COACHARYA

REFLECTIONS ON COACHING

AN ANTHOLOGY

*A Tribute to the Coaching Profession
by Master Coaches
On Coacharya's 10th Anniversary*

Acknowledgment

Coacharya acknowledges the contribution of our well-wishers, coaches, and alumni to our 10-year anniversary celebratory book, **Reflections on Coaching – An Anthology.**

Introduction

Ramanathan, Pranav.

Wabi-Sabi (侘寂) is a Japanese term that embraces authenticity by finding beauty in natural objects that are imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete. The green patina on a copper building structure, leaves gusted up by a wind swirl, the cragginess of a cliff face weathered over the years. Originating in Zen Buddhism and traditionally directed at the intricate aesthetics of Japanese tea ceremonies, *wabi-sabi* has influenced the Western cultural worldview in the fields of art, design, technology, and wellness.

A derivative art form, *Kintsugi*, glues back together broken ceramic bowls using lacquer and gold powder to create beautiful inlays where cracks would have been. *Kintsugi* can be seen as a metaphor for acceptance, allowing for the open expression of flaws thereby allowing one to show love for oneself and compassion for others. The cover of this book captures an image that could be many things -- a slice of silica stone, a magnified puddle of leftover watercolors, or a burst of light on a stained-glass window -- we know not the artist's medium or intention other than that an impression of colors has been created that elicits an ontological sense. Therein lies the essence of coaching, guiding one's spirit through the myriad of imperfections, impermanence, and incompleteness, such that we may internalize than and in turn, grow.

How did Coacharya begin?

Coacharya is an amalgam of the words, Coach and Acharya. The etymology is as follows:

- Coach (def.) /kōCH/ noun: Partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.

- Achar·ya (def.) \ä-ˈchär-yə\ noun: One who walks alongside you (literal translation from its Sanskrit base).

When we began talks of starting a coaching practice, we agreed on an approach that would combine the analytical evaluation of tested psychological personality models with right-brained, emotion-based, spirituality. The premise: to blend the best of western and eastern ideologies to embody a well-rounded global perspective.

A decade later, Coacharya's mission continues to use coaching as a primary intervention in corporate areas of leadership development, performance enhancement, managing career transitions, and resolving behavioral, and cultural issues. This schema intends to educate executives in self-awareness and train them as leaders so they, in turn, can coach others to lead.

Our anthology celebrates Coacharya's 10-year anniversary by collecting reflections from coaches that have contributed their talents to the company, and to the coaching ecosystem as a whole.

About the Author

Pranav Ramanathan is a Professional Certified Coach (PCC) specializing in systemic and youth coaching modalities, and a coach trainer. He is the co-founder and CEO of Coacharya (www.coacharya.com) an award-winning leadership development firm, and served on the Board of Directors of the non-profit, Upwardly Global (www.upwardlyglobal.org). Prior to this, Pranav spent 15 years in technology and product marketing at start-up and corporates, including The Nielsen Company. He has a B.S. in Architecture from Arizona State and an M.S. in Marketing from Northwestern University. Pranav is a multi-instrumentalist in a band and the proud father of two beautiful daughters.
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Transpersonal Coaching in Times of Corporate Challenge

> "A soulful approach to work is probably the only way an individual can respond creatively to the high-temperature stress of modern work life without burning to a crisp in the heat."
>
> –DAVID WHYTE, (1994)

Introduction

In this article, I write from the transpersonal perspective that views all human beings as souls on a journey through life. The transpersonal approach is much needed at this time of social, economic, and political turbulence in the world. We daily face complexity and rapid social change that can feel overwhelming and disabling. However, we all can learn to bring a counterbalance to the individualistic pursuit of the material, with its emphasis on high achievement, at the expense of interpersonal connection. To create the best conditions for transformational learning, we need to engage with the soul, and as coaches, we need to connect to our inner life with compassion and love. Coaching now needs to engage with changes in society, work, and threats to the very survival of our planet.

Transformational learning is a process that works on two levels: horizontal and vertical. The former level refers to skill development and the latter to self-development. Transpersonal coaching facilitates this dual focus process and integrates the two to bring us the freedom to embrace our whole self, mind, body, and spirit. A transpersonal coach, therefore, introduces clients to new ways of being that will free their capacity and energy for creativity, compassion, and connection in all their relationships. In doing so, we co-create a space for transformational learning. This learning takes us into the deeper levels of the inner lives of our clients and our fellow travellers. Transpersonal coaches offer *'the still point in a turning world'* (Eliot, 2001).

But do we have our inner still point? Our starting place must then be to ask ourselves - are we ready enough? Are we prepared for this deep dive with our clients, our fellow travellers? Do we have an inner still point that we can work from? Our personal development work is needed to enable us to stay wholehearted and open to our full humanity. A transpersonal coach does not fear exploring at this deeper soul level to connect to their inner life.

Safe Transformational Change in Times of Stress

We know from experience that personal change and development are evolutionary processes that may be triggered by normal life events such as leaving home, getting married, and embarking on a career. Other triggers may include personal crises, dramatic organisational changes, illness, and breakdown in work relationships. Holding a systemic perspective, we include global, political and economic crises that can trigger our clients' stress states. Some individuals and organisations thrive by seeking the needed support and are then ready to face whatever challenges arise. For many, however, such triggers can be overwhelming and lead to business failures, breakdown in mental and physical health, and the capacity to sustain personal and work relationships. Such events may evoke a crisis of meaning, such as- how can I make any sense of my current situation as the world I knew is changing beyond all recognition? We may all be asking- can our centre hold in times of social and corporate challenges that are now being faced globally?

We add another lens through which clients can view their place in the web of life. Through this lens, we see that we are all connected. We all have a longing to matter, to belong, to contribute, to collaborate, and to be creative in the world. It is our shared longings that make us human. Stress cuts us off from being aware of our universal human longings. In coaching, we learn to notice when we are stressed, and we learn ways to recover our emotional equilibrium.

In a transpersonal coaching dialogue, we are supported to acknowledge that loss and change have shaped the pattern of our lives. We notice and become curious about how we have

been impacted by life events. By entering the reflective domain of coaching, we explore the different ways of seeing ourselves and the world. We explore the nuances of reality. We begin checking our assumptions and seeing the world with new eyes. Transpersonal coaching is, therefore, a collaborative learning experience shaped through co-created dialogue. Together we create a safe space for reflections on our lived experience and *not simply verbal accounts of it*. Safe relationships create the best conditions for both parties to learn to be vulnerable, embody, and risk being present in the ebbs and flows of an emergent dialogue. Because the work takes place relationally, the coach and client learn together as they engage with the here and now of their experience. At times a coach will share their emotional response to a client's lived experience. Clients discover that how they come across affects others. New levels of awareness arise and form the basis of new meanings and new ways of being. Clients may then come home to their true selves, free to connect and collaborate.

Amid Distress, Chaos, and Frozen States, What Can a Transpersonal Coach Offer?

A transpersonal coach offers a psycho-spiritual approach that addresses the whole person, mind, body and spirit, a process that develops the whole person's intelligence and lens through which to reframe life as a developmental journey. It offers a space to pause for reflection, developing awareness of different ways of being in the world, beliefs and values, leading to an increasing level of awareness of self and others. It provides an opportunity for self-realisation, or meeting the Self, and self-actualisation or accessing our Will (Assagioli, 1965). It is an exploration of what may be blocking our joint capacity to stay steady during a relational crisis. It creates awareness when stressed by attending to the body, and it also models emotion regulation.

A transpersonal coach will also share the universal myth of The Hero's Journey as the story of every man and woman's call to the Self. We may be heroic, but we accept that we will also fail at times. A transpersonal coach will develop a way to meet and honour the Self-our inner Wise Being. He/she will bring compassionate engagement within a co-created dialogue.

Starting Points for New Client Relationships

Choose your approach to beginnings that convey something of who you are and what you are bringing to this new relationship. Your purpose as a transpersonal coach is to create a space for reflection, for deep enquiry, and to bring your client's attention to **notice** how they are being. A space then opens for reflection and dialogue about what they sense could increase their understanding of themselves and others. They experience with you the value of pausing for reflection. They may remark that this is the first time they have given themselves time to think deeply. These are moments when the part we call the Self, their guide on their soul's journey, comes into awareness. Together we are building a bridge between their inner and outer worlds.

Firstly, we take time to co-create the relationship so that it becomes a place of safety where transformational learning can take place. Through mutual trust and honesty, we co-create a safe way of being together. This means that at the start of a coaching relationship, we wait, giving time to settle into this new relationship. We may share a short mindfulness practice that slows down the pace of our dialogue and sets the scene for how we work together. I might say something like, 'let's take a moment or two to come quietly into each other's presence by noticing our breathing, slowing it down. When you are ready, we can begin.' In this way, we are beginning to value attention to our body as a source of wisdom that is hidden from us when we are stressed or challenged at work. This means that our relational field becomes a place of creativity and possibility and helps us transform our way of being and thinking. We could say, 'I will accompany you, walk beside you as we travel together during this new challenge in your life.' I believe this is an intention we need to have, whatever our coaching approach is. Here are some of my ideas for opening enquiries: what matters most to you right now? what in your current life is calling you? do you have support to help you to stay steady in the face of challenges to your well-being?

1. **We Are All Dreamers**

> "Those with busy lives but bereft of the inner images based on the soul's desires, have empty larders, and no fire in the hearth; they will starve if they are not fed something more nourishing."
>
> –DAVID WHYTE, (1994)

The dreams we have during the night can offer clues to what we may be feeling about ourselves that have not yet surfaced in our conscious minds. Someone not immediately aware of their emotional life may find that sharing a dream will bring them closer to their feeling self. When we reflect with curiosity and with no wish to interpret *the* meaning of images and symbolic material, we listen so that our clients can discover for themselves what has hitherto been just outside their awareness. For exampl**e,** a CEO dreams of finding himself standing naked in the boardroom, unable to escape or speak. When asked what struck him most about the dream, he said that he had felt utterly trapped and deeply afraid of being seen naked by his colleagues and that they would be laughing at him, thinking what a fool he was to turn up like this. While we waited quietly together during the next few moments, he began to see the parallels between the dream and his work life and then spoke of his waking fears about a presentation he was preparing to give the following week. He could also see how his inner critic was telling him he had nothing worthwhile to say.

There are many ways to work with dreams, and a transpersonal way is to be curious together and see what connections the story of the dream evokes for the dreamer. We stay with the dreamer's associations and take time for them to emerge. We can be of service to the dreamer without overstepping a boundary *or* needing to be a psychotherapist.

2. Working with Fear

It would be unusual not to sense that we are feeling afraid when we are facing change in our lives. Acknowledging our fear is a way to work with it as, in naming it, we effectively diminish its power. Then we can work in ways that bring the parasympathetic nervous system into play, which will ease our anxieties.

3. The Window of Tolerance

This is a term coined by Dr Dan Siegel to describe our normal brain and body reactions to adversity. It suggests we have an optimal level of readiness to deal with events when we are in our calm window of tolerance. This optimal level signifies our capacity to remain calm with whatever thoughts, emotions, and body sensations are evoked that we feel threaten our psychological safety. However, there will be moments when our autonomic nervous system is immediately triggered, and we cannot cope. We have temporarily lost our capacity to regulate our emotions and so move out of a relationship at that moment.

Describing the image of the window to clients, with words or a drawing, permits them to acknowledge difficult feelings. This helps them find a way to feel at ease with their feelings, thoughts, and body sensations. With relational mindfulness, we are both enabled to return freely to our relational field.

4. Working with Illness when Clients are Suffering Physical Pain

The body holds wisdom that may be expressed through physical symptoms. A stressed CEO describes heart problems, pain and anxiety. He tells the coach that his wife had died a few months ago, and he had been holding his grief quietly, fearing his heart would break. Once he was able to weep, he noticed that the pain was lifting, and he realised his heart could let go of his painful feelings. Later, he described feeling more connected to his leadership team and was able to return to his creative, relational self.

5. **Guided Imagery**

There are many guided journeys we can work with. For example, "Meeting Your Future Self" is often used when clients are in transition and asking for guidance. By accessing their imagination, we can encourage some deeper enquiry. See also: www.coactive.com/docs/resources/toolkit/pdfs/29-Life-Purpose-Exercise

General Note to all Coaches

There are many universal and timeless truths, so please explore your own and your client's cultural, and spiritual traditions for inspiration, philosophy, and other resources such as literature, poetry, music, drama and films.

"We are all walking each other home."
-RAM DASS

Resources

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Presence

My Struggles and Strides

For a leadership coach, having presence is a crucial aspect of a coaching role. It involves being fully present and attentive to clients and creating a safe and supportive environment for them to explore their thoughts and feelings. According to the ICF (International Coaching Federation), presence is one of the eleven core competencies that coaches must possess to provide effective coaching services.

The ICF defines presence as "the ability to be fully conscious and create spontaneous relationships with clients." In other words, coaches with presence can be fully present and focused on their clients in the coaching relationship. They can create a sense of connection and rapport with their clients. This is fairly clear and easy to understand by most coaches. Simple as it were, in my development as a coach, I struggled to master this competency. *What was making it difficult?* The challenge lay in my ability to manage what all goes within my inner self. When I look back, self-reflectively, on my years of development as a coach, I was grappling with several anxieties that were weighing on my mind. These were:

1. As a seasoned manager with years of corporate experience, I am quite 'goal-focused. In the coaching session, I am very conscious of all the coaching goals agreed to with the client. I mentally allocate a specific number of coaching sessions to deal with each of these goals. In the coaching session, I get preoccupied with the fact that we must make concrete progress as per the schedule that I am holding in my mind - the time boundary of the session within which I need to make a difference in the client's thinking.

2. My typical coaching session is one-and-a-half to two hours. Within this time, the client must realise what his/her limiting belief is, what needs to change and what may be the possible actions toward making that change.

3. I also carry a sense of responsibility that I have to help the client realise the return on investment (coaching fees).

4. I have several thoughts about what needs to be done based on my life experiences. I often end up judging the client and based on my vast experience, I also have a pretty good idea of what the client should be doing to deal with this specific coaching goal. As I use them, I see the clients experiencing the benefits more often than not. This becomes self-perpetuating, reinforcing my beliefs and my coaching approach.

The manager in me was rational and quick to jump into the problem-solving process. This was in the way of 'presence' that was truly needed. Over the years, I have grown to realise my biases and beliefs that limit my effectiveness as a coach.

As I transitioned from a Professional Certified Coach (PCC) to a Master Certified Coach (MCC), I began to develop 'presence' in its full sense. Firstly, during my MCC training, both my mentors, Cindy Muthukarapan and Ram Ramanathan drew my attention to connect with the emotions of the client and also their own emotions. This was a big shift for me. This also connected me back to the several T-group sessions that I had attended way back in the 1980s and 1990s. These were run by ISABS (Indian Society for Applied Behavioural Science). These sessions went a long way in developing my self-awareness, connecting me with the emotions of others, and also achieving a higher level of emotional maturity. Furthermore, I went through several peer coaching sessions during the MCC certification process. In these sessions, I also kept getting very granular feedback on this aspect. This helped me improve my self-awareness, knowing my biases and limitations. I am now able to manage my own emotions and judgements. I can now stay present in the moment, even in challenging situations and maintain a neutral and non-judgmental stance.

At a practical level, in my coaching sessions, I use some approaches to stay present with the client:

1. **Silence:** I wait with a childlike curiosity. I am observant of the client's body language and emotions. I call out what I see. I do not experience anxiety about what I will do with what I see, what I hear and what I find. I also don't have any performance anxiety. I am mindful and recognise that every session may not be 'value-adding' to the client. Yet, every session is an essential step in the transformation journey the client is going through, even if the session may appear to be running at the same pace. I am mindful that coaching is a marathon, not a sprint.

2. **Sharing my own emotions:** I have no hesitation in sharing my vulnerability. When I am confused and unable to figure out what to say and do in this instance, I acknowledge and share it with the client. Often this has led the clients to go deeper within and discover the way forward.

3. **Summarising:** paraphrasing what the client says and sharing it back with the client. This often leads to the client reflecting further within.

4. **Level:** by sharing business information that I would have picked up from the media and acknowledging the challenges and positive trends in the business. Mostly, I do this during the first few minutes of the session, as it helps to level the client.

5. **Enquiring:** about how the fortnight and the month have been for the client; about the significant progress on the substantive aspects of the business, the client's situation – holidays, travel, training, reading, any extracurricular activities and milestones. Enquiring also about the family members — weddings, children, admissions, examinations, health, and special achievements. This helps to anchor the client, and I do this at the beginning of the session.

6. **Sharing my highlights and milestones:** if any.

7. **Suspending your judgments:** I am mindful of sharing only observations and asking reflective questions with childlike curiosity — unlike a school teacher. This is an important difference in the way questions are asked. A school teacher already knows the answer. She/He is asking questions to check if the students know the answer. The child, by contrast, does not know the answer and is curious to find it out.

8. **Paying undivided attention:** The cell phone is to be kept on silent, so no taking notes and no looking at the clock. I keep a clock or cell phone so that the time is Conveniently visible to me without me making any effort. Sometimes, if I still have concerns about the time, I ask, *"how are we doing on time*?"*. This invariably leads to fine-tuning the time we further have for the session. Despite prior commitments, I have encountered instances when the client has scheduled other engagements even before the session has finished. I see this in the client's restlessness, hurried responses, and frequent glances at cell phone messages, alerts, and time.

9. **Notes on the session:** I take no notes during the session but immediately after. I write down the highlights of the session in "Evernote" - in this, I even note down some thoughts that came into my head but which I did not explore. This serves me well for future reference. I then read these notes before the next session. That refreshes my memory and helps maintain continuity.

10. **Session Plan:** I keep a broad sense of how the coaching session is progressing. I do not develop any specific plan for the "next session". That way, I do not carry any preconceived idea or game plan about the session(s). I remain spontaneous. For maintaining presence, I find this very useful. Otherwise, I may tend to fit somehow what is emerging into my broader game plan. This is critical to being "present in the moment" with the client.

11. **Break:** my typical coaching session is 1.5 to 2 hours. So I find it useful for myself and the client to take a short break of 3 to 5 minutes mid-way into the session. Longer, only if the client wants it. I have done so even during online sessions. It refreshes both of us, and I have often discovered that this has greatly energised the client and me.

12. **Check-ins during the session:** I intermittently check on the client by asking simple questions such as: how is it going? how meaningful is this? how is the client feeling? how is this related to the coaching goals that we had set up?

Developing presence as a leadership coach requires a combination of self-reflection and practice. Coaches can work on their self-awareness and emotional intelligence by engaging in activities such as mindfulness and journaling, as well as seeking feedback from mentors, peer coaches, and clients. It is important for coaches to be aware of their own emotions and reactions and to be able to manage them effectively. This can involve setting aside time for self-reflection and self-care and seeking opportunities to learn and grow.

In practice, coaches can work on their presence by participating in coaching sessions with experienced coaches, observing and analysing their coaching style and its impact on clients. It is through practice and experience that coaches can develop their presence and become more effective in their roles. Coaches can also seek out professional development opportunities. These may be T-group training, mindfulness workshops, Vipasana or any such personal development workshops to further enhance their self-awareness and emotional maturity.

It is also important to remember that presence is not just about being present with your clients but also about being present in your own life. This means taking care of your well-being, setting aside time for self-care and personal growth, and being authentic and genuine in your interactions with others. A coach with a strong presence can bring their full self to their work and be present and engaged in their own life.

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Bergraaf, Mireille.

My Personal Journey into Cultivating Intuition in Coaching Mastery

"Intuition" is a word that coaches and coaching practices commonly use. However, nobody tells you *how* to develop your intuition. It was not until 2018, when I was in the ICF Accredited Coach Training Program (ACTP) with Coacharya, that I discovered the building blocks of intuition. Although Coacharya gave me the tools I needed, it was up to me to do the work to cultivate my intuition. The journey on how to cultivate my intuition was one of the gifts I got from the ICF ACTP coach training with Coacharya. In this article, I will share with you how I cultivated my intuition and the impact that the power of intuition has had on my coaching practice.

How I Cultivated My Intuition

I had the privilege of learning about intuition first-hand from my trainer, Ram Ramanathan, co-founder of Coacharya, who taught me the importance of the principles of Unconditional Positive Regard, Being Mindless, and Listening Generative. Through understanding and practising these principles, I saw benefits not only in my coaching practice but also in my daily life. I experienced higher self-love, higher self-acceptance, and higher self-respect.

Cultivating Unconditional Positive Regard

As a coach, you must always have Unconditional Positive Regard for your clients. However, I soon realised that I could only meet my clients as deeply as I have met myself. Simply put, you cannot give what you do not have. So, to have high regard for my clients, I needed to have this same regard for myself.

I realised that this meant I needed to love my who*le* Self, not just the "positive parts" that made me proud. I also had to love the "negative parts" that I wanted to hide away. I had to love my flaws, disappointments, shame, anxiety, laziness, procrastination, etc. To my amazement, I discovered that by loving my "negative parts", I started to open up to myself. Once I opened myself up to these "negative" aspects of Self, I better understood why I talked, thought, and acted the way I did. I discovered a message hidden in each of my negative traits. For example, when I was angry at someone, I discovered that my anger said more about my mindset than the other person's character. God had given me a choice. Being angry meant that I chose to be angry. Instead of choosing to be angry, I could have chosen not to be offended by that person and keep my joy.

Once I began to look for and learn from these messages intentionally, my awareness of Self grew. As I became more self-aware, I started to love myself more, which led to higher self-acceptance.

Higher Self-Acceptance

The more I loved myself, the more I started to accept my whole Self. I had more compassion for myself and my negative character traits. Once I gained this compassion, I consciously chose to work with them. I also became mindful of my inner dialogue. I decided not to allow negative voices or attitudes to take root anymore. I stopped talking about the way I was and started talking about the way I wanted to be. I began to affirm myself positively and actively chose to speak positively about myself.

Higher Inner-Peace

Even if I was not happy with some of my character traits, I noticed that experiencing self-love and self-acceptance brought me inner peace. With my newfound inner peace, I lost the appetite to be "right" all the time. Instead, I opened up more to others and became curious about

their way of thinking and perceptions. Even if I was not on the same page as them, I was comfortable agreeing to disagree. I started treating others as I wanted to be treated and felt my inner confidence growing.

While working towards Unconditional Positive Regard through daily journaling, guided meditations, and praying, I knew I had a long way to go. Yet somehow, this was a comforting thought. While I was not where I wanted to be, I was not where I used to be. This realisation gave me enormous inner strength. The daily, intentional effort I made towards developing the muscle of Unconditional Positive Regard brought me inner peace, inner confidence, and inner strength and helped to expand my self-awareness.

Being Mindless

Ram Ramanathan taught me that being mindless is the true "being" state. It is the state where you just "are." This is more easily said than done, right? When he introduced the concept, I wondered, "How can *I* do this?" My mind raced with thoughts. I realised if I wanted to be mindless, I needed to work on my mindset. I needed to take responsibility for my mindset and work on calming it down. For me to be in the state where I just "am", I decided to

1. **Let Go of Judgement:** Judgement is the constant process of assessing things as "right" or "wrong." If I needed to be in a state of pure "being", I needed to let go of all the extra thoughts caused by judgement. Every morning when I got up, I was very intentional about judgement. I told myself, "Today, I will not judge for one hour". By focusing on not being judgmental for just one hour, I started recognising when I was judgmental. This helped immensely in my coaching sessions when it is even more important not to be judgmental towards clients.

2. **Develop Trust:** During our coach training, Ram Ramanathan often told us to be comfortable coaching in the space of "not-knowing". To be able to coach in the space of "not-knowing" meant that I needed to be mindless. Being mindless, however, is a scary

place to be, especially when we are so used to the feeling of control our conscious thoughts give us. I needed to work on my trust. This was a big challenge because I was a super controlling person back then. I had to work on letting go of this controlling part of me. To develop more trust, I started a morning routine with guided meditations and one positive 'I AM' Statement— "I AM open and allowing." Just repeating this one 'I AM' statement every day was key in allowing me to internalise more trust.

3. **Practice silence to simply** "**be**"**:** When our minds are so used to constantly thinking, planning about the future, and making judgements to protect ourselves (which is not our mind's fault— that is what our mind has evolved to do to survive), simply "being" is not as simple as it may seem. I started small, experiencing silence for five minutes every three days. Truthfully, five minutes does not seem long, right? Well, for me, it was like five hours; my mind was so restless. Through my practice, I gradually could experience silence for longer periods— going from five minutes to ten minutes, from ten minutes to fifteen. It took me at least nine months before I witnessed my internal dialogue start to slow down, and I could simply "be." This was a slow process, yet a vital one for developing mindlessness. Even now, I keep practising silence.

While mindlessness may seem like an easy state to achieve, I can say that I had to be very intentional about becoming mindless. It took perseverance, determination, and discipline to build the muscle of being mindless. The beauty of practising mindfulness was that it brought me even more passion for coaching. It is magnificent to experience self-trust and inner peace in coaching, and it is a fantastic feeling to have a calm mind that is not constantly racing and creating judgements— I can just be.

Listening Generative

Listening Generative is the third principle at the core of Coacharya's ICF ACTP program. To listen generatively, you must listen with an open mind, heart, and will. The goal of generative listening is to connect more fully to what the client wants or wants to be. It means listening so

profoundly that you can see the client in the future state and thus guide the client to connect with that state.

Although Unconditional Positive Regard and Being Mindless improved my ability to listen generatively, I also needed to be much more sensitive to what the client was offering if I were to guide them to their imagined future. I needed to - listen not only to what the client said but also to what the client *didn't* say, be able to notice and feel the client's energy and shifts in their energy, and be fully connected to the client to be able to allow the client to become an expert in their topic. Although I could tune into what was not being said and notice shifts in my client's energy, I found that fully connecting to the client was far more difficult than I had anticipated.

I was still in the process of becoming fully connected to myself and could not fully connect to my client. I discovered that I needed to deepen my connection with Self further and keep working on the parts of myself that I was not proud of. Even if I understood that there was a message hidden inside these parts, connecting deeper with myself was a struggle. I wondered; how could I be fully connected to others if I was not fully connected to myself? I researched this and came across the teaching of Dr Wayne Dyer and listened to his audiobooks.

The following were the teachings I came away with

1. You Are God
2. Change Your thoughts, Change Your Life: Living with the wisdom from the Tao
3. Your Sacred Self

The teachings from these audiobooks, combined with my daily guided meditation practice, were necessary for me to understand how I could connect with myself. I experienced that connecting with myself meant- feeling how it feels to be me. I experienced that the moment I could feel my whole Self was a moment of total surrender. In that moment of total surrender, I was aligned with God because I gave away all control, judgement, anxiety, insecurities, anger, shame, and frustrations and allowed myself to just be. I experienced total peace, love, joy and

compassion. A love that was light, tender, unconditional and full of acceptance. My body felt light like I was floating, and at the same time, full of Godly light.

I now realise that when I consciously connected to myself, I was connected to God. In this connection, when I was open and allowing God to flow through me, I felt intuition kicking in. And when this happened, I had even more love for myself, acceptance of my whole self, trust, and connectedness to others. In my journey of Listening Generative, I discovered that the connection with God was necessary for me to connect with others on a deeper level, both emotionally and spiritually. I also experienced that my connection with God let intuition flow more freely- there was no effort anymore. I became more equipped to guide my clients in connecting with themselves and their future states.

My Definition of Intuition

Cultivating Unconditional Positive Regard, Being Mindless, and Listening Generative brought me on the path of cultivating my intuition. Everybody has their definition of intuition. Intuition is commonly known as a "gut feeling"-you know something but cannot explain how you know it. However, based on my journey, I have come to my definition of intuition. To me, *i*ntuition is your direct line with God. It is the invisible place that resides within us and is called the soul. I believe that our souls are connected to God, who is all-knowing. So, when we align with God, we communicate directly with God and here is where intuition kicks in - when you are in direct communication with God and when you are operating in the field of pure awareness, pure knowledge, and pure wisdom. That is why intuition is called "KNOWING".

This "KNOWING" can manifest itself in different ways. Some people have a strong sense of knowing things, feeling emotions and sensations, seeing images, hearing, smelling, and tasting things. With my intuition, I have a strong sense of knowing and feeling emotions, and at times, I have a stronger sense of seeing. This is how it manifests itself in my coaching practice.

Benefits of Utilizing Intuition as a Coaching Tool

I use intuition to evoke awareness and support the client in their self-discovery process and develop their potential and become the expert in their topic. By using intuition within my coaching practice, I have

1. **Better attunement with the client:** Co-creating with my clients has now become a dance in which the level of connectedness makes it easier for me to share what I feel is going on within me, what I am sensing, and what I am noticing.

2. **Better able to guide them to connect to themselves and let their intuition flow freely:** I am much more at ease with working with the client's whole Self. Since I am much more able to just "be," I feel that the level of connectivity with my clients is growing. I am much more comfortable asking them what it feels like to hold a thought, a belief, and a perception. I want my clients to experience how a thought, a belief, or a perception, manifests in the body and allow them to feel how it 'feels' to be themselves. This way, their intuition can flow freely, guiding them to finding their truth.

3. **More self-discovery leads to higher levels of self-awareness:** Whenever I use my intuition in coaching, I am always amazed that my clients freely express what they experience in their bodies. My goal is to get them out of their head and start experiencing a way to communicate directly with their bodies so they can tap into their intuition. In my experience, this self-exploring in the body leads to a higher self-awareness.

4. **Better coaching outcome:** Better attunement, better guidance to let their intuition flow, and a higher level of self-awareness have helped my clients to have better outcomes from our coaching sessions.

Thank you, Coacharya, for making this possible for me. In closing, I was not, and still am, not in a hurry regarding my self-development. The teachings of Dr Wayne Dyer taught me one

great principle— *"A journey of a thousand miles starts with the first step."* Achieve great things by taking small steps. This is exactly how I cultivated, and still cultivate, my intuition. Cultivating my intuition is a journey, not a destination. By cultivating, I feel that I am growing in a higher level of awareness. I am still practising and will continue to practice Unconditional Positive Regard, Being Mindless, and Listening Generative to develop my intuition and to discover more about myself and my clients. This is the best way to serve my clients.

Resources

Carl Rogers, *On Becoming A Person.*

Article by Matt Kahn, titled "*People Can Only Meet You, As Deeply They've Met Themselves"*
-https://tinyurl.com/2p8sd37y

Deepak Chopra, *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success.*

Dr Wayne Dyer, *You Are God*- https://tinyurl.com/mmb4jp4p; *Change Your Thoughts, Change Your Life: Living The Wisdom of the Tao; Your Sacred Self: Making The Decision To Be Free.*

About the Author:

Mireille Bergraaf is a Professional Certified Coach (PCC) and a Certified Clear Beliefs Coach through the International Coaching Federation (ICF). She is the founder and owner of Dutch Leadership Development (DLD) - a leadership development company focused on performance improvement. Mireille uses coaching, mentorship, and training to guide companies in improving professional and personal performance.

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Buch, Ujjaval.

Coaching at the Grassroots: Democratization of Coaching in a Practical Way

Coacharya has contributed immensely to the coaching profession over the last 10 years. One of the significant contributions is towards embodying the democratization of coaching. Democratization of coaching is equated with making coaching available to the grassroots as well.

It all started during covid time, probably the toughest time for humanity in recent history. Jaipur Rugs approached us to explore some coaching propositions for making their leaders coaches and mentors. Jaipur Rugs is a unique enterprise operating on Gandhian principles and conscious capitalism. They have deep-rooted networks with the artisans in rural India and they get some of the finest products made by these artisans and market them in some of the top-end markets of the world. It's worth visualizing the canvas. On one hand, the artisan is probably a tribal lady working out of her home to make two ends meet. Her artisanship is to be harvested while managing the world-class standards of design, quality, colour and fabric which will appeal to top-end buyers of some of the most developed countries.

We initially trained their leaders based in their head office via zoom for coaching and mentoring skills and that was well received. It was a bit of a challenge to build skills and make them practice, however, Coacharya has always been an early adopter of technology so learners took some time to adjust, but they managed well and we sailed through.

The next challenge was to build coaching skills in their field supervisors who will coach the artisans. We were all excited to be a part of this real-life case where you infuse coaching skills in those field supervisors who themselves belong to the hinterland and whom they would coach also belong to deep rural areas where 'literacy' in popular understanding is hardly there but profound common sense and wisdom is there.

The Chinese character of change consists of two pictures - Danger and opportunity. We were chosen by the universe to be the instruments of creating a history of its kind however we had to conquer the following challenges.

Challenge 1: Mode of Training - Online

All the participants were field supervisors who were operating in rural areas of Rajasthan and Gujarat. They used to connect via mobile phones. Connectivity was a huge challenge.

How we dealt with it:

We had to maintain patience, whosoever could not connect, organizing catch-up sessions for them to understand the concepts and also checking on the understanding and application, all via cell phone.

Challenge 2: Language - Vernacular

All the concepts needed to be explained in Hindi owing to the preference of the participants.

How we dealt with it:
We had to simplify all the concepts and transfer these to them in a language and manner that they can understand easily. It was quite a learning experience where we got enriched in the process.

Challenge 3: Coaching Frameworks/Models and Practice

Coacharya's proprietary models like 3A/3C and SET would not be received well in their original form but we had to protect the sanctity of the models and translate them in a manner that they not only comprehend but apply them as well.

How we dealt with it:

We worked out the stories/examples with which they can relate and also encouraged them to practice in a simplified manner.

Challenge 4: Assessing their Coaching Skills

The biggest challenge was to assess their coaching skills where we could not go physically and all of them operate on different schedules so it was impossible to assess them together.

How we dealt with it:

We asked them to record their practice conversations on phone and send them to us on WhatsApp, which we listened to, made our notes and organized telephonic feedback and mentoring conversations.

Impact:

They reported greater cohesion, better on-time deliveries, lesser discrepancies in quality and most importantly, greater engagement between the artisans and supervisors.

What we took away:
The biggest feeling was the sense of gratification on two counts. First, the pleasure of witnessing the metamorphosis of these participants and second, to be the vehicle of facilitating democratization of coaching in the true sense.

About the Author:

Ujjaval has been a global executive leadership coach since 2012. Extensive experience in coaching global clients as well as teams across cultures and geographies. A strong believer in blending systemic and spiritual approaches to enhance the quality of results. He would like to be known as an instrument of the universe and a student of Ram Ramanathan and Cindy Muthukarapan who pays it forward with what he has learnt from both his teachers. https://www.linkedin.com/in/ujjaval-k-buch-mcc-actc-63000217/

Correa, Steve.

Perspectives of Coaching in Indian Organisations

When Ram Ramanathan invited me to write this chapter, he prompted me to ask the following questions: How do organisations view Executive Coaching? What are your reflections on the Indian bosses as sponsors and clients? I had many questions as well around the praxis of coaching. These questions are best explored within a wider pool, of sponsors and coaches, rather than just my personal view, which I have shared in *italics.* Helen G Brown said, "*Never fail to know that if you are doing all the talking [in this case, writing], you are boring someone".*

> "Never fail to know that if you are doing all the talking, you are boring someone."
>
> – HELEN G BROWN

I have chosen to write from a first-person perspective. Readers should forgive my biases, prejudices and judgements arising from my corporate background of thirty-plus years with eighteen-plus years being CHRO, my role today as an Executive Coach and OD (Organization Development) Practitioner, and my research while writing my book, "The Indian Boss at Work: Thinking Global, Acting Indian". All this shapes not only my writings but influences my worldview as well. I have tried to be as objective as possible in recording and summarising my notes, and any error is my responsibility alone.

This paper results from interviews with 'sponsors' of Executive Coaching, otherwise referred to as a Client Organisation, with interviewees drawn from the HR function. All these interviewees have sponsored External Coaching Interventions for upwards of thirty-plus executives. In addition, I have also interviewed coaches who have worked with large organisations. For confidentiality, I will not be sharing the names of those I interviewed or the names of the sponsored organisations, as there is more value in what is being said rather than

who said what. I am encouraged and thankful to the sponsors and coaches who have shared their time and input with me.

I have organised the reflections into themes around: What is coaching, and what are the desired outcomes? How is a coach selected and matched with the client? How is the coach briefed? When does it work best? What factors are conducive to positive coaching outcomes? What would you like to change? What is the context under which coaching is contracted, and how does a coaching need get identified? What are the perspectives on coaching Indian bosses?

Defining Coaching and Outcomes

The International Coaching Federation (ICF) defines coaching as **"***partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximise their personal and professional potential. The process of coaching often unlocks previously untapped sources of imagination, productivity, and leadership.***"**

Let me offer my thoughts: *I see coaching as a reflective space, and the coach provides his/her presence as a container for what is moving within the client. The coach's role is to support the client in meeting his /her objectives. The coach's role is to help the client gain insight, commit to change and to make the transformation effective. Coaching may be done by Internal Leaders or External Coaches and is especially useful for senior leaders who have experience, knowledge, and subject matter expertise yet need added perspective to lead in these turbulent times.* Not surprisingly, when I enquired about coaching, both sponsors and coaches shared:

1. It is a process to enable self-realisation, especially for those who find it difficult to step back and reflect.

2. It is a partnership that enables thought-provoking and self-reflection that honours the individual and her/his cultural context and addresses her/his potential and her/his learning style and which creates possibilities.

3. The ability to reflect and for the client to meet herself/himself to reach potential.

4. Coaching is about empowering the individual to make choices, even if the individual does or does not make a choice.

5. To help individuals build on interpersonal skills.

6. A space in which one feels empowered to respond to one's values and aspirations.

7. Helping understand oneself better and recognise one's opportunities and mental roadblocks.

8. Helping individuals examine their limiting beliefs and help in shifting to enabling those sets of beliefs.

As regards the length of the coaching journal, most coaches and sponsors felt that an effective coaching process should be between six to nine months. Several coaches felt that a more holistic and systemic coaching process is necessary for coaching to be successful, and this flexibility needs to be built into the contracting stage.

Context and Need Identification

Few organisations have a sophisticated framework for leadership identification and development. For others, the need for coaching arises from an (IDP/PDP) Appraisal process or discussions from a talent board. Coaching is handpicked for several reasons, including helping new employees integrate, supporting role transitions (geography/role switch/size), supporting newness to an SBU, and an emotional connection with a new team.

Executive Coaching (EC) is primarily for supporting building personal growth and transformation, which will enable performance and attitude change. Clients are invited voluntarily

to a coaching Intervention, including deciding on a preferred coach based on the 'chemistry calls' offered to her/him. EC was mostly offered to a senior cohort of leaders, given budget constraints and often bandwidth issues of the reporting managers.

Interestingly, while the phrase 'performance improvement or personal effectiveness' is used, it simply denotes remedial actions (like a communication style) of a gap or expectation. It is only in the coaching process that the gap becomes a vision or aspiration for the client. One coach observed that KPI is a clear priority in most discussions, and behaviour is relegated to second place. In some cases, it seems like the sponsor is saying, "*get this fixed, even if that means a behaviour needs to be worked with, do whatever is needed*". A coach affirmed that performance improvement is a by-product, which should be clearly stated in the contracting stage.

A sponsor shared an example of a senior leader who was sent for coaching as he demonstrated dysfunctional behaviour, such as screaming at people in the office corridor, humiliating them and not empowering them enough. Another sponsor commented that individuals, no matter how senior, who displayed such behaviour, would not even be considered for executive coaching. I was fascinated by these examples of alignment with the business. In one organisation, multiple strategic growth projects were identified that required acceleration, and in which a coach supported the business leader to help in the thinking process and personal growth.

Coach Selection

Today, there are many coaches available, both experienced and qualified. Sponsors use two criteria: coaches known to them or coaches familiar with their context and the references they receive from those they trust. Experienced coaches are valued as they know what questions to ask. A coach maintains that credibility is one reason why he gets what he has to offer through his own life experiences.

Some argue that empathy alone is not coaching, but all coaches need to be empathetic. The fitment of the coach and client is critical, and 'chemistry meetings' play an important part. An external coach is considered significantly better than an internal coach.

In my view, all leaders must have a rich repertoire of skills- be directive at times, create affiliation, support vision, set pace, and adopt a democratic approach and a coach-like style. These are part of the essential golf kit of a leader. However, as a coach, there are some inherent challenges when leaders act as coaches: they earn respect but not trust as they exercise judgment and are a part of the same family, even though they may be credible. Apart from that, they may not have the time. They would be more effective as mentors. Although this may seem vested, an External Coach can add immense value because he has the experience and the skills and can guarantee confidentiality.

