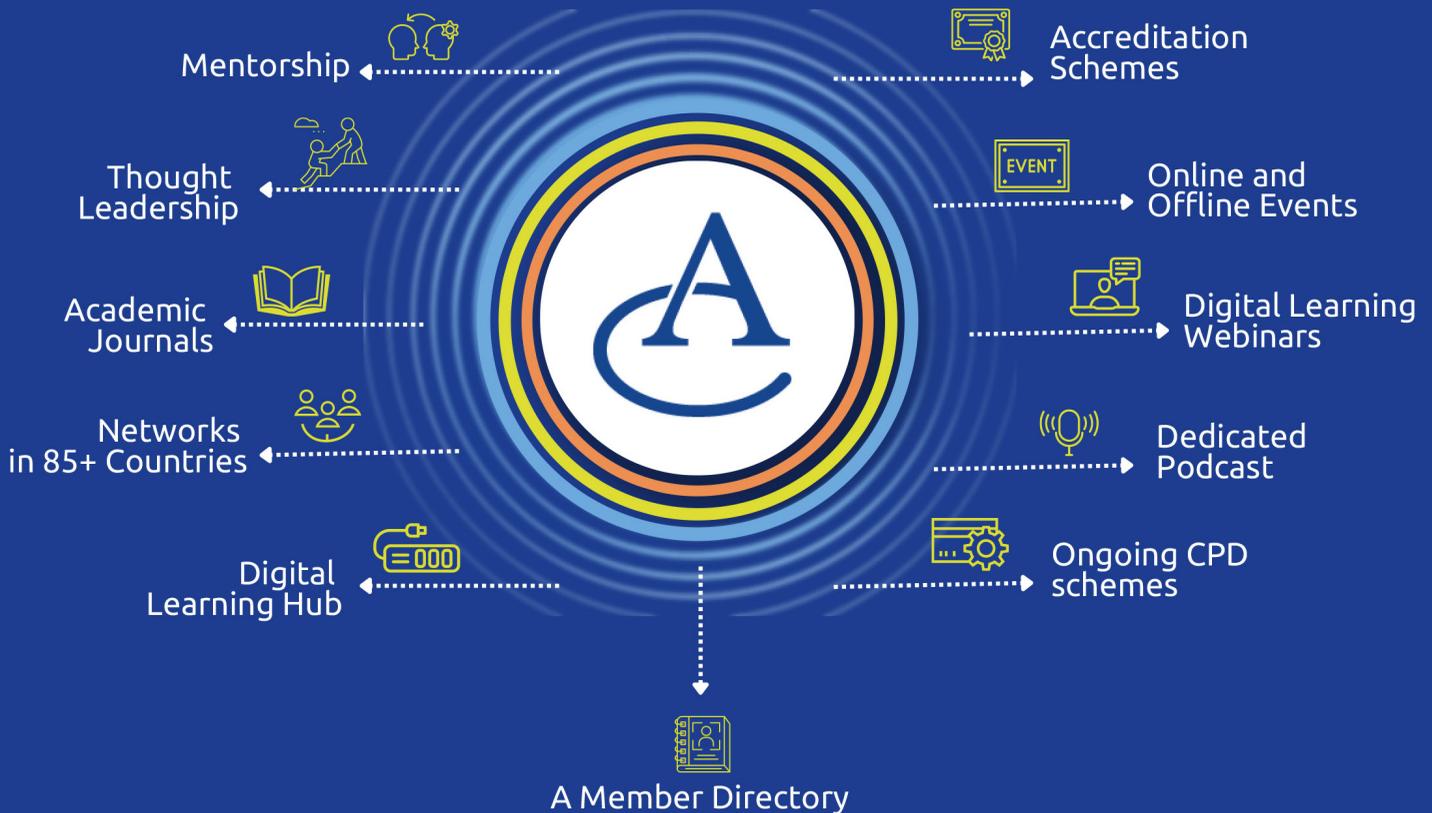
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5, 19 October and 2, 16  
November 2023

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