What You Brief, So Shall Coach Deliver

In IT parlance, "*garbage in, garbage out*". The familiar proverb, *"what you sow, so shall reap"*. In the coaching world, what the sponsor briefs become the context and the intent for what content the coach should work with the client.

The practice of briefing style and seriousness varies. Often the organisation has a set of behavioural competencies against which gaps are identified, and the coach is briefed on that basis. In most cases, the HR briefs the coach, one on one. In some cases, a two-way meeting, with the direct manager briefing the coach; more often, there are three-way meetings where development needs are discussed. Some coaches use these briefings to ask pointed questions about areas of development or what behaviours are expected to change. Still, otherwise, it is quite informal and flexible as a process. Some coaches have used this opportunity to explain the coaching process and set realistic expectations. The issue of confidentiality is also covered. Only one sponsor felt they should trust the client, empower him to where he wishes to go on the journey and support him rather than build a tight governance process and structure around it.

While management jargon like performance improvement or effectiveness is being bandied about, there is recognition that coaching is not a skill-building process and that an individual one-on-one provides opportunities for self-introspection and gaining added perspectives and personal insights. Coaching is fundamentally focused on relational issues, improved communication, and supporting the need for delegation. In other words, EC works around behavioural issues and less skill building.

A coach argued that sponsors are very demanding (sometimes to the point of being ridiculous) and quite often have unrealistic expectations. However, sponsors who have had the experience of Executive Coaching (being coached themselves) were seen to be more receptive to the process and have more realistic expectations. Coaches do not have a magic wand. Some sponsors shared that they were open to receiving feedback on the larger organisation if provided by the coach. For instance, one sponsor shared that feedback was received and that new employees in roles were stressed as too much pressure was placed on them for early performance. Basis this feedback, the organisations moderated their expectations from the new employees, both to organisation and role, and became more patient.

When Does Coaching Succeed? What helps?

Most sponsors felt that there was success in two out of five cases. The range of success is seen to stretch from forty per cent to eighty per cent of coaching interventions. Even when it has been unsuccessful, sponsors felt that coaching allowed clients to reflect and introspect. It was also observed that an unintended consequence is that a client may leave the organisation, post a coaching intervention with a different career purpose. My views on measuring coaching effectiveness include feedback from the client, and other critical stakeholders, which can be viewed from 360 feedback, net promoter scores or skip-level meetings.

What Improves Coaching?

1. The client will benefit if she/he is willing to be coached.

2. When the client can reflect from an inner core when she/he is aware of both her/his strengths and opportunities and when there is stakeholder alignment and support.

3. When coaching outcomes are sought at the beginning and when realistic expectations are set and clarified at the very outset.

4. When there is strong trust and bonding between the coach and the client.

5. When there is a more holistic approach to coaching which includes working with the client, the context, and alignment with critical stakeholders.

6. Sponsors with prior experiences are receptive to coaching, especially if the direct manager himself has undergone coaching.

7. Where the behaviour demonstrated can be measured before and post-coaching.

What is Usually not Helpful?

In situations where the client is very senior in the hierarchy, there is a lesser incentive to change. Also, where the client is an alpha male, there is less likelihood of coaching succeeding when there is a lack of transparency. (In one example, there was a comment about the integrity of the client that HR introduced, but this was not brought up during the three-way coaching meetings. At the end of the coaching intervention, HR queried and felt that the 'integrity' issue

might not have been resolved). It does not seem to work where the role holder is in a highly matrixed organisation.

In my view, leaders today respond very well to external coaches. It signals that they are valued (a few years back, it would have been seen as 'something broken to be fixed'). They recognise that the organisation is investing in them to go from 'good to great' and know that this intervention is expensive and time-consuming and that results will take time.

What is the Usual Wish List of Changes?

By the Sponsor:

1. The coaching framework seems to rely heavily on the western framework of "*asking rather than telling*". Can we have an Indian framework which would make more sense?

2. Focusing on insight and strengths and weaknesses is not enough. There must be a linkage between the business performance and the pathway to be visible.

3. Allow the whole journey. Give it time and not short-circuit halfway through by sabotaging it between and letting the forming, storming, norming, and performing. Go through the entire process.

By the Coach:

1. Seek supervision from professional supervisors or peers.

2. There are better ways of selection than the current 'chemistry meeting.'

3. A contract that allows for multi-stakeholders' involvement, with several reviews included, even reviews post six months of intervention.

4. Bespoke the clients' needs – not follow a tight standard.

5. Avoid commoditisation of coaching and reduce coaching rates.

6. Unrealistic expectations of visible changes in a few sessions.

7. Many clients persist in asking the question, "tell me", rather than exploring/reflecting.

8. A short-term intervention and a longer-term perspective need to be looked at in terms of the overall development of the individual.

9. Fewer organisations have looked to create a "Coaching Leadership Culture" as a larger platform.

Coaching the Indian Boss

Indian bosses have deep cultural coding, and the programming leads to cultural cloning. They are mostly cognitive and with an intellectual bent of mind. They tend to act mostly under pressure to avoid losing face or when team members threaten or leave the team. Indian leaders love to coach and wish to be stars, but they argue that it works well at home but not so much at the workplace as there are constraints by way of workplace culture. The coach works with the client on stakeholder analysis, mapping, and how to interact/influence the stakeholder to ensure she/he can be more effective in the workplace. Advice to the Indian coach would be to respect the culture and context.

Despite modern education and exposure, most organisations struggle with equality of treatment and opportunities for women. At the Indian workplace, the notion of family, community, duty, obligations, and responsibilities are pronounced. A coach argued about the significant upsides of patriarchy, which need to be recognised as part of our cultural inheritance as also the notion of contentment.

What I argued in my book still seems very relevant, "...*that the crux of the Indian leader's effectiveness lies with his ability to co-hold these tensions. There is a personal and*

organisational waste when he fails to do so. There are "culture codes", and multiple 'tensions' between the inner being and the social being, the primal self and the socialised self, the traditional ideas versus the modern, and success lie in integrating this successfully and in being able to manage the tensions ever unfolding, between Self and System."

About the Author:

Steve Correa is an Executive Coach and OD Consultant who has over three decades of corporate experience. He is the author of "*The Indian Boss at Work: Thinking Global Acting Indian",* published by Sage Publishers. He can be reached at www.linkedin.com/in/stevecorrea

Clutterbuck, David Prof.

Coaching and Mentoring: How Did We Get Here, and Where Are We Going?

Today, it is hard to imagine a world without executive coaches. Yet in the early 1980s, the idea of coaching as a profession existed only in sports – and then it was a highly directive form of instruction. Indeed, the history of coaching only goes back to the mid-nineteenth century, when fierce debate raged as to whether it was sportsmanlike to have a coach because it gave the client an unfair advantage! Tennis coach Timothy Gallwey, in 1974, introduced a different approach based on helping people work things out themselves rather than be told. But it didn't catch on in business until more than twenty years later.

What did exist in the business world was mentoring. Indeed, the first leadership book in the Western world (if you discount Machiavelli's, The Prince) was a book of mentoring dialogues written by Fenelon, a cleric at the court of the French King Louis XIV. The tradition of mentoring goes back three thousand years to the epic Greek poems, The Iliad and The Odyssey, where Athena, the goddess of wisdom, appeared to her favourite, Odysseus, to help him learn from his escapades. She used her wisdom to help him develop the wisdom of his own, asking penetrating questions that made him reflect, become more self-aware, and truer to his values.

The first professional body set up in this field was the European Mentoring Centre, the forerunner of today's European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC). Created at the start of a thirty-year collaboration and deep friendship between David Megginson and me, the EMC aimed to bring together practitioners, academics, and corporates to develop and spread good practice. Core principles that remain today were inclusion, diversity of practice and culture, along with an emphasis on evidence-based practice supported by research. Annual conferences, a library, and research reports helped to spread good practice.

As more and more people began to call themselves professional coaches, they increasingly ran into a problem. In Europe, most of what they offered was offered by mentors, but for free. Some classic blunders by North American academics gave them an out. Two helping roles we now know to be incompatible - mentoring and sponsorship – were conflated into one. Ah, said the coaches, ignoring all the evidence to the contrary – coaching is non-directive, but mentoring is directive.

And that's where the EMC / EMCC principle of inclusion came to the rescue. "*If you think you are doing much the same as what we think we are doing, come and join us.*" Prominent practitioners and educators from the UK – in particular, Sir John Whitmore, Eric Parsloe, and Julie Hay – worked together to turn EMC into a body representing both- the professional and vocational aspects of these two closely aligned disciplines. The EMCC has pioneered accreditation and standards for coaching and mentoring; the code of conduct is now adopted by all other major bodies in the field except the ICF, which has its role of supervision and many other innovations.

Its initial focus was Europe, but it is increasingly represented worldwide. One of the reasons it is expanding so fast is the reaction in many countries against the monoculture of coaching originating from North America. Every ancient culture has traditions similar to coaching and mentoring – these are not disciplines just invented! It can be argued that coaching, in particular, has become a form of well-intentioned colonialism – imposing the principles and values of one culture over others.

Another factor has been the need expressed by serious coaches for academic rigour. A colleague's analysis of a cross-section of accredited coaching courses indicates that a significant proportion is either based upon or incorporates elements of pseudo-science. The concept of practitioner-academic partnerships, which I have long championed, is one way to both ensure evidence-based practice and, at the same time, make academic research useful in the field. (*I frequently referee coaching papers for journals and observe that a high proportion of papers by academics alone fail the "So what" test!).*

A third factor is that coach maturity studies show conclusively that the more coaches grow in capability and confidence, the more like mentors they become. They use far more of their own experience and intuition to build empathy with the client, craft more insightful questions, and, they can draw upon narrative, parable and story. They have a large store of tools, techniques and processes, but the more mature they become, the less they use them. Rather than do coaching, they hold the client while the client has the conversation they need to have with themselves.

The similarities between coaches and mentors are much greater than the differences. And some of the claimed differences turn out to be nonsense -- for example, mentors give advice, and coaches don't. For a start, it is unethical for a coach to withhold guidance that might prevent someone from doing something dangerous or illegal. What mentors do frequently is give context --- useful information that helps the client with the quality of their thinking. They do so more often than "pure" coaches because they have relevant experience to draw upon. Giving context is very different from giving advice, which is doing the thinking for someone.

Coaching and mentoring are both about helping someone achieve clarity in two dimensions. The first is their internal world – their values, hopes and fears, strengths and weaknesses. The second is the external world – what is happening around them. The coaching or mentoring conversation links these two dimensions allowing for better decision-making, greater confidence in doing the right thing, and stronger intrinsic motivation.

Many coaches speak of the freedom from guilt when they realise that adopting a mentoring style is not just compatible with being a good coach but is an essential part of "growing up" as a coach.

A fourth factor is the emphasis that EMCC places on supervision and reflective practice. For a professional coach today, not having professional supervision borders on the unethical. The complexity of the issues our clients and we face requires us to re-examine our practice constantly. Supervision is very different from mentor coaching. Accredited supervisors are not

just experienced coaches; they have also undertaken extensive education in various disciplines that allow them to provide multiple perspectives on cases and issues.

A Look to the Future

This need for constant re-evaluation of our practice as coaches is reinforced by the swift evolution of the world in which we practise. Among the currents sweeping through our world are

1. The increasing ability of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to do the basics of coaching better than humans. The main defence we have against this is by leaving behind formulaic processes and models, such as GROW and relying increasingly on our wisdom and our ability to work with free-flowing conversation. (More echoes of mentoring!).

2. The shift from 1-2-1 coaching to team coaching. A survey we conducted two years ago found that 80% of CEOs and HRDs believed that more emphasis should be placed on team development and reward and less on individuals' development and reward. As tens of thousands of new coaches qualify each year, becoming a competent team coach is one way of maintaining a market differential. And beyond team coaching lies coaching teams of teams.

3. The shift from external coaches to internal coaches. Contrary to what many coaches choose to believe, there is not a major competence gap between internals and externals. Moreover, internals often have better supervision and are more aware of the culture in which they are working. We are seeing more and more partnerships between internal and external coaches – I hope this trend will grow!

4. An increasing level of questioning about the social purpose of coaching. If coaching is mainly about helping people, who are already privileged, to advance their careers, then it reinforces inequity and poverty. As coaches, we have one of the most powerful gifts for bringing about positive change in society – so how do we focus it where it is needed most rather than where it is most lucrative?

There are major challenges here for coaching practice, professional bodies, and coach educators. If we face up to them and embrace them, it will add great value to what we do.

About the Author:

Professor David Clutterbuck is one of the original pioneers of coaching and mentoring. Co-founder of the EMCC, he marked his 75th birthday in 2022 by writing his 75th book – a retrospective look at the development of the fields of coaching, mentoring, and leadership over more than four decades. He can be reached at www.linkedin.com/in/prof-david-clutterbuck

Dayse, Dreyvan.

Listening Curiously - An Ontological Inquiry

> "The ability to observe without evaluating is
> the highest form of intelligence."
>
> –JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI, INDIAN PHILOSOPHER, SPEAKER, AND WRITER

Humans, by default, possess a mind and an ego. Evaluating, therefore, is part and parcel of the human construct. When we hear something, we have the habit of immediately forming conclusions without any real consideration. That is why it is difficult to learn something new. Truer as we get older, as our minds and egos become more rigid. Hence, the need for our highest form of intelligence to go past the mind and the ego and not evaluate as we observe. People, after a certain age, generally find it difficult to learn new skills and absorb unfamiliar bodies of information. We are all curious, but we try out our curiosity only to the point that it does not challenge our ability to understand new information.

> "I think, therefore I am."
>
> –RENÉ DESCARTES, FRENCH PHILOSOPHER, MATHEMATICIAN, AND SCIENTIST.

The general population of humans also operates out of an understanding that our minds are our greatest tool. We are who we are because we can think. Notice the underlying ego that can be felt in this quote which highlights the pride that humans feel. Clearly, our ability to think makes us feel superior, even invincible.

This makes us believe that equipped with a mind, an ability to think (which we mistake for intelligence, and which, at best, is mostly undistinguished unconscious chatter), and with the right attitude, curiosity, determination, patience, and perseverance, every idea, concept, information, and knowledge out there can be conquered, absorbed, and owned. Interestingly, we do so by taking a new idea or concept and breaking it down, referencing it, twisting it, tweaking it, chunking it, and fitting it into an older structure or framework that we already know or possess. After all attempts at forcing it into our already existing frameworks of knowledge, we extrapolate a new meaning out of it. We get excited when it all fits, and we have created a new layer to our already existing body of knowledge. We then declare the information or the concept valid. We pat our backs and admire ourselves for our "curious minds".

"Curiosity is always the concealed arrogance of a self-consciousness that banks on a self-invented rationality."

-MARTIN HEIDEGGER, GERMAN PHILOSOPHER, EXPONENT OF PHENOMENOLOGY, EXISTENTIALISM, AND AUTHOR OF BEING & TIME.

Over many millennia we have become a culture that believes that we are the smartest species in the world. Our progress as the most dominant intelligent species backed by our endless and relentless curiosity makes us assume that we are born in such a way that "anything valid", anything worth knowing, we will understand. Everything is comprehensible. Not

surprisingly, if it does not fit into our previously existing constructs after numerous attempts and if we continue to "not" understand the idea or the concept, we conclude, "it must be invalid". This is what Heidegger means by self-invented rationality.

Most human beings fail to notice that our curiosity is often limited by how much sense we can make of a subject. When we hear something new which we cannot understand or make any sense of, we not only easily conclude that it is invalid, but most often, our reaction is to get offended by it. (e.g., try and recollect when you may have taken an exciting new idea to your manager or boss, or suggested a breakthrough strategy in a board meeting or even to your family and friends, only to subsequently experience a condescending dismissal of the proposal, along with being made to feel like you do not know what you are talking about. Notice that they could not understand or appreciate the possibility despite being curious. Not comprehending the idea makes them feel challenged and even subconsciously intellectually inferior. That challenge to their egos is the source of the dismissive/offensive behaviour).

That is how curiosity exists in most discussions and most spaces.

We trash new ideas, information and knowledge that do not fit into our existing worldview; we dismiss them; after all, we are creatures that are capable of understanding everything out there, are we not? Notice the underlying concealed arrogance we operate out of, as brought out by Heidegger's quote. That is our mind speaking, our ego in action. This is a pattern that plays out repeatedly. It happens with us and with others around us, but we fail to notice it. We all are wired to work against something or someone when we do not understand it or them. Our arrogance and our ego invalidate it or them. The extent to which one can feel offended and what that can lead us to do is well known in the all-too-famous story of Galileo.

Galileo hypothesised that the Earth was round and revolved around the sun, a view that became controversial and was considered blasphemous by the Roman Catholic Church, as it explicitly contradicted the Holy Scriptures. Galileo was subsequently tried by the Roman Inquisition and made to recant his views, and placed under house arrest for the rest of his life. Indeed, our old ways of perception are so deeply rooted that we do not see ourselves dismissing every new piece of information that challenges us.

The path to freedom from this unconscious embeddedness is to practice "Choiceless awareness", i.e., observing what is so and allowing it the space to unfold as it will. We simply listen and listen simply, which though uncomplicated, is not easy.

As coaches, we do away with the need to agree or disagree; we let the words pass through us without mental interpretations or conclusions. We let it be the way it is, not tweak it or change it, not fix it or categorise it, nor relate it to something similar. We stay with that information exactly the way it is, unadulterated, undiluted, unchanged, unmorphed, just pure, plain, and original. We free ourselves from the need to think and interpret everything we hear, judge its applicability and act upon the information instantly. This is where our awareness of the "thought mechanism" comes in. When we go through a coach training course, we quickly learn that being present equals discarding the thought mechanism that is constantly at play and allows for silent listening. That is one of the key competencies we need to accomplish. Another key competency would be to be curious about the "who and what" of the client. But how is one supposed to be curious whilst shutting down the "thought mechanism?"

Information versus Inquiry

One of the ways to explore a concept is to start with the definition and gather all the information around it. See examples of how the word, idea, or concept is used and how it can be applied. This would typically be an epistemological approach that is based on getting informed. E.g., 'curiosity', from the oxford dictionary:

This approach helps us get definitions, descriptions and other relevant information about the word or concept we are interested in. We understand the concept as best as we can. We equip ourselves with the knowledge and the sense of it and then apply it to a situation. So as a coach, when we engage, we equate curiosity to asking more questions, finding out more, exploring all angles, and thinking outside the box. We equate curiosity with "know more", "understand better", and "get a clearer picture" to learn more about the "who and what" of the client.

Notice that the faculty that leads the process is the intellect, our minds. Our thinking minds are not separate from our egos because intrinsically, we are ruled by the construct that I am because I think. When a coach is trying to be curious, the coach is essentially surfacing and collecting more information. But information is not equal to experience. One cannot learn how to cycle or cook or swim by gathering information from a book or an expert. One cannot use such information and think their way through to experience. Experience is not just an intellectual process. The intellect often comes in the way of and spoils a pure experience.

This is the limitation when we approach a subject epistemologically. E.g., through its definition, we do not get access to the phenomenon that is present where curiosity is present.

We are also oblivious to the energy present underneath the act of getting curious. We do not grasp how arrogance might be concealed inside of curiosity, as discussed at the beginning of this article. A coach who learns and goes through the coach training journey adopting the epistemological approach will likely struggle to figure out the right questions to ask during their session after some time. Any response by the client that does not fit into the framework of the coach's understanding will be rejected by the coach due to this underlying concealed unconscious arrogance.

How do we then overcome this? "*How can one acquire curious presence or curious listening?*"

Acquiring "Curious Listening" as an Unconscious Competence

The way to gain access to "listening curiously" as an unconscious competence is to approach the matter with an ontological inquiry. An ontological inquiry is a phenomenological approach that essentially is the quest for what is present when curiosity is present. Not starting by asking what curiosity is, as a definition, description, narrative, example, etc., but by initiating inquiries on the following lines:

1. When curiosity is experienced by me or others, then what is present?

2. What is the being of a truly curious person?

3. How is curiosity different from wanting to know more?

4. Where does curious listening truly lead one to?

5. What energy needs to be present for authentic curiosity to manifest?

6. At what point does a person stop being curious?

A seeker who partakes in such an inquiry is not left with a definition or a description but a connection with curiosity. By the end of the inquiry, the seeker would have established a way to embody the "energies", "presence", and the "being" of how true authentic curiosity can show up in the world. This approach is a game-changer when trying to learn any skill - balancing a cycle, cooking or even coaching. The entire family of micro-skills that come into play in coaching, right from curiosity to listening, presence, unconditionality, empathy, compassion, evoking awareness, partnering, inquiring, exploring, acknowledging, supporting, and positive regard for the client, etc., must be explored phenomenologically and not epistemologically to achieve mastery. One can equip oneself with all these definitions and a thorough understanding of all these concepts, but that will still not give one the ability to show up with coaching as an innate, unconscious competence.

At best, all the information of the frameworks, competencies, markers, tools, and question banks can help a person acquire the coaching skills as someone who is operating at a level of conscious competence and, that too when backed with a considerable amount of coach practice hours. That would enable a coach to achieve mastery in coaching in the realm of "doing".

Challenges to Listening Curiously

As we can establish by now that the fundamental idea or construct that most of us as humans operate from is – "*I think, therefore I am*". Most coaches who unwittingly operate through the construct that '*I am because I think*' most often mistake our love and passion to engage with a client and their world essentially as an opportunity for us to understand them and help them resolve their situation. We manifest in that space as thinking partners. Many coaches find comfort in introducing themselves to their clients as thinking partners.

Thinking is in the realm of "doing". When thinking becomes the primary energy whilst engaging with our clients- then we are thinking to ask, to act upon, to do, to make happen, to provide, to help, and to take responsibility. This "doing" often, when not distinguished, negates our "being", the ability to just be. To just be is not to do, to not make happen, not to provide, not

to help, not to take responsibility, but to be there totally, wholly, and completely. This is what "listening curiously" in an authentic coaching process is all about. The question that most coaches struggle with is – "*What then is my value as a coach?*"

Being Heard

The above question has been addressed most aptly by Carl Rogers when he describes what "being heard" means in his groundbreaking book, *"On Becoming A Person":* "*When someone hears you without passing a judgement on you, without trying to take responsibility for you, without trying to mould you, it feels damn good …. when I have been listened to, and when I have been heard, I am able to re-perceive my world in a new way and to go on. It is astonishing how elements which seem insoluble become soluble when someone listens. How confusions which seem irremediable turn to be relatively clear flowing streams when one is heard.*"

Listening curiously is a way to listen so that it leaves the other person feeling that they have been heard. It leaves the client feeling whole and complete. In coaching, clients truly do not need the contribution of our thinking minds; they do not need the 'I *am*' aspect of the coach either. One can truly be present only by being truly absent. What is absent is one's self-image, thoughts, emotions, feelings, state of mind, biases, opinions, prejudices, worldviews, educational qualifications, experiences, careers, accomplishments, erudition and more -everything in the realm of "I am".

What is present is one's presence, one's curious listening, one's energy, one's being. For a client to walk away having experienced "being heard" is priceless. It is infinitely more valuable to them than walking away with a solution or idea or a possibility that has been provided by the thinking mind of a coach. Going back to the first quote at the top of this article and borrowing the essence of it, one can also interpret and conclude, "*The ability as a coach to observe and listen curiously without evaluating, without feeling the need to change anything and allowing for everything about the client to stay exactly like the way they express it, is the highest form of presence and service to a client.*"

Findings From an Ontological Inquiry Around "Listening Curiously"

If one were to take on a rigorous quest to connect with what exists where 'listening curiously' exists, what are the underlying energies, notions, and assumptions that are present when curiosity is present, one may arrive at some of the following realisations:

1. What commonly exists when people are curious is a "hunger" for answers.

2. The need to solve and resolve something is often mistaken for curiosity.

3. Most people engage with their curious energy to *"understand."*

4. At some point, curious energy can lead one to a place of intellectual discomfort.

5. For most people beyond that point, the quest for answers and possibilities makes them subconsciously feel incapable and unsmart, so most will reject any further curious exploration down that path.

6. We are usually curious as it leads to excitement.

7. Excitement is food for our minds and hence for our egos (**I** *think, therefore, I am)*.

8. If we continue to feel excited, we continue to be curious.

9. When the excitement stops, any further curiosity exposes one's incapacities in terms of the ability to intellectualise or understand.

10. Most people get defensive at this point. One can even express that by taking offence, being dismissive, etc. For most people, curiosity exists as a limited opening, and they are trying to fill it.

11. Curiosity does not exist for most people as an infinite opening to another world of possibilities.

These are points that emerged for me through my short ontological inquiry for this article as hindrances to authentic curiosity. It is an incomplete inquiry, mainly serving as an example. It is listed randomly and with multiple overlaps. One may or may disagree with them, and that is okay. I invite seekers to engage in their ontological inquiry on this subject and arrive at their findings.

Application of the Ontological Inquiry on '*Listening Curiously*' Whilst Coaching

When one approaches a topic from a phenomenological approach, we get to see, feel, and sense the energy and the underlying phenomenon underneath the subject. We get to experience the container that holds that energy. We establish a real connection. Not just an intellectual one but more like an embodiment of all the little nuances that come together and collectively bring energy and give life to that subject, idea or concept. That is an ontological inquiry - a pathway to a true, deep, authentic connection, and not just a superficial understanding that mostly satisfies the intellect.

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Dreyvan Dayse is a veteran with twenty-two years of enabling teams in the armed forces and eight years of enabling business teams and business leaders. Dreyvan has the unique experience of holding leadership positions both in the military and in the business world. He has been a coach trainer to many seekers of the ontological pathway to becoming a coach over the past three years. Find him on LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/dreyvandayse

Devarajan, Harish.

Coaching: The New Generation Human Resource Competency

Background

The Human Resources (HR) function started as a welfare custodian in a highly exploitative industrial environment. Then its mandate shifted to being an administrative and regulatory authority inside the organisation. In the last few decades of the previous century (the 1980s onwards), the focus shifted to the development of the employees and aligning their interests with that of the organisation. In the new millennium, the world of business and organisation were all digitally impacted, and the Human Resources function was no exception. Automation, Digitization, and Artificial Intelligence have substantially impacted the metamorphosis of the HR Function.

In a recent publication – "*HR Here and Now*", co-authored by Ganesh Chella, VJ Rao, and me - we have explored in detail the cross-roads that the Human Resources function has had to navigate through and the pivots the Human Resources Professional is triggered to make. The success and failure stories of the Human Resource practice are almost equal. HR Professionals typically choose or operate from three paradigms: thinking, feeling, and doing. Apart from the context in which the Organization operates, and the expectations of the various stakeholders, the competence and capability of the HR Professional play an essential part in how the story unfolds.

The HR Professional

The nature of the challenge and opportunity available has contributed to attracting different types of people to the arena. There has been no prescribed route to becoming an HR

professional for many years. There is evidence of people from multi-various backgrounds and experiences who have made their mark in the HR Profession.

It is only in the last fifty years that Management Schools have sensed the need and therefore created an education stream for potential HR managers, which, however, has been woefully insufficient to cater to the emerging needs - both in quantity and quality. The following competencies have emerged as key *to* a successful HR professional:

1. Knowledge of human psychology, economics, business management, regulatory frameworks, and a social context is vital.
2. Communication, interpersonal relationships, influencing, team building, and facilitation skills.
3. Attitude awareness focuses on individuals, community consciousness, authenticity, sustainability, and systems orientation.

Looking at the above list, one will notice that some of them have been in the lexicon of HR professionals for a long time, while some have become more prominent recently.

Emerging Organisational Context

Over the last few years, there has been an increasing awareness and acceptance of the importance of people orientation in Organizations and amongst leaders. What was earlier assumed to be the HR Professional's sole responsibility is now seen as a critical leadership capability. Enlightened Organizations have always believed that this leadership role must be embraced by senior leaders and line managers across the organisation at multiple levels. It is heartening to see that this is being recognised and adopted by many organisations, even though the realisation has been triggered by recent events like the pandemic and disturbing trends of great resignation, quiet quitting and moonlighting.

The HR professional is primarily responsible for designing and implementing the Organization's strategy for attracting, motivating, nurturing, and developing the requisite people, leaders, and teams in sync with the organisation's mission and values. However, the HR

professional can never succeed if he/she attempts to do this alone. The people strategy has to be aligned with the Organizational vision and co-created with other business leaders. The implementation of the HR strategy has to be a shared responsibility, shouldered and steered by many People Champions across multiple levels in the organisation.

The successful achievement of any organisation's vision depends on developing a competitive strategy and the excellent execution of the same. This requires competent and committed people to strategise, lead, review, re-orient, and deliver across the organisation canvas. The new Gen employee phenomenon is a critical component impacting today's Organizational context. Progressively, the attitude and character of the workforce have been changing with time. Baby boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z have all demonstrated significant shifts and changes in their aspirations, capabilities, social orientations, and world view.

With the advent of automation, the internet and Artificial Intelligence, the reliance on HR to handle routine and repetitive tasks has been reduced. The aspirations of the new generation of employees have also changed to seeking greater variety in their tasks, more meaning to their pursuits and a balance in their lives.

The frenetic pace of innovation, easy access to knowledge and the collapsing of geographic barriers are leading to a re-orientation of what needs to be taught in schools, how people wish to work and what defines success. In light of this current reality, the competency framework of the HR professional and the skill set of People Champions across the organisation certainly needs an overhaul and an upgrade.

Implications to HR

The role expectations of HR will soon change due to tectonic shifts in the context, as outlined above. The orientation of the HR function is moving away from the hard transactional aspects to the more transformational elements.

The erstwhile dominant roles in Recruitment, Performance Management, L&D, Rewards & Benefits and employee-related administrative services will soon be removed from the charter

of the Human Resources function. The future focus will shift towards the Organization Design, Organization Culture, and Organization Transformation apart from the core responsibility of ensuring the nourishment of people, leaders and teams.

Coaching: A More Recent Intervention

In the last twenty years, Executive Coaching has made its presence felt in Human Resource Development (HRD). While the practice of coaching has been there for many decades, in the recent past, it has become more popular with its adoption and adaptation to different aspects of life and organisations. The Human Resource Professionals vested with the primary responsibility of strategising for and implementing the People agenda of the organisation have started to take note of this new human intervention practice. Coaching is a soft touch development process, which recognises the potential of the individual, respects their choices, reinforces their commitment, and reorients their energy towards their desired state of being.

Performance Enhancement, Leadership Effectiveness and Organization Culture are key strategic levers which have an impact on all aspects of the business. Coaching is making inroads as a highly useful intervention to impact all the above levers positively. With the new expectation and focus from the HR function and the HR professional, it is not surprising that they are showing interest in coaching, for it seems to have significant relevance to their emerging context and imperative.

The HR competency framework is certainly getting overhauled, and certain capabilities, which significantly overlap with coaching skills, are being adopted. Similarly, the leadership competency frameworks are also being updated with a significant addition of skills associated with coaching.

New Age Competencies for the HR Professionals and People Champions

There will be a host of capabilities added to the framework of HR competencies, like digital capability, data analysis, critical problem solving, systemic thinking etc. However, they will not

be as key as the coaching skill set, given the fundamental shift in the expectation from the HR Professional – nurture and nourish people, leaders and teams within the organisation. In that vein, the following are some of the coaching skills which have significant relevance for the HR professional and the People Champions:

1. Active Listening

One of the elementary competencies is to be a good conversationalist. This has two elements to it - speaking and listening. Most people focus on the speaking part and ignore the latter. The quality of the conversation becomes better when both can share their perspectives. This means that there's a good balance between speaking and listening. To be an effective HR professional / People Champion, one needs to feel comfortable listening as much as talking. In the new age, with time being a scarce commodity, people yearn for a conversation with someone willing to patiently listen without getting distracted or restless.

Active listening goes beyond hearing the words. It is also about sensing the feelings behind the words. This ability to discern feelings is an exceptional skill that develops with much practice.

2. Appreciative Enquiry

Another valuable skill is making the other person feel comfortable and valued. This is a fundamental step to creating and building a trusting relationship. This is about demonstrating a sincere interest in the other person's life, experiences and accomplishments. The genuine demonstration of this competency will automatically create regard and respect for the other. This then helps the conversation to move into uncomfortable and hitherto unexplored areas with a certain degree of trust.

3. Mutual Respect

The core philosophy of interdependent relationships is equity amongst those involved. There is no permanent hierarchy or superiority in status. The creation of mutual respect and

regard for each other's status is the foundation for developing a healthy relationship of mutual benefit. Even though, at times, one person may derive more benefit than the other, the mutual respect generated makes it comfortable to engage without any feeling of obligation or guilt. Both feel equally committed to the relationship and respect the contribution the other could potentially make in the various activities they engage in.

4. Encouragement

In the context of attempting new behaviour or change in our approach, fear of failure is the most common emotion. The more seasoned or experienced the person is, the more reluctance to experiment with new behaviour is even more prominent. The support of a colleague is of great value. However, it is often noticed that this support is not solicited openly. Hence, encouragement and the extension of unsolicited support is a highly impactful gesture or offering to people in the throes of change or development without any judgment attached.

5. Mirroring

The skill of bringing the attention of a person to their behaviour or action is called "mirroring". Effective feedback is another term that refers to this key and highly useful skill in the context of performance enhancement and development. The impact of this skill lies in how one can do it with authenticity and sensitivity. Its effectiveness is definitely dependent on the level of trust and openness that exists between the two.

6. Empathetic Challenging

Real development and improvement happen with a certain degree of challenge and stretch. This is often the missing link in many developmental journeys and engagements. Especially with individuals who have achieved a significant degree of success or with leaders in senior positions, the individuals around them are hesitant to give honest feedback, struggling to express expectations that require a change in attitude or behaviour from the leader. Even with junior people or with peers, the manner of challenging them needs to be with a supportive and understanding slant lest their acceptance of the challenge be lost, and the response will be one

of rejection or denial. This mixture of empathy and challenge is a powerful concoction that results in a significant shift in commitment, leading to enhanced performance/improvement.

Conclusion

The HR Professional and the People Champion of the future will most certainly have to be adept in engaging in an impactful fashion with people in the organisation, be it as a colleague, internal consultant, HR partner, line manager, mentor or coach. The new-age HR competencies elaborated on in this article are not exhaustive but indicative. Most of them are part of the coaching skills framework. Coaching is one of the critical competencies for tomorrow's HR Professionals / People Champions.

About the Author:

Harish Devarajan is a Leadership Coach, Organisation Transformation Consultant, Co-author of the best-seller book "HR Here and Now", former CHRO of Hindustan Unilever, and Mentor to several Social Sector Organisations. He founded and manages his coaching and consulting firm People Unlimited**.** To know more, check out **www.peopleunlimited.in,** or you can find him at www.linkedin.com/in/harish-devarajan-5940165

Deshpande, Prasad.

How to Add Another Dimension to Your Coaching Using Whole Brain Thinking

Our brains are unique and different. These biological differences combine with our lived experiences to shape how we think, feel, and respond to changes. Nature and Nurture are equally important. Differences in our brains shape how we perceive the world and the behavioural decisions that we make. Whole Brain Thinking (WBT**)** encourages us to pay attention to these differences. Understanding these differences results in contradictions the client may need to be aware of. The coach has an opportunity to ask powerful questions that evoke awareness.

WBT makes us aware of how mindset influences behaviour and, more specifically, how we view the world through the lens of our thinking. WBT trains us to pay more attention to how our client thinks and how we may need to adapt to connect with her/him. This reflects in our being more present with the client. This insight into how individuals and teams think and the ability to "tune in" enables me to be more direct and get to the real issues faster to partner and co-create relationships with my clients and teams with less effort.

The Whole Brain Thinking Model
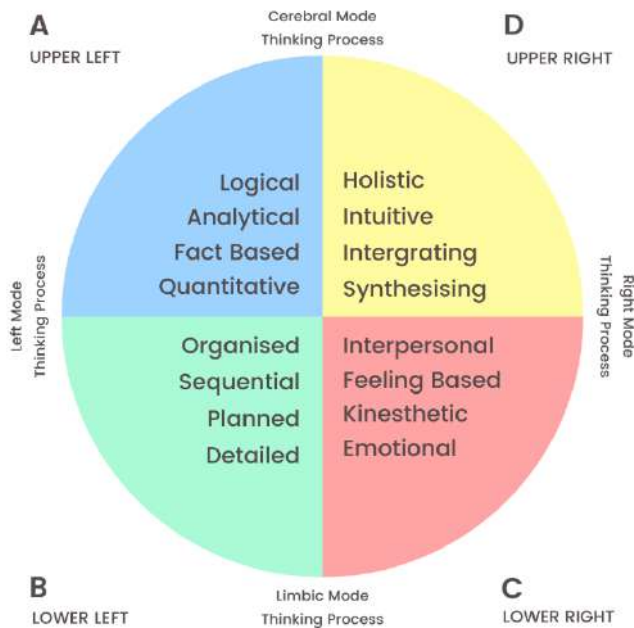
Ned Herrmann combined Sperry's work and Maclean's research (renowned Nobel Prize-winning scientists) to create his Whole Brain Model. This model emphasises dominance in four parts of the brain: Cerebral left, Limbic Left, Limbic Right, and Cerebral Right. These four styles or "mindsets" are quadrants A, B, C, and D. The WBT model identifies four primary thinking styles, each associated with a specific area of the brain:

A. **Analytical thinking**, which is associated with the brain's left hemisphere (A and B quadrants), is focused on logical analysis, reason, and objectivity. People relying on this thinking style are often detail-oriented, logical, and analytical.

B. **Structural thinking** is focused on organisation, structure, and stability. People who rely on this thinking style are often orderly, systematic, and detail-oriented.

C. **Emotional thinking** is focused on feelings, *emotions, and personal values*. People who tend to rely on this style of thinking are often intuitive, empathetic, and value driven.

D. **Creative thinking**, which is associated with the brain's right hemisphere (C and D quadrants), is focused on imagination, intuition, and subjectivity. People who rely on this thinking style are often creative and artistic.

This metaphorical model describes how each of us has a preferred way and mode of thinking, which affects how we receive and process information. The awareness of one's thinking style and the thinking style of others, combined with the ability to act outside of one's preferred thinking style, is known as Whole Brain Thinking (WBT). We are "hard-wired to be whole". Research by Herrmann International has shown that 93% of the population worldwide prefers two or more thinking preferences, and all have access to all four quadrants.

Whole Brain Thinking and the HBDI®

The Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI®) is the instrument that accurately identifies one's thinking preferences. This instrument is easy to administer, given that it is online. It takes only twenty minutes to complete. It provides an accurate, visual, validated profile of how one thinks and how one thinks under pressure. There are over two million people in Herrmann global database. I have administered the HBDI® profile to over six thousand people from hundred companies in India.

Figure 1: Real-life profiles (masked):
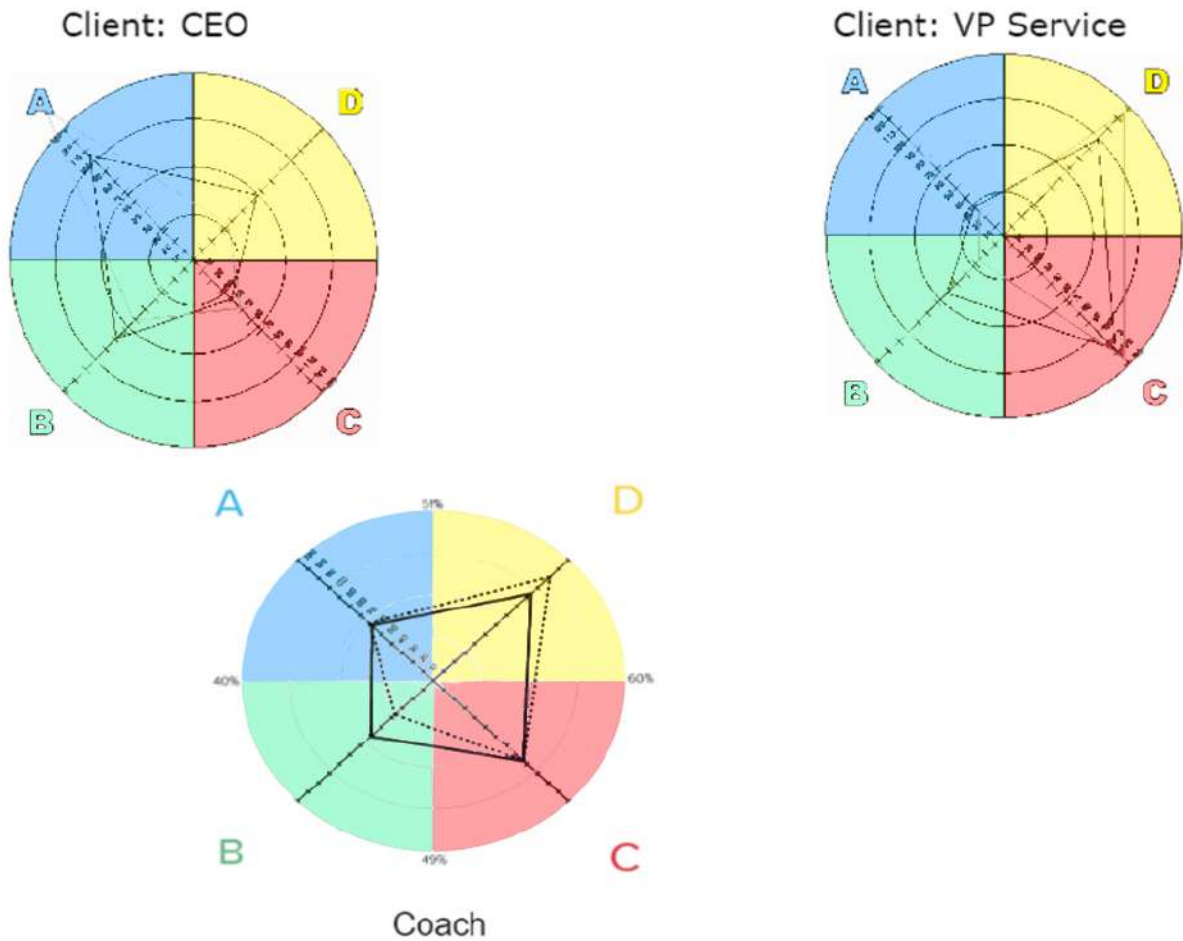
Examples of Client and Coach HBDI® profiles reflect each quadrant's dominance. The white lines show how the individual thinks under stressful conditions. The inner concentric circle indicates avoidance in that quadrant. The circle next to that shows secondary thinking preferences. The last two concentric circles show primary thinking preferences.

Mastery in Coaching Using WBT

International Coaching Federation (ICF) defines coaching as partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximise their personal and professional potential. In my experience, masterful coaches partner with clients to navigate paradoxes, as navigating paradoxes is paradoxical. It requires the coach to shift to 'Both/And Thinking' and to develop systemic, cultural and contextual awareness, which the ICF competency model emphasises. Instead of choosing between alternative poles of a paradox, a masterful coach encourages the client to think "Both/And". For example: how can I be both 'blue' and 'red' simultaneously or both 'green' and 'yellow' simultaneously? how can I accommodate competing demands over time?

WBT enables masterful coaches to cultivate the ability to understand many perspectives. As Scott Fitzgerald said, *"The ability to hold two opposing ideas at the same time and keep the ability to function".* It also allows the client to recognise and appreciate the possibility that many seemingly contradictory ideas can be true simultaneously. The updated ICF competency model reflects these extra demands placed on coaches to support clients in today's volatile world. The model emphasises the critical elements of coaching practice, like the importance of a coaching mindset and ongoing reflective practice, the essential distinctions between various levels of coaching agreements and the criticality of a partnership between coach and client.

WBT and the Updated Coaching Competencies

1. **Embodies a Coaching Mindset:** develops and maintains an open, curious, flexible and client-centred mindset. WBT allows the coach to explore the perspectives presented by each quadrant and recognise the blind spots-preferences of thinking that the coach will not "naturally*"* explore.

2. **Establishing the coaching agreement:** WBT can help clients to be more effective in this competency. Clients whose preference is not "green" learn to be more structured and practical in their thinking. This shift defines a coaching agreement and establishes realistic goals.

3. **Powerful questioning:** a coach can ask powerful, specific questions tailored to a client's dominant thinking preference. Say a client is intuitive (yellow quadrant).- the coach might ask questions that help the client explore possibilities and connections. In contrast, say a client is logical and specific (blue quadrant) -the coach might ask open questions that help the client clarify and define the problem. Tailored questions open up coaching conversations faster and build trust.

4. **Direct communication:** say a client is experimental and prefers to think about the future (yellow quadrant). The coach might use metaphors and stories to connect with the client. Say a client has a solid emotional preference- high on red. The coach might personalise the conversation and be more emotional. The sooner the coach learns how to tune in to the client's preferences, the earlier she/he can build a rapport.

5. **Creating awareness:** clients don't spend time reflecting on how they think. They are unaware of how their mindsets can affect their behaviour. For example, the coach might help clients understand how their emotions influence their decision-making. In my experience, this works well because people are more open to feedback on their thoughts.

The ICF competencies provide the structure and WBT the flexibility to adapt. I coach clients to navigate paradoxes. Below are two cases that illustrate the process:

1. **The Case of the Adamant CEO**

(Please refer to the figure above)

I coached the CEO, and a key team member, the VP of Service of a large manufacturing multinational. While they respected each other, they did not see eye to eye on many issues. I suggested we look at WBT as a model.

The CEO was a "*high blue*"- very analytical, fact-based, and precise. He was impatient with people who took too long to get to the point. He was also very sure of his approach- a high focus on tasks and numbers, and he saw no need to change. After all, he was very successful, having steered the company to new heights-the quintessential "Captain of the Titanic". Under pressure, he became even more analytical and, as his people would say privately- the 'iceman'- apparently empty of emotion. That was not true; of course, he was emotional, but he prided himself on keeping his feelings in check. His deputy was the Vice President of Service. He was more people-focused and approachable and believed in nurturing relationships. The CEO respected his deputy but worried he was too soft on people. He repeatedly suggested to his deputy that he should be tougher and develop the ability to take hard decisions. Their weekly meetings needed to be more relaxed and productive. When both of them completed their HBDI® profiles, it was as if the lights went on - an 'aha' moment.

They both saw how differently they "*viewed*" the world. Faced with the evidence of his mindset, the CEO was open to change. The CEO requested his VP to address the monthly staff meetings, which the CEO used to do earlier. This was a "small' change. But it was tough for the CEO in the initial meetings to control his impatience. His deputy took fifteen minutes to "warm up". That did not help. The CEO discovered that the team was much more receptive to his messages when he spoke later. On the other hand, the VP also began to understand the importance of being as succinct and precise as his CEO.

The CEO and the VP began honouring their differences. They found ways out of every impasse that surfaced because of their differences in thinking. They successfully navigated their paradox with "Both/ And" thinking.

2. **Vishwas: The Odd One in the Family**

I have come to expect requests from my clients to help someone in their family or extended family complete their HBDI®. There is always someone who doesn't fit in, needs clarification, or is often confused about which choices to make.

Vishwas was the nephew of the CEO I was coaching. My client told me that Vishwas was the only son and different from his parents. This created tensions between them. His father was the Head of the Department of Physics, and his mother, whose office was next door to her husband's, was the Head of the Department of Chemistry. The family was academically distinguished and boasted of doctors and engineers from both sides. The family prided itself that everyone had opted for the science stream in the last three generations. His father was logical to a fault, and his mother had Vishwas's life planned out from the cradle. Choosing the Arts and Humanities stream was not an option for Vishwas.

Imagine their surprise when Vishwas declared that he wanted to take Arts and Humanities because he did not care much about Science. He eventually bowed down to family pressure and enrolled in the BSc programme at Bangalore's top college. He was a bright student. With help from his Uncle, in his first year of B.Sc., he gave the National Institute of Design(NID) design aptitude test, unknown to his parents. To his surprise, he topped at the National Level. Though he had to waste a year, he found his calling and has since excelled at NID. His parents are now, of course, proud of him.

> "All happy families are alike; each
> unhappy family is unhappy in its way."
>
> -LEO TOLSTOY, TAKEN FROM HIS NOVEL ANNA KARENINA

Vishwas did not need coaching. His parents did. This was a classic case of left-hemisphere-dominant parents who believed sincerely that they were thinking in Vishwas's best interest when they pushed him into taking the science stream. A needless dilemma was resolved when they finally understood Vishwas's perspective from his HBDI profile. His creative brain (a high yellow) meant he took to design like a duck to water. Vishwas would have done well in other fields, but the journey would have been painful, full of doubt and extra effort.

Honouring Differences

My biggest insight is the importance of honouring differences. Chantel Prat has said, "*When two different brains, shaped by their unique biology and life experiences, interact in a shared environment, they do so through the barrier of the different subjective realities they create.*'" Or, as Abraham Lincoln said, *"I don't like the man; I must get to know him better".*

Vishwas's family quickly judged him out of a misguided sense of concern. Similarly, we are quick to judge those who are different from us and more forgiving of those who are similar to us. If we take a step back and become more curious about our differences- why we think and feel differently- we are likely to get along better with people. Whole Brain Thinking helps us honour differences whether we are coaches or clients. When we honour differences, we celebrate the other person and ourselves.

About the Author

Prasad Deshpande heads Empowered Learning LLP, a consultancy focusing on Strategic Planning, Leadership Development and Organizational Processes. He is also the founding President of the ICF Pune Chapter. With over thirty-five years of experience working in India and internationally, Prasad's passion lies in coaching, helping executives and their teams to transform the way they think, engage and collaborate with purpose. Prasad lives in Pune and is married to Swati, a Dental Surgeon, and they have two sons. Prasad loves to travel and play golf, and his particular interest is understanding and working with different cultures. To learn more, follow him at www.linkedin.com/in/prasad-deshpande-mcc-06a3354

Flowers, Betty Sue.

Coaching and the Power of Story

While civilizations have been inspired by their great myths, we humans have our own individual stories that explain the world to us and guide our behaviours. Humans are storytelling animals. We even dream in stories. In coaching, no matter the client's age or institutional level, I have found that working with the stories people tell about the realities they perceive in the present and the dreams they want for the future opens doorways to transformation.

Reality: Facts versus Narratives

As a child, I noticed that my mother and father seemed to be living in two different realities, even when the same thing happened to them both. The facts were the same—but the story each was telling about the facts was different. The experience of reality was based not on the facts but on the narratives created to make sense of the facts.

Over time, I saw that my parents weren't the only ones whose sense-making depended on their stories. A powerful truth lies at the bottom of this observation: while we may not have much control over many of the facts of our lives, we do have control over the stories we tell about them. I can't change the date of my birth or the place where I was born, or the language I first learned, but I have power over what I tell myself and others that these facts mean.

This truth forms the basis of an exercise I've often done in conferences and seminars that can produce powerful results. Everyone in the room is paired with another person and given the instruction to tell the story of their life to their partner as a hero story. *"This isn't a*

confession or tell-all," I say, *"and you'll have very little time. Just be sure the story is true. The partner must not interrupt or comment in any way but just listen."*

A buzz arises as people all over the room begin to tell their hero story. There's laughter, too, especially from those who feel embarrassed to talk about their lives as if they've been on a hero's journey. Then, after fewer than ten minutes, I say "*Switch*," and the other partner tells a hero story. There's never enough time to tell the whole life story, but that isn't the point. Nor is there a set time for each segment of the storytelling, so the exercise isn't fair or predictable in that sense.

After a few minutes, during which the second partner shares their hero story, I say "*Stop*" and then give the next set of instructions, "*Tell the story of your life as a victim story.*" Then, "*Switch to the other partner*", followed after a few minutes with, "*Stop!*" and the third set of instructions, "*Tell the story of your life as if there were a purpose to life, and that purpose was to learn all you can. Earth is called the suffering planet because those of us sent here are the slow learners, and like animals trained to find their way through mazes, we learn by shocks. At least that's the premise of this story.*"

The conversation following this exercise is always lively- "*What story was easiest to tell? How did you feel telling the hero story? The victim story? The learner story? Did you notice that different plots picked up different facts in your life? Did you notice that in telling the victim story, you could use the same facts as you used in the hero story—by switching the agency from 'I did' to 'I was done to'? 'I am what I am because of what they've done to me.'*"

Once, a group of scientists completely failed at telling the learner story, saying they didn't believe life had a purpose. The next time I did the exercise, I stressed that participants didn't have to believe that plot—just tell the story *as* if it were the case.

On another occasion, I did the exercise with a group of corporate leaders participating in a seminar. They were all men, and their wives had been invited to join them in the exercise and then go to lunch. Every executive there felt more comfortable in the *hero story*; some had

difficulty even beginning the victim story. But every single wife felt more comfortable telling the *victim story.* When this became clear, there was a remarkable silence in the room. A few couples skipped lunch to walk and talk with each other about what this narrative preference meant.

Executive Storytelling

Executives, especially those with great responsibilities who are not yet CEOs, tell stories all day long. Sometimes the stories they tell to the CEO are the same as those they tell to their direct reports, but not always. I often refer to the image of blindfolded people touching different parts of an elephant and reporting on what the "***reality***" of the elephant is. If they touch the tail, "*It's like a rope.*" If they touch the side, "*It's like a wall.*"

There's always a story of reality being told in a company, but because we humans respond to our stories about the facts and not the facts themselves, it's often difficult to see facts that don't fit the narrative. But sometimes, it's helpful to executives to think in terms of the stories that are implicitly guiding the company. A coach can ask questions about these stories - the stories the executive is telling and how and why they might differ from those of others.

While the specifics of the stories can be illuminating, the most significant effect of working with stories in coaching is to loosen the experience of the story from the assumption that the narrative is the reality. When clients begin to see stories as stories, they become more open to hearing other points of view. They learn to create a storytelling space that elicits more questions and welcomes complexity. Rather than conveying a single story from on high, a common story is more likely to emerge. And if that story is held lightly, as a story and not as a truth, it can be changed more easily without threatening the standing of the person giving up the old story for a new one.

Leaders and Stories of the Future

The purpose of a leader is to guide an enterprise into the future. Moses saw the promised land. Martin Luther King said, *"I have a dream."* But the challenge for any leader is that the future is always and only fiction. It doesn't exist. It's just a story.

Leaders often do their best to ignore this fact. We all do. We project the past into the future, choosing to ignore the truism that the only thing we can know about the future is that it won't be like the past. Leaders spend money and time to create elaborate models to perfect this "forecasting" method of storytelling. If the model is persuasive enough, they will base strategic conversations on these forecasts. Forecasting is a way of turning the fiction of the future into an agreed story that is experienced as reality. But, as the saying goes, "*A trend is a trend until it breaks.*" While responsible leaders need to use forecasts, too often forecasts exist not as fiction but as the one "official future"—this is a fact.

How can a coach help leaders hold the future lightly, as fiction, and not as a forecast?

One way is to use multiple plausible stories of the future—scenarios—as platforms for strategic conversations. What would be our strategy if the future was like Scenario A? But what if the future is more like Scenario B or C?

Holding the future as a set of fictions, not as an official forecast, helps develop resilience in the face of uncertainty. The more responsibilities a leader has, the more uncertain and surprising the world around that leader becomes. Sometimes those without large responsibilities do not appreciate how powerless a leader can feel in the midst of the large and challenging forces that are not under the leader's control. Here the coach can help not by assuring the leader that things will be all right but by working with the leader on the story that the leader is telling. Is it a victim story? Or can the same story be turned into a credible hero story? "*We shall overcome.*"

Notice "*We*" in "*We shall overcome.*" The most powerful hero stories are vested in the people of an organization. They arise from a shared purpose, not an individual will. To the extent that a leader's purpose is generated from an individual will rather than a vision of the future, others will have difficulty entering the story and offering help. But when the purpose is generated from the emerging future, it renews itself within everyone operating in that field, not just the leader.

Sometimes leaders with will-generated purpose are exciting to be around in the short term, but eventually, the flowers around them begin to wilt. A powerful, visionary purpose is not will-generated; the leader has to be a servant to the purpose in order to have that purpose blossom in others. Others must be able to tell the story of the future in a way that includes their roles and that of the leader.

A story of the future that is a generative vision is resilient in any scenario because failure can lead to new beginnings. A story has a beginning, a middle, and an end, and the end can serve as the beginning of a new story, the next chapter. A good story is not just about happiness and success but about meaning. A leader can develop the storytelling capacity to stand back just a bit from the action in order to see and articulate that meaning. Helping a leader tell the story of an emerging future that supports the purpose of the whole is a great privilege for a coach.

About the Author

Betty Sue Flowers is Professor Emerita-UT Austin and former director of the Johnson Presidential Library. She has consulted for the Aspen Institute, NASA, CIA, and the US Navy and written futures scenarios for Shell, OAS, OECD, WEC, the Five Eyes, WBCSD, Malaysia, Oman, and Slovenia, among others. Her books include two collections of poetry; Browning and the Modern Tradition; Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future; and, as editor, Christina Rossetti: The Complete Poems; Synchronicity: The Inner Path of Leadership; Realistic Hope: Facing Global Challenges, and Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth.

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FORD: Rajendran Baskaran & Chakraverti Gangapriya.

Coaching for Impact And Transformation at Ford Motor Company

When we were approached for writing this article on how we have used coaching at Ford Motor Company and how our leaders, teams and the organization have benefitted from interventions involving coaching, we took a moment to pause to reflect. Yes, we do a lot around and using coaching in the company. There is also a recognition that coaching is an inner journey, and that such an exploration could help employees become better individuals and leaders, effective in their roles. When we put together all the initiatives in the company, it was a revelation even to us. In this article, we have tried to capture all that we do for our leaders, teams and individuals so that they can realize the true value that they bring as individuals and groups to show up and deliver effectively in their jobs.

When Henry Ford set out to build the organization, he was driven by the powerful vision to "open highways to mankind". Mobility was seen as a vehicle for the progress and development of the human race and the hundred-plus years since the founding of the company have shown how powerful this idea has been. In a similar sense, there is a recognition in our organization that coaching and coaching skills can play a transformative role in the lives of our employees and leaders and make better people of them.

Leadership Coaching:

Coaching is part of every leadership development programme that we run in the company – whether it is for top business or functional leaders. This is perhaps true of most organizations,

and we are no different. There is recognition that leaders who receive coaching can make a very positive and durable impact on their teams and organization to help achieve their goals.

In our Global Executive Leadership Programme (GEL) and the regional Experienced Leaders Programme (ELP), participating leaders get assigned individual coaches, after a proper orientation so that they understand the power that coaching can unleash. We allow leaders to choose from a panel of coaches, depending on the coach-coachee chemistry. In many cases, the relationships have been transformational for our leaders, impacting not just their professional lives but also prompting them to make significant and long-lasting changes in their personal lives too.

Our Leadership Learning Lab (LLL or L^3) for new leaders, which has now completed three cohorts, includes coaching small teams of leaders, allowing for the team to not just learn through the coaching process but also from each other's work and life experiences. This is combined with one-to-one coaching sessions with in-house certified coaches. Again, these sessions help to provide perspective, courage and positive intent to our new leaders to chart their courses in their leadership journey.

Our first-time supervisor development programme, Ford Leadership Experience (FLX) includes a module on coaching, to lay the foundation for developing a coaching mindset in our newly appointed supervisors and managers and adding coaching capabilities to their managerial toolkit as they take baby steps in their transition from individual contributors to full-fledged managers.

Ford runs development programmes that are focused on building a pipeline of women leaders. Our Top Right programme, targeted at women employees at the threshold of becoming General Managers, has a module on coaching included in it. Participants get access to external coaches to work on specific areas of development or support to address any self-limiting beliefs that may be holding them back in their leadership journey. Speaking to past participants of this programme, many admit to the significant impact coaches and coaching have had on their professional careers and in many cases, extending to their personal lives too.

In addition to all of the above, individual leaders, especially our key talent, who request access to a coach to address a specific development opportunity or have been identified by their supervisor to overcome certain gaps to their being effective leaders that could be addressed through coaching, are provided with this support accessing our panel of external/ internal coaches.

Several of our leaders will stand testimony to the effectiveness and impact of coaching in their professional journey, having benefited from coaches and coaching interventions. They, in many cases, become ambassadors for coaching, spreading the good word that it can do for individuals, especially leaders.

Developing Coaching Capabilities:

Over the last few years, the company has invested significantly in building in-house coaching capabilities. This comes in several forms.

Most important in our minds, is the leadership and HR sponsorship for coaching as a development tool and acknowledgement of the power of coaching in the development and transformation of our employees in their professional and personal lives.

The company sponsors the credentialing journey for senior HR Leaders. In addition to financial support, aspiring coaches are given time and access to resources that will enable their learning and credentialing journey. This has enabled us to build a pool of in-house certified coaches over time to take care of several of our coaching requirements. To further democratize coaching, our employees can access internally trained/ certified coaches to support navigating their development.

Middle-level HR Managers have also been trained in basic coaching skills, equipping them to deal with day-to-day work wherein a coaching approach allows them to address personnel-related issues in teams that they support at a deeper level. Some of these HR managers have also chosen to take their training forward towards credentialing.

Trained and credentialled coaches in the company are part of a global Community of Practice (CoP) that supports their continuing education through peer-level interactions, talks on coaching-related topics and exposure to thought leaders in the area of coaching. Members meet periodically to engage on all matters related to coaching and enhance their knowledge and develop their perspectives as coaches.

Our in-house training portal, Degreed, contains a fantastic repository of learning materials related to coaching – accessible to employees who may be curious to know more about coaching and available for all internal coaches that are looking to sharpen their coaching skills. Access to this portal is free, enabling continuous and widespread learning on the topic across the organization.

Acknowledging the need for complementary tools that enable employees to understand themselves and their managerial styles better, the company also enables access to self-assessment tools of various kinds – allowing employees to use an objective and data-driven approach as they work on their development journey.

Building A Coaching Culture:

For a large and global organization like ours, individual and team coaching interventions are not sufficient, and this is well understood. And the greater objective of the organization is to build a strong coaching culture. This is no mean task and requires much continuous work.

Also, Coaching does carry a not-so-positive connotation within the organization and that is an area of focus lest it becomes a barrier to better utilization of coaching as a developmental tool. In common day-to-day organizational language, many employees and leaders have a notion of coaching being a corrective mechanism to take care of an undesirable behavioural or performance issue. That's baggage that we are constantly and intentionally working to overcome through better communication and education on what coaching is really about.

Several of our organizational training and transformation initiatives like developing radical candour, practising inclusive leadership, having crucial conversations, and demonstrating executive presence have a strong focus on building coaching capabilities. Competencies like active listening, asking powerful questions, creating self-awareness and establishing empathetic connections form the basis for many of these programmes. Developing these competencies also means building a purpose-driven and caring organization with a disruptive and strong challenger mindset for the competitive world that we are in.

Having said that coaching as an approach to individual development and organizational transformation is well accepted and continues to be given the focus, importance and priority that it requires. One of Ford Motor Company's core values is Care for Each Other and the aspect of coaching ties in very well with this value and furthering its practice in the organization. It manifests in many ways – direct and subtle – and it is this Coaching approach along with many other employee-oriented practices that makes Ford such a great place to work.

About the Author:

Baskaran **Rajendran** is the Director, of People Matters in Ford for China and International Market Group (IMG) covering India, ASEAN and Australia & New Zealand. An astute HR professional with about 22 years of work experience, he started his career with the Aditya Birla Group as a college graduate and joined Ford in 2004. Baskaran holds an Associate Certified Coach certification from the International Coaching Federation and is Certified in Applied Neuroscience for Coaches.

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https://www.india.ford.com/about-ford/ford-business-solutions/

Goldsmith, Marshall.

Eat the Marshmallow

Delayed gratification is supposed to lead to greater rewards. Sometimes. A famous study in the late 1960s by Stanford psychologist Walter Mischel involved preschool children at Stanford's nursery school.

Children were shown one marshmallow and told they could choose to eat it whenever they wanted. If they waited up to twenty minutes, they would get a second marshmallow. Follow-up research on the children years later led Mischel to conclude that the subjects who waited for the two marshmallows had higher SAT scores, better educational achievement, and lower body mass index. These studies eventually led to Mischel's 1994 book, "*The Marshmallow Test: Why Self-Control Is the Engine of Success*," establishing the test as one of the rare laboratory studies about human behaviour that has become a cultural touchstone.

As an Executive Coach for over forty years, I have been working with leaders worldwide at the top of industries and levels. I work with high-achieving and very successful people, and as a result, I have learned a lot about the behaviours and mindsets of the type of people that make it to the top of their field.

Reading about the Marshmallow Test raised an interesting question for me. What if a person was to continue receiving marshmallows the longer they waited – if they could accumulate an infinite number of treats? There would be some people that would never have the chance to enjoy the delicious marshmallows. They would continue to collect and end up on their deathbed, surrounded by mountains of marshmallows!

Although a study like this will not be conducted, there are examples of this type of infinitely delayed gratification in the leaders I work and interact with daily. Smart, successful, and high-achieving people have all learned the importance of delayed gratification. They pursued extra years of education and training, pooled their resources into an entrepreneurial idea and missed time with family and friends for the sake of their jobs and companies.

In many ways, these delayed gratification choices have hugely benefited their lives. Without their degrees or time and energy invested in their start-up, they wouldn't be in the positions they are in now. But many of them reach the end of their careers with regrets about the opportunities they didn't take outside of their careers. They never ate any of the marshmallows they had been collecting along the way.

In my latest book, "*The Earned Life",* I explore the idea of how to live a life with no regrets and find the balance between hard work and enjoyment. As I've grown as a coach and mentor, I've realised that helping my clients find fulfilment and success at work involves teaching them so much more than how to only improve in their roles at work. Their capacity for efficiency, empathy, trust, leadership, and more are connected to their whole lives – and finding enjoyment in life is critical to their overall health and happiness. Achieving balance is one of the key components of improved leadership.

Sometimes you need to stop waiting and eat the marshmallow.

About the Author:

Doctor Marshall Goldsmith is the *Thinkers50* #1 Executive Coach and New York Times bestselling author of *The Earned Life*, *Triggers*, and *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*. Find out more about him by visiting his website www.marshallgoldsmith.com

Gopalakrishnan, Udaykumar.

Presence – An Elixir for Coaching Finesse and Prowess

"Presence is a state of inner spaciousness."

– ECKHART TOLLE

Ideal coaching partnerships are ones wherein both coach and client experience absolute harmony, sanctity and equality to gain shared influence, progressive development and quality transformation. In order for coaching engagements to recognise and realise the depth and purity of how coaches can effectively partner with clients, due diligence and ownership ought to be invested by the coach to ensure completeness in the partnership.

While all the well-researched eight coaching competencies prescribed by the International Coaching Federation (ICF) independently and in tandem are significant and meaningful, I am quite enthralled by the core competence number five, viz.: "*Maintains Presence*" As defined by the ICF, this core competence is- *Coach is fully conscious and present with the client, employing a style that is open, flexible, grounded and confident.*

Thanks to myriad reflections and understandings gathered over time during my coaching practice, I consider maintaining presence integral to fulfilling the larger objectives of coaching and contributing to the client's experiential evolution. Needless to say, maintaining presence ensures crucial evidence as an effective enabler of attaining ingenuity and agility, otherwise referred to as artistry and fluidity in the coaching process.

"*Maintains Presence*" implies that the coach completely partners with the client when the coaching conversation flows, capturing the stated and unstated expressions while simultaneously being both deftly objective and aptly emotional. Quite a tough ask, though, considering the complex challenges of being in touch with objective and emotional essentials in absolute balance without compromising either of these two cardinal elements.

While donning the role of a coach, affirming the tenet of "self-being an instrument of change" becomes all the more incumbent for coaches to reflectively reach out to their inner selves by discerning between being objective and empathetic. This seemingly elusive yet feasible combination sets the stage for establishing deeper connection and resonance with clients and thereby experiencing the ultimate joy of dance in the "Here and Now" of coaching.

The Coach establishing the connection and resonance with the client augurs well for reaching out to the wholeness of *"who the client is*", *"vibe with explicit and tacit needs of the client"*, *"understanding how learning and creation occur in the client's world and heart"*, and "*how the client can be empowered to lead the dialogue"*. Though a cliché in the coaching parlance, it is all about the client's agenda, which is to be explored and never that of the coach.

The coach summons all the requisite sense of curiosity and provides the client with an equal or even greater space for contribution. This elevates the mojo of true partnership as the coach allows the client to let go of the direction-setting process. This approach permits abilities that reside within the client to associate as well as distinguish the interplay of objective and emotional aspects in the world of the client, with the coach merely holding a mirror, albeit actively listening and evoking awareness. This implies the coach letting the client choose not only the agenda but also the creation of the coaching process per se. When practised at a mastery level, this would evidence the coach demonstrating interest in the client's perspectives rather than articulating the coach's view of the situation.

Decoding this further would imply the coach soliciting information about the thought processes and feelings pertinent to the client's goals. It would be completely out of place if the coach does not ascertain information about the client's thinking and enquire about the client's feelings in given situations and instead relies on the coach's own performance or tends to impose

knowledge. This attitude would cross the border of pure coaching nuances into prescribing and offering solutions, thereby blocking the client's potential energy and ownership.

One of the passionate forms of learning I love to reflect on and imbibe from corporate coaching engagements is by creating 2x2 matrix models. Apart from gaining conceptual clarity, this modus operandi helps me to stay grounded whilst immensely valuing the learning that emerges in coaching dialogues and enables me to practice the same with greater conviction. I am hugely grateful to the clients with whom I collaborated for this mode of learning. In an attempt to capture the essence of experiences, insights, and learning acquired from the corporate table, I offer this model for coaches to connect, resonate, value add or reject, depending upon experiences and learning, which I respect you would have gained. I would certainly like to learn from you all, as I simply cannot be flawless in offering hypotheses, though practical and limited in my understanding.

Mastering Coaching Presence – Holistic Partnering with Client
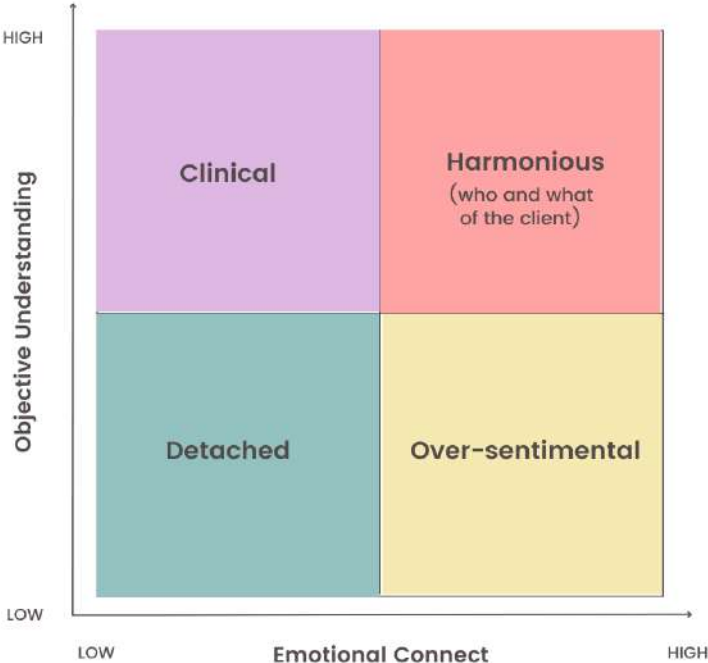
Let me now proceed to decode the above-illustrated model by placing in perspective the four quadrants and their implications to establish evidence for mastery in coaching. The "Holistic" term denotes the support the coach can potentially render to the whole person of the client rather than merely viewing the coaching process as transactional. A transactional level of coaching would signify "missing the forest for the trees" and remain in peripheral levels of what otherwise a master coach can facilitate in the long-term evolution of clients. This apart, true systemic thinking and connectedness with the client and the larger ecosystem can be better perceived by the coach and then the coaching partnership would be a complete one. Holistic support would also help coaches consider the client's physical, emotional, social and spiritual well-being. Being holistic is to view that the whole is more than the sum of its parts, and therefore, the quality of coaching and alliance between coach and client assumes a higher level of synergy.

The x-axis indicates the skills and values of a coach with which appropriate Emotional Connect can establish tenets like the being of the coach, embodying a coaching mindset, cultivating trust and safety, active listening, evoking awareness, and facilitating client growth. The y-axis relates to the traits and skills of a coach to experience the deepest levels of Objective Understanding about knowing the facts, the circumstances, and other relevant data and agendas in the client's world.

To add on and clarify, before elucidating what each of the four quadrants stands for, the premise that weaves both the x and y axis is that the coach exhibits complete curiosity to discover both the mind and heart of the client while also trusting and valuing the inherent process of coaching itself, without needing to create value as a coach.

The Detached Quadrant

If the coach tends to operate completely or slips into this quadrant, it connotes being indifferent, unconcerned, incurious, aloof, detached, and disinterested. These behaviours definitely invite negative consequences and no work done with respect to the client's agenda. The fallout tendencies also could include an exhibition of interests in the coach's view of the situation rather than that of the client. The coach's curiosity may operate at a low ebb, precluding the possibility of seeking more information from the client's stance and goals.

The Over-sentimental Quadrant

Functioning from this quadrant would represent the behaviours in which the coach is overly emotional, and in turn, ushering possibilities of losing out on objectivity when it comes to helping the client navigate towards facilitating growth and placing learning into action with total accountability of the client. This mode can also prevent the coach from seeking information about the client's knowledge and thinking and possibly trip into prescriptive ways. Attention could centre around the coach's own performance or demonstration of knowledge about the topic or situation.

The Clinical Quadrant

Working out of this quadrant would entail coaches showing no character or warmth toward the client. Though maybe efficient, the approach can be cold. Expressions could be sans feelings and empathy. The adverse impacts could include clients being left uncared for and emotions not being valued. This can also prevent the client from being transparent and vulnerable and the tendency to brush the same under the carpet, with no space or psychological air to vent out hidden yet essential feelings. This also hampers the coach's ability to avoid responses to the client's whole person, or the client's who. Moving in this direction can also tempt the coach to teach rather than a coach.

The Harmonious Quadrant

Akin to a combination of simultaneous musical notes of different pitches or quality making chords or individuals singing in harmony in tune with each other, activating this quadrant would evidence both the coach and the client dancing in a symphony by being congenial, amiable, congruous, balanced with mutual respect, and acknowledgement. Being in this state would certainly evoke mindfulness of the coach and receptivity of the client. Together, they experience the sweet spot where their combined greatest strengths and personal power overlap easily, with minimal or no resistance or stress. In effect, the coaching process itself elevates to being in the zone. Thus, such deep-diving into the coaching space benefits both the coach and the client. On the one hand, the coach experiences a sense of fulfilment. On the other hand, the clients feel self-empowered and poised to derive reflections and solutions for their concerns and challenges from the standpoint of discovering and reclaiming themselves. The coach develops abilities to manage emotions and experience comfort working in the space of not knowing yet being fully responsive to the client.

Evidence of mastery in coaching while being in the Harmonious quadrant is illustrated below:

The Coach remains completely connected as an observer of the client's world, focuses on the 'who and what of the client', with empathy, learns from the client without providing any knowledge or experience, demonstrates the highest levels of curiosity to learn more about the client, stays and comfortable with silence, resting upon pauses and reflections, trusts the process of coaching, without any need to add or create value.

In turn, the Client chooses what happens in the coaching session, feels valued, included and empowered, pours vulnerable emotions, is encouraged by the coach to stay in the present, determines to look inward and inside out rather than externalise, generates proactive motives and confidence, and experiences transformational changes. The coach and the client are equal contributors to the conversation in the client's direction, their creative cooperation and synergy appear and endure, and their mutual respect enhances without judgments. The above listing is

only illustrative and not exhaustive. Master coaches can certainly add value-based learning from kitty bags gifted by their clients.

In recent times, I was fortunate to assimilate reflections and takeaways from numerous corporate coaching engagements, particularly concerning the competence of "Maintains Presence".

There was an interesting case of coaching a C-suite executive in the banking domain. The initial contracting with the sponsor was for ten coaching sessions. As destiny would have it, before the tenth round was completed, the client secured internal permission for two additional coaching sessions. The journey that I sailed, though relatively smooth, had shades of bumps and trials. I was pleasantly surprised when the client sounded a need to explore aspects of Performance Appraisal ratings and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Even though I was initially caught off guard considering the confidentiality of this process at the senior level, I agreed to work on the same, recognising this crucial agenda for clients to learn and apply. Thanks also to the incisive relationship built with the client, I was able to completely and closely partner by balancing in simultaneity objective understanding and emotional connect.

What I learnt and gained was truly matchless compared to previous coaching experiences of not knowing the intricacies of the client's agenda pertaining to performance appraisal aspects, seizing the jar of curiosity, remaining transparent and vulnerable, holding back any semblance of knowledge that I had about the subject, though an HR professional by background. More importantly, I allowed the client to fully explore sensitive concerns of senior leadership dynamics in the larger ecosystem. Eventually, this offered me abundant fulfilment and pride when the client acknowledged progress during the coaching sessions and how he successfully applied the learning.

"Maintains Presence" opens the doors for complete partnership in the coaching terrain to focus on "the who and what of the client" and consistently perform in the harmonious quadrant. Being in this trajectory ensures emotionally rewarding growth for self-in-role as a coach. I have grown and still yearn to grow.

About the Author:

Udayakumar Gopalakrishnan is a sought-after Facilitator, OD Consultant, Keynote Speaker, and Executive Coach. After completing his PG in HR from XLRI, he worked in senior HR roles for eleven years. During the last three decades, he partnered with six hundred plus organisations and transformed thirty-three thousand plus corporate professionals in India and overseas. He is a proud member of the Coacharya family, having undergone PCC and MCC training with Ram S Ramanathan. He holds an OD Certificate from NTL Institute (USA) and was also a faculty member. His credentials include MCC [ICF], MP [EMCC], EQ Assessor [Six Seconds] and Debriefer & Coach [Harrison Assessments]. He has authored three seminal books. He can be reached at www.linkedin.com/in/udayakumar-gopalakrishnan-mcc-icf-mp-emcc-od-ntl-pghr-xlri-9508b010

Nair Gopalakrishnan Harikrishnan & Sidhu Tina.

Coaching Youth

Often asked is the question, what is the difference between coaching adults and coaching youth?

A paradigm shift of note with youth and adult coaching could be that our younglings are limitless and free to dream within their current realities. In contrast, adults are constrained by their current realities and self-limited in their dreams due to conditioned belief systems. Experientially what differs during coaching youth, maybe the energy variations arising out of anatomical, physiological, biochemical and psycho-emotive changes due to age-related or developmental processes of the adolescent client. Those who have experienced the energy exchanges with youth and adult coaching might agree there is some, if not a considerable, difference in what the coach walks away with at the end. What the client walks away with is their own, and it will be remiss of me to comment on that in this article. Interestingly, as coaches, we are often trained to approach each session with Unconditional Positive Regard and an informed approach of not providing solutions and being the finest evocative and reflective sounding board platforms. And with youth, often we find their questions are rooted in their current reality of the here and now, and it is the coach seeking clarification on the youth's journey of the hereafter and the tomorrow. For the self-seeking adult, it is either regret of the past or anxieties of the future that often come up as limiters to harnessing the power of the present.

Adult and Adolescent Neuroplasticity

The brain and the neural development during the pre-teen, teenage/ adolescent to young adulthood stage is remarkable. Neural pathways are constantly forming and re-forming based

on environmental interactions and the conditionings adolescents are subjected to. This leads to character formation and behaviour modifications into adulthood. Unequivocally, each generation of adults categorically states that the youth of their generation lack the etiquette and civic sense their generation had, as did the adults of their generation note of present-day adults whilst growing up.

What is it that becomes a generational gap between youth and adults? Where does that line blur? Is it not that many adults that we know still retain their youthfulness? Has not one of life's eternal mysteries, as equivalent to the origin of life, been the search for the tree of life? One that provides eternal youth and vigour? And we wonder what is the difference between coaching youth and adults when adults would gladly give it all for the fountain of youth while the youth cannot wait long enough to spread their wings and fly into the Sun, even if the cost is singed wings.

Maybe the answer is not to be found in a nutshell, or the answer could be in a rainbow, as William Wordsworth reminisced about his emotions upon glancing at one, both as a child and an adult, and penned the famous line - *the child is the father of the man*. May it also be that the answer need not necessarily be found in the differences between coaching youth and adults; nay, it could rather be in the similarities that require the coach to develop a deeper, genuine, soulful understanding of both or all stages of life's development, of the beingness in a moment and the universal, inherent power in all to manifest the future, rooted in the present; that only needs to be channelled or directed through evocative questioning and soulful listening, be it the youth or the adult.

It has been one of life's most rewarding experiences to work with adolescents and young adults, to be their mentor-coaches and to walk with them onwards as they realise their goals, their immense potentials within, and the moments of awakenings that are undeniably visible and powerful beyond measure. The vision of the future for youth is often unclear as the younglings still try to sift through familial and societal expectations while retaining their sense of wonder and joy in discovering or pursuing their passion. When the coach can foster trust and respect, the barriers or resistance to exploring the limitless diminishes. And ironically, trust and respect are gained purely by reciprocation, by identifying with their goals and challenges, which only requires the coach to be client-centric.

Trauma-Informed Awareness and Approach

If, for a coach, coaching the youth is a calling, and often it is, there are areas one needs to build up on -skills, education, strategies, as well as resources to be redirected to -as needed. Identifying trauma and Adverse Childhood Events (ACEs) is integral to delivering ethical services. There is substantial evidence that ACEs in youth predispose them to chronic stress and mental health conditions as adults. It behoves the coach to be aware of circumstances that could often mean more exploration is needed into causation. From an ethical and safety perspective, this may require the coach to engage in additional training to develop their repertoire of skill sets and network of healthcare and social support systems that the coach can redirect or refer a client based on need. There are laws and regulations regarding childcare, child welfare, and social security measures specific to the province, state or country based on geographical location.

Case Study One

For example, in the Canadian educational system where Tina currently works as a high school principal, there are specialised programs for youth. One program was specifically serving vulnerable females who have been made marginalised and are in need of care towards social reintegration. Here is one such case study of how a coaching mindset made a difference to a student in a Specialized Vulnerable Program at a district school board in Canada.

Z is a sixteen-year-old female who came to the program from a community agency. She was neuro-divergent, exposed to various types of drugs in the home and was sexually assaulted, experiencing significant trauma at a very young age. She exhibited behaviour in school that was unsafe for herself and her peers. Enrolment in the program provided her with formal education. It assisted in developing a frame of mind to overcome fear, shame, guilt, anger, and a sense of hopelessness to foster meaningfulness and a sense of purpose and belongingness initially within their classrooms and later into workplaces and society.

When Tina met Z, Z was a victim of human traffickers, and Z had a handler who had convinced Z that money was the means and answer to her troubles and Z could make money

easily by partnering with him and being on the streets. Z would bunk class and later started recruiting her own classmates with the promise of easy money. Tina had to work with Z over time, slowly chipping away at the facade of bravado that is youth's (and often adults') cloak to hide their vulnerability through congenial conversations based on a coaching framework. This helped Tina and Z to understand Z's value systems and beliefs. Once Tina gained Z's trust, Tina could gently challenge Z's understanding of value systems in terms of money and finances and belief systems in terms of immediate short-term gain versus long-term investments in herself as opposed to in herself. This fostered her self-worth and self-esteem to promote agency and channel her passion for success from materialistic gains to earning a degree and having a business for herself so that she need not be dependent on anyone for anything anymore. Today Z is a successful entrepreneur and helps other girls who have had adverse events in their childhood.

Case Study Two

As part of his clinical practice of treating patients with chronic or persistent pain, Hari often has to provide physiotherapy services to young adults or youth between eighteen and twenty-four. These are youth who are suffering from conditions seen at both ends of the spectrum, either congenital medical conditions or sometimes no specific inciting events at all -the pain spontaneously occurred one day in their childhood or adolescence and since has impacted all parts of their life - to the point that they have had their childhood or adolescent growth years robbed off the fun, socialising as well as other activities youth their age would have engaged in. When youth come in for consults, it is not merely their physical pain that afflicts them but the hopelessness of their situation, the inability of any medical professional to answer their questions regarding a cure, and abject fear and anxieties about their future. They have most often tried every modality and treatment course prescribed to them. However, nothing seems to work.

G is a twenty-two-year-old youth who has congenital hip dysplasia and had hip replacement when he was twenty-one years old. Due to the chronicity of pain and altered walking pattern, G could never engage in sports or have fun as he would have liked and always felt he did not belong. When G came to Hari, G had undergone numerous sessions with multiple

physical, occupational and psychotherapists, physicians, and counsellors, as well as numerous other clinicians. However, G had not found pain relief, despite the root cause of hip pain being resolved now after the hip replacement. While working with G, Hari inquired not only into the physicality of the pain but the emotional and spiritual implications of G's pain condition. Hari also used coaching principles to listen to G's pain concerns actively, and not merely prescribe a solution or treatment plan, yet co-create with G a plan that was rooted in what G identified as fun, meaningful, joyous, as well as something he would want to sustain for the rest of his life and provide a purpose towards his bigger goals in life of staying healthy and raising a family. G's innate fear was he was told he would not be able to do high-impact sports; hence, he believed he would not be able to participate in any sports activity actively and would miss out on the quality of life, making him less of a person. Exploring G's fears, and challenging some of his belief systems on what it meant to be healthy and to exercise, led to G realising the benefits of less traditional or alternative forms of exercise like Qi-Gong and Yoga, which opened to G a path to spiritual awakening and today G leads a healthy, successful, and fulfilling life. As the saying goes, one of the realisations we had during one of our sessions was that pain is inevitable, but suffering is optional.

The who of the person is often not included during medical or therapeutic consults, which is often a disservice to the patient or client, as we are missing an integral piece of the puzzle that could often aid patients in the self-management of their conditions.

In the case of youth, they are often assumed to be less knowledgeable, so as adults, we impart wisdom in terms of advice rooted in adult conditioning and the adult-biased belief of what is suitable for the youth. Coaching youth, in its essence, must transcend this notion that because they are young, they cannot see and hence do not know.

Access to Youth Coaching

Finally, one of the existing concerns with youth coaching is access and reach. Whilst it is unanimously agreed that youth benefit from coaching to realise their potential, how mainstream is youth coaching? Most youths with access to coaching services have affluent stakeholders or

come from households where coaching strategies are centred and valued. Life coaching can liberate youth to achieve their infinite potential. Tapping into systems and institutions, including educational, community and government-funded programming, maybe a bridge to coaching youth universally. With youth, a collectivist archetype positively supports adolescent development. If the stakeholders come together with a vision to centre the development of today's youth globally, actualising the collective energy consciousness may be a reality sooner than later.

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Harvey, Janet.

Generative Wholeness

> "The human race is in the midst of making an
> evolutionary leap.
> Whether or not we succeed in that leap is your
> personal responsibility."
>
> – SCOTT PECK

When was the last time you visibly and boldly challenged the status quo? If you are like most people, it is a tricky question to answer. Leaders and their teams I have engaged with over the past three decades start by sharing their historical experiences, knowledge, and ability strengths. In other words, their professional status quo defined their identity and what they perceived was valuable and essential for the team. While experience is always useful to performance, more is needed when facing accelerated and complex change. What always emerged that everyone found useful and effective arose from something other than the certainty of their history. Success emerged from tapping into underutilised, innate creativity that permitted the inner aspects of each team member to interact and influence the dialogue in fresh, emergent ways. These words begin to describe being generative. That way of engaging allows wholeness to arise individually and then collectively. Being generative together is the formula for making the whole bigger than the sum of the parts.

Uncertainty about what is on the other side of our familiar and comfortable daily lives stops most of us from challenging the status quo. Knowing, knowledge, expertise, and evidence-based approaches are a protective shield that maintains normalcy until it does not. Metaphorically, the rubber band we use to bind our known lives together loses its elasticity. Over-stretched, the rubber band becomes brittle and then fragile. When that rubber band breaks, we

experience plenty of contagious stressors. Those stressors are the seeds for scepticism, doubt, blame, shame, and some conspiracy theories to project responsibility onto something or someone else. Circumstances and the environment that construct fuel fear that provokes attachment to an idea of normal that does not include those uncomfortable situations. Yet even these contagious and seemingly negative consequences are part of our wholeness, individually and collectively, in our family, workplace, and community.

The purpose of this chapter is to challenge what we recognise as our status quo so we can catch up with the forever-changed reality of professional life today. Our new virtual workplace creates a timeless workday rhythm. We operate in a zero geography and technology-enabled, multiple-team matrix. All these factors require management and leadership capability that enthusiastically shares responsibility for outcomes and places a premium on teaming our way through continuous change. Artificial intelligence and augmented reality disrupt workplace relationships and dynamics even further. We already see heightened importance and value for human relating capacities. As work becomes more focused on originating new ideas and experimenting quickly, we perceive the requirement to learn throughout the creative process. A fundamental change in focus from transactional activity that produces products and services occurs because automation produces far more effective and consistent quality.

I feel the deepest gratitude for the coaching profession when a client allows the vulnerability of not knowing. Read these pages as if you are a client talking with a coach. Notice the pain from tolerating the mirage of a life built on the idea of security. Become aware of an inner tension building where we no longer accept the way of living that places safety and security above our innately creative life force. Even the most prideful C-Suite executive or a delighted and successful parent, or college graduate, or, truthfully, any human being, awakens to the hollowness of achievements that, all too often, are void of enlivening relationships.

We must each learn to see beyond our comfortable preferences and biases as the only way we learn, grow, and transform. Learning to notice is a living paradox between your nature and what you nurture, between what is intrinsic and extrinsic in your self-awareness. Extrinsic growth builds capacity that empowers a new relationship with your circumstances. Intrinsic growth begins when we expand awareness of the traits that make up our authentic selves. These unique traits form your nature. We nurture our essence to expand as our capacity to meet life

grows. Science has produced neurobiological evidence for long-held spiritual principles that connection with others and feeling belonging is essential for living. Connection and belonging that arise from our authentic self are linked to our experience of meaning and shape our mindset, shaping our lived experience, breath by breath, in every context.

When I refer to the term mindset, this includes our frame of reference, attitude, thoughts, beliefs, values, habits, and routine actions. All these elements influence, usually unconsciously, how we show up in the world, our approach to making decisions, and our interactions with others. That mindset often operates unconsciously or subconsciously in the form of habit and routine. The body prefers habits and routines for energy conservation. We are often slow to recognise much has changed around us, and we have forgotten that there is so much more to us than our circumstances. That means being whole goes unrecognised. It does not negate that wholeness is the state of all human beings. Iteration of our conscious awareness through deliberate noticing and choosing becomes the path to growing into all of yourself, accessing an integrated self, and operating from wholeness.

Being generative operates as a double helix. One strand builds and empowers four capacities: to originate new thinking, create something tangible from that imagination, experiment to learn what is most valuable, and ultimately, how to produce outcomes for self and others that contribute to success, well-being, and a thriving life. The second strand radiates from the inside out, honouring the unique soul of each person. As we claim and embody the authentic self, others experience this and feel permission to do the same. We cannot see in another what we have not claimed within ourselves. Maximising potential in life requires every person to remember, claim, and embody their essence. By being generative, we collectively produce the conditions by which each person enthusiastically accepts responsibility to live in wholeness
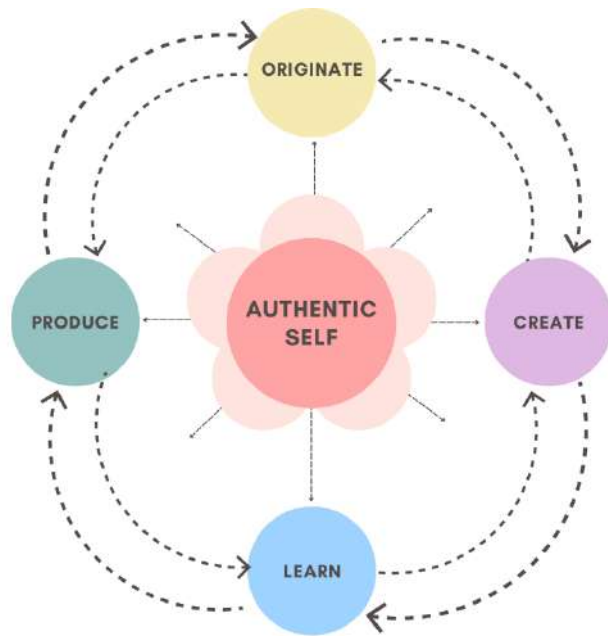
GENERATIVE WHOLENESS

Adopting the dynamic capacities to originate, create, learn, and produce results, so we *live* sovereign, the freedom to express personally and professionally from our authentic self.

So many myths and stories express this journey from knowing to not knowing, from proving to accepting, and from apathy to inspiration because it is the human development journey. It is an archetypal path that does not discriminate based on gender, culture, economic status, or any other criteria you identify. Instead, the experience is inclusive in the same way that individual wholeness embraces all the inner selves unconditionally. The term "dynamic" is key to inviting change rather than being at the effect of change, passive and sometimes feeling powerless. When we exercise our generative capacities to be sovereign, we become free to express and choose personally and professionally from our authentic selves. That way of choosing is wholeness. We believe, trust, and honour our truth that we can adapt and adjust our practices of personal sovereignty at any moment. As human beings, we have an innate capacity to originate and to create. When we originate, we use our imagination, which naturally activates creativity to bring an idea into form.

Perhaps you are asking, *"Living through my wholeness is so obviously a good choice; why is it so darn hard to do it?"* A short answer is fear. The fear that stops us is an illusion yet so very palpable, present, and real in our minds, bodies, and hearts. Advertisers and the media know all too well how to engage us and sustain our attention on fear in various forms. Leading well means seeing the whole of each person and the interconnections among people. When we perceive and relate with each person as equally resourceful, capable, and creative, we see more

than the situation. We see the impossible as possible well beyond our desire to fulfil what is needed. We want to discover and then use our unique genius. To do so, we must remove the layers of belief and learning that imbue our life reactions motivated by security from what scares us.

Awareness practices open the door to rooms in ourselves we may never have visited and now have the power of choice to consider entering. As we examine what is possible by tapping into more of who we are, a sense of unity emerges. Longing for a more genuine and more in-depth experience of engaging with life is familiar to every level of human development. However, the pathway to wholeness is internal and requires attention to learning about our essence. Essence is a synonym for the core or true self, stripped of the convenience of personality.

When we focus our attention externally on becoming someone the world expects or wants, we eventually feel disappointed. We notice a void and realise our choices do not generate the harmony and unity we imagine. For many people, this occurs as internal noticing only, invisible from day-to-day living. A coaching partnership offers a safe environment and process to reveal the hidden in an honourable and respectful way. Our dialogue with a coach opens a path to transforming our relationship with life. Our next choice is to surrender our practised identity and invite our innate capacity for change. Accept ourselves, and every other person, as already whole anytime, anywhere with anyone, no matter the circumstances.

Making life choices that liberate our essential self produces many benefits: effortless vitality, freedom to express our authenticity, ease in learning, and access to a sense of wonder about life. These are all qualities of generative living and the path to leading well. A favourite colleague shared a question that made me laugh out loud, "*Are you watering the weeds?*" Most of us focus on what's not working, what's causing suffering, and what is not yet part of our life. While it is undoubtedly valuable for us to define problems entirely and with specificity, we do this to ensure a robust solution emerges that addresses the root causes of the pain. We benefit by reframing issues away from characteristics as symptoms toward a statement of what is factually occurring beyond our assumptions, biases, and preferences.

When we look in the rear-view mirror, it's easy to see that optimising stability and becoming knowledge experts are two high-value leadership outcomes. However, today's business environment produces continuous disruption that makes knowledge extinct at a pace

and scale never experienced. So here are three activities leaders, teams, and their coaches may explore over time to strengthen wholeness and our agency to lead well, do good and drive change:

1. **Face your patterns of being and relating with a beginner's mind; the generative capacity to learn about you:** become aware of your patterns of interaction. Choose a body-based grounding method that supports listening deeply within, e.g., hiking in nature, singing in a choir, or kayaking on a lake. Reflect on your daily journey by asking yourself about habits, preferences, assumptions, and biases that may be the source of disruption for you. Journal your insights, without censorship, for the wonder of learning about and knowing you. Question the source of your patterns. Receive reflections from trusted peers about their experience of you and consider what calls you to engage through those patterns. Experiment with suspending the patterns. Be in an ongoing practice of noticing what shifts around you as you move your mindset and the associated actions. Observe how others respond. Choose intentional shifts toward optimism with change, use of imagination, encouragement of collaboration, and notice what transforms your relationship with change.

2. **Act by experimenting and engaging with insight versus intellect, the generative capacities to originate and create a new way to show up and interact:** notice and acknowledge your listening habits, e.g., do you rush to reply, always initiate, and speak first or form answers while another is still talking? Surrender the inner chatter that wants to fix, guide, advise, or demonstrate your expert status. Let what others say with you land and be taken in fully. Allow an open exchange to occur that creates what is shared in the moment. Slow down the pace with people who matter. Practice silence after someone speaks to you to allow emotion and a sensation to arise in your awareness. Name the meaning internally you experience and then invite curiosity, forming a question to ask to share even more.

3. **Exercise deep honesty to believe there is always more than now; the generative capacity to produce a trusting relationship with yourself that you are always whole**

no matter the circumstance: connect with your wholeness daily. Start where you start, sixty seconds a day for a week. Then two minutes, five minutes, and when you feel the joy of this, settle into your daily routine for whatever time serves you. Continuously seek what else is available in the field of exchange with others. Be available for surprise and reciprocity from an unconditional connection. Be willing to be disturbed by what you hear, experience, and receive in the spirit of learning, growth, and expansion of your natural rhythms.

Change can be instant, and we lose nothing. Yet, a narrative continues that change is hard and takes a long time. Wholeness arises from being generative, supporting us to change, and stepping into life in new ways consciously. Living in the state of being that is Generative Wholeness™; we can consistently choose the change that sustains excellence, connection to effortless vitality, and belonging with all that is.

About the Author

Janet M. Harvey is a bestselling author, speaker, leader, and an ICF master certified coach and accredited educator who has engaged leaders, teams, and global enterprises for nearly thirty years to invite change that sustains well-being and excellence. Visionary CEO of inviteCHANGE, a coaching and human development organisation, Janet Harvey, uses her executive and entrepreneurial experience to cultivate leaders in sustainable excellence through **Generative Wholeness™,** a signature coaching and learning process. As Janet shares, "*coaching in its many forms has at its root the effect of awakening consciousness and doing so in a highly accelerated fashion that sustains.*" She can be reached at www.linkedin.com/in/janetharvey

Hawkins, Peter Prof. & Turner, Eve.

As Coaches And Supervisors, How Are We Shifting "*Business As Usual*" To Address 21st-Century Challenges?

Wherever we live in the world, some of the stories we hear in the news will be similar. An example is evidence of political, social, economic, geographic and climate inequality. As coaches, mentors, supervisors, and mentor-coaches, we are not separate from this background to our work, and the question we are posing in this article is what is our role, if any, in upholding things as they are or encouraging a shift in "*business as usual*"? Depending on the sectors we work with, we may, as an example, be supporting the top earners to be "*more efficient"* to ensure their businesses "*do more for less*", so getting more out of their employees.

Let us look at just a few facts as presented by different bodies/charities. In India, according to Oxfam (2023), "*the top 10% of the Indian population holds 77% of the total national wealth. 73% of the wealth generated in 2017 went to the richest 1%, while 670 million Indians, who comprise the poorest half of the population, saw only a 1% increase in their wealth.*" It is a similar picture in other parts of the world. Statista (2023) says that, "*in the second quarter of 2022, 68 per cent of the total wealth in the United States was owned by the top 10 per cent of earners. In comparison, the lowest 50 per cent of earners only owned 3.2 per cent of the total wealth.*"

Thomas (2020) cites a 2018 air quality study in the American Journal of Public Health to show how economic inequality is linked to racial inequality and to poor health outcomes, with the poorest, non-white populations experiencing the highest exposure to particulate matter because of where they live, *"a combination of solid and liquid particles in the air; when these small particles are inhaled, they can infiltrate your lungs and bloodstream and cause serious illness."* Thomas also notes that "*fracking waste sites are also more likely to be found in neighbourhoods of color, which can degrade water quality.*"

In our 2023 book (Whybrow et al., p1), co-written with Josie McLean and the late Ali Whybrow, we (Eve and Peter) describe how "*Humanity is in peril, and we need to change our ways….to transform our lives and our professional coaching, supervision, mentoring, and leadership development practices.*" There are contributors from around the world, and some contributors live in places which are facing the worst impacts of climate change, such as The Philippines (see Whybrow et al., p67), while the countries most impacted have contributed the least to climate change.

The book is rooted in our belief that everything is interconnected, that we and all of life forms influence and are influenced by each other, operating systemically (also see Hawkins and Turner, 2020). Here are two graphs that provide an unsettling overview of how we are (ab)using our planet. In figure 1, we see that until 1971 we, as a species, were using as many of the Earth's resources in a year that our Earth could regenerate in a year. This contrasts with 2022, when by the 28th of July, humans had already collectively used all that the Earth could regenerate in a year. In Fig 2, the statistics are shown by country, providing the date when **Earth Overshoot Day** would fall if all of humanity consumed like the people in that country.
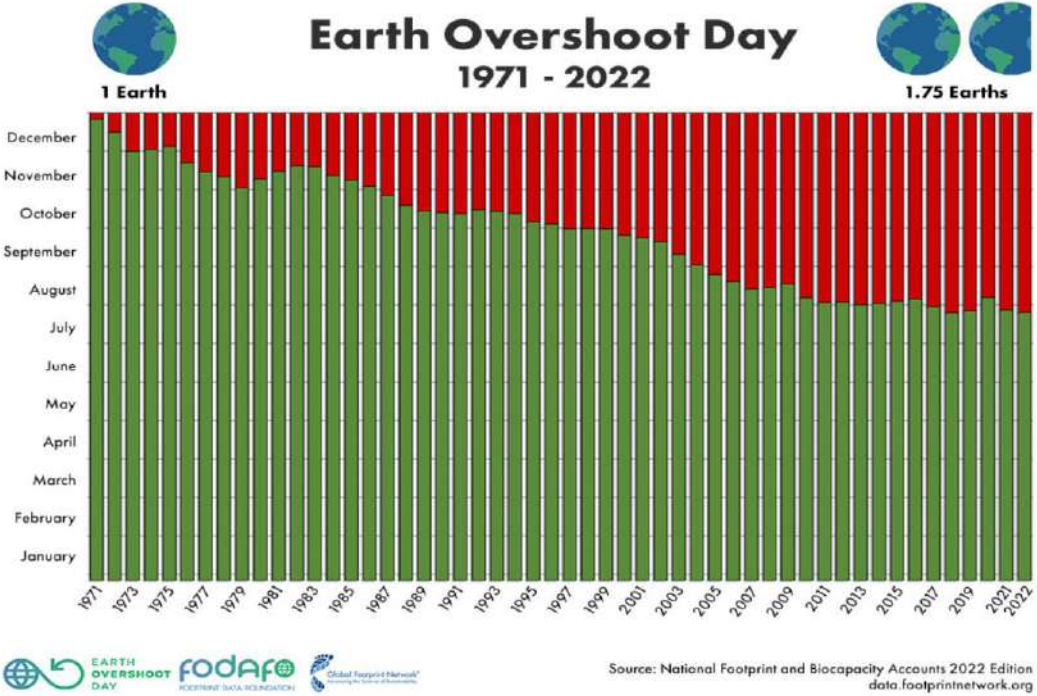
Fig 1 Earth Overshoot Day 1971-2022

Fig 2 Country Overshoot Days 2022

We could use other statistics, for example, around employment related to unequal inclusion, particularly at the most senior levels, around age, race or disability. So, what does this mean for us? How do we each relate this to our moral code, our sense of justice and fairness? How do we relate it to our role as coach, mentor, supervisor or mentor-coach? Here are just a few questions from what we have written so far that you might like to discuss with others:

1. What is the meaning and purpose of our work?
2. Is it our role to work with "*business as usual*" in all cases and help our clients be "*successful*"?
3. What does "*successful*" mean, and how do we judge?
4. And can success be gained regardless of what that might mean for people around our clients and for the more-than-human world?

5. Is our role as coaches, mentors, supervisors, and mentor coaches to support a more equal world?

6. What do we each believe about inequality – social, economic, climate, political and so on?

7. Are our current systems "fit for purpose", and what might that mean?

8. How do we abide by our professional bodies' codes of ethics and good practice, for example, as laid out in these clauses:

8.1 Global Code of Ethics (2021):

2.8 Members should be guided by their client's interests and at the same time raise awareness and responsibility to safeguard that these interests do not harm those of sponsors, stakeholders, wider society, or the natural environment.

3.8 Members will engage in professional development activities that contribute to increased self-awareness in relation to inclusion, diversity, technology, and the latest developments in changing social and environmental needs.

8.2 ICF Code (2021):

28. I am aware of my and my clients' impact on society. I adhere to the philosophy of "*doing good"* versus "*avoiding bad*".

9. Are our current systems "fit for purpose", and what might that mean?

In a short chapter, our intention is not to try to provide answers, even presuming there are any, as there are just perspectives! Each of us is different and will follow our individual moral compass. Carroll and Shaw (2013, p19) write that "*My mind is a moral maze where I end up continually facing yet another dead end. I long for the easy answer that removes any responsibility for having to go on an ethical journey where the destination is unclear.*" We would suggest it is a journey we each need to undertake. And De Vries (2019, p135) in reflecting on ethics, argues "*it comes alive in relationships"* and is *"about how we treat and deal with one another.*"

We have done presentations to coaches, mentors, supervisors and mentor coaches around the world, and some point to their training as a deterrent to considering these issues. In particular, some feel bound by the notion that the client is only the person facing them in the coaching room and that the client's wants are paramount. One session particularly comes to mind when we went through ten things we might need to "*unlearn*" to work systemically (Whybrow et al., 2023, p188-189, development of an earlier piece by Hawkins, 2015) and some coaches were "*in tears feeling somehow that the 'shackles' had been removed*" (2023, p 189). The ten were:

1. The client is only the person opposite me.
2. I need to consider only their agenda of what they want.
3. I leave my experience outside the coaching room.
4. Interventions are always questions.
5. I should never interrupt.
6. I should always end with an action plan.
7. Coaching is only about personal development.
8. Coaching only happens in session.
9. I should not feel their feelings.
10. I must never go deep because that is only the realm of counselling and therapy.

Do you relate to any of these? Maybe some you are happy with. In Whybrow et al. (2023, p189), we suggest this exercise you might like to do now, alone, or with others:

1. Which, if any, of these assumptions do you find yourself fully subscribing to?
2. Which, if any, of these assumptions feels '*tricky*' for you – perhaps you feel you '*ought*' to follow this but find yourself breaking these precepts?
3. Which, if any, would you be delighted to let go of?
4. Which of these might limit the depth and flow of your relationship with your clients?
5. Which ones could stop you from bringing a wider lens that considers community, society and nature as stakeholders?
6. What competencies or new rules would you like to add?

We will each have an idea of how we address this, and here are just a few of the elements we each bring into our work, starting at the outset in our initial "*chemistry*" meeting and contracting. For example, we might ask:

1. Tell me about you. Tell me what you most care about.
2. Who and what does your work-life serve?
3. How are we going to attend to the more-than-human/ecological world in our coaching?
4. What is the work we need to do together (rather than want!)? What is life/business/our family/our community etc., asking of us?
5. What might you regret in five years (or another timespan that seems appropriate) not having worked on in our coaching together now?
6. What are the issues that might affect your future stakeholders (customers, employees, suppliers etc.) that you need to address now?
7. If your stakeholders were in the room, what would they have appreciated about the work we have done together, and what would their challenge to us be?

We believe that we have the tools we need to practice systemically and challenge what needs to be challenged right now. We understand the power of true dialogue, and one of the most fundamental gifts we offer is really listening at the deepest of levels, without judgement. As De Vries says (2019), ethics exist in relationships. Even if we do, at times, find ourselves drawn to judgement, through reflective practice, we can understand and learn from that and develop how we work.

As we write in Whybrow et al. (2023, p17), "*Only through sitting and listening to one another can we ask fundamental questions about what matters most in life and death, while sharing and exploring painful emotions, deep-seated assumptions, values, conflicts, images, dreams, and meanings. Safe, respectful, and open dialogues engender warmth, tolerance, validation and a diversity of understandings….*" We do not seek to impose our own views but to really listen to each other, to fellow beings, to the Earth, and to make ourselves vulnerable with an open heart, an open mind and an open will (Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013).

Carl Rogers has shown us that profound listening can be the catalyst for significant personal change, building a deep connection and relationship. Remen (2006, p.217-220)

describes Rogers' visit to the Stanford medical faculty in the USA and how cynical she and the other medical practitioners and psychologists were: *"Unconditional Positive Regard seemed to me to be a deplorable lowering of standards."* But she describes a demonstration he gave as profound as he worked with a doctor from the audience "*without saying a single word, conveying to his client, simply by the quality of his attention, a total acceptance of him exactly as he was"* (Remen, 2006, p218-219). Remen reflects that it is the quality of our listening, not our words, that effect change, and this is a skill, as coaches, we share and should never underestimate.

Nancy Kline talks of the power of attentive listening to ignite other people's thinking (2020, 2015, 1999) to generate their best thinking, arguing that … giving people '*good attention…makes them more intelligent,'* while poor attention '*makes them stumble over their words and seem stupid.'* (1999: 37). In an exploration of '*business as usua*l', we can remember that providing attention is a gift we can each offer to allow everyone - coach, client, any stakeholder - to be our most intelligent selves and to hear ourselves think in safety, without judgement.

The final stage of listening is to listen through and with the person to all the nested systems, they are part of. Some examples are their family, team, organisation, community, social and cultural background, and the wider ecology they live within. This co-discovery provides the broadest backdrop to our work with others.

In the great Indian book of timeless wisdom, the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna tells Arjuna that when we start loving things more than we love persons, our lives become contaminated by greed and selfishness. Today we are discovering it is not just our lives but our whole shared Earth, its seas, land and atmosphere, that become contaminated by human selfishness and greed. The path of return that Krishna shows Arjuna is the path of *love*: love for our fellow beings, the nature that surrounds and supports us, and the sacredness of life.

As we finish this short discussion, we wonder how you are feeling now about some of the many issues the world is facing and how that relates to your professional work, as well as your personal lives. There are many opportunities to discuss some of these questions, from sessions run by the different professional bodies that are increasingly tackling such concerns to free global communities like the Climate Coaching Alliance, where people come together to explore our responsibilities. We look forward to seeing and hearing from you. Thank you for reading.

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Coaching Toxic Leaders

The word "toxic" brings negative feelings and images into our heads and heart. In Hindu mythology, Lord Shiva was able to not only collect all the toxicity from the ocean but stop it at his neck to prevent it from harming himself and others. But what does the word "toxic" actually mean? It is something which is harmful or poisonous. It can also refer to materials which damage the environment or relationships which are harmful or abusive.

Venom is considered toxic. It is produced by many animals, such as snakes, scorpions, and spiders. In animals, it is a mechanism used to facilitate hunting for food and self-defence from predators. Its effects can vary from mild to very severe and can often be life-threatening. A spear in the hands of an ancient human could have been perceived as toxic by the animals he/she hunted. The antidote to treat snake venom is called antivenom. This medication contains a minuscule amount of the same venom, which is seen as harmful. Similarly, there is a blood thinner which uses the venom obtained from the Brazilian pit viper.

When a toxin comes in, it affects specific parts of the body. In an organisation with toxic leaders, toxicity spreads everywhere by means of culture, interactions, and followership. Toxic leaders affect the organisation with a culture of fear and retribution. Hence, it is important to look at diagnosing and remedying it. As coaches, turning toxic leaders around is a challenge we will probably face sooner or later. Identifying them is not an easy task as they often come across as strong, decisive, and even charming. If they occupy high positions, their proven record can be a red herring. In this article, we will examine the idea of toxic leaders from different angles and see if even toxic leaders could have some redeeming element.

The first task on hand is to understand their broad characteristics and identify them. Jack Welch, who was considered a fabulous leader, has in many cases been held up as a toxic leader

after he retired from GE when he held sway over a large number of people inside and outside his company. Some of the traits of toxic leaders are

1. **Narcissism:**

    Many of the features of toxic leaders can be related to *narcissism*. As with most traits, there is a spectrum. Those at the high end are arrogant, overconfident, self-entitled, and aggressive. They want to be constantly in the news and in front of the arc lights. They want not just attention but fawning adulation from others. Those on the lower end of the spectrum lack conviction and self-confidence and could be very timid. (*Note: narcissism could manifest as covert in addition to the grandiose – characterised in all cases by the narcissist putting his/her needs and feelings above others*)

2. **Lack of Empathy and Caring:**

    Empathy is both being aware of one's own and other's emotions as well as processing and communicating them appropriately. Caring involves putting others' welfare at least on par with yours. Toxic leaders do not pay much attention to their own feelings and emotions and can be oblivious to what others are feeling. They may often dismiss them if they are not appreciative, adoring or concurring.

3. **Poor Communication:**

    Toxic leaders can be obnoxious and dismissive in their interactions, especially with team members and direct reports. They may, at times, be overly sweet, but to those who are not their acolytes, it will be seen as false and saccharine. While most toxic leaders are in your face, you do find some wolves hiding under sheep's clothing.

4. **Inconsistent behaviour:**

    There is generally an inconsistent pattern of behaviour where the response of toxic leaders takes into account their own goals, state of mind and perspectives. This leads to an inconsistency in their expectations from others. When combined with the above three aspects, this leads to favouritism, unfairness and general unpredictability, putting the people around them on pins and needles. Those close to them may have to handle the fallouts of these behaviours and "*manage*" them.

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5. **Manipulation:**

They will try to pull a third person into your conflict, typically to reinforce their own opinion or position. They will try to make you doubt your own perspective and reality, often by twisting facts or insisting that things you remember did not actually happen. Frequently demeaning, intimidating, bullying, or belittling others are commonly associated behaviours. Narcissists have good emotion-recognizing capabilities, which they use to manipulate others for their own benefit.

6. **Microaggression:**

A lot of toxicity is subtle. In Transaction Analysis, this would be equivalent to no strokes. This is sometimes more devastating than a negative stroke. Being made to feel invisible, worthless, or minuscule without a word being spoken is very traumatic. In this subtle avatar, toxic leaders will feign victimhood and make the other person feel guilty. Some of the actions include ignoring a question, pretending not to see the person or failing to provide any feedback. They maintain a cloak of secretiveness and create chaos by withholding information, feigning ignorance, or plainly denying facts or prior communications. Subtle toxicity makes it easier to simply deny any prior action or decision. This is often unwittingly exhibited by many leaders, but the toxic ones use it consciously and weaponise it.

7. **Disregards for Safety**

A toxic leader may prioritise their interests over the safety and well-being of others, including their team. This can lead to not just unhealthy working conditions but even worse situations. It could be dangerous. The ongoing saga at Twitter or the Capitol Riots are examples where leaders expect blind faith from their followers to an extent where the mental well-being and, at times, even physical well-being of those followers are put at risk.

Having seen many of the patterns which make leaders toxic, let us see if this is an incurable disease or if it is possible to recover. Toxic leaders grab and hold to try to demonstrate power. When they leave, their legacy continues to maintain a lot of the toxins in the organisation, which need to be actively left behind. They need to be actively cleaned.

Antidotes to this Toxicity

It is seen that most people do have a conscience. However, toxic leaders live in a world which is pretty black and white. Those who support them are white knights in shining armour. Those against them are the blackguards and the vilest of villains. This leads to a definite lack of people who can articulate their independent thinking and diversity- as such; these people are cast off. They also like to show off and are competitive. Slowly by building trust, these are aspects which can work in favour of reducing the toxicity in these leaders. Of course, as good coaches, we need to be aware of other conditions like manic depression or bipolar disorder and refer them to the appropriate professionals who are trained to address that. Even if one is trained in those spheres, we still need to take off our coach hats and put on the other hats.

1. **Non-violent Communication:**

Non-violent communication is one of the most effective ways to foster compassion. It can be applied to work and personal settings as it helps people rethink and restructure how they express themselves and listen to others. It is a framework for communicating what we feel and what we need in a manner where we will be understood. In the book "*Giving from the heart – Natural Child,*" Marshall Rosenberg, the founder of this powerful technique, describes it as "*A specific approach to communication - speaking and listening - that leads us to give from the heart, connecting us with ourselves and with each other in a way that allows our natural compassion to flourish.*"

The four stages involved in Non-violent Communication are observations, feelings, needs, and requests. This method worked wonders for a sincere country CXO client who was given strong feedback by his subordinates via his superiors. Kick-started by authentic communication to his team members and peers of his intent to recalibrate his treatment of them and to mutually rework their ways of working, he was able to draw them into being open to his perspectives as well as understand and accept their perceptions of his previous leadership style. De-personalizing the feedback and dealing with it objectively with the long-term leadership outcomes in mind was the necessary preparation.

2. Empathy:

Social science researchers distinguish between various parts of empathy. Empathy is often described as seeing things through someone else's eyes or walking in another person's shoes. However, it is a lot more complex than that. Empathy consists of three components. To truly practice empathy, however, all three parts are required.

2.1 Cognitive Empathy overtly understands how the other person feels and speculates on what the other person's thoughts at that moment are. Cognitive empathy helps you notice that something is wrong with your team member and that she/he is no longer speaking up and sharing ideas in meetings. This deals with thoughts.

2.2 Emotional empathy is when you hear your team member being told that her/his idea was ridiculous and it would never work, and you can imagine what the hurt and embarrassment feel like for them. This part deals with feelings.

2.3 Compassionate Empathy or Empathic Action was described by Daniel Goldman in his seminal book, Emotional Intelligence, as *"With this kind of empathy, we not only understand a person's predicament and feel with them but are spontaneously moved to help if needed."* Compassionate empathy is when you are moved to action to help alleviate the pain of your team member.

There are several ways in which leaders can show empathy. Leaders need to have genuine empathy. They cannot pretend and expect that the pretence will not be noticed. To create a positive effect, there has to be a sincere effort to observe, note, and respond authentically to others. This will convey empathy and help identify and address the problems, which will help make the workplace more congenial and, consecutively, more productive. Some ways in which leaders can show empathy include: listening actively and attentively without interrupting or planning what they will say next; sharing their own experiences; using body language and non-verbal communication that shows they are listening; valuing and appreciating feedback and thanking the person sharing it for both the effort and the courage to speak up; acknowledging the feelings of all the stakeholders; asking open questions to gain a deeper understanding of the other person's perspective; sharing personal experiences that are relevant to the situation; offering help and support when needed; being aware of the personal boundaries

of your team members and respecting them is vital if one intends to express empathy; refraining from making assumptions about someone else's experience or motivations; and, owning up to mistakes and apologising to others if there was a wrong assumption or mistake.

When you have a bucket full of muck, it needs to be cleaned up completely before you can fill it again. That is not an effortless process. On the other hand, you cannot simply let the dirt settle and put clean things on top. They will end up mixing with each other sooner or later. Leaders go to the other extreme of pleasing others and might, when in high positions, don the cloak of toxic leaders. Toxic leaders become very visible people to be emulated for success in the organisation. Toxic leaders are strong decision-makers. Their need to display their strength often results in ill-thought plans, which may be detrimental to the welfare of their stakeholders. Hence coaching toxic leaders is a tough but important agenda for coaches.

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Lam, Stepanie.

Culture Matters for Coaching?!

I am quite lucky. Since I have learnt coaching till now, I have coached individuals from thirty-seven different nationalities. It covered six continents except for Antarctica. Many people have asked me different questions or tips about "*How to coach your clients with different cultures*?" or *"Does the culture matter for coaching*?"*. In fact, I am very interested in this subject. In order to understand the client's perspectives and provide the most comfortable, safe space for them, I did spend a few years studying different journals, articles and books. I will continue to work on this piece of work in the near future. In this article, I will be sharing some personal experiences, and I hope they are of help to the readers.

In 1964, Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian philosopher, pointed out in his findings from the study of media theory that even though there are seven billion people in the world from myriad different cultures, we live in a global village where events taking place 10,000 miles away would seem as close as events happening in the next street. As a matter of fact, the forces of globalisation are dramatically changing the environment around the world.

For instance, Covid-19. It is a global health crisis involving economic, political and cultural influences and power struggles that are working across national boundaries. Social distancing and lockdown arrangements even affected all organisational culture, strategy planning and our individual daily lives - our well-being, our beliefs and values, our habits, our behaviours, our intentions and our action plans. We are all involved, and none of us can escape from it.

According to Collins Cobuild English Dictionary, *culture* is a particular society or civilisation, especially considered in relation to its beliefs, ways of life or art, and it is to be important for the development of people's minds. A well-known anthropologist Kluckhohn (1951),

defined culture as consisting of patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups. It includes their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e.historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values.

Do We Have to Consider "*National Cultures*" in Our Coaching Conversation?

Before making the judgement, I recalled a funny memory. When I studied in Japan and worked in a Japanese company, my head used to always keep nodding, up and down, with the sound "*hai*" (a Japanese word) during the conversation. Nodding is a gesture of politeness, and it embodies Japanese culture. To me, it also means that I'm listening and answering "*yes*" for acknowledgement.

The Chinese also have a similar habit - in Hong Kong, we nod our heads up and down to mean "*yes*" with the sound "*en*". And when we shake our heads from left to right, it means "*no*". I think these gestures are universal. However, one day, when I had a casual talk with one new teammate who was from India, I felt very puzzled and confused. When I spoke with her, her head was shaking non-stop, but she was smiling or laughing. After a few minutes, I did ask her, "Is there anything wrong? Why it looked like you agreed with my conversation by smiling, but you also shook your head. Did I say something wrong?"

After she explained, I realised that the Indian gesture is just the opposite. When they shake their heads from left to right, it means "*yes*". We laughed for a while, and this experience let me know that no one rule applies to all, including the so-called "*common sense*". Indeed, it made me confused, and I hesitated about whether I should continue my conversation with her. We have to respect and understand otherwise; it will trigger unnecessary miscommunication, misinterpretations, and even self-doubt. It is one funny example of national culture. It is also a fact that differences among national cultures have important implications for everyone; because of cultural differences, ways of communication that are effective in one country might be ineffective in another.

Everyone is unique. We all have our own unique characters, preferences, styles, motivations, needs and emotional pulse. Is it related to culture? Maybe or maybe not. Different cultures can have different values, beliefs, practices and behaviours. Those differences can be tangible and intangible in nature. However, this "*mindset*" can permeate throughout the whole person – mind, heart and action. It may influence the decision, organisational cultures and management practices. Personality is one of the key factors in understanding my clients. Hence, there is no absolute right or wrong if it is not related to ethical issues, as there is no one approach which is the best for coaching and coaching supervision. We only can follow the flow. Be a reflective partner with our presence for our clients and OURSELVES at that moment. Coaching and coaching supervision are not one-way traffic. Sometimes, we will ignore ourselves as a human. "*Who we are is how we coach and how we supervise.*" As indicated by the EMCC competencies, a supervisor's capacity relates more to how a person is being than what they are doing.

Honestly speaking, there is no one set formula to coach. Coaching is not a robotic process. We are human – clients and coaches too. Somewhere along the journey of our lives, we all desire to be understood and be felt valuable, not just by fixing problems. If we want to have a mastery level of coaching skills, we still have many good ways to develop ourselves. It is because everything matters, and everyone's lives matter. Being well-prepared is the predominant effective coaching technique to support our clients in attaining the best outcomes possible. From the perspective of the competency, it will be "*Deep Listening Skills*". It looks like an inner compass – better understanding ourselves and understanding other people.

Why "*Deep Listening Skill*" is the Key?

Everyone knows listening as a skill is important. As professional coaches, how can we develop deep listening skills? How frequently can we pay full attention to listen to what others are saying? How do your listening skills serve you to have effective communication and connect to your clients? Below are two tips to hone your listening skills:

1. **Be Like an Empty Container:**

From my own experience, before going into the coaching session either in person or via a zoom meeting, I will prepare myself for at least five-to-ten minutes. Finding space for myself is fundamental and necessary. Groundwork is critical for my readiness in how I respond to both the whole person of the client and how I notice any little movement or energy shift from time to time. I have to empty myself, reconnect myself - I have to be focused, be centred and be balanced proactively.

I avoid interruption by any external factors, and I clear my mind to be an empty container for my client. If my "*container*" is fully occupied, how can I contain much more important things from that specific client? This process is the same as the concept propounded by Marie Kondo's in her book, T*he Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*: T*he Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing.* Kondo is convinced that "*tidying your home will help you to find the mission that speaks to your heart.*" In the same way, once I empty my container, I have more space for listening and sensing, and this has a positive, holistic effect on the coaching session.

Mastery of coaching presence is a life-long learning journey. Since 2011, I have been learning Christian meditation (Contemplative prayer). It has developed a regular practice of sustained mindfulness and increased my empathy and love for others. It also enables me to be a calm human with an appreciation glass to see my client as a human. I do not work simply on getting the task done and not for my own interests or benefits.

When I '*maintain presence'*, I am able to host a psychologically safe space for my clients; I am able to connect with them easily. Deep listening from myself first. Getting in touch with my inner voice and my heart to understand my own needs and rebuild trust in myself and my instinct. A healthy mind is crucial. Physical wellness cannot be ignored. A holistic person is connected to their body, mind, and soul. If the container is broken, how can I be of service to my client?

耳 Ear/Listening
眼 Eye/Observe
王 Respect Other
心 Heart/Focus Out
聽

2. Make Use of the Five Senses:

The Chinese character for listening, "Ting", as depicted above, captures the true essence of what it means to *listen*. The characters on the left, from top to bottom, mean '*use both your ears to listen and respect the other person*.' The characters on the right, again from top to bottom, mean '*use ten eyes to observe the other person and keep an open heart*'.

How can a coach integrate the above character to ask powerful questions? When is the right moment to ask challenging questions? It is all based on the coach's ability to listen to what the client is saying about who she/he is. The coach has a strong curiosity to explore the client's emotions and the way the client perceives the world, which includes her/his beliefs, values, perspectives, assumptions etc.

As discussed above, an empty mind is critical. If I respect the client, I will not judge what the client is saying. I will not indulge in selective listening. Even though dead air happens, I still believe everyone is resourceful and capable. I can let go of myself and give sufficient time for

the client to think. Coaching is a process and also a learning journey which has an impact on a person looking to grow and overcome challenges to have stronger personal awareness, make wiser decisions and lead more contented and fulfilled lives.

When I was young, I travelled to more than twenty-five countries - I have backpacked, I have hiked and scuba-dived too. Travelling made me understand the world and gave me a sense of self-awareness. The more cities I visited and the more people with whom I communicated, the more I became aware of the little things in my own mind. This exposure developed in me a strong curiosity about most things, including people. I remember an experience I had while travelling in Italy. I had taken the train from Pompeii to Florence by myself. I did not know Italian. On the train, two men were talking. After listening to them for two hours, I felt I understood what they were talking about. Then, I asked them, "*Are you talking about xxx*?". They were so surprised. Of course, I was not able to understand all that they were saying, but from their facial expression, tone of voice, the pace of their speech, body language and some keywords, I guessed what they were talking about, and I clarified it with them. Deep listening is more about observation, paying full attention and making a lot of effort and concentration on both the verbal and nonverbal language using the five senses. I listen to understand but not to judge.

Hence, the Chinese character "Ting" teaches me how I can and am listening to others. If I can use ten eyes to observe, two ears to listen, and my whole heart to focus on the other person with respect, I will truly understand and truly demonstrate deep listening skills to what the others are saying.

In fact, what is most important in the coaching process? How can I understand my client better? Culture matters, but at this moment, I think every single life matters. Everyone is like a book with different stories, backgrounds, experiences, values, beliefs, dreams, regrets, visions, missions, etc. As a coach, we can demonstrate child-like curiosity to understand the person - the holistic person, which is the most important during every single session.

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Mpotulo, Nobantu.

Ubuntu Coaching in Supporting Coaching in Evoking Awareness

Introduction

Coaching is one of the most effective modalities in developing leaders, executives and teams to be adept in their leadership roles. Coaching is a very intimate, human-centred approach to supporting others to be whole and helps set the stage for emergence. It is about partnering with clients, co-creating with them, and affirming and challenging them simultaneously. Similarly, coaching is about dealing with the tip of the iceberg with the intention of revealing more of what is below the water-level mark. *What is coaching exactly?* Two coaching definitions bring coaching alive for me; one is the definition by Doug Silsbee, and the other is The International Coach Federation's (ICF**)** definition of coaching.

Silsbee defines coaching as *a relationship in which one person is primarily dedicated to serving the long-term evolution of effectiveness and self-generation in the other.* The ICF definition of coaching is *partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.*

In both these definitions, the client is the central and the most important figure. This is in line with Carl Rogers' client-centred theory. *The client-centred theory emphasises positive regard and unconditional acceptance of clients.* In this paper, I will explore how Ubuntu Coaching helps to support coaches in applying the ICF core competency 'Evokes Awareness'– core competency # 7.

What is Ubuntu?

Mr Nelson Mandela once said about Ubuntu, "I*n Africa, there is a concept known as 'Ubuntu' – the profound sense that we are human only through the humanity of others; that if we are to accomplish anything in this world, it will in equal measure be due to the work and achievement of others.*"

Whilst Bishop Desmond Tutu says, "*A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished".*

Ubuntu Coaching

Ubuntu Coaching is the ability of the coach to co-create fully with the client as far as the client's hopes and aspirations are concerned. This implies a deep sense of connection, compassion, care, and curiosity about who your client is. This creates magic between the coach and client, resulting in success.

Ubuntu coaching brings forth an interdependence of thoughts, feelings, and beings connecting coaches and clients deeply. Thich Nhat Hanh referred to this connection as *inter-beingness.*

Ubuntu Coaching and ICF Core-Competency 7: Evokes Awareness

In my role as a coach, coach supervisor, mentor coach and trainer of coaches, I have discovered the following as pitfalls in coaching that result in a disconnect between coaches and clients. Trying too hard to drive the client towards reaching a solution: Marcia Reynolds refers to this as *'coaching the problem and not the person*. ' For me, this is the over-emphasizing of the WHAT at the peril of the WHO.

Over-summarising, reframing and paraphrasing: Cinnie Noble, in her Cinnergy Model, addresses this so well in the Library of Professional Coaching, where she shares research she conducted where most clients indicated that reframing, summarising, and paraphrasing did not contribute to their growth:

1. Using body language that is not mirroring the client's body language and focusing too much on the content because content can be very seductive.

2. Not being curious enough and talking too much, and not holding silence and space for the client.

3. Being in performance mode and trying to focus on asking powerful questions as well as fielding too many questions to the client.

Evokes Awareness – Core-Competency 7

Definition: Facilitates client insight and learning by using tools and techniques such as powerful questioning, silence, metaphor or analogy.

1. Considers client experience when deciding what might be most useful
2. Challenges the client as a way to evoke awareness or insight
3. Asks questions about the client, such as their way of thinking, values, needs, wants and beliefs
4. Asks questions that help the client explore beyond current thinking
5. Invites the client to share more about their experience at the moment
6. Notices what is working to enhance client progress
7. Adjusts the coaching approach in response to the client's needs
8. Helps the client identify factors that influence current and future patterns of behaviour, thinking or emotion
9. Invites the client to generate ideas about how they can move forward and what they are willing or able to do

10. Supports the client in reframing perspectives
11. Shares observations, insights and feelings without attachment that have the potential to create new learning for the client.

In Ubuntu Coaching, we use a model I developed using the acronym RASEA, outlined below:

1. Receive:

When a guest arrives in an African home, the guest is treated with the highest respect and dignity. The family hosting the guest regards the visitor as the most important person. The family sacrifices for the person and gives up privileges for the family members. I learnt from most friends from India that most households treat guests as God. In isiZulu, when we greet in the South, we say Sawubona. This means that I see you, your strengths, hopes, dreams, and aspirations. I see your ancestors, too and whatever struggles you might be experiencing. When Receive applies in coaching, the client becomes the most important person out of the approximately 7.5 billion people in the world. To receive the client this way, the coach must be fully present, apply mindfulness, bring a heart-centred approach to coaching, and embody a coaching mindset proposed in the ICF core competencies. As we receive our clients this way, we provide psychological safety and engender a relationship characterised by trust. This helps our clients to cultivate presence in the *Here and Now*. From the beginning of the coaching relationship, the client's awareness is cultivated and enhanced.

2. Appreciate, Acknowledge:

Appreciate and, acknowledge, emphasise the significance of being of service to the clients. This stage of Ubuntu Coaching extends the Zulu greeting, *Sawubona (I see you)*. This step ensures that we do not take our clients for granted. We appreciate them for choosing us as their partners. We appreciate and acknowledge them for their courage to be vulnerable and to solicit the coach as the thinking partner. We explore what matters to the clients and co-create the coaching conversation's path. Embodying a coaching mindset, cultivating trust and safety,

and actively maintaining presence and listening are the ICF core competency that the coach utilises in this stage. To heighten being in the here and now, I practice before coaching meditation, breathing, walking in nature and conscious censoring to support myself in being present.

3. Summarize:

Through active and deep listening, we enable our clients to see what they say. We see them. They see themselves and can see what they say. Recently a client I was coaching started crying, and on inquiring about the tears, she mentioned that for the first time, she experienced seeing herself. The possibility to summarize effectively is encouraged by the coach's ability to tune in deeply internally, tune in to the client's space and tune in deeply to the interpersonal space between the coach and the client. This three-way attunement enables us to be fully awake to what the client is saying, the non-verbal cues, the metaphors and figures forming for the client. To be in tune with our intuition as coaches, we have to coach from the heart and our roots. In summarizing, we do not just repeat what the client is saying; we connect to what the client expresses somatically. This embodied response only comes when we are entirely in tune with the interpersonal space. This becomes like a dance in the moment with the client, a dance that is not choreographed or rehearsed. As we dance in the moment with the clients, the client starts to hear themselves as the coach asks exploratory questions. Instead of coming from their head, their responses come from instinctual intelligence (*deep knowing*). We recognize and acknowledge that the interpersonal space is an entity and a living organism.

4. Evoke Awareness:

This step emerges when we focus on coaching the person and not the problem. Through attuning and listening deeply, we are enabled to listen deeply to the truth that arises for our clients. We do not attend to only what is said; we also focus on the moment's immediacy. What are the non-verbal cues, the wisdom of the interpersonal space and what is resonating in the limbic system between the coach and client? We observe, we share just-in-time observations with the client, and we do not interpret; we have to be non-judgemental and curious about the client. The importance here is for the coach to adopt a *beginner's mind* to abandon being an expert and coach from a not-knowing stance. As we do this, the capacity of our clients to find resolution expands. Embodied presence is essential in this stage.

5. Ask:

The coach stays curious and asks powerful questions to get the client to solve the issue and expand their thinking. The critical competencies here are active listening, presence, pausing, allowing for silence and reflection. The coach has to maintain neutrality and not be attached to the responses. It is critical to avoid leading the client and asking open-ended questions. The client's fog starts to lift through deep explorations, and clarity, energy, and a movement to take action surface.

RASEA is illustrated in the diagram below:

Mindfulness
- Emotions
- Sensations
- My bias
- Evoked

Curiosity
- Gestures
- Tone of Voice
- Silence
- Breathing

- Observe
- Share just-in-time
- observation
- Do not interpret
- No judgment
- Curiosity

Systems Thinking
- Stakeholders
- Work Environment

Diagram segments: Self, Client, Environment
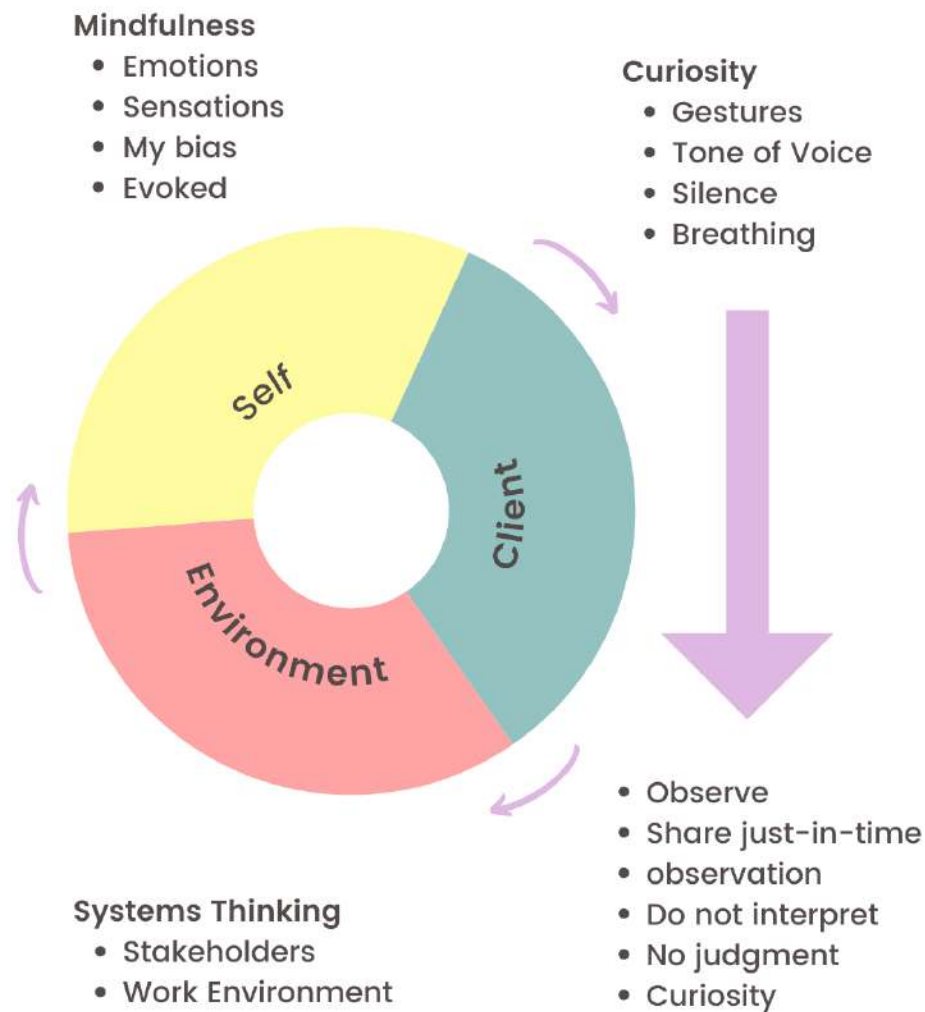
Ubuntu coaching promotes accessing heart qualities and has these qualities as principles guiding coaches to work with clients. The *7cs* we see in Ubuntu Coaching are compassion, caring, curiosity, co-creation, courage, connectedness and commitment to action. Whilst these principles are the main qualities of the heart, the 7cs are a commitment to act to ensure that clients implement measures, take responsibility, and hold themselves accountable. In applying the principles of compassion and caring, we use unconditional positive regard for our clients. We see our clients as able and good, similar to us, who have hopes, dreams and aspirations, courage, vulnerability and trust they show to the coach with their issues. The partnership between the coach and client enables a process that promotes co-creation as the coach is curious and asks powerful questions to raise the client's awareness and reveal. This '*heart work*' is embedded in the Ubuntu Coaching Mantra: *See More, Hear More, Love More, Illuminate More, Be More and Do Less.*

Conclusion

Evoking awareness in our clients does not happen organically - there has to be preparation before the coaching session. As coaches, we have to bring a state both somatically and mentally that helps us tune in with clients. These would be regular practices that a coach embarks on before, during, and after a coaching session. This helps to ground the coach and enable connection with the heart and the body. As we bring about this resourceful state, we are able to enhance limbic resonance with our clients, and they also integrate the head, heart, body and soul. Finally, coaching is not about following a script and aiming to mark all the ICF core competencies. The body is always the truth-teller - resource the body to nourish the mind, and you will create magic.

About the Author:

Nobantu Mpotulo is passionate about supporting people through their journey of development and transformation. She has been one of the few privileged people that realised from the tender age of sixteen that her purpose in this world was to be a Healer. Nobantu has been coaching leaders, executives and teams for more than twenty years. She is accredited by the ICF as a master coach, and she is a process facilitator, a facilitator of peace circles, and an organisational development facilitator. She developed Ubuntu Coaching, a coaching approach based on the ancient African wisdom, Ubuntu. She can be reached at www.linkedin.com/in/nobantu-mpotulo-259b334

Mukerjee, Pradeep.

Unconditional Positive Regard…Mere Words?

When I began my coaching journey more than fourteen years ago, I truly enjoyed the holistic approach to coaching. The focus was on how the coach came across as a "person" during the process of coaching. While I appreciate and understand that, to learn anything, there is a need to break down the "whole'" into parts, focus on and learn each part, and then assemble the parts to recreate the "whole", there is always a possibility that the reconstruction of the "whole" may not get as much emphasis as the focus on the parts.

I think I need to break that sentence into parts if I have any hope of communicating to the reader what I mean. I am sure we all remember the time when we were learning how to drive. I hope I was not the exception when any attempt to make the car move would stall thanks to the lack of coordination between the clutch and the accelerator (if you are even half my age, chances are you learnt on those machines which tested your coordination skills before the automatics were invented). So, the initial focus was on getting the car to move with very little attention to the road and environment around you. Once the car got moving, then the attention shifted to how to steer the car without bumping into anything or any person. It is only over time, and with lots of practice and getting honked at, that I got to appreciate that driving a car involved a lot more than clutch and accelerator coordination, steering, avoiding accidents etc. It involves judging distances and speed, keeping an eye on your surroundings as you drive, anticipating what other drivers and pedestrians will do, and recognizing the road is not just for you but for a multitude of others who are in vehicles or on foot. In fact, I think these aspects are a lot more important to drive safely and effectively than what was focused on during the learning phase. What is learnt initially becomes unconscious expertise over time.

Coaching, for me, is very much like that. While the training does focus on various competencies, effective coaching is all about a *genuine* interest in the person you are coaching,

understanding that person, and bringing to bear all the competencies in the most appropriate manner that helps the person develop in areas she/he would like to. It is not about just displaying the individual competencies; it is about bringing the competencies together in your behaviour that is most effective for the person you are coaching.

This is succinctly captured in the one competency: "*Establishing Trust & Intimacy with Client*". Specifically, within that, as elaborated in the ICF Competency Model, having respect for the client and holding the client in "*unconditional positive regard*". Trust is something that can exist at many levels; trust in another's knowledge or capabilities, trust in another's intention, trust in another's sincerity, and trust in another's commitment. Unconditional positive regard to me means to trust in another person, period. At all levels and on all dimensions, one can trust another person. This emanates from, or one could argue leads to, respect for the other person accepting the other as she or he is holistic. And, in my experience speaking personally, the one thing that comes in the way of doing this is our proclivity to judge people. Let me illustrate:

I recall coaching a client who always wanted to discuss how I would deal with some specific challenge he was dealing with or had dealt with in the recent past every time we met. Initially, while I tried to tell him that my experience was irrelevant as my context and his context was not the same, I humoured him when he insisted, which he always did. I did call it out after a couple of sessions. I explained that if we continue to discuss specific, transactional items, the coaching is not going to be effective as it is not going to lead to any learning and change in behaviour, which is the aim of coaching. His response floored me. He went on to explain the principles he had picked up from my experiences and also gave me a few instances of how he dealt with situations differently because of our conversations. He told me that his preferred learning style was from the experiences of others and hence, his focus on my experiences. I had totally misjudged his intentions. Once I understood where he was coming from, we had a good conversation about my reservations on the effectiveness of the approach to accomplishing his goals from coaching; he understood and became more receptive to the coaching approach. The conversations became much more effective. I obviously reflected a lot on what I could have done differently to avoid such a situation. I used to ask myself whether I explained coaching well during contracting, whether I inadvertently came across as an '*expert*', which led him to believe my experiences would be worth emulating or did I not fully demonstrate the competencies of trust,

presence, asking questions etc. My reflections led me to the core issue at heart, i.e. I questioned his intentions when he wanted to know about my experiences. That was making a '*judgement*'. And that, to me, was wrong. What helped us get back on track was my direct communication on the pitfalls of the approach he was taking. The fact remains, however, that I had made a judgement. And when we make judgments, it shows. Fortunately, my respect for his curiosity, his incisive questioning, my listening, and his presence helped balance the judgement (which he said he had not experienced). Still, I was not in tune with his learning preference and had made a judgement based on what I believed coaching was and was not. Driving the car on the coaching road, I had misread the intentions of my client.

In another coaching assignment, the client and I explored the beliefs the client had about networking proactively and connecting with people, a competency his job required as he had just gotten into a role where he needed to manage a function for multiple countries. In our second conversation, when we got into action, the client came up with an action that made sense, and I got into the questions about structures and support that may help him with the actions etc. I could tell from his response that, as far as he was concerned, the conversation on that topic was over. I sensed that and did not proceed, thinking that if he did not go through with the action, we could take it up in the next conversation. In our next meeting, not only did he tell me about how he implemented the action we had discussed, but how the action opened his eyes to the extent to which his self-limiting beliefs were coming in the way of his effectiveness in relating to people. We actually ended our engagement on the third conversation. When we finally did the closure conversation with his sponsor and the client, his boss confirmed that he had been seeing a significant change in the client reaching out to people and connecting with them, which was the main objective for which I had been engaged as a coach. I must confess I was totally taken aback. As I reflected on that experience, I was again judging the sincerity of the client to commit to action, and I was disturbed by my inability to discuss the actions threadbare in the manner I was taught during my MCC training. But frankly, I was wrong, and my feelings and views on whether the coaching went as per the process taught were immaterial. I should have sensed the client's commitment in his mannerisms and body language and discerned that he did not require any structures or support to implement the action. Was I listening enough, or was I judging again

or …? While it is easy to say we should have unconditional positive regard for another, our brain does not allow us to do this easily.

We are all very familiar with the role of perceptions in living our lives; we live based on our perceptions of reality. To quote a famous American Philosopher and Environmentalist, Henry David Thoreau, "*It is not what you look at that matters; it is what you see.*" Recently, I heard an audiobook titled *A Thousand Brains* by neuroscientist Jeff Hawkins. In the book, the author explains how we form models of the world in our brains and how we determine our lives and respond to the world based on those models. These models are obviously based on our experiences which include the experiences of people. So, when we have formed models of a person based on our interactions with the person, we tend to see the person as per the model formed. "*He is a well-meaning person or very caring or very humorous……etc. etc.*". Similarly, we have formed models to interpret the actions of people. From my past interactions with people, I have a model which states that asking me for my experiences is tantamount to "*tell me what to do*," which indicates laziness apart from it being '*wrong*' since such a request goes against a coach's ethics. Or, when a person takes something lightly, it indicates a lack of commitment. Such judgments compromise "*having unconditional positive regard*" for another. But if our brain works that way, and worse, if our day-to-day lives require us to assess or judge people in order to do our job well, how are we supposed to stop judging the actions of our clients?

Author Jeff Hawkins also demonstrates how our neocortex predicts what is going to happen next based on the models we have about the situation we are in (including predicting how another will react during our interaction). Our thinking and action are based on those predictions. We also know that our behaviour begets behaviour in response. So how do we ensure that we leverage this cycle of predictions of expected behaviours based on perceptions formed which lead to our behaviours and therefore beget the behaviours from our clients? The only way is to control our perceptions, and that can come if we truly believe inherently in the goodness of the person. I never said it is easy, and neither do I claim to be adequately competent in this dimension.

Some recommendations one could consider:

1. Recognize the cycle and consciously start believing in the goodness of the other even before the first interaction. This is how the cycle goes: perceptions formed lead to the prediction of behaviour, and our behaviour begets behaviour. If the cycle starts with positive perception, the rest follows. Be aware that what we see is what we perceive and may not be reality. What you are seeing of the person you have to coach may not be her/his reality (or, more accurately, according to neuroscientists, her/his perception of reality). Can we empathise enough to understand her/his perception and model of the world, especially relative to the coaching goals?

2. While each ICF competency needs to be practised and honed in, practice the art of understanding, and responding to, the whole person; for example- what drives the person? What helps the person learn? What is the person really interested in accomplishing? What are the values the person cherishes? Why does the person wish to accomplish the goals they have stated? etc - and whatever else you can about the person. The greater the interest you take in the person, the greater the emotional connection, respect and reciprocity in the relationship. These can be natural questions that can be asked during the coaching conversations at relevant times but need to be considered in your approach, the tone of your conversation, the construct of your questions etc.- not artificially but out of respect for the person.

3. Consider ALL people with unconditional positive regard and respect. The more you practice this with people (irrespective of the relationship), the better you can become at it.

4. Lastly, demonstrate all coaching competencies to the hilt. Can these become part of our unconscious self? Like changing gears or braking when appropriate? In my experience, as a coach, we have to work a lot on our own mental models of the world in order to effectively understand others' models. As Michelangelo once said, "*I saw the angel in the marble and worked on setting it free*"; we have to do the same on ourselves first before we can effectively coach others.

Happy Sculpting!

About the Author:

An experienced Management Professional and certified Executive Coach, **Pradeep Mukerjee** focuses on working with organisations and leaders to enhance their effectiveness. He works with organisations on developing people strategies and aligning structure, capabilities, and talent to business strategy. He also works with leaders to enhance their effectiveness through individual, group, and team coaching. He can be reached at www.linkedin.com/in/pradeep-mukerjee-53136a4

Muthukarapan, Cindy.

Mentor Coaching - When The Heart Calls!

Gratitude in Giving and Receiving!

I start this article by sharing a snippet of my start to professional coaching. When I first explored and researched becoming a coach, something inside me illuminated, and I knew I had found my calling. I loved my coach training program, I loved working with clients, helping them achieve their goals, and empowering them to become their best selves, and I loved preparing for and getting credentialed as a coach. A lot of love! Most of these loves lived inside me, uncommunicated to others directly. Although, in hindsight, I do think the inside illumination showed up in many unspoken forms.

My love for coaching grew deeper. One day, I was asked to mentor a group of coaches; of course, my instinctive response was yes! And in my inexperience, I spent hours preparing for a two-hour mentor coaching session - post-session, as I brewed some tea and reflected on the session; what I felt inside me was hard to explain; it was as if someone switched on a light bulb and removed the switch. I knew, I felt, and I loved the dynamics of that session. A voice inside me urged me to develop myself more in this area… and so began my love for Mentor coaching….in this article I share, some insights and learnings from my experiences of almost two decades of Mentor coaching….

ICF Mentor Coaching for an ICF Credential consists of coaching and feedback in a collaborative, appreciative and dialogued process to increase the coach's capability in coaching, in alignment with the ICF Core Competencies and mentor coaching should take place over an extended time (three-month minimum) in a cycle that allows for listening and feedback from the Mentor Coach while also allowing reflection and practice on the part of the individual being mentored.

The intention of the process is coaching skills development. As the process unfolds, mentor coaching is experienced as a personal and interactive process, heart-focused. It drives learning because it goes beyond simply facilitating and teaching technical skills and knowledge.

Through a relationship based on personal support, mentoring provides assistance and feedback and fosters learning and development of coaches-in-mentoring through a process combining similar elements of encouragement, self-management, support and evaluation with learning at the core. Coaching literature and research indicates that while clients learn, coaches do too. This, in turn is reflected in the words of Freire (1990) that "whoever teaches learns in the act of teaching, and whoever learns teaches in the act of learning" Journal of Learning Design 2015 Vol. 8 No. 3 SPECIAL ISSUE: 10th 24 Anniversary (p. 31).

One of the key aspects of mentor coaching is the relationship between the mentor and coach-in-mentoring. From experiences, the process of mentor coaching cultivates, encourages and builds a trusting and supportive relationship, which allows the coach-in-mentoring to open up and share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. This heart-focused approach can lead to deeper learning as the coach-in-mentoring is more likely to engage with the new skills development on a personal level, enhancing their understanding, motivation and engagement in the learning process, leading to better, successful outcomes.

It is not just about achieving goals and success but also about personal growth, inner transformation, and fulfilment.

I share an overview from many coaches that I mentored who years later shared that during the mentoring process of developing coaching skills to MCC, they discovered so much more about themselves - they discovered an awareness of connection with one's inner self, purpose, and meaning in life – evoking and embodying this connection, leading to a more fulfilling and meaningful career and life experiences.

Within this context, the mentor coaching process can significantly influence a person's connection with their inner self, purpose, and meaning in life. From my experiences, here are some ways in which mentoring is linked to spiritual growth and inner wisdom:

- **Supporting inner reflection and self-awareness:** Mentoring can help individuals connect with their inner selves, understand their values and beliefs, and develop a deeper sense of self-awareness. This inner reflection can help them align their personal and professional goals with their spiritual beliefs, leading to a more fulfilling life encouraging mindfulness and presence: Mentoring can help individuals cultivate mindfulness and present-moment awareness. This can help them become more attuned to their inner wisdom and make decisions that align with their values and purpose.

- **Fostering compassion and empathy:** Mentoring can help individuals cultivate compassion and empathy towards themselves and others. This helps them develop a deeper connection with their spirituality and a sense of purpose beyond material success.

- **Facilitating inner transformation:** Mentoring can facilitate inner transformation and growth by helping individuals to overcome limiting beliefs and patterns of behaviour that no longer serve them. This can lead to a greater sense of purpose, meaning, and fulfilment.

Cultivating trust and psychological safety is another critical component of mentor coaching. Psychological safety refers to the sense of trust, openness, and respect that exists in a group or relationship. In the context of mentoring, psychological safety is within the context to which a coach feels vulnerable, and some discomfort and yet is open in sharing their thoughts, feelings, and concerns with their mentor without fear of judgement or retribution.

Here are some reasons I noticed why trust and psychological safety is significant to mentoring coaches:

Encourages open communication: Psychological safety promotes open communication between the coach and mentor. When a coach feels safe, they are likelier to share their thoughts and feelings honestly. This open communication can help the mentor to understand the coach's strengths, weaknesses, and aspirations and tailor their mentoring approach accordingly.

Promotes self-reflection: When a coach feels safe, they are likelier to engage in self-reflection. They can explore their beliefs, values, and assumptions and identify areas to improve. The mentor can help the coach reflect on their experiences, challenge their assumptions, and support their learning journey through self-reflection.

Increases motivation and engagement: Psychological safety increases the coach's motivation and engagement in mentoring. When a coach feels safe, they are more likely to be open to feedback and willing to take risks, experiment with their approach and take ownership of their development.

Fosters a positive learning environment: Psychological safety fosters a positive learning environment. It creates a culture of trust and respect where the coach feels supported and valued. This positive learning environment can help the coach develop their skills and knowledge effectively and enhance their overall learning experience.

In addition, the mentor coaching process is enhanced when there is a commitment to ongoing learning and professional development, familiarity with the latest coaching trends and techniques and being able to help their coaches-in-mentoring stay up-to-date with best practices in the field.

My over two decades of experience in coaching informs me that ongoing learning is vital to coaching and mentoring coaches in their professional development for several reasons.

Firstly, the field of coaching is constantly evolving, with new theories, practices, and technologies emerging regularly. As a result, coaches keep up-to-date with these developments to ensure they provide their clients with the best possible service.

Secondly, ongoing learning is essential for coaches to improve their skills and knowledge. Coaches who engage in regular learning opportunities can develop a broader and deeper understanding of the coaching process, enhance their coaching skills, and gain new insights into their client's needs. This increased knowledge and skill can help coaches work more effectively with clients, leading to better outcomes for the clients and a more fulfilling career for the coach.

Thirdly, ongoing learning is vital for coaches to maintain their coaching credentials. Most coaching organisations require coaches to complete a certain number of continuing education units (CEUs) or professional development hours each year to maintain their credentialing.

I will conclude these few value-adds with a reflection that ongoing learning helps coaches and mentors in multiple ways, mostly staying motivated and engaged in their work and their contributions to self, others and society, leading to greater job satisfaction and better outcomes for them and their clients.

For my ongoing learning, I regularly take feedback from coaches-in-mentoring on what contributes to them being open and engaged with learning and development during the mentoring process; here are a few insights they shared:

- **Trust:** Coaches need to feel that they can trust their mentor to provide them with honest feedback and guidance without judgement. A mentor who is able to establish a trusting relationship with their mentee is more likely to create an environment where the coach feels comfortable asking questions, sharing their challenges, and being open to new ideas.
- **Respect:** Coaches need to feel that their mentor respects their knowledge, skills, and experience. A mentor who is able to acknowledge the coach's expertise and strengths is more likely to create an environment where the coach feels valued and empowered to learn and grow.
- **Heart-focused approach:** Coaches need to feel that their mentor cares about their personal and professional growth. A mentor who takes a heart-focused approach, which means they connect with their mentee on a personal level, understands their needs, and tailors their mentoring to the coach's unique situation, is more likely to create an environment where the coach feels supported and motivated to learn.
- **Feedback and guidance:** Coaches need feedback and guidance to help them identify their strengths and areas for improvement. A mentor who is able to provide constructive feedback, guidance, and support is more likely to create an environment where the coach feels comfortable exploring new ideas, trying new approaches, and taking risks
- **Celebrating success:** It is significant for several reasons when it comes to mentoring and coaching relationships. It reinforces positive behaviour motivating the coach-in-

mentoring to continue to strive for growth and improvement and stay on track to achieving their goals.

- **Learning environment:** Coaches need to be in an environment conducive to learning. A mentor who creates a safe and supportive learning environment encourages curiosity and provides opportunities for reflection and growth is likely to create an environment where the coach is open to learning.

In summary, coaches are open to learning during a mentoring process when they feel the mentoring relationship is based on trust, respect, a heart-focused approach, feedback and guidance, and a supportive learning environment. This support can be invaluable in helping new coaches navigate the credentialing process and develop their coaching skills to add more to the ecosystems they serve.

A mentor coach is someone who has a deep understanding of coaching and is able to share that knowledge and experience in ways that contributes to:

Personalised guidance: A mentor coach provides personalised guidance to help a coach in credential identify their strengths and weaknesses, develop their skills, and achieve their professional goals. This guidance can be tailored to the coach's individual needs and help them become more effective and confident.

Acknowledging success: Acknowledging coaches pursuing credentialing is a way to promote professional development, accountability, recognition, and encouragement within the coaching community. It can help coaches feel valued and appreciated for their contributions and motivate them to continue their efforts towards achieving their goals.

Objective and Personalised feedback: A mentor coach provides objective feedback on a coach's performance, helping them to identify areas for improvement and make adjustments to their coaching approach. This feedback can be invaluable in helping a coach to develop their skills and improve their coaching effectiveness.

Accountability: A mentor coach helps a coach in credential to stay accountable for their progress, goals and commitments by engaging in a partnered, designed approach.

Emotional support: Coaching is an evoking, challenging profession, and a mentor coach provides emotional support and encouragement to help a coach-in-credential navigate the ups and downs of their skillset and confidence in managing diverse clients. This support can be critical in helping the coach to maintain their motivation, energy, and passion for their work. While the development of technical skills and knowledge is crucial, the emotional intelligence and empathy of the mentor coach are equally important for the coach's growth and development.

I conclude this article with a reflection; my role as a Mentor coach started with me eagerly engaging, giving and imparting some knowledge and experience to other coaches. Over the years, my mentoring experiences and contributions evolved to receiving and giving, with the receiving informing my ongoing growth and the light inside me shining brighter - a sense of joy, fulfilment, and connection, a sense of gratitude for the positive energy flows in explained ways and an awakening to the call for something new…

About the Author:

Cindy Muthukarapan is an ICF MCC, internationally recognised and experienced, Executive and Leadership Coach, Director of Education – Coacharya. She has over 20 years of experience in the field of executive coaching, leadership development, and program design. She is an accomplished, sought-after MCC Mentor Coach, Coach Educator and Coach Evaluator supporting emerging and evolving coaches to higher levels. Cindy's approach is authentic, thought-provoking and enlightening - hearts open; clients become inspired to change, driving the results they seek.

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Novak, Klavdija.

Importance of Non-Verbal Listening in Coaching Across Cultures

In the structure of the ICF competencies, *non-verbal listening* - a skill of listening to the client beyond their words - is part of the '*Listening Actively*' competency. It is a reflection of the coach's presence, her/his client-centricity, and curiosity. For me, it is tightly connected with the coach's ability to be empathetic.

Why is this competency relevant? Coaching is a space of trust and safety where the client has the opportunity to stretch and go beyond their usual known ways of thinking and feeling. In this quest, emotions like sadness, fear, anger, surprise, disgust, and different nuances of these, show up and indicate that something important is going on. In coaching, those are valuable moments because they help clients to gain awareness, even insights into what *is*, into their inner world, and explore what is beyond the current awareness.

We are all so very used to suppressing our (*negative*) emotions, even though their intention is to signal important things for us. They show us, for example, that we like something or we do not. That we are actually afraid of something. Or that something does not agree with our values, and so we get angry. These may seem basic findings, but we rarely experience that they connect us with who we really are. The truth, which in coaching often needs to be discovered and explored, is hidden below the surface of the person.

Some of us show emotions more comfortably than others. So, when a client starts speaking slower or faster, when their tone of voice changes, when they stop for silence, when they sigh, shudder, swing their hand, start to gaze, look away, breathe quicker or slower, touch their chest, face, hair, those are the moments when things are happening inside them. Those moments are valuable to explore. The coach should pick them up, stop and see what there is. Help the client just let themselves be.

One challenge here is that clients who are very rational seem to want to quickly move on and run away from those moments because what lies beneath is strong and overwhelming, and they get uncomfortable, sensing things could get out of control. In those moments, it can be quite challenging for the coach to hold the space and the moment longer so that the client could understand what is going on.

Another challenge is that some clients are abundant with words, and it seems like the non-verbal cues are showing up again and again, but the client won't stop talking, so each opportunity is missed because the coach, of course, won't interrupt. But the coach could *gently interrupt* if they feel this is beneficial for the client. They could explain why in their mind, it is important to interrupt and ask to stay in the moment for a while. To have the opportunity to explore if the client wishes to do so.

There is another aspect of non-verbal listening for me, and that is the non-verbal communication of the coach to the client that they are listening. This happens when the client feels that the coach is with her/ him completely with every single cell of her/his body. Witnessing. Without saying a word. Without a nod, even. I have gone through many training sessions in personal development and years of practising Osho meditations. In practising *spiritual inquiry,* I have experienced how non-verbal listening is effective without anything but having the intention to be there fully, curiously, and by listening. Two people sit in front of each other; one speaks, explores, and the other listens without commenting. The body transmits energy that is powerful enough for the other person to feel it.

How to be at our best when listening non-verbally? *Non-verbal listening in both aspects is possible when I immerse myself in the client's moment*. It's like I am a ship made of paper floating on the waves of the ocean. I completely open myself up to receiving with all my senses without any judgement. I let go of everything that is mine, and I go along where the client takes me.

It took a long way for me to achieve this stage. I needed to learn about feelings and emotions, understand my own emotions, why they are happening, and how to process them; observe others, learn how to observe them and what actually to do with the observations; learn to have no expectations and take people as they are, without judgement, without trying to fix something for them. Being brought up in my culture and my family and practising corporate law

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for fifteen years was not helping. What helped was years of practising self-awareness, letting myself be with what is, abandoning the urge to action, and changing the pace of my *doing*. When I finally learned to calm myself completely and listen to my body and my guidance, only then was I able to go along with my clients in complete pacing and empathy.

A word about online coaching and the ability to listen non-verbally: of course, with having another human being on screen, we are a bit impaired. More so if the technology is not working at its best and if people are sitting in the shadows, too far away, or appearing from an unusual angle. Therefore, it is beneficial to instruct the client on how to sit in front of a camera. With a quality connection, however, I have experienced that most of the non-verbal cues can be picked up. I remember watching the line of the client's shoulders or shirt closely to see how the breathing is moving it. For me, in this respect, there is even some benefit to being on screen. On-screen, one can observe the other person closely without coming across as staring, and the coach's non-verbal communication radiates on the other side as well.

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Klavdija Novak, previously a corporate lawyer, is now a business owner, a business trainer and a coach with extensive international practice. She holds the Master Certified Coach (MCC) accreditation from the International Coaching Federation. She is a licensed NLP coach and trainer, a Jungian Coach, a Scrum Master, a certified Lego Serious Play Facilitator, and a Harrison Assessment Employee Development Coach. Her private sector clients come from around the globe, and she trains the European Institutions in Brussels and Luxembourg. She can be reached at www.linkedin.com/in/klavdijanovak

Pandit, Y.V. Lakshminarayan.

Coaching for Leadership Development

During my tenure of nearly fifteen years as Managing Director - India for SHL, a global organisation providing talent management solutions, I consulted with a large number of companies, both MNCs and Indian businesses, in the area of executive/leadership development. We worked with organisations to develop leaders at all levels.

The development process typically involves identifying development areas through assessment/development centres (DCs). Most of the companies had a competency framework which was the basis for the development centres, and the DCs helped identify which competencies were an area of strength and which competencies were areas of development. The next step in the process was to draw up an Individual Development Plan (IDP).

The IDPs typically were built around the **70:20:10 principle**, where 70% of the development inputs were on-the-job experiences, 20% of the inputs were from managers, other leaders, and mentors, and 10% was from classroom training.

As we worked with many organisations on the development of leaders, particularly senior leaders, it became clear to me that inputs from other leaders/mentors and classroom training had limited impact on developing leadership capabilities. Even on-the-job training or job experiences, in many cases, did not play a major role, particularly in the case of senior leaders, since beyond a point, it was not possible to provide a wide range of on-the-job experiences.

The leaders were functionally highly capable, as otherwise, they would not have reached where they had. However, there were significant development opportunities in the areas of behavioural competencies. These could not be developed merely through classroom training, business school programmes and mentors. As I studied this issue in depth and did a lot of research, it became clear to me that coaching is the most effective approach for bringing about a significant behavioural change.

Need for Coaching

Most of the behaviours that needed to change in these leaders were deep-seated, deeply rooted behaviours which they had developed over long years of work. Success and growth in their careers reinforced these behaviours. As they reached the leadership levels, these leaders realised that these behaviours were, in fact, detrimental to further growth and negatively impacted their success as leaders.

Significant changes in the business environment and workforce composition (e.g. more millennials) require major changes in the leadership behaviours of the past. What was considered successful and, in fact, necessary leadership behaviours fifteen to twenty years back are no longer desirable. In fact, they are major roadblocks for the new leaders. As Marshall Goldsmith's book title goes, *"What Got You Here, Won't Get You There"*. This is where coaching plays an important role in leader development. Coaching is very effective in bringing about the major behavioural transformation that leaders very much need to succeed going forward. Developments in neuroscience have reinforced and validated the benefits of coaching methodology in bringing about behavioural transformation in leaders.

In my work with leaders during my tenure with SHL and in my coaching engagements with senior leaders over the past ten years, the major focus for leadership development has been in the following areas: emotional intelligence, developing high-performing teams, working collaboratively with peers and other stakeholders, leading with humility and vulnerability, and resilience. Developing these competencies requires significant behavioural changes in leaders.

Case Study

One of the senior leaders I coached recently, let us call him Ravi (not his real name), was a typical leader who needed to make significant changes in his behaviour. He was the successful head of a business unit within a large global shared services company, part of a major US corporation. He led a team of over fifteen hundred employees, with managers in India and the USA reporting to him. While he was a high-performing leader with a high level of drive for results, his 360-feedback report and feedback from the line manager showed that he was seen as being abrasive, pushy and directive in his style. He did not pay adequate attention to developing the next level of leaders. He was pushing himself and his team very hard, which was causing enormous stress and health issues. His line manager, who was based in the USA, felt that Ravi would benefit from coaching. Based on the feedback reports and a tripartite discussion with his manager and HR, we identified three focus areas for coaching: leading with humility and empathy, developing team members through delegation, and ensuring work-life balance for self and team.

Identifying Coaching Goals

In coaching for the development of leadership competencies, this first part of clearly identifying coaching goals is an important step. In most cases, where the leader's development through coaching is sponsored by the organisation, stakeholders, viz., line manager and HR, play an important role. It is necessary to involve them and get their buy-in to the goals that the coaching engagement would focus on. It would also be important to involve them in a "*mid-term review*" and "*end of engagement*" discussion.

The second important part is the 360 feedback and a personality profile through a reputed instrument. The 360 feedback can be through an anonymous online questionnaire (built around the organisation's competency framework) or through a call with feedback providers (done by the coach). The 360 feedback and the personality profile will give valuable insights that will help to increase the client's self-awareness and identify the areas for development. If a development

(or assessment) centre report is available, that can also be used to form the basis for identifying coaching goals.

Each of the coaching goals is addressed during a coaching session. It is possible that some of the goals are interlinked, i.e. the underlying behavioural issues are similar, and that multiple goals get addressed in a coaching session.

In the case of Ravi, the process of identifying coaching goals increased his self-awareness significantly. In the coaching sessions, it became clear to him that his need to achieve results at all costs, his need for recognition, and his inability to accept setbacks were the main factors driving his aggressive behaviour towards his subordinates. This was also preventing him from trusting his direct reports, delegating, and giving opportunities to them to learn and grow. Underlying these were also his sense of insecurity and fear of failure, which were the bottlenecks leading to derailer behaviours. He committed to making the required changes and agreed to work on a plan to make these changes happen. He came up with steps that he could take to change his leadership behaviours. By the fourth coaching session, significant changes in his behaviour were evident both to himself and his manager. During the "*mid-term review*" with his line manager, it was clear that he was making good progress.

Coaching Competencies

While all the coaching competencies played a role in bringing about positive changes, the coaching competencies that played a critical role in my coaching sessions were *Cultivates Trust and Safety, Listens Actively and Evokes Awareness through powerful questions.*

Establishing trust and providing a safe space for the client was extremely important. We had to delve deep to identify underlying behavioural bottlenecks, viz. the typical iceberg metaphor, exploring the beliefs and values. Acknowledging and respecting the client's unique talents and insights, showing support and empathy, and acknowledging and supporting his feelings, concerns, and beliefs played an important role in establishing Trust and Safety. The client could trust and share his inner anxieties and worries as well as his beliefs and values.

Exploring the client's feelings and emotions and, exploring his perceptions about himself and his "*world view*", listening deeply to both verbal and non-verbal communication (all key elements of *Listens Actively* competency) helped explore and enhance the client's emotional and social awareness.

One of the most important aspects of coaching leaders is coaching the "*who*" of the client, i.e. the person behind the role. While this is important in all coaching engagements, be it life coaching or career coaching or any other type of coaching, it becomes even more important in the case of senior leaders. The main reason for this is that many, if not most, of the senior leaders are constantly focusing on the "*what,*" i.e. the situation or problems they are facing and deciding on what needs to be done or finding solutions to the problems. They are highly task focussed. Most of them do not pay attention to their own self, i.e. their own emotions and feelings. So, it becomes necessary for the coach to connect with and coach the person. As the oft-repeated saying goes, *coach the person and not the problem*. This becomes even more relevant in the case of senior leaders.

In the case of Ravi, as I connected with Ravi the person and also helped him connect with his own self, his self-awareness deepened enormously. He became aware of his own beliefs and attitudes, which were coming in the way of becoming the leader that he was capable of being. It became clear to him that the working style that he had developed in the early part of his career, which in fact, had led to his success, was not relevant in his current leadership role. His further career progression would depend on changing these work styles.

Another important aspect of coaching leaders is to help them "*explore and expand*". Explore their current thinking, feeling, and emotions and help expand their thinking beyond the current situation. This requires powerful questions which challenge the client's current paradigm and current assumptions and evoke awareness.

In Ravi's case, I had to challenge his assumption that his team members would not be able to meet targets without his close supervision. Questions such as "*What would happen if one or two of them failed*?" "*What contingency plans can be developed*?" and "*How can failures be used as a learning opportunity to develop these individuals further*?" helped him to change his mindset towards delegation and come up with effective steps to delegate and develop his next level.

The entire coaching journey was one of partnership. The client, Ravi, decided what he wanted to accomplish in each session and across sessions. As his coach, I partnered with him to support him in his journey. A year down the line, it was heartening to know that he was promoted to the next level of leadership and now leads a much larger team.

Conclusion

Coaching is a very effective approach for developing leadership capabilities, particularly in bringing about behavioural transformation. Most leaders are strong in functional competencies but need development in the behavioural areas of emotional intelligence, leading with empathy and humility, developing team members, collaboration and resilience. By increasing self-awareness and helping the leader explore their beliefs, attitudes and values deeply, the coaching process enables the leader to come up with the steps needed to bring about the transformation. The coach needs to connect with the "*who*" of the leader, help "*explore and expand*" current thinking and current paradigms, and partner in the transformation journey.

About the Author:

Y.V.Lakshminarayan Pandit is a Master Certified Coach (MCC) from ICF and has been coaching senior leaders for over a decade. He has four decades of business experience and has held leadership positions in reputed companies (Unilever, Tata Teleservices, Arvind Mills, Texmaco) across several industries (FMCG, Telecommunications, Textiles). He has nearly a decade of experience in global markets and has lived in Hong Kong and Jakarta. He was the Managing Director-India, for SHL, a global leader in talent management services, for nearly fifteen years. Since 2019, he is the founder and CEO of Pinnacle Leadership Consulting. He can be reached at www.linkedin.com/in/yvlpandit

R, Smita.

Power of Visualisation in Coaching

Visualisation *is the power in you to turn an imagination, a perception, into reality*. Each and everything that we see today around us was first visualised mentally. Visualisation is a deliberate attempt to create a mental image of something. It is a cognitive process for an individual to form a mental representation of a thing, a situation, or a concept that is aspired to be transformed from perception to reality. This imagination can be based on a desired scenario, past experiences, or a combination of both. The visualisation process can be done via-visual(eyes), auditory(ears), olfactory(smell), gustatory (taste), and tactile (sense of touch) processes.

Neuroscience research has shown that visualisation activates many of the same areas of the brain as actual perception. The brain areas that are involved in visualisation are primarily located in the parietal and occipital lobes. The primary visual cortex, located in the occipital lobe at the back of the brain, is responsible for processing visual information from the eyes and is known to be activated during visualisation. The parietal cortex, located in the parietal lobe, is involved in spatial processing and navigation and is also known to be activated during visualisation. The premotor cortex, located in the frontal lobe, is involved in planning and executing movements and is activated during visualisation that involves movement. Additionally, the temporal and prefrontal cortices are also thought to play a role in visualisation. These areas are involved in memory and decision-making. They are respectively activated, and the blood flow in that area increases during visualisation, which involves recalling memories or making decisions based on visual information.

Central Sulcus
Frontal Lobe
Parietal Lobe
Occipital Lobe
Temporal Lobe
Brain Stem
Cerebellum
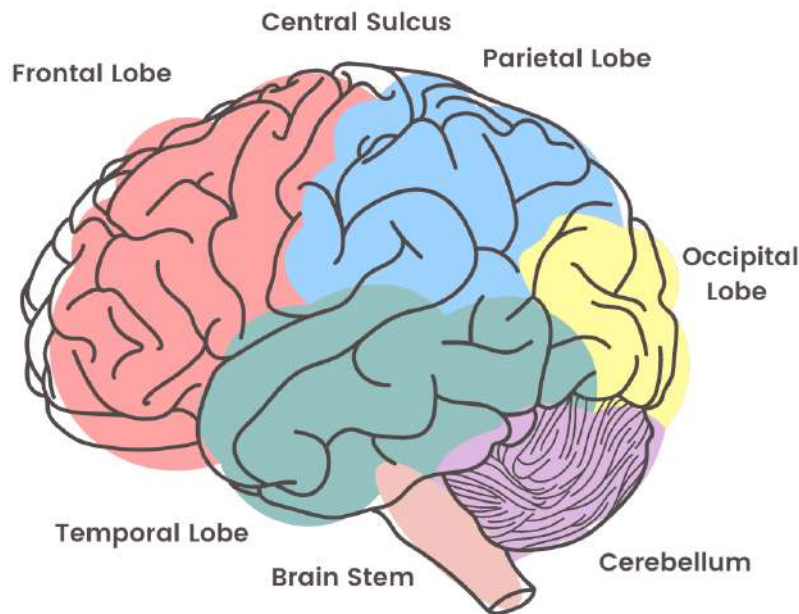
In her book *Creative Visualization*, Shakti Gawain talks about the *"Law of Radiation and Attraction"*. The principle is that whatever we put into this universe will be reflected back. At some point, most humans operate from limited liabilities and beliefs. That is the constant energy we send to the universe, and that is what we attract. A positive attitude would help us in attracting positive energy. She writes about this in her book that we are *"consciously imagining what we want can help us to manifest it in our lives"*. My child's cricket coach, before any match, often would ask the team to visualise that they had won the match, ask them how they felt after having hit a boundary, holding the trophy in their hands, and celebrating the success with the team.

As a child, if I ever uttered something negative, my grandmother would say, "*Goddess Saraswati sits on the tongue once a day, and she grants boons by saying "Tatashthu,"* and hence I would be very careful about using any negative expressions. The logic is the same as granting positive energy to our words. *Visualisation is the process of giving positive energy to our words, thoughts, and actions.*

Take, for example, Rumi's famous saying, "*What you are seeking, is seeking you*". With the power of visualisation, we see the concept of Synchronicity. Carl Jung, in the early 1920s, developed the concept of Synchronicity. Let us understand this with an example- while

dreaming or awake, we imagine that we are meeting a dear friend after a long time, and the next day without any plan, we actually meet the friend.

In Visualization, it has been scientifically researched and proven that as realistic and clear as your mental image, so clear will be the outer experience and outcome. It suggests that vivid mental images produce neuromuscular responses which are similar to those of the actual performance of that activity. This theory is called the Psychoneuromuscular Theory.

Functional equivalence is the visual imagery, and actual physical response shares the same neurophysiological processes; for example, after we win, the neurochemicals released at the time are also released during Visualization of the win, and that makes you feel that you are already a winner. Symbolic learning theory happens during Visualization when the action and alternate solutions are planned well before. When the actual action needs to be done, we know exactly what needs to be done. The mirror neurons in the brain get activated when performing or seeing someone performing, and according to these theories, we have to make our visualisation as vivid as possible.

Affirmations are positive statements that thoughts and imaginations firm. Affirmations help to break the old patterns and negative mind chatter with more positive thoughts and words. It is a powerful technique, one which can transform our attitude and help change what we create for ourselves. For example, if you catch yourself saying, "I *am unable to do this*", replace it with, "*I have the ability and the potential to do this*". Similarly, the thought, "*I don't have enough resources to do a particular task*," when changed to, "*I have the required resources to perform this particular task'*, is powerful.

Visualisation in coaching plays an important role. For me, it starts prior to the session, where I sit with my eyes closed and imagine the client sitting with the intent to be their better version, open and flexible to learn new ways through the questions, getting enlightened with awareness, being able to navigate the path of exploration, and making a choice to take action. The two-minute visualisation about the coaching process- enabling the client to work on themselves, to be intentional about their goals, to let go of what is not serving, and to graciously accept the new learnings - helps me be grounded. As the coach and client build trust in each

other and the coach becomes aware of the client's preference for the visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile processes, the visualisation can be done accordingly.

The Coaching Mindset is one of the new additions to the ICF core competencies. I see a tremendous difference in doing that as it helps me to better manage and regulate my emotions, be absolutely client centred and flexible, and be open and aware of my intuitions. For me, "Embodying the Coaching Mindset" is about visualising the process of coaching, which helps the client move from unconscious incompetence to unconscious competence. The client who appears to be in a disempowered state is either on the path of empowerment or feels empowered by becoming aware, ergo plans the actions from the state of knowing - self or the situation or the other, with conviction.

The client starts the exploration with some sharing and with questions and starts going deeper into the conversation. A part of the sharing is the facts, and some part is about the perceptions or imaginations of the client. The imagining part of the conversation would be a great way to understand if that part stems from a limiting belief, some fears of which the client is totally unaware, and unconsciously the perception and imagination become a reality. By partnering with the client and triggering thoughts about the perceptions in the conversation, the coach Cultivates Trust. The triggered thoughts consciously or unconsciously transmit in our bodies, and their visualisation plays a great role.

The coach and the client constantly partner to creatively visualise the best path to reach the goal. In a formal setting, the visualisation process can be done through the process of closing eyes and imagining what is needed. However, in the coaching process, right from the identification of the goal to transforming the learning into actions, visualisation of the actions first happens in imagination, and later, deliberately, through the power of creative visualisation, thoughts turn into reality.

In coaching, '*metaphors*' play a huge role in visualising a thought, a person, or a situation in some shape or form. Metaphors refer to the use of familiar or complex data or information. The use of metaphors helps in Visualization and can make the coach understand the information; the coach partners with the client to interpret the metaphors, decode, and thereby *"*Evokes

Awareness*". The coach masterfully asks questions beyond the current thinking of the client, which allows the client to visualise and become a better version of themselves.

Reframing is a powerful tool to change our vision of a particular situation or a problem. It can help provide a new perspective on a difficult situation. It can be really useful to change and challenge negative or limiting thoughts and focus on strengths and focus on building. Visualising the positive outcome of reframing helps in the process.

Some ways of Visualization during a Coaching conversation:

1. Visualisation is often used to help clients achieve their goals. The client may feel anxious about a presentation or taking on a new project. The process of Visualization can help the client to focus on the positive outcome, focus on the strengths, possibilities, and opportunities, and that can create motivation and confidence.

2. Visualisation helps the client to focus on the present moment and reduces the stress of the past and anxiety of the future. By visualising how the client feels by achieving the goal, clients focus on the positive aspects, and the attention and intention go on taking action rather than worrying about the limitations.

3. The client may come to discuss the obstacles that prevent them from achieving their goals. The process of Visualization asks them to imagine themselves overcoming a fear or overcoming a difficult situation. This may help the client to develop some strategies for working on the obstacles. The focus may shift from obstacles to possibilities.

4. Visualisation for some would be difficult, as each of us has a different constitution. For a few, it might take a long time, and for a few, it would take a lesser time. The idea is to have a goal, a belief that it will manifest, and be patient so that the goal transforms into reality.

About the Author:

Smita R. is a PCC Certified Coach from ICF, on the way to Mastery, an ACTC from ICF, an EMCC SP, a Mentor, and she is General Manager at Coacharya. She is passionate about supporting organisations in transforming their culture through coaching. Smita is a true believer and advocates that everyone is unique and complete in themselves and has the unlimited potential to achieve their goals - personal and professional. Smita, in her journey to be a coach, has supported people to achieve their goals. A mother of two beautiful children, she resides in Bengaluru. She loves practising yoga, reading, and cooking. She can be reached at www.linkedin.com/in/smita-raghum-39490911

Ramanathan, Ram S.

Designing Your Future in a Confusing World

A constant in the changing scenarios over the years has been the experience of seeing successful people unhappy with having what they have accumulated, doing what they are seemingly doing so well, and being who they are with the masks they wear. To the outer world, they are successful and, therefore, happy. The truth is that they feel unfulfilled, dissatisfied, and frustrated with themselves.

They are the Confused Generation. I empathise since I was one for many years, like a rat running on a treadmill in a rat race with others, all ending up as losers with no winners. I also empathise because I found a way out.

My Story

I was an aggressive, ambitious and reasonably self-aware corporate leader reaching senior levels of a large MNC by my early thirties, becoming a CEO before forty, and helping to build a multi-billion conglomerate in a foreign country before fifty. At fifty, the world around me wobbled and collapsed through no action of mine. A financial crisis in the region bankrupted large companies, one of which I headed. It took another two years to have a serendipitous epiphany that helped me understand many things about myself.

I was invited to join a Vipassana program in Singapore with a hundred others for ten days to meditate in silence. On the eighth day, there was an overwhelming feeling of emptiness, of aloneness, which was calming and revealing. I wish I were *"**Ramana**",* discovering that I was everlasting energy, not finite matter. I was nowhere as evolved. It was an indescribably joyous

feeling that lasted about an hour, one which I could not reproduce for several years. That day, I discovered myself.

I had been a meditator for several years, had dabbled with chakra energisation with some unpleasant results, and trained in and practised Reiki healing. This was very different. I made no effort to get back to the corporate world and instead undertook a monastic journey. I journeyed to the Himalayas multiple times, meditated in hundreds of ways, taught meditation to over 10,000 people across the world, ghost-wrote over thirty books on Vedic scriptures, and then realised that the guru I followed did not walk the talk he preached. With the awareness that wisdom and the guru lie within, I trained to be a professional coach. The coach, healer, and corporate leader came together in unexpected ways, helping me help others through Coacharya, which my son and I founded in 2012. We started with traditional coach training and coaching, thereby establishing ourselves. Then we ventured into systemic and spiritual coaching, which now differentiates us from many others.

Designing the Future

This concept of designing the future as a program is something that emerged from an integration of coaching, healing and energising work that we now apply with teams and individuals, even in our work with corporate leaders. The primary learning outcome of this program is to discover one's life purpose and unleash one's infinite potential through the integration of mind-body matter into one's natural energy through seven simple, practical steps. The Learning Outcomes are:

1. Practise yogic meditation and chakra energisation to integrate mind-body energy systems.
2. Create a GROWTH WHEEL plan for three years.
3. Discover Purpose, Passion, Strengths, Opportunities and Resources.
4. Envision the 65 Back legacy and walk back to the three-year time frame.
5. Compare the three-year plan and walked-back vision, and create Intent as the gap.
6. Relive past experiences to Relieve conditioned blocks.

7. Creatively manifest desired Intent through meditative visualisation.

Design Your Future is a *Hero's Journey* that requires commitment, resilience, consistency, and perseverance. It is fraught with obstacles and challenges, most of which will be one's internal beliefs of one's inadequacy. *How can I? Who am I? Am I adequate? How can I?* These will be your resounding echoes. The process helps to dispute and discard these. Once learnt, one can self-coach oneself using meditative chakra energisation to go through the seven steps.

Meditative Chakra Energisation

Best way to start learning meditation is by practising the right posture with the right breathing, moving to a body scan and then energising the chakras. One can then practise specialised chakra-based meditations. The guided meditations we provide cover: breath awareness meditation in the right posture, a body scan of about hundred and eight points as in the Yoga Nidra process, and chakra energisation as a full cycle, always starting from the crown of the head and completing at the crown of the head, elemental meditation for the lower three chakras, expansion meditation for Heart and Throat chakra, and gratitude meditation for Third Eye and Crown chakra.

Understanding and practising require guidance. The complete Yoga Nidra-based breath body mind energy meditation is essential for all the other steps in the process. Use this link for a guided meditation on chakra energisation. Additional meditations are included in Chakras Demystified. These are also available on Coacharya's YouTube channel.

GROWTH WHEEL

As a starting point in your Hero's Journey and as a reference point, create a *Wheel of Life*, as shown below, using eight segments for your future as you see it now in the next three years, as year-wise and month-wise goals. This will be used later to compare with your twenty-five-year long-term vision.

Purpose: Sweet Spot of Success

"Your body-mind matter is transient. Your energy being is eternal. You download the purpose of your next appearance in a set of new mind-body clothes from the leftover desires from the last act", says Krishna in Bhagavad Gita.

> "Your body-mind matter is transient. Your energy being is eternal. You download the purpose of your next appearance in a set of new mind-body clothes from the leftover desires from the last act"
>
> — KRISHNA IN BHAGAVAD GITA.

Krishna speaks of purpose as karma, the carryover, of our last thoughts from the essence of one's unfulfilled desires, *vasana*, from our previous existence. In a rather flexible manner, one can say that this *prarabda karma* is the dharma, the purpose of our present mind-body life. This is veiled by Maya*,* our ego state. In this step, one understands what one's purpose is through meditation and also through exercises such as one's metaphor. In addition, one discovers the following: passion as the pattern in experiences we enjoy and learn from, strengths that we display observed by others around us, opportunities leading from passion and strengths, and resources that we need in order to succeed in these opportunities. These, integrated, form the *Sweet Spot of Success* framework in our Hero's journey to Purpose.

Intent-based on GROWTH Wheel and 65 Back Vision

The next *three* steps are plans and visions one creates as *Wheels of Life* using the *Sweet Spot of Success framework*:

1. The GROWTH Wheel provides the near-term three-year goals of what we can be continuing as we are.

2. 65 Back provides the longer-term twenty-five-year legacy vision of what we can be in line with our Purpose.
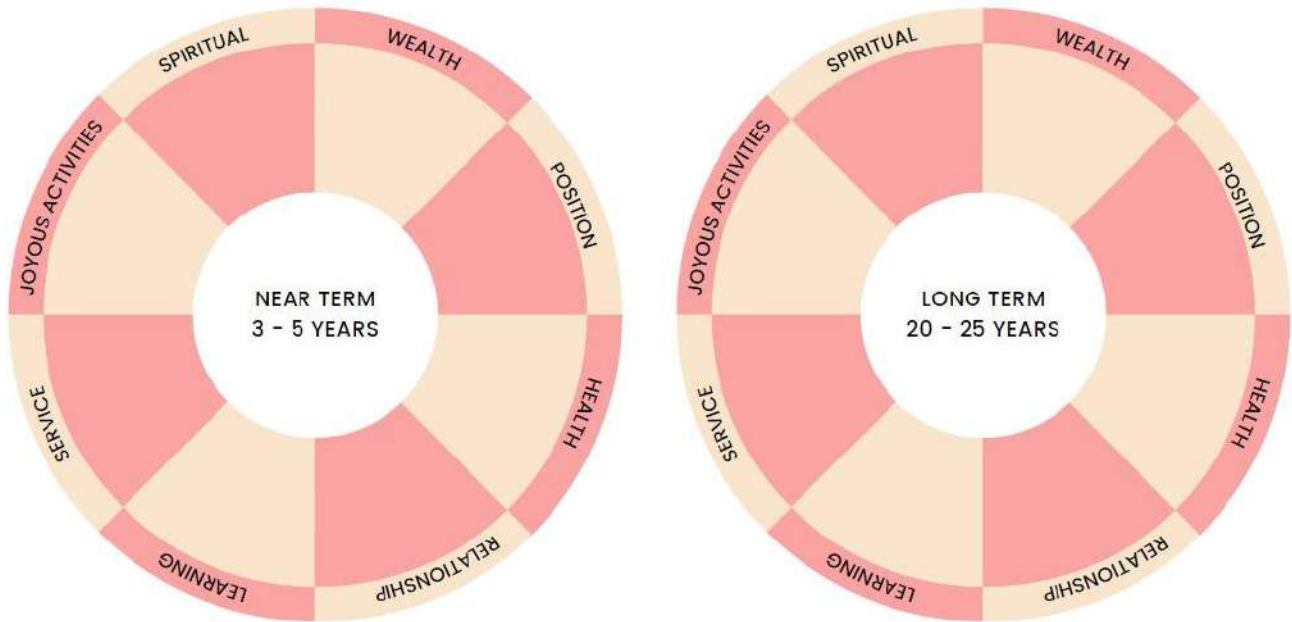
3. The gaps one sees in each of the eight segments between the two Wheels of the goal now, and the vision later provide the *Intent, the wake-up call goal* of the Hero's Journey. Researched evidence exists to show that envisioning long-term legacy goals to guide near-term actions has a far greater impact than merely setting resolutions. Coacharya has used this process of Create Your Future through many cohorts of coaches with success and testimonials.

Relieving through Reliving

There is one more very important step one needs to take before working on manifesting the Intent. Our inability to listen to this wakeup call of Intent has been due to:

1) Not realising the prarabda karma, purpose, of our life.
2) Being led into other activities through greed and fear through conditioned beliefs arising from what we have experienced, stored as emotional memories
3) Some of which manifest as unfulfilled desires arising from greed, causing unhappiness, shame, residing in the lowest Root Muladhara chakra, which when energised dissolves selfish wants into needs that serve all.
4) Fears and phobias, causing guilt and shame residing in the Sacral Swadishthana chakra, which when energised provide one the courage to face the fears.

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5) Anxieties that trigger stress and helplessness residing in the Navel Manipuraka chakra, which, when energised, fires one into action.

6) Invalidation, fear of failure, and a desperate need for approval and likes residing in the Heart Anahata chakra, which, when energised, helps one to love oneself, and as a result, others in deep compassion.

7) Comparison leads to envy residing in the Throat Vishuddhi chakra, which, when energised, helps one discover one's uniqueness and express it.

8) Arrogance, superiority, and need to control residing in the Third Eye Ajna chakra, which, when energised, becomes humility with an understanding of our energy potential to serve others.

9) Discontent, even after material success residing at the Crown Sahasrara chakra, which when energised fulfils us in acceptance and gratitude.

Relive and Relieve is the process of experiencing, healing, cleansing, and dissolving these disempowering memories and energising the chakras to their most powerful potential states. This is not a one-off process. It is iterative and dynamic and practised the same way as one does meditative energisation, using the same processes. Of the meditations provided:

1. Elemental meditation addresses the lower three chakras- Root, Muladhara, Sacral Swadishthana, and Navel Manipuraka chakra.

2. Expansion meditation addresses Heart Anahata, and Throat Vishuddhi chakra.

3. Gratitude meditation addresses the Third Eye Ajna and Crown Sahasrara chakra. These three should be practised after familiarising oneself with the breath, body, and mind energy meditation based on Yoga Nidra practice.

This Relive and Relieve process is a somatic ontological process aligned with neuroscientific and psychological principles, building the Quantum Science truth of our energy being into it. This process has been used in a conversation coaching mode in the present moment with thousands of people to heal negative disempowering emotions and energise one's potential to transform.

Intent Manifestation

The final step in the Hero's Journey is to manifest the Intent in the cleared space of energised chakra in the process of creative visualisation. This step will follow the complete breath, body-mind energy meditation, followed by the Expansion meditation at the Heart centre. Staying still in the Heart Centre, *visualise* the Intent as manifested reality and experience it with all senses as a multicoloured real-life movie, with one's fingers held in the kinaesthetic anchor.

Coacharya offers Create Your Future programs to familiarise one with these steps and practice. For the first time, one needs guidance in learning the meditations right.

About the Author:

Ram Ramanathan has donned and doffed many bodies in his life as a Corporate Leader, Entrepreneur, Consultant, Wannabe Monk, and now a Leadership Coach, integrating Eastern wisdom with Western science. Ram mentors at Coacharya. He can be found at www.linkedin.com/in/ramsramanathan

Ramani, Gowri.

Narrative Coaching – Bringing New Stories to Life

> "It's like everyone tells a story about themselves inside their own head. Always. All the time. That story makes you what you are. We build ourselves out of that story."
>
> —PATRICK ROTHFUSS, AUTHOR

The stories we tell *ourselves* define who we are, and these stories determine the story of our *future*. Humans are social creatures, and one of the ways we connect with each other is through our stories, listening to them and finding ways in which they are similar or dissimilar.

What is Narrative Coaching?

The concept at the core of narrative coaching is based on the idea that the stories we tell ourselves play a crucial role in shaping our lives and identities.

Who we are and what we do are influenced by the stories we tell ourselves, and how we narrate those experiences have an impact on how we feel and think, how we see ourselves and our relationships with others. The way in which we think and talk about our experiences can make problems bigger/smaller than they are, or the stories can help us contemplate new possibilities.

The self-identities in our narratives are *critical* in making and sustaining change in ourselves because so much of what we do is based on who we think we were, are now, and should or could be in the future. The identities are what we check our actions against in an attempt to stay true to who we are. To change and evolve as a person, we need to *transform*

our self-identities in a manner that stays coherent while still being able to move us forward to a different future that serves us better. Over twenty-five years ago, Dr David Drake created Narrative Coaching to offer a natural and powerful alternative way of coaching to help in the clients' growth journeys.

He recognised that traditional coaching methods often just worked with clients at the surface level. They did not take into account the personal and social narratives that played a crucial role in their clients' identities and actions. Hence, they often could not lead to deep and sustained changes for clients without their internal stories and identities evolving to serve them better. Narrative coaching involves working with people to reconfigure their self-conceptions, their lived experiences, and their life stories. In the process, they develop an increased sense of agency and accountability as an author of their stories (instead of being a *victim* of circumstances) and develop an increased awareness and agility as an actor in others' stories and how they can influence their environment.

The clients feel empowered and capable of creating a new future for themselves as they narrate, rewind, and rewrite their stories for themselves and others. Increased awareness and space for growth happen when a core aspect of their narrative identity is challenged, and they open themselves to new life stories and newer identities, along with other aspects of their being.

The Narrative Principles and Process

There is a lot of research that has gone into developing these processes, and a whole body of work (which is too big to be done justice to in this space) exists around Narrative Coaching. I will introduce a few fundamental concepts and tools in this chapter. Narrative Coaching is based on six very simple principles at its core:

1. Trust that everything you need is right in front of you.
2. Be fully present for what IS without judgement.
3. Speak only when you can improve the silence.
4. Focus on generating experiences, not explanations.
5. Work directly with the narrative elements in the field.

6. Stand at the threshold when a new story is emerging.

These principles, while seemingly simple, are similar to what is expected from a masterful coach – e.g., Carl Rogers' Unconditional Positive Regard for clients based on the belief that they already have all the answers they need, "coaching the person and not the problem", being among those. Narrative Coaching, however, diverges from some of the traditional coaching paradigms significantly. A few *key* aspects are elaborated on below:

1. The first point of differentiation is the first principle of Narrative Coaching that *everything needed is right in front of you*. The belief that most of what is needed can be uncovered by digging into the client's narratives is at the foundation of narrative coaching.
2. The second key difference is that Narrative Coaches tend to *avoid* defining a session goal or objective in clear, measurable ways, which is one of the main elements of many other forms of coaching. When a client is narrating a story in coaching, they are trying to make sense of something in their life. It is often too early for them to know exactly what the story is about or the function it is serving, or what they should aim for as an outcome. Narrative Coaches walk along with the client to where the story leads and trust that progress and increased awareness happen as a *natural* process.
3. The third key element is the concept of Radical Presence. *Radical presence*, as a *way of being* for a coach, requires not worrying about what the client should be thinking, what the coach should be doing, and where the conversation should be going. This enables the coach to be present alongside their clients with non-judgmental attention, welcome whatever is present in the moment, and notice more of what is actually happening. *Radical presence is recognising and honouring each moment for exactly what it is*. In addition, Narrative Coaches start in silence and speak only, when necessary, listen deeply before and not after asking questions, and trust that the story will reveal itself rather than needing to drive the conversation.

One of the key elements of coaching mastery is to connect the clients better with *who* they are and help them evolve to *be* the person they need to become to create the future they want for themselves, and not be transactional by focusing on the *what* of the problem. This is very much in alignment with the core belief on which Narrative Coaching is based. Despite these

major differences, the narrative conversations lead to significant progress from where the session begins. By tuning into the present moment and their client's story, the coach allows the client's deeper needs to emerge. As a coach, what their presence has to contribute gets revealed through inquiry into their client's narratives. The client's own narration does most of the work instead of the coach driving the conversation. The coach can contribute and facilitate progress by focusing on what the story is trying to draw attention to. How is the story coming out in the client's voice, body language or facial expressions? Also, to find the nuances and hidden elements by paying attention to more subtle cues such as posture or energy.

In practice, Narrative Coaching's body of work includes several tools and methods. One of the most intuitive tools I found in the Narrative process is the Rewind tool, which is exemplified below by a conversation with a real client of mine. Most of my clients are very senior corporate leaders who often bring up a pattern or a symptom they have noticed and want to explore further rather than look for a well-defined solution or outcome. I find that the Narrative approach, which does not force a clear, verifiable definition of a session outcome for each session, is more intuitive and suitable for these situations. As an intuitive coach myself, I find a free-flowing conversation that leads to a deeper awareness more valuable to my clients, and I use it quite often, rather than forcing a definition of an expected outcome with great clarity at the beginning of each session.

Example:

The Client is a successful woman leader within a large MNC in Europe who is being groomed for a region-level leadership role. She is already being mentored by the President of the region. The issue brought up was this - while she is seen as a strong leader, she is very competent. With high potential for further growth, there is consistent feedback that she comes across as unsure of herself, especially in the presence of senior leaders, and needs to develop the confidence to take on a higher role.

The *Rewind Tool* from the Narrative Coaching methods, as used in a (highly abridged) conversation with the client, is described in the example below:

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1. **Reflect on a challenge:**

    a. What did you observe? Describe focusing on the experience as a reporter and not a participant.

I am making an important presentation where the President and other Regional leaders are in the audience. I am well prepared, and the audience is listening and engaging well. I complete the presentation well.

    b. What were you telling yourself at the time? What is the story you are telling yourself during the experience? *Is this my best, and am I doing it perfectly? What do the President and others think of me right now? Am I making any mistakes?*

    c. What does it say about how you see yourself? Who were you during the event?

Someone who is second-guessing herself constantly and seeking perfection in everything.

    d. What did you do as a result? What did your behaviour come across as?

I was probably projecting a lack of confidence and making unforced mistakes, despite preparing well.

    e. What happened in the end? Describe the outcome achieved.

I came out of the meeting unsure of how well I did, and as a result, I began focusing on what I could improve upon.

2. **Rewind the story for a different outcome:**

    a. What would you like to have happened? What different outcome would have served you better?

I should have walked out of the meeting feeling confident that I did well and proud.

    b. What could you have done differently? How could you have behaved differently to achieve the above outcome?

I could have stayed in the moment, been more assured about what I was doing and not keep comparing myself against an imaginary perfect state.

c. What would need to shift in how you see yourself? What does your identity need to be to achieve this outcome?

I need to stop looking for perfection and accept that what I am doing is found to be good enough by the leaders.

d. What could you tell yourself next time this happens? What needs to be your story?

I am very good at what I do, others see me as competent for the current role and are sure of my potential for the next higher role, and I have no need to be perfect in everything I do.

e. What would you observe if "*this*" were the case?

A powerful, competent and confident young woman who is sure she is doing what she needs to do to continue to be successful.

While most other coaching approaches focus on having the client identify clearly the outcome for each session, narrative coaching is more free-flowing. It maintains the focus on staying with the narrative and working with what emerges. The above example also highlights how, despite not clearly defining expected outcomes, the process makes such an outcome clearly possible, along with a deeper awareness of '*self*' or '*who they are being and who they need to be*'.

In conclusion, narrative coaching is an effective approach for helping individuals change their self-identities and stories to achieve a better future. It is based on the idea that the stories we tell ourselves play a crucial role in shaping our lives and identities. Through narrative coaching, clients feel empowered and capable of creating a new future for themselves as they narrate, rewind and rewrite their stories.

Personal Journey with Narrative Coaching

I first learned about Narrative Coaching in 2018, soon after I entered the field of coaching. I was feeling a bit lost after attending my first training program on what coaching was all about. I came from three decades of corporate experience in the world of IT, and was very proud of my

analytical and problem-solving capabilities. Coaching seemed so imprecise and more of an art than science that I was not sure what sort of a coach I'd make.

The video from Dr David Drake introducing the Narrative Coaching program to become a trained Enhanced Practitioner in Narrative Coaching resonated with me so much that I just knew I had to sign up immediately.

I learnt immensely from the seven-month-long program, and there are several practices that are tightly integrated with my own coaching approach, based on Reflect, Reframe, Re-imagine™. I find the approach liberating and easy to use, especially with clients who are more into an exploratory journey than a problem-solving one.

> "Those who do not have power over the story that dominates their lives, the power to retell it, to rethink it, deconstruct it, joke about it, and change it as times change, truly are powerless because they cannot think new thoughts."
>
> –SALMAN RUSHDIE, AUTHOR.

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Disclaimer: A lot of this chapter content is based on the tremendous work done by Dr David Drake and his team in researching, developing, practising, training and popularising Narrative Coaching as a subject. In many places, the content is directly quoted from his book, as there is no better way of conveying a point or concept.

Ramesh, Priya.

Sacred Gift of Presence

Look at that flower. Do you see a flower, or are you experiencing its beauty? If you are seeing it as a flower, your mental faculties of cognition are at play; if you are experiencing the flower, you are being present. That is the nature of Presence; it is beyond and more. It is the secret sauce to any powerful and fulfilling relationship because it enables one to connect. The coach and client relationship is based on this very connection. Connection is critical for one's survival (ask Maslow, Carl Rogers…).

In one of my coaching sessions, the client was so moved by her insight and overcome by emotions that she broke down, and I was seated in a chair next to her, at once embracing the moment and allowing her to be with herself and to be herself.

At the end of the session, I reflected on the session - what I did to allow for this profound and powerful moment for her. What did I say? Did I ask a powerful question? Did I do this, did I do that, what did I do? I had no ready answers. That is when I realised that I was going down the wrong alley. In fact, I was not doing anything, and that was it; I was not doing anything. I was just there, poised and easy, which created this experience for the other. Presence is just there, nothing much really to do or make happen. It is an encompassing space that is awake and pulsating yet quiet and rooted. When present, life flows.

I have come to recognise that in me being present to my whole self, inadvertently, I allow the other person to be that way too. In my connection with myself, I enable the client to connect with herself. As coaches, we are unconsciously role-modelling for others. When we are agitated, the energy is transferred, and we see others agitated too. This is a subtle process of connection. So, I ask, what would you like the nature of your connection to be?

Presence is a word that eludes description or a definition. I have often wondered why this is so hard to describe, what makes it so critical to understand it and its role in any relationship,

particularly coaching. Presence is not an object of intellectual understanding. It can only be a felt experience. Yet here is an attempt to understand and demystify it.

What Does it Mean to be Present?

(*mind you, it is always Present, not **do** Present*)

Presence is a state of being when all of yourself -mind, body, and spirit -pours into this moment, now, and at that moment, a connection is made. The connection may be with yourself or with another entity. This deep connection is the birthplace of possibilities. A generative space. I associate this space with Shunyata – a void, as per the Upanishads. This space where nothing exists but everything can be born and exist. There is immense beauty at the moment that whispers of possibilities. It is a state of being where our attention is both acute and at ease.

1. **The state, The being**

    Presence is the function of your state of being. The state is a coming together of many dynamic things as it culminates in the moment. This coming together of certain causes and conditions creates the consequence called Presence, as every moment is based on the principle of dependent origination (borrowed from tenets of Buddhist psychology), i.e. this moment is dependent on all factors at play before the moment, and it is coming together in a certain way, for the present moment to originate. In this state, one is just being – no motive, no distortion, just awake and aware. This Presence is a sacred gift.

2. **Presence and Self**

    How can we be present to ourselves? What we are really saying is becoming more aware of our experience. Experience - our thoughts, emotions, sensations, desires, wants, values, beliefs - our whole self. When all of this, in no particular order or proportion, comes together, we have an experience, and we can say that we are present. Our skills of observation play a big part in developing this for ourselves. When we are aware, we then use the awareness to manage ourselves, to catch ourselves when not present, when not aligned. This state of being is, therefore, a function of our emotional intelligence, awareness of the moment in its totality, which allows us to calibrate our state, to be in the present (especially pertinent when we are distracted and are not present). We can begin this by working with our emotions, thoughts, or actions,

whichever is easily accessible to us and create the alignment to come back to being present. When we are not present to ourselves, we fail to experience life. Presence is life itself. This, in turn, further extends and impacts how we see, hear, and therefore receive the other. Can we offer this sacred gift to ourselves first?

3. Presence and the Other

There have been times I have walked into a room full of people and sensed the palpable energy, sometimes positive and sometimes disturbing. This sense came from no facts, no data; it was just a felt experience. If you have felt this way, too, you would call it Presence.

Have you walked with someone who hardly speaks, but you can feel their presence, that they are there for you, you are heard and seen? Being heard and being seen is to be recognised, to be acknowledged, and this is the fundamental human need that can be associated with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Belonging). In deep presence, we encounter another being and connect to others in ways that go beyond a transactional conversation.

Encountering Another Being

A research project on Muntjac deers was conducted by Dr Stephan Harding, an animal ecologist, for his doctoral study. Many days/months went into understanding the Muntjac deer, its habitat, the forest and how it lives and its relationship with the ecosystem. The scientist then one day had a chance encounter with the Muntjac itself when the deer turned in his direction, and their eyes met and hearts connected. At that moment, when the scientist meets the Muntjac, there is a wholeness that transcends all knowledge, concepts, frameworks, and learning. A moment when, through the felt experience, there is an understanding of the whole, the forest in its entirety, the animal as a resident in that habitat- *a part becoming whole*. It is an intuitive space beyond any conceptual, intellectual understanding. The whole self comes forth. When you encounter the being of the other, there is no longer the other.

Watch yourself in the mirror: do you see the mirror? No, you see yourself. The mirror is, therefore, not present in that. A coach plays the role of the mirror; however, in the state of being present, one does not exist outside of the other.

As a coach, my unique responsibility is to receive others for how they are and who they are becoming. Presence is a sacred gift.

The Enablers

1. **Surrender and Humility**: to be in the moment and be present, there is a certain letting go of what was and what will be. In order to surrender and to be able to do that, that moment has to be bigger and greater than *'I'*. That would be humility. When there is no motive or distortion, no need to define, fix, to make things a certain way, we surrender to the greatness of what emerges.

2. **Courage and Vulnerability:** when we let go of the need to drive action, to push clients in a certain direction, we are working with the unknown, and it needs courage and being vulnerable to show up in this space, being curious and not knowing.

3. **Clear to Create:** observation may be a key tool. The awareness of that which takes us away from being present is equally important. Clearing that which distracts us creates space for what could emerge. This is the greatest gift you can offer because it creates connection, it gives meaning, just as silence gives the words that follow it their meaning. In these moments of connection, insights occur, shifts happen, and perspectives change. Change, therefore, is not forced by the coach or client. It is a consequence of deep presence, which is, in turn, a consequence of clearing the space and creating a generative space.

4. **Cultivate**: to be able to be present now, we may need to cultivate it over a period of time by exercising faculties of 'focus and attention' as a practice. Meditative practices may be one of the many ways to learn how to 'pay attention'. We can also find anchors (a thought, an action, an emotion, a habituated ritual) that grounds us in the moment and be present.

5. **Awareness, Acceptance, and Allowance**: awareness of our state of being, acceptance of where we are, and allowance to calibrate ourselves. They are unconscious drivers of Presence.

6. **Do not try too hard:** it is like trying to hold sand in your palms; grasp it too tight, and it slips away; hold it with gentleness and care, and it will stay.

NOTHING 'TO DO' JUST 'BE'

"We walked side by side along the path, not knowing where we are going yet knowing that we are moving together, curious. The path was lonely and sometimes dark, yet we were not alone.

I felt the heightened sense of alertness that was at once powerful, alive as it was reassuring, calming. In that state of being I was both aware of all my senses, my thoughts and was somehow assured that I just knew what to do, how to act. I walked with myself and my Presence. Just the two of us. My Presence and Me!"

The above text is from "Sacred is the place of the densest presence" written by Mircea Eliade - a Philosopher and Historian of Religion.

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Rao, Prakash.

NLP in Coaching

NLP and Coaching! Every time I take these two amazing words in the same breath, I feel so complete. I think this is a perfect marriage. What coaching sets out to achieve, NLP acts as a catalyst in the process.

In conversational coaching, observing the clients' somatic experiences, choice of words, patterns in their behaviour and so on and so forth is quite important. As though made-to-design for coaching, NLP unfurls the structures of most of these, making the '*observations*' effortless and resourceful for the client.

What is NLP?

Your behaviour is based on a certain structure. NLP examines this structure of the way you think, act and speak with the use of specific models. These models were initially patterned by Richard Bandler from inspirational individuals such as Milton Erickson, Virginia Satir, and Fritz Perlz, who were highly regarded because of their behavioural and linguistic prowess.

NLP is a multi-faceted process that involves the *psychological effects* on behaviour. It is an *epistemology* which uses different stages in human development, thought and attitude formation. It provides efficient tools and strategies that define your role as a human being, your identity, and your ideal state of success.

Although the initial state begins within you, the process gradually involves your environment and the people around you to create aspirations and the right mindset that leads to attaining them with no barriers.
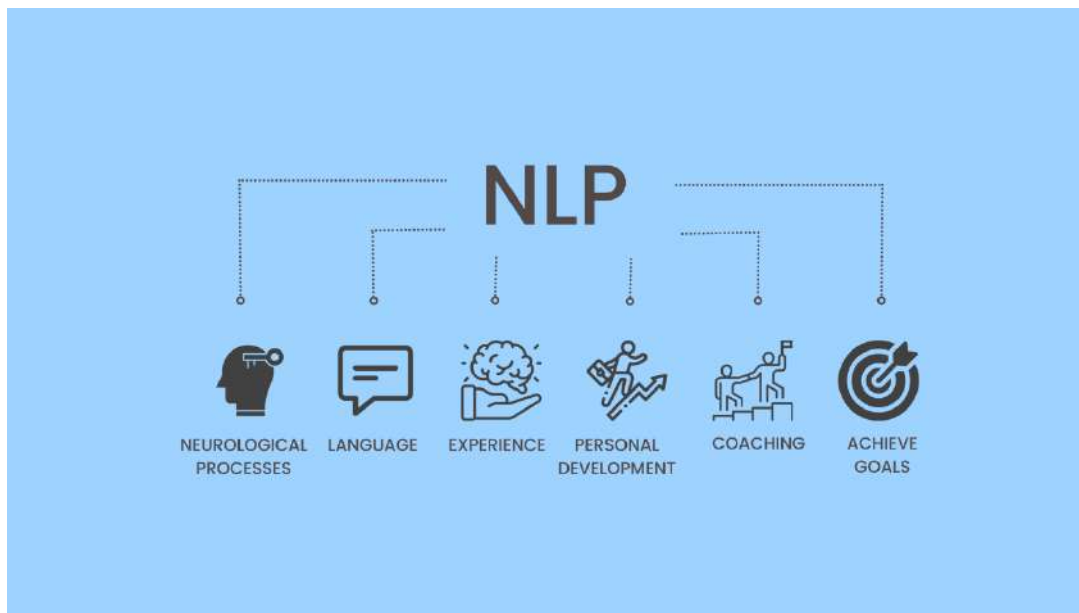
Now, let's shed some light on conversational coaching. First, the conversation itself. In simple terms, a conversation is a form of communication. For some, communication is a mere conversation, and for others, it's language proficiency and maybe a source of gaining attention or passing on information. In the soft-skills world, communication is mostly the interaction between the sender and the receiver with less or no barrier.

However, communication is much more than what is stated above, and perhaps what is not stated too. Communication is expanded to its power of **i**nfluence, building trust and managing outcomes. In the first place, communication is what happens to oneself -self-talk. This is where coaching mastery comes into the picture. A coach has to unpack and unfold what a client is talking to themselves because there lie the questions, and there lie the answers.

Noticing communication patterns or linguistic expressions is the trump card. In coaching, what linguistic expressions are audible and visible? Mastering the art of noticing language patterns and unearthing the choice of words or meaning associated can bring about a huge

change in the way you can move your client in the direction of their outcomes more effectively. It is independent of the language used and hence gives the freedom to apply it to your own language. Think of using a Milton model or a Meta-Model technique (we will touch upon these in some time) in Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, French, or any other language; you will be able to do it effortlessly.

Imagine how you learnt to fire a rifle or a gun. Later if you were to try another make or model, it is just a matter of applying your acquired skills of firing a rifle or a gun to this new machine in your hands. Bang. It's that simple. Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) as a science and practice is held high among people managers, leaders, human resource professionals, coaches and trainers etc., since **i**t is easy to use, holistic, and futuristic in its application. Some of the basic elements of communication, viz. language, vocabulary, eye contact, smile, voice modulation, pitch/tone, pace, body language and/or gestures, clarity and confidence take the forefront when we notice communication. Is this all? The answer is '*no'.* What gets discounted in the bargain are the core elements of communication, which are *pause and active listening.*

A pause is a potent tool in communication and influence. It gives the coach the opportunity to gain attention and feedback. At the same time, it gives the client the time to process the information in their "*map of the world*". Many times we make the mistake of reciting conversations as quickly as possible, without stopping, as though we have memorised the whole stuff, sometimes as evidence that we are listening. But, a master coach knows to pause periodically to give the client the time to "*catch up*" and to let the meaning of what he or she is saying sink in. Often, clients need time to scan their memory to see where, *what is said*, fits or doesn't fit in their map of the world**.** Think of a stand-up comedy show. The comedian gives time for the audience to understand the joke and laugh at it without rushing to the next one. Or, think of a politician speaking; he or she will deliberately create ample opportunities for people to clap and cheer. Isn't it? Pause is extremely important and attracts a lot of attention. In the world of coaching, pause promotes partnering, helps a coach embody a coaching mindset, and, more importantly, helps the coach maintain a coaching presence.

Active listening is listening by paying attention to all five senses - visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, olfactory, and gustatory. As well as giving full attention to the client, it is important

that the '*active listene*r' is also '*seen'* to be listening. Otherwise, the client may conclude that what they are talking about is uninteresting to the coach. My mentor, Cindy, always used to say this, "*have the mindset to evidence the competencies while your intent is invisible*" - how true what she said, isn't it?

> "The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said. And it happens only through Active Listening."
>
> – PETER F DRUCKER

As you communicate with the client, it is not just up-skilling yourself on how and when and what to speak. It's more important what you listen to and how you listen to it., along with the ability to comprehend and respond thoughtfully. Show empathy and be considerate, and encourage the speaker to express themself to the fullest.

Observation is the key to active listening. Paying attention to the finer aspects of the sensory experience of the speaker is extremely important. As they say, "*it's the (little) difference that makes the difference*". A master musician can recognise the quality of a singer because they are paying attention to all aspects of the singer's performance. A sportsperson can recognise the game of the opponent since she/he is very closely watching her/his opponent's every move on the field. Here's the link for a short video of Andre Agassi talking about how he beat Boris Becker: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3woPuCIk_d8

Map of the World

One of the goals of conversational coaching is to unpack the map of the world. The key is to discover the likes, dislikes, biases, prejudices, fears, and much more that create our map of the world. All of us have our unique maps that are created by the process of Generalization, Deletion and Distortion. Our perceptions are filtered through our memories, mental state,

upbringing, values, beliefs and attitudes. Maps are unique because our filters (*Generalisation, Deletion and Distortion*) are unique.

"The world is this way or that way because
You Tell Yourself it is this way or that way."

–JIM FORTIN

Since our maps/filters are unique, two people can argue about the meaning of something simply because they see and perceive it differently. To be a successful coach, this is something that you want to take into account- it is important to be able to understand and respect clients' views and perceptions; simply say '*their map of the world*' or '*mental map*'.

Observation and active listening (as discussed above) will broaden and improve your own mental maps. By working from within the other person's mental map, your influence over him/her will increase simply because there will be more connection, and he/she will be more interested in sharing and receiving. This also develops your sense of flexibility so that you can relate to and communicate to the clients' maps effectively.
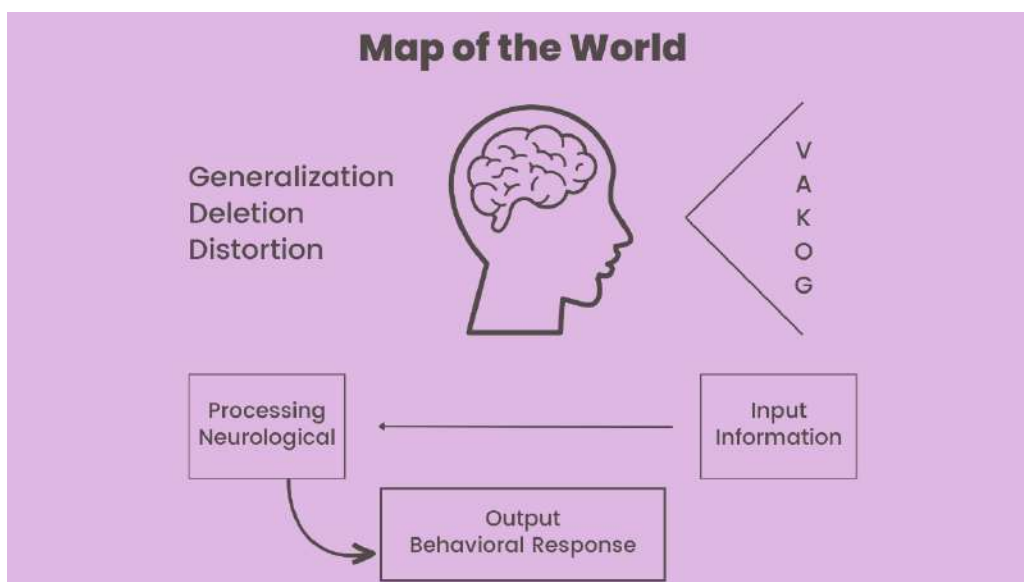
Imagine driving on a highway. In a span of ten minutes, you come across signboards, shops, trees, animals, and zillion cars ahead of you or travelling in the opposite direction. Do you really remember all of that when you stop the car? The answer is no, as most of them get *deleted*. What happened to millions of bits of information that meet your five senses? Our brain can process seven plus or minus two bits per second. Everything else gets deleted. What is selectively retained gets our focus. And what is focused on expands. The deletion occurs when we selectively pay attention to certain aspects of our experience and not others. We then overlook or omit others. Without deletion, we would be faced with too much information to handle with our conscious mind.

Distortion is the meaning we create with the information we have retained or what is consciously deleted. We make shifts in our experience of sensory data by making misrepresentations of reality or creating our own meaning. Misrepresentations necessarily do not mean bad, not even good. In eastern culture, the cow is treated as a god. This makes the communities who believe in this give preferential animal treatment -even age-old rituals and customs are built around the meaning given.

Distortions are not just meanings we create; over a period of time, they become part of our belief systems, culture and more. It defines how we take action, and it also defines our behaviours. Generalisation is a process of drawing universal conclusions based on one or two experiences. At its best, generalisation is one of the ways that we learn by taking the information we have and drawing broad conclusions about the meaning of the effect of those conclusions.

Generalisation gives us speed and helps us take quick decisions. When we generalise, we reduce the amount of information we need to deal with by putting things in categories. While generalisation gives speed, it may not help you in looking at things differently while forcing you to build preconceived notions or prejudices. Men are strong, women are weak. This generalisation restricts you from seeing men and women around you differently and operating with them in a different way.

Now, in a coaching conversation, imagine if you are able to notice the generalisations, deletions, and distortions the client is making; Bang! You got your client to the higher orbit of awareness. Noticing and sharing how you see the client is thinking and behaving will expand their map of the world. This gives them a chance to look at their situation differently, and this is what they come to you for.

Few Examples of Healthy and Unhealthy Filters:

Filters	Healthy	Unhealthy
Deletion	Reading with Music ON. Meditation. A sportsperson paying attention to the game in a huge audience-packed stadium.	A student believes that the teacher targets him. Focussing on only the negative qualities of a friend/partner. Discounting the learning from a failed experience.
Distortion	Fantasy Imagination and Dreams. Failure is the stepping stone to success. Because I was born poor, I will definitely die rich.	Fearing the nightmares. Failure is the way to stop telling yourself to stop trying. Because I was born poor, I should die poor.
Generalisation	People around the world are always good and welcoming. If I can win in sports, I can win in life.	People around the world are strange and unwelcoming. If I have failed in one subject, I will fail in others too. No one loves and respects me.

	Everyone loves and respects me.	

Evaluate

We all have the natural tendency and urge to Judge, Evaluate and Approve (or Disapprove) another person's statement. For example, if I said, "I love dogs", you may approve or disapprove of my statement based on your *Map of the World*. You may also evaluate and judge me as a pet lover, a caring person or anything else. All these are coming from your tendency to judge. This acts as a barrier to giving your client Unconditional Positive Regard because when you judge, you are operating from within your Map. Allowing yourself to be curious to layer out the maps of others needs non-judgemental conversation. Although making evaluations is common in almost all conversations, this reaction is heightened in situations where feelings and emotions are deeply involved. *Stronger the feelings, the less likely to be non-judgemental.*

This is what Master Coaches do; they notice what's crossing their mind and allow it to pass by without interfering with understanding their clients. A great way to Partner and show Unconditional Positive Regard.

Listen to their Map of the World

We can achieve real and effective partnering and avoid the tendency to evaluate when we relate to others' Map of the World, say, while we listen with understanding to the others' Map. This means noticing the expressed idea and attitude from another's point of view, sensing how it feels to the client, and achieving his/her frame of reference about the context being discussed.

This may sound extremely simple, but not so much. This is one of the potent tools for successful coaching - to have a great impact on the clients, to propel them to take action, to

gather high-quality information, to declutter one's perceptions, to reframe one's content and context, and much more.

We know from research that empathic understanding, understanding with the person and **not** about the person, is so effective that it can bring about significant changes in their current understanding.

Emotional Vocabulary

Feelings are our reactions to the world around us. Many experts agree that all feelings are derived from one of four basic emotions: anger makes us mad, joy leads to a feeling of gladness, grief makes us sad, and fear makes us scared. People's ability to express their feelings varies widely. Some people not only have the ability to state how they feel but can even precisely describe their feelings and associate words with them. Few can identify the underlying feelings but fail to describe or be precise on what it is exactly. And some of them even fail to identify their feelings, or in some cases, are unable to admit them, going through the four basic feelings.

The Feelings
What is another way to say it?
Sad, Mad, Glad, or Bad?
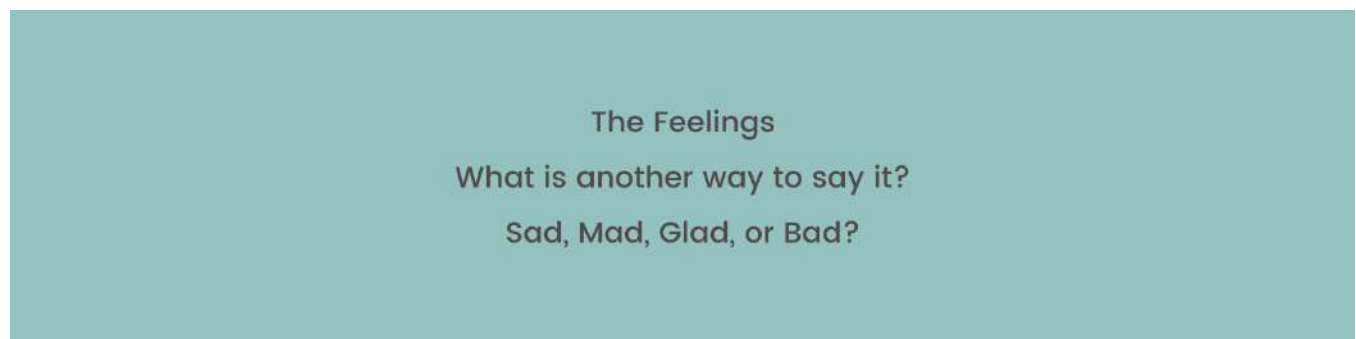
Karl Albrecht formulated a module to interrelate three principle styles by which people come to terms with strong emotions. The model deals with thoughts and feelings not as separable entities but as interconnected aspects of people's responses to their experiences - one that has a linear approach along the spectrum. At one end of the spectrum, people may tend to suppress their feelings. At the other end of the spectrum, people may tend to capitulate

to their emotions. What might be a perceived balance or equilibrium is an accommodation of feelings/emotions.

For a coach, is it important to refer to and notice the feelings of a client? Yes, absolutely. In fact, as you make the coaching agreement with the client, you can see the feelings/emotions associated with the reason why the client wants to achieve the outcomes they want. As my mentor, Ram, says, "*Somatic experiences are the purest form; once you bring it to your cognitive senses, it gets diluted*". So, noticing the changes in the way the client is sharing and bringing their attention to it is the key.

A real-time example:

One of my clients approached me with the goal of learning the local language in the new city she moved into. It was about four years she was in this new city but was not able to make good progress with the local language. She had her reasons. Every time she heard people speak the local language, she visualised a poor/weak, not-so-well-dressed rural person. And the sound the language made to her ears was like, '*shaking a tin can with marbles/pebbles in it*'. She told me it was "an awful sound and an irritating experience". While working with her, I took a shot and asked her if she could show me how the language sounded to her. She used her hand as though holding a tin can close to her ears and started shaking it while making the sound '*da, da, da, da, da…*'. Irritation was all over her face.

Now, I asked her if she could do this any differently. She started moving her hand slowly. After some time, she could feel the rhythm, and this rhythm made her feel good. She made a new musical note from the tin can containing pebbles in it, which took away the irritation. She was fine, and she was able to stand the sound of the language and learn it in a way that helped her interact with the locals.

Partnering – The Essence of Coaching

Partnering is the key to embodying a coaching mindset and one that creates a sense of trust and safety with the client. Rapport is the fastest way to do this; let us see how.

Rapport is the ability to relate to others in a way that creates trust and understanding. It is the ability to see the other's point of view and get them to understand yours. You do not have to agree with their point of view or even like it. *It makes any form of* communication easier and more influential. We say things like: "*we are in sync*", "*we operate on the same frequency*", "*we are on the same wavelength*," "*There is a mutual understanding between us*", or "*We like each other*" - these statements are evidence of great rapport.

> "Rapport is the ability to enter someone else's world, to make him feel that you understand him, that you have a strong common bond."
>
> – TONY ROBBINS

Our life outcomes - whether personal or professional- directly depend on our ability to establish and maintain rapport, thereby building trust. Trust and rapport are almost synonymous in the psychological space. There is no trust where there is no rapport, and vice versa. Surprisingly, we make most of our business decisions based on rapport rather than technical merit. You are more likely to buy from, agree with, or support someone you can relate to than someone you cannot.

In the space of coaching, rapport builds the bridge on which the client can share the information. The client feels psychologically safe to share and be vulnerable and can experience the coach's presence and listening completely. This gives way to being in *sync* with the coach.

To build rapport, **f**irstly, start emphasising the similarities. By emphasising the similarities or commonalities, resistance and resentment will generally disappear, and cooperation will improve. With practice, it becomes easy to find what we share with other people and focus on it.

Pacing

Rapport is established and maintained by pacing. By definition, this is the process of moving as the other person moves. Pacing or matching accepts the other person's behaviour and meets them on their map of the world. It is about reducing the differences between yourself and others at an unconscious level.

You can pace or match many different aspects of behaviour. Of course, if the other person is aware you are matching their behaviour, it becomes mimicry. Obvious attempts to "*copy*" people will break rapport. Successful pacing happens at an unconscious level.

What You Can Match – To Pace

Matching is something we all do naturally in some contexts. Watch what happens when someone talks to a small child. They might crouch down to the child's height and talk more slowly (or excitedly). Romantic couples in restaurants often seem to be engaged in a dance, leaning and smiling in mirror postures.

1. **Body postures:** You can adjust your whole body, half body or part of your body to match the other. Matching typical poses that the other person offers with their head and shoulders is useful. If the body posture is unusual, matching can seem disrespectful. Subtlety is vital.

2. **Breathing:** You can match the rate of a person's breathing, where they are breathing from (chest, abdomen or stomach) or how deep. This is not a good technique if the person has difficulty with breathing, as you may feel similar symptoms.

3. **Voice:** Matching the pace, volume, pitch, tone and type of words is a little tricky to learn but worth it. Try watching a TV program in a foreign language in order to notice these auditory processing distinctions. You do not have to try to match all these aspects. Choose one. If a person is talking slowly, slow down. If they speak softly, drop your volume.

Body postures/breathing and voice matching can often be difficult to execute. It needs a lot of practice. More importantly, one needs to calibrate the other person thoroughly to be able to match exactly. What is more effective and impactful are values and language patterns.

4. **Beliefs and values:** Authentically trying to understand another person's beliefs and values without judgement can create a very deep rapport. Once again, you do not have to agree with them or change any of your own values; the goal is to understand. Unconscious patterns lie here, and therefore, even close matches can strike a great rapport. You seem to enjoy the company of a person who believes in something similar to you.

5. **Language patterns:** Matching language patterns is a favourite rapport technique. Most successful speakers, coaches, counsellors, sales professionals, and teachers use this incredibly well. By using the same words to describe things and processes, the person feels understood. Listen for powerful words. We attach particular words to corresponding experiences. If a client says she wants to be confident and you talk about her capability, you can miss the rapport boat. Matching representational systems can be very powerful and subtle. Notice the preferred mode of representation the client is using. Just by responding to their representation preference, you can subtly yet effectively build rapport.

a. Visual Predicates include words and phrases such as see, look, view, foggy, clear, bright, reveal, focused, short-sighted, paint a picture, an eyeful, picture this, hazy, etc.

b. Auditory Predicates may include terms and phrases such as sound, hear, tell, listen, resonate, clear as a bell, loud-and-clear, tune in/out, on another note, give me your ear, etc.

c. Kinaesthetic / Feeling Predicates include words and phrases such as touch, feel, grasp, fuzzy, hard, concrete, sharp as a tack, solid, unfeeling, heated debate, get in touch with, make contact, hand-in-hand, etc.

d. Auditory Digital Predicates may include words and phrases such as think, know, learn, process, decide, consider, understand, experience, motivate, learn, figure it out, make sense of, pay attention to, word-for-word, conceive, etc.

6. **Leading:** Having matched the client for a while and established rapport, we can start to lead and change the direction of the communication. *Leading means leading someone to a certain goal or result on the basis of rapport and in terms of the win-win principle*. Leading also provides an opportunity to check whether a trusting relationship has been established. If it has, the other person will unconsciously follow your lead after a short time. If that doesn't happen, you need to go back to pacing/matching.

In the context of coaching, leading means a coach's ability to share what you have noticed. Ask questions, challenge values/beliefs, and reframe what you have heard or felt. To lead is to help your client move forward in the direction of their goals. (Reference: https://www.landsiedel.com/en/nlp-library/building-rapport.html)

NLP gives you an added advantage in the space of conversational coaching. It gives structure and nomenclature to things that you, as a coach, can observe and share with your clients. What is more, some of the techniques like perceptual positions, content and context reframing, new behaviour generator, circle of excellence and many more can be used to help clients achieve their goals. Metaphors and anchors used in NLP are so powerful that you will almost every time notice your clients' conversations. The visualisation technique is widely used to help clients remove things from the past and create things in the future.

Lead your coaching practice the NLP way.

Further Reading:

NLP For Dummies by Romilla Ready & Kate Burton.

NLP At Work by Sue Knight.

Get The Life You Want by Richard Bandler.

Unlimited Power by Anthony Robbins.

Your Brain For A Change by Richard Bandler.

The NLP Workbook by Joseph O'Connor.

About the Author:

Prakash Rao is an MCC Coach accredited by ICF, an Executive and Leadership Coach, and an International NLP Trainer. He is a sports and adventure enthusiast, a marathon runner, a powerlifter and a certified mountaineer. He is the founder of Born In Flight, a Coaching, Consulting and Talent Transformation Company.

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Shirke, Pranav.

Building a Coaching Culture

"*The best thing about coaching was knowing who I am as a person, what my goals are, and what my purpose in life is. I strongly believe that my purpose in life is to stand up for what I believe in and to contribute positively to my community and family.*" This testimonial from one of our employees says it is all about the power of coaching, a practice which we seek to democratise access to at Standard Chartered.

I am blessed to be part of an organisation that believes in the development of its people. Coaching has always existed as an integral feature of our corporate culture. However, historically it was limited to a select few. For example, the provision of executive coaching was skewed towards senior leaders and talent identified for acceleration. People leaders (or line managers) were expected to build '*coaching muscle*' as part of their leadership development programmes. The value of coaching was recognised, but we lacked a formalised process for embedding it broadly as a skill.

Branching into Democratisation

In 2020, coaching came into its own. Our coaching strategy was strongly endorsed by the HR Management Team, with the intent to make it accessible to all employees in the moments that mattered.

We devised a three-pillar approach in service of this ambitious aspiration – upskill leaders in conversational coaching ability, develop an internal cadre of certified coaches, and provide access to external coaching partners.

1. **Upskilling Leaders**

The coaching muscle is a key part of the people leadership structure. We knew that our leaders were at different levels of coaching maturity, and there was a need to upskill on the basics of coaching – how to build trust, how to create the right balance between support and challenge, how to respect and actively listen, and how to cultivate a curious growth mindset to challenge ourselves and others. We created Coaching Mastery as one of our flagship programmes to develop this coaching capability within the organisation. It is a bespoke programme, and over the last three years, we have upskilled more than three hundred mid-to-senior leaders across the organisation.

We have leveraged our global learning weeks and similar scalable events to create awareness and share practical tips on the topic through masterclasses facilitated by our own practising leaders, reaching more than three thousand leaders. Coaching skills continue to be part of the leadership capability built for our leaders. These efforts have contributed to defining a common language around coaching, underscoring its importance in the service of creating a high-performance and innovative culture in the organisation.

2. **Building an Internal Cadre of Coaches (Ignite)**

Initially, a group of employees qualified with professional coaching certifications (like me) came together as an informal community to offer coaching services to colleagues; it was an experiment. This informal attempt got a formal boost when some of our senior leaders decided to use the approach to unleash the potential of female talent in the organisation. We started with a small pilot of ten internal coaches coaching ten mid-level female executives in 2019. This was received very well and given a spotlight at the bank's management team meeting. We got the right support at the right time, with an appetite for building a pool of coaches. We partially funded the coaching certification (to seek out those who were really willing to invest in themselves) of a hundred and twenty-plus employees to build a scalable capability. We strategically earmarked this programme (Ignite) for mid-level women to start with.

We have now expanded the portfolio to cover key strategic segments supporting our Diversity and Inclusion agenda. We experimented with running forty-eight-hour Coachathons, where employees had the opportunity to get a taste of coaching through our Ignite coaches. Ignite is now also experimenting with serving communities by coaching staff members of our

partner organisations who support our community agenda. Today, Ignite stands strong with two hundred proud and motivated coaches who have already served more than two thousand internal clients. Our coaches see this opportunity as a strong part of our employee value proposition, which has contributed towards building loyalty and improving retention in the organisation. Ignite is self-funded, where we charge our internal clients, and the revenue earned is invested back in the development of coaches and management of the initiative.

3. **Providing Access to External Coaching Partners**

We have transitioned from a bench of individual coaches to working with specialist coaching providers to meet demand. We work with two partners – one offering face-to-face executive coaching for our senior Managing Directors and the other offering virtual coaching across all levels of the organisation. Our leadership and coaching providers help to both train our employees and certify our Ignite coaches. Our external partners are an integral part of our ecosystem to democratise access to coaching.

This three-pillar approach has enabled us to drive awareness, develop a common language through a community of coaches and clients, positively impact our employees, and contribute to accelerating our business performance. More than 90% of clients felt their coach created a '*safe*' environment in which they felt comfortable trying new things without feeling judged and that coaching was a good use and investment of their time and resources.

Key development topics discussed through coaching are self-awareness, confidence, communication, people management, strategic mindset, stakeholder management, personal branding, and managing stress. Across different cohorts, we have seen a ten-twenty-five per cent improvement in the progress of development goals. The importance of active listening as a core leadership skill has been underscored by all employees participating in the coaching journey. As a result of Ignite, more than 90% of internal coaches felt an increased sense of purpose in the Bank.

Coaching for life

We will continue to scale our proposition to help build a sustainable coaching culture in service of our purpose and business objectives. We will continue to create awareness, upscale through interventions, engage with past, current, and future coaches and clients, and maintain

a growth mindset. Coaching is no longer a want; it is a need to fully realise the potential of each individual and the organisation.

About the Author

Pranav Shriram Shirke is a global leader, scaling organisation development capabilities through internal and external partners. As part of this role, he is responsible for democratising coaching within the organisation, making it accessible to his colleagues in moments that matter to them. He is a practising coach certified by the Co-Active Training Institute. He has completed the Systemic Coaching course from Coacharya. He brings in almost three decades of corporate experience spread primarily between management consulting with McKinsey & Company and developing and coaching leaders at Standard Chartered Bank. Born and brought up in Mumbai, Pranav has been based in Singapore for the last two decades with his wife and two adult daughters. He can be reached at www.linkedin.com/in/pranav-shriram-shirke-5135a516

Sreedharan, Ramesh.

Team Coaching- Is It for Everyone?

I very often get asked this question, "I am comfortable coaching individuals, but can I coach a Team?" As a coach myself, I firmly believe that each of us has limitless potential, and the only thing that comes in the way of attaining that potential is our beliefs and fears -essentially, the way we think and engage with a situation. So too, with Team Coaching. Every one of us, trained as a coach, can be a Team Coach. All it needs is a shift in perspective. What are these perspectives that need to shift while working with teams?

Understanding Who or What Comprises a Team

A team is a group of individuals who are, within or outside an organisation, tasked with accomplishing a specific set of objectives, which is normally aligned with the larger organisational goals or vision. We normally think of high-performance teams as a set of highly accomplished individuals. This is the first perspective that needs to be examined. High-performance teams are a group of individuals, who not only work well amongst themselves but also have a good understanding of the system that they operate in and are able to manage those relationships well too.

This reminds me of a very interesting Ted Talk by Margaret Heffernan, *"Why it's time to forget the pecking order at work"*, where she quotes an experiment done at Purdue University to study productivity and about how in this experiment, "*super chickens*" (with aggressive alpha male behaviours) actually peck each other to death rather than doing what they should be doing.

Helping Teams Become More Aware of the Relationships Between Themselves. Also, the System That They are a Part Of

As a team coach, you are fundamentally working with the team to help them understand these relationships. *So, what is the shift required in perspective here?* As a coach, when you work with an individual, the most important role that a coach plays is that of a mirror. The mirror shows or helps the client understand what they cannot otherwise see for themselves. While working with teams, a coach very often sees behaviours that the team does not notice for themselves.

E.g., In a team of seven, you notice that most of the talking is done by two or three individuals. Just noticing this, sharing it with the team and asking them what they would like to do about it would shift the dynamics in the team significantly.

Hence, a big part of the role of a Team Coach is to help the team recognize their ways of working by sharing what you notice and empowering them to find their own solutions. Some of the most defining moments in team coaching are when the coach is able to surface the so-called "*Elephant in the room*". This requires the team coach to have the courage to share what they notice and to be sensitive to the undercurrents in the room and surface it in a sensitive, non-threatening way.

Helping to Create a Non-Threatening "*learning*" Space

As with all forms of coaching, a team coach uses every opportunity to help the team learn while "*doing*". Every win or failure becomes an opportunity to celebrate and learn. Helping the team make small shifts is an important part of managing change. Significant shifts or changes can be overwhelming.

E.g., You notice that the team keeps interrupting any individual who is talking. Asking them what makes them do it, exploring this behaviour with them, and helping them agree on one or two rules that they will start following going forward, etc. Helping them find a protocol to express when someone is not following the rules etc.

There have been instances where after agreeing on a certain protocol of behaviour with the team, as a coach, I request the team to allow me to sit into some of their operational meetings. My role there is to just observe and share with the team if I am seeing them display the behaviour that they agreed to or not.

This is a critical competency for a team coach. The International Coaching Federation (ICF) has published team coaching competencies in addition to its existing coaching competency model. A lot of emphasis has been laid on Competency 4, Creating Trust and Safety.

Understanding What Comprises a System

Typically, teams are very inward-focused and believe that just doing their part of the job will produce results. This leads to frustration about how their jobs become difficult because someone else is not doing theirs. Hence, a key part of being a team coach is to help the team understand that they are part of a system which influences what they do and, in turn, can be influenced into aligning with what the team would like to achieve. It is also important for the team coach to help the team identify and map out the stakeholders who are part of the system in which they operate. And finally, help them appreciate what each of these stakeholders expects from this team by proactively engaging in a dialogue with these stakeholders. The last bit can be a little challenging for the team. This is an opportunity for the coach to help them identify some of the beliefs and fears in the team.

I once worked with a team who were tasked with integrating and standardising the HR practices and processes of a recently acquired entity with that of a larger organisation. Though this was a mandate from the board, the team was struggling with getting the buy-in from the new entity to manage these changes. The exercise in getting the team to understand their system and stakeholders made them realise that they were only talking to the leadership team of the acquired entity, and that too on conference calls. Nobody in the project team had any relationships in the new entity. They did not even have a representation from the new entity in their project team, nor did they fully understand the structure of that organisation or what they actually did. The team realised that they needed to spend time building relationships. This

entailed some travel that had not been budgeted. The team's belief was that their CEO would not approve this additional expense. As a coach, I asked them to validate this belief by actually walking up to the CEO and asking for approval. It so happened that they got what they wanted. This was a team of highly experienced HR professionals whose belief systems were limiting their effectiveness by stopping them from leveraging the ecosystem that they were part of - challenging this belief helped them completely change the way they worked.

We started this article by asking what perspectives need to change for someone to make the shift from individual coaching to team coaching. I have tried to address some of those perspectives so far. This might be a good time to look at what you could bring from your current approach to coaching into team coaching.

Look at the ICF's newly published competencies on team coaching. You will find that ICF has actually built on the existing competencies and added some of the nuances that we spoke about earlier into the existing ICF Core Competency Model. Interestingly ICF has named the new document "ICF Team Coaching Competencies: Moving Beyond One-to-One Coaching*".

Hence, in team coaching, you will still start a coaching engagement by helping the team define their coaching objectives; you will still define the ways of working (Competency 3); you will allow everyone to contribute and have their say (Competency 4); you will notice and share; you will help the team pause and reflect (Competency 5); etc.

As with building any competency, the only way to do it is by "doing it". Hence, if you are serious about learning team coaching, I would encourage you to find a team coaching engagement. Initially, you would partner with an experienced team coach. ICF encourages you to also work with a Coaching Supervisor. Supervision is a great way to create your own space for reflection and explore some of the challenges that you are facing.

I believe any good coach can become a great team coach too. As with anything you do, ask yourself, "*Is this something that I want to do?*". If so, trust yourself and get into the deep end. You will certainly learn to swim after a few tries and, maybe initially, with a life vest.

About the Author

Ramesh Sreedharan is a seasoned business leader with an overall experience of over thirty-four years working with multinational organisations in senior business leadership roles. He is accredited with the International Coach Federation (ICF) as a Master Certified Coach (MCC) and an Advanced Certification in Team Coaching (ACTC). Ramesh has over three thousand five hundred hours of coaching experience, having worked with over three hundred leaders and their teams since he started this journey eight years ago. Ramesh believes that leadership effectiveness is really about leaders and their teams being able to engage and build high-value partnerships with both their teams and stakeholders. Hence, the coaching approach that he has helps both individuals and teams not only get a systemic view of their ecosystem but also helps his clients engage effectively with their ecosystem in an emotionally intelligent fashion. Apart from coaching, Ramesh runs various leadership development programs through his organisation, Orenda Centre for Leadership Excellence, with the firm belief that inner wisdom guides every individual in his/her journey. He can be reached at www.linkedin.com/in/ramesh-sreedharan-6ba01816

Smriti, Komal

Journey to Find the Whole Person

Most of the people I have known in the coaching space came to coaching through some personal life situations or a deep inkling to do good for the people. The challenges, frustrations, and confusions that we might have felt become the lived experience through which we find it easy to connect to people. Also, it comes naturally to understand the struggles and difficulties of other people. Empathy is not an effort but a known space we inhabit for the world around us. I would think that we give others what we dearly want for ourselves. Though there is a necessary condition to it. Only a person who has reflected, contemplated and made good on the troubles of life is in that state. Those who reel under the stresses and traumas might be causing more hurt and pain (though unconsciously).

The differentiating factor between the ones who hurt and who heal is self-awareness. And this also is the first objective of Coaching, help bring the client into awareness of Self. And it may seem counterintuitive to think that people lack self-awareness. However, if you pause and observe around, you will see people going through an animate life like a programmed being, reacting to situations, people, environment, expectations, desires, and perceptions like clockwork. Sometimes, this tendency to react is more subtle than we think. Let's understand it by example.

I always thought of myself as a compassionate, thoughtful and helpful person. My teachers would call me a no-nonsense girl. I had a knack for reading between people's words and even silence. I was introspective and always felt that I know myself and I think through my actions and choices. I had a calm demeanour and maybe that is why when I had a violent fall-out with my classmates in University, I was the most shocked person. I felt disappointment, shame and guilt at my behaviour. That was the indication of something deep inside me controlling my actions, feelings and thoughts. After all, there was a lot I was yet to know about myself. And the journey is still on. I might find myself closer but not there yet.

Despite it being a long and arduous journey where I barely had any guidance or mentor to turn to, it is enriching and worthwhile. And if I had the safe space and the support available to me earlier on, I believe it would not have taken this much of time and ordeal to reach where I find myself. Hence, I understand not just as a coach but as a person the value a partnering, co-creative and accepting relationship can bring to a sole warrior (a feeling most would relate to). In my coaching journey as a learner and then as a mentor, the coaching competency I have been most intrigued by is that "the coach acts in response to the whole person of the client (the who)".

And the questions in my mind have been:

"What is the whole person?"
"What does it mean to be acting in response to the who?"
"How would I know if I am present for the who?"
"And how would I know when I am not present for the who?"

At a certain psychological level, the answer also lies within the coaching competency framework of ICF, where the coach is required to listen and explore the clients' words, emotions, sensations, energy, thoughts, perceptions, needs etc. It signifies that a person isn't just their thoughts or perceptions but also their emotions, sensations, energy, and potential. More philosophically and spiritually, a person is an amalgamation of their past, present and future.

Whom you see in front of you has all of these present together at the same time, while it manifests differently. Most of the time, people are not aware of their wholeness and are stuck in the way they look at themselves. Many still will not even consider themselves, not knowing what it means to know self or how much more is there to know about self.

"This is who I have always been."

"This is how I have always lived or done."

"I am _____". Fill in any adjective or word and it is the limiting view about the self that we tend to carry. Some have perfected living a cerebral life that even when you inquire about emotions, they will respond in thoughts as if they do not know what emotions are. Some, you may find drowning in the ocean of emotions at all times. As I associated myself with being calm, kind, and giving, shoving away every other possibility of being into the deep dark of the unconscious, also called a shadow in psychoanalysis.

"I don't aspire to be a good person. I aspire to be a whole person."

These words from Carl Jung indicate the reason for us not feeling whole or seeing ourselves as whole. Because over ages and generations, through religion, law, or moral codes, we are programmed to be good. To see the world as a duality of good and bad, and choose the side of good, despise and fight the bad. How do we ever feel whole then? As Carl Jung said, "**a whole person has both walked with god and wrestled with the devil**." Here, god and the devil are metaphors for good and bad. And wrestling with the devil isn't despising but engaging and winning it over by knowing the real nature of the devil. This comes with the acceptance of god and the devil, good and bad, within us. Though it is not easy.

"The most terrifying thing is to accept oneself completely."

A couple of years back, I faced the jealous self that I accepted, even noticed for the first time. I moved to Canada and have been struggling to find my way about or steady work (despite having worked for more than 15 years in corporate). And my brother who moved to Canada a few years earlier shared with me the news of his promotion. I was excited for him, and then

within a few seconds a thought emerged in my mind, "what wrong have I done?". I fell silent the moment I noticed this thought and understood the jealousy tucked neatly behind it. My brother is most precious to me and my love for him is unconditional. And here I was feeling jealous of his progress. But I couldn't deny it, now that I have seen it. It pained me for days. And finally, I accepted it. It dropped in an instant, but it has been agonizing. I could understand why people would go in denial, suppression or projection of these feelings. Calling them sins and demonizing them doesn't do any good to the person, relationship or world. But going through the inconvenient, uncomfortable or terrifying (as Carl Jung says) process of self-acceptance is the answer.

This becomes possible in coaching when the coach sees the clients as this whole, even before the client has learnt to see themselves. Self-acceptance is uncomfortable especially when we are never permitted to be the whole self. We need permission to be, till we learn to see the truth of ourselves.

I recall one of my recent conversations where the client was being self-critical and apologetic about seeking approval from people around her. She came out of a long and traumatic marriage where she had been constantly diminished. She said, "I should be more confident. I shouldn't be seeking validation." And when I asked her what is wrong with seeking validation when she is just beginning to learn and practice what others might have been doing for years, I saw her taking a deep sigh and relaxing her body. She smiled and said, "thank you". She knew she was a confident woman, she managed to come out of a soul-sucking situation in life. Perhaps she just needs permission to be.

Self-acceptance makes it easy for us to be in the world. It takes away a lot of inner resistance that we learn to impose on ourselves and aids in our growth. And yet again, the limits of our growth are again decided by what we think ourselves to be. A very logical question appears to us when we are on the journey of integrating the good and bad parts of self.
"Who am I?"
"Am I the kind, giving, compassionate person or am I the jealous, angry, disillusioned person?"
"Am I all of it?"

"How do I assimilate these contradictory qualities in me?"

And beyond these questions lies the journey that is possible only with curiosity and courage. The true experiments with the self to know the reality of self. The path comes from the ancient wisdom of sages or elders or ancestors (whatever we may choose to address them as). Whether you take the path of wisdom through Vedanta; the path of practice through Yoga; the path of dharma through Buddhism; the path of meditation through Zen; the path of love through Sufism; or the path of nature through Daoism; all these paths lead you to effortlessness and awareness of the truth of self. One demand in all eastern philosophies and traditions is that you are not asked to believe, but experiment. Take an idea, reflect on it, practice it, play with it and see what it does for you or within you. That is considered to be the highest knowledge – Pratyaksha Gnana.

In the four Vedas in Hinduism, there are four statements about the truth of self and the world. These statements are called the "Mahavakya". These are:

"Aham Brahmasmi" – I am Brahman

"Tat Tvam Asi" – Though art That

"Ayam Atma Brahma" – This Atman(self) is Brahman

"Prajnanam Brahman" – Consciousness is Brahman

All these statements indicate the reality that the self or Atman is consciousness. And there are interesting ways to realise this truth that is used by various sages and wise men. Buddhism also considers consciousness to be the true self. However, since the true nature of consciousness cannot be defined, they call it Anatta or Anatman and they use the expression of Sunya for Brahman.

In both their cases though, the truth of self is beyond what we conceive through mind, body, and intellect. In Taittiriya Upanishad, a whole person looks a bit like the Pancha Kosha: three bodies and five koshas encompassing the consciousness. The most exterior kosha that is tangible and is perceived in an awake state is "Annamaya kosha" or the gross body (sthula sharira).
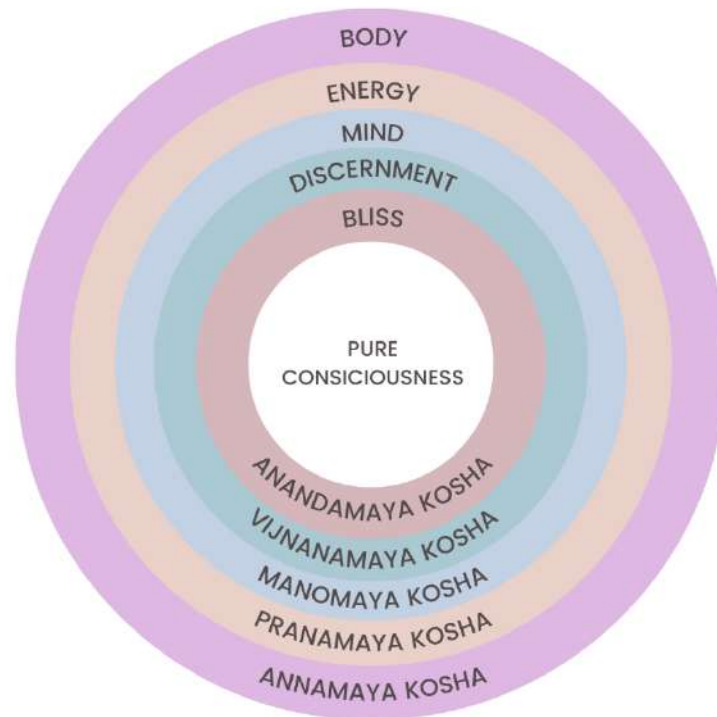
The next three koshas are part of the subtle body (sukshma sharira). These are: "Pranamaya kosha" – energy or vital sheath; "Manonmaya kosha" – mental sheath; "Vijnanamaya kosha" – intellect or discernment sheath.

The innermost sheath to consciousness is "Anandamaya kosha" or the bliss sheath. This is also called the causal body. The body is the cause of all other exterior koshas.
Pure consciousness or our true Self manifests outwards through these layers of the body.
This model (if I may call it a model) makes you think deeply about your true self. The adjectives like tall, strong, man-woman, child, old, and young lie in the Annamaya kosha. The traits like smart, intelligent, kind, compassionate, etc. lie in other respective koshas. And all of these are the layers through which the self manifests in the world. These are not you or me. Adi Shankaracharya (the proponent of Vedanta philosophy) gave a way to arrive at the truth of self,

saying "neti-neti" (not this, not this) by systematically negating all the koshas and arriving at pure consciousness to be your true nature. Another beautiful reminder comes in the form of his poem "Nirvana Shatakam."

Buddhists also use the model of five skandhas (aggregates) that manifest the Annatta through Rupa (physical body/ form); Vedana (sensations/ feeling); Sangya (perception); Samskara (mental formations); and Vigyana (consciousness). So, a whole person is the aggregate of their body, feelings, perceptions, thoughts and consciousness.

In Bhagavad Gita, lord Krishna teaches Arjuna the truth of his self as Atman using these lines: Like a person removes the worn-out clothes and puts on the new, the soul (atma) leaves the worn-out body and adopts the new body.

वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय
नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि।
तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णा
न्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही ॥ 2 ॥

This verse highlights the perishability of the body, which we might form a strong association or attachment to. Therefore, the cause of our trouble, limitations or limited self-acknowledgement is us not seeing who we are.

While these books of wisdom and philosophies give these ideas, how do we know that they are true?

In my view, we experiment. Practice taking these ideas and see what happens. How do these turn out? I can share how it works for me.

Knowing that my truth is pure consciousness, allows me to drop what is not working at the moment and choose something else, without attachment or drama. It allows me to just play my part and honour the one in front of me as pure consciousness having the ability to play their part. And if I notice the person in front of me troubled, stuck, feeling limited or entangled in mental dramas, all that is left for me is to be naturally curious about "how". The inquiry is effortless, the exploration is joyful. All you are doing is helping clear the layers of the light within. Like Ram Dass said, "**We are all just walking each other home**."

The opening verse of Isa Vasya Upanishad speaks of the wholeness, fullness or completeness of Brahman (all existence) and therefore Atman in the following verse.

पूर्णमिदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णत्पूर्णमुदच्छते।

पूर्णस्य पूर्णमिदाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते॥

॥ ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

That (Brahman) is complete, this (Atman) is complete. This wholeness has emerged from that whole. Having taken the wholeness from that, what remains is also whole and complete. Let there be peace, peace, peace.

Now that I know the truth of the person next to me is wholeness, fullness, and completeness, I wonder what comes in the way of them seeing and experiencing this truth. How is maya or illusion entrapping their awareness? And once we can explore it, they see it too. And truth, once seen cannot be unseen.

See your wholeness and you would not need to do anything to act in response to the whole person of the client or anybody. That will be the only way for you.

About the Author

Dr. Komal Smriti is a Coach by profession. She coaches corporate executives, Leaders and teams. She is a Coacharya Alumnus and Educator. She considers herself to be a student of Eastern philosophies and likes to include the learnings in her Coach training programs as well as coaching practice. Born, raised and worked in India, she now lives in Canada with her family, calling it the "Karma Bhoomi". She volunteers with Up with Women (UWW) and is part of AKA, a group dedicated to using art and human expression to elevate humanity.

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Subramaniam, Shiva.

Biomimicry and Coaching: Exploring Lessons from Nature

When I was asked to write this piece on the connections between coaching and biomimicry, I accepted immediately without any hesitation. I am happy that I did so because as I started to write, I discovered connections that I never imagined possible. I have made a beginning. Those of you who are passionate about coaching and intrigued by biomimicry will create more connections on your own. To me, this article is the beginning of a conversation on the linkages between coaching and biomimicry.

Biomimicry is the practice of learning from and mimicking the principles and design strategies of nature to solve human challenges. Biomimicry is learning from nature. It is not learning about nature. Learning from nature implies that nature has something to teach us. A teacher is someone who is knowledgeable, experienced and has something to offer to us, and nature is a teacher, a 3.8-billion-year-old teacher.

To understand biomimicry, take the lotus leaf as an example. The lotus leaf stays clean, despite growing in muddy waters. Every one of us knows that. Philosophers quote the lotus leaf example to talk about detachment. In biomimicry, we ask the question - "*How does nature do something?*". This question is critical to biomimicry. Asking how the lotus leaf stays clean helps us get to the strategy that the lotus leaf employs to remain clean. This strategy tells us that the lotus leaf has small microscopic bumps on its surface, and when water falls on the leaf, these bumps prevent the water from sticking to the surface of the leaf. Water just rolls off the leaf, and as it rolls off, it also carries dirt particles along, and thus the surface of the leaf stays clean. The lotus leaf employs this strategy to fulfil a specific function, which is to stay clean. In biomimicry, the next question to ask is - "*Can we imitate this strategy or principle to address a problem or challenge?*". For instance, can we make fabric employing this strategy so that the fabric does not get dirty? *Lotusan Paints* has employed the lotus leaf principle to develop paint for building façades to keep them clean.

Every organism and living system in nature has some unique strategy that we can learn from. Biomimics learn these strategies from nature and mimic these strategies in the human context. We can learn to manage traffic in our cities from how ant colonies move and to make water out of thin air from the humble Namib beetle. The majestic redwood forests can teach us a thing or two about managing organisations, and hardy oyster reefs can provide a blueprint for protecting coastlines. As biomimics, we do not have to reinvent strategies that already exist; we just need to learn how to adapt them. To learn from nature, we have to use our curiosity and imagination to discover the solutions that it has to offer. Nature is not merely a hoard of oil, minerals and other material resources. Nature is a fount of knowledge and wisdom that can guide us towards a sustainable future, as all of nature's solutions are inherently earth-friendly.

The intention of this article is to see the connections between coaching and biomimicry. I have examined some competencies that I think connect to biomimicry. Sometimes the connections may seem tenuous, and sometimes straightforward. I am excited about the possibilities. As biomimics, we ask the fundamental question - "*How does nature accomplish what we wish to accomplish*?" This question helps us to look for lessons from nature that we can apply in the human world.

Ethics in Coaching and Nature

I start with ethics, a central tenet in coaching. The ICF Code of Ethics describes the core values, ethical values, and ethical standards of behaviour for all ICF professionals. *So what, can nature teach us about ethics?* To answer this, I refer to Janine Benyus, who is credited with popularising the term 'biomimicry'. In her book 'Biomimicry – Innovation Inspired by Nature', Janine summarises the ethos of biomimicry - "*Life creates conditions conducive to life.*" Ethos in this context is the ethical responsibility that nature employs to protect itself. Over millions of years, all life forms have figured out that the best strategy to take care of themselves and their

offspring is to protect the place where they and their offspring live. Observe any ecosystem on earth, and you will notice that all life forms in the ecosystem work to boost, or at the very least maintain, the habitability of the ecosystem for the benefit of all life forms within.

Nature's designs are benevolent and do not cause harm. Nature, for instance, uses life-friendly chemistry. Most of nature's chemistry is water-based. Living beings use materials, chemicals and processes that are supportive of life's processes. Once their work is done, the materials allow for biodegradation into useful components. The Venus flower basket is a marine sponge found deep in the waters of the Pacific Ocean. It forms intricate, beautiful glass-like structures made of silica that it pulls from seawater, using only water as a solvent. Unlike many human-designed industrial processes that demand special conditions like high pressure or high temperature, the Venus flower basket's glassy fibres are created at sea-water temperature and pressure. And what's more, these fibres transmit light better than many industrial fibre optic cables. Ethics in nature ensure that life thrives within planetary constraints and without compromising the growth of future generations. This is a valuable lesson for us as coaches too.

The Importance of Function and Context

Coaching competencies lay emphasis on developing a coaching mindset. A coaching mindset includes being aware of and open to the influence of context and culture. This means that as a coach, I am constantly aware of my own context and the client's context. This helps the coach serve the exact needs of the client in their context. In coaching, it is critical to articulate clearly the purpose of the coaching session. This helps to move the coaching to the best interests of the client rather than the coach. In other words, the function of the coaching session must be very clearly defined. Function in this context refers to *what we want the session to achieve*.

Function is also a fundamental concept in biomimicry. In nature, function refers to what a living being must do in order to survive. An organism or living system performs or attains a function through specific adaptations that could be internal or external structures, behaviours or

even a process. For example, a cactus plant has spines, the function of which is to reduce water loss (among other things). Spines are, therefore, a strategy to prevent the cactus from losing water in its typically arid habitat.

Context refers to the environment and other factors affecting the survival of the organism or the living system. For the cactus, the context is the hot desert with an arid climate and unpredictable rainfall. Context determines the strategy used, which implies that strategies vary based on context. For instance, spines also perform the function of protecting the cactus plant from predators. The nettle plant, on the other hand, performs the same function through leaves that cause a painful sting. The cactus spines and nettle leaves are two strategies to accomplish the same function. Each strategy is best suited to the context of the plant. Spines work best in the conditions where cacti live, while stinging leaves work best in the nettle's habitat. A strategy that works to accomplish a function in one context may not work in other contexts. These lessons can easily be applied in the coaching context too.

The Power of Collaboration

A coach is expected to show support, empathy and concern for the client and remain focused, observant, empathetic and responsive to the client. This is the core of the relationship. A client comes to the coach trusting that the coach will partner with them in their journey of growth. We know from practice and experience that these two competencies help the coach be one with the client, doing everything possible to serve the client's needs. In nature, several examples embody this spirit. Underneath the ground beneath our feet, there exists an intricate network comprising the roots of trees and certain species of fungi. The fungi send out fine tube-like structures that entwine with the roots of trees at a cellular level, creating what is termed the *Wood Wide Web*. This complex underground network enables trees and plants to communicate and collaborate. They distribute resources - sugar, nitrogen, and phosphorus, between one another using this fungal network. For instance, a dying tree might send its resources to the benefit of other trees in the community. A young sapling might be supported with extra resources

by its stronger neighbours. The trees also warn each other. A plant under attack from pests can indicate to its neighbours to raise its defences before the pests reach it.

A coaching relationship is also mutual in nature. In as much as the client benefits from the coach, the coach benefits equally, if not more, from the client. Every coaching session brings in new knowledge, different perspectives, learning and insights. This *mutualism* is what makes coaching exciting and purposeful.

Mutualism exists in nature too. Many organisms and living systems interact so as to provide mutual benefits. The benefits could simply be one organism's waste that becomes another organism's resource, or it could be close relationships that have evolved over time. Clownfish (made popular through the animated movie, 'Finding Nemo') and sea anemones share such a mutualistic relationship. The tentacles of sea anemones contain harpoon-like stinging capsules that the anemones use to capture prey and repel predators. The clownfish, however, seek refuge in the tentacles of the anemones to protect themselves from the other fish in the sea. The mucus on the skin of the clownfish protects them from the sting of the host anemone. Nutrients from the waste produced by the clownfish nourish the sea anemone.

Nature as a Model, Measure and Mentor

Biomimicry values nature as a model, mentor and measure. Over 3.8 billion years, nature has figured out solutions to almost all of the problems that humans are trying to address. Nature's designs are well-adapted and resilient; what did not work has already been discarded. Nature is the perfect model for us, providing blueprints that can be applied across context and need. We can model nature by learning to see things as interconnected systems.

Nature provides a measure of how to '*create conditions conducive to life*'. All of nature's solutions inherently follow certain overarching principles, especially by way of responsible design- nature uses only the energy it needs and relies on freely available energy; nature recycles all materials; nature is resilient to disturbances; nature tends to optimise rather than

maximise; nature provides mutual benefits; nature runs on information; nature uses chemistry and materials that are safe for living beings; nature builds using abundant resources, incorporating rare resources only sparingly; nature is locally attuned and responsive; and, nature uses shape to determine functionality.

How can human designs embody such exactness, beauty, and efficiency? We can create conditions conducive to life, just like nature does. We can mimic how nature offers reciprocity and abundance for life to flourish. A mentor for me is someone who helps me grow as an individual and who is always at hand when I need help. I learn to grow as an innovator by learning nature's innovation strategies. I learn to use silence, the way nature does to be a better listener. I have heard from several people that being in the midst of nature has a calming effect on them. Nature is a mentor who lives by example and someone we can go to in times of need. We can be guided by humility as we are mentored by nature's lessons.

With this article, I have just touched the tip of the iceberg. There are several more connections we can draw between coaching and biomimicry. Connections to listening, connections to presence, connection to bias for action. Maybe this piece will motivate us to explore many more connections and make us bio-inspired coaches. As coaches, all of us desire to constantly learn and grow. Now, with biomimicry, we know that we do not have to look very far for a mentor to learn from. We just have to look out of our windows.

About the Author

Shiva is a biomimicry evangelist with over thirty years of experience in driving learning and development in organisations. He is the co-founder of Biomimicry Compass, an IIT Madras incubated company. He is a guest faculty at IIT Madras, where he teaches biomimicry, creative thinking, and cross-culture. He is a Professional Certified Coach (PCC) and has coached the Indian National Cricket Team and the Delhi Daredevils IPL team on creative thinking. A lawyer by qualification, he was an advocate in the High Court at Madras. Shiva is a firm believer in the power of imagination; he has a real star for a friend and is an ardent Manchester United fan. He can be reached at www.linkedin.com/in/shivathepaperclip

Venkatadri, K R.

Breaking Silos in Corporate Leadership

As per the classical management theory definition, "*An organisation is a group of people with a defined relationship in which they work together to achieve the goals of that organisation. This relationship does not come to an end after completing each task.*" As humans, we have our own interests, cultures, beliefs, values, etc., which we bring to the organisation in which we work. Any organisation has many functions, and each function tries to maximise its own objectives, sometimes at variance from the organisation's objectives. This creates silos in organisations, which result in sub-optimal performance of the business.

Over time, companies have used many techniques like getting members to work in cross-functional teams, holding regular meetings between leaders from different departments, transferring leaders across functions to get greater empathy, setting goals for alignment etc. However, we do see that in spite of such interventions, silos get created. Most silos get created due to the creation of personal fiefdoms. Many leaders are interested in protecting their self-interest, and this translates into their teams' behaviour as well. Hence along with the above-mentioned interventions, there is a need to address the human side of leaders.

As a qualified coach, in my understanding of the coaching principles and my personal experience and study of organisations, I have found that using the coaching competencies for leaders and organisations can bring about cohesion within teams and bring people together by understanding themselves, their motivations, their behaviours, and their mental roadblocks, and thereby, encouraging trust, open communication and collaboration across levels and departments. Coaching can be an effective way to achieve this by helping leaders develop the skills and mindset needed to work effectively across silos.

While there are a number of coaching competencies that would help in addressing the issue of silos, the top three competencies, in my view, are -Maintains Presence, Communicating Effectively, and Cultivates Trust and Safety.

1. Maintains Presence

Maintaining presence is an important aspect of building connections between people. When someone is mentally and emotionally present, they are fully focused and engaged in the current moment, which can help create a sense of security and reliability in others. Here are a few ways in which presence can be maintained – active listening, demonstrating authenticity, and empathy, being responsive, and being mindful. These help in being self-aware and convey a feeling of comfort to the listener. Furthermore, the leader needs to manage her/his emotions in the interaction to be present and also be vulnerable enough to know that he/she might not know everything. This is not an easy competency for leaders to demonstrate, and more so in a corporate situation, where the leader believes that it is his/her job to provide solutions and react before the other person has spoken. These behaviours not only demonstrate a lack of presence but also could lead to a lack of trust and comfort. This then encourages more silo behaviour to find comfort with like-minded members or functions.

Traditional organisations, more so in the command-control regimes, have encouraged problem solvers to grow up in the organisation. However, as more organisations become more knowledgeable and service-oriented, the key is to help the team members to solve their own problems. The leader has to provide coach-like behaviour to ask the right questions and be present to help the team members to grow.

In maintaining presence, silence is a key requirement for the leader to allow the other members to think of the solution in their minds. This competency is not easy and needs a lot of practice and self-restraint to develop and follow. Silence can play an important role in building trust and comfort as it allows for reflection, active listening and the creation of a safe space for open communication. It can also create a sense of intimacy and vulnerability, which can foster deeper connection and understanding.

2. Communicating Effectively

Communicating effectively is key to building trust and safety. Being open and having transparent communication helps. Establishing clear roles and responsibilities and periodic touch points help in maintaining the balance of relationships. As mentioned earlier, companies create cross-functional teams to work together, understand each other's perspectives, and come out with a common solution without holding on to departmental turf. There are many cross-functional teams, however, in which one member is so dominating that the other members keep silent. This also happens in organisations where one function is typically the dominant function, e.g in many FMCG companies, the S&M team is more dominant; in the manufacturing companies, the operations team is more dominant etc. It is critical to bring about the right governance in the team for all to express their views. Many leaders of such dominant functions become more self-serving and self-centred if they are not self-aware of their behaviour. Hence interventions to help such leaders to understand their behaviours and their negative effects would help in addressing this issue.

3. Cultivating Trust and Safety

Cultivating Trust and Safety is crucial to reduce the formation of silos. Personal fiefdoms lead to silos, leading to a lack of trust in each other, resulting in the need to protect one's turf. Forming groups gives a sense of safety and security. Hence the starting point for breaking silos is to start trusting each other and make the others feel safe and secure. I have seen managers speak about a lack of trust in others. However, the key is to start with the self. "*Do others trust me? What are the behaviours that demonstrate that I am trustworthy?*" These are questions that every leader needs to ask. In organisations, I have seen that many employees are comfortable sharing their personal issues with some leaders/managers and not with others. This is a clear sign for each leader/manager to know how much they are trusted. To be able to become trustworthy is hard work needing perseverance and effort.

Coaching can play a key role in helping to build trust and typically involves helping individuals or teams identify and overcome barriers to trust, such as communication issues or past conflicts. This can be done through techniques such as active listening, effective feedback, and open and honest dialogue. Additionally, coaches may also work with individuals or teams to develop and practice trust-building behaviours, such as being reliable and dependable, being transparent and honest, and taking personal responsibility for actions and decisions.

It is important to note that breaking silos is not a one-time or short-term activity. It requires consistent effort and a culture of openness and collaboration to be successful in the long run. Thus, we can see how coaching competencies can help in breaking silos. I have seen companies provide executive coaching to senior leaders and also have now begun to provide coach training programs to senior leaders and mid-level managers to create a coaching mindset. This will help managers to become more self-aware and also learn the coaching competencies that will help other members of the company

About the Author

Venkatadri is one of the very few CXOs who is also a Master Certified Coach from ICF. Over the last thirty-two years, this mechanical engineer and IIM Gold Medalist has been honoured with multiple leadership roles across Unilever and Tata groups. He is a core advisor in various professional bodies like CII, IMC, BCCI, and institutions of CSIR institutes and TIFAC. He loves leading by example and mentoring and coaching new-generation leaders.

Vijayalakshmi.S.

Coaching and the Call to Courageous Leadership

Introduction

The last few years leading to the present have offered us the realisation that we live in very challenging times. Our world as we knew it seems to have changed at a pace and with a suddenness that we are still coming to terms with. Such challenging times also offer opportunities for deep growth – if we choose to embrace them. This is also a time when the light has been shone on leadership, increasingly of a certain kind. What the world needs now is Courageous Leadership*.* Let me elaborate on why.

Often courage is associated with a state of fearlessness -not experiencing fear- and the fact that it is inborn -either you have it, or you do not. Both of these associations are a far cry from what courage really is.

Nelson Mandela said, "*I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear"*. I deeply connect with this understanding of courage and find its sharp relevance in our current **VUCA** (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) world. Given how the adjectives *challenging, complex, unpredictable and ambiguous* seem to be an integral part of our new normal, one can expect a lot of associated fears to accompany these. We cannot avoid these fears, but we can certainly respond to and conquer them. Leadership in today's world, therefore, needs to be courageous above anything else. Building on this thought of "*why courageous leaship*", I would like to connect the dots with coaching, leaders and coaches in the rest of this piece through my own experiences and work as a Coach. In particular, I would like to focus on four aspects in four parts:

PART 1: Two Important Fears That Leaders Grapple With

While there are many fears humans encounter, the two important ones, especially in the context of leadership, are the fear of failure and the fear of the unknown.

The first one arises perhaps because of the spotlight that is thrown on a leader, thereby mounting an innate pressure on them to shine. This is accentuated by a highly competitive culture that measures success through a constant high bar. Thus, failure is viewed highly critically by the world, leading to many a leader's world-view and actions driven by this unconscious fear of failure. This fear leads to interference with a more natural performance and becomes counterproductive to it.

The second fear that is often not acknowledged but is very real is the fear of the unknown. Rapid changes in a leader's operating environment lead to a context with fewer constants and many variables. We have experienced this in the three years of the pandemic, where we found ourselves in the throes of an unknown enemy (or more) and had to find a survival strategy even as we were making sense of what hit us. Business leaders had to deal with this at a different scale, where business models, standard ways of working, and even the reason for existence pivoted overnight. The fear of the unknown is like being in a dark room – unsettling, invisible and confusing - and while trying to find your way out towards the light, you may falter and fall.

In the last few years of my work as a coach partnering with leaders across industries and levels, I have often noted these two fears show up in our conversations and in their being. I could deeply connect and empathise, having experienced them myself through thoughts such as – *"Would I really be able to support my clients effectively through the unending months of the pandemic when both our worlds were shaky and unclear?" "How would the dynamics of the coaching profession change and what new expectations would be there in the new normal, when life/survival was all that mattered?"*. I soon realised that these fears were universal and, in fact, allowed for a deeper sense of connectedness between us and our 'being human'. And together, somehow, it was possible to overcome these fears with a Courage Mindset.

I also realised that coaching could provide that safe space and container to explore these fears and more. In fact, in a world where embodying courage seemed more important than ever, coaching could find its sharper purpose to contribute to society to facilitate and build courageous leadership. Imagining the possibilities of a world with courageous leaders is truly inspiring.

If courage is conquering fear, my pen picture of a courageous leader who overcomes the two fears outlined above would look like someone who is: comfortable in "not knowing enough"; moves forward with a sense of direction and purpose even whilst the destination is unclear or shifting; spots an opportunity in every challenge, displaying resilience in adversity; trust in their own innate capabilities (and that of others); reframes performance through a lens of progress - consciously diffusing pressure by adding pleasure; embraces falls and failures (in self and others) as important lessons for real growth; and, embodies optimism and hope.

Reading the above qualities, it may seem as though this is relevant to anyone in our present times. Absolutely. The above are relevant and meaningful traits of self-leadership that everyone would benefit from to thrive in tough times. Often leadership is viewed in a restricted manner to include only those who lead others and have followers. It is necessary to go beyond that narrow view and application as something more inclusive, which can be made visible through the lens of self-leadership. In fact, self-leadership is a stepping stone, which simply is about how you lead your own life -the first step before one can lead and influence others.

PART 2: What is Courageous Leadership; How Coaching Can Support and Facilitate It?

Now, let us look at how Coaching can enable and support courageous leadership. Coaching, unlike other more commonly-known interventions, is not built on any one strict/specific framework or structure and is truly non-constraining in terms of limiting boundaries stemming from one's past. Its purpose is to enable human potential and is built on a strong foundation of trust and partnership. Coach partners with a client not just to work on specific goals but, in the process, facilitates growth for the whole person of the client. Coaching connects with and enables the core of the client to become stronger. Through a series of conversations, typically

spread over a period of a few months, the coach and the client navigate important themes that hold meaning and importance for the client.

The first step in the coaching journey is to build a strong container of trust and safety, where the client can safely place all their fears and dreams as they are without going through any pressure to "look good" or "make sense". This is important specifically in the context of courage because the first step in overcoming any fear is to acknowledge it with honesty. Coaching encourages authenticity and honesty from the client through a completely non-judgemental atmosphere. When we know that the person listening to us is not judging us at all – whether it is the disappointment of a failure or the audacity of a dream - we find ease in letting it all flow.

This grows even stronger when we experience the coach listening to all of us – our words and more than our words, our emotions, our energy, our whole person. That feeling of being heard is so powerful, and it paves the way towards feeling empowered. The coach then gently invites the client to move forward to what they would like to do with their present state or situation, relying on powerful questioning and open-ended inquiry that offers the maximum benefit to the client's exploration. The client who may have started this journey experiencing some fear or a sense of being limited (in actions, thoughts or beliefs) now experiences a sense of resourcefulness through this inquiry that is appreciative – they begin to find anchor points and answers to many unanswered questions about themselves and their world.

Building on these, the coaching process evokes a deep awareness in the client through their own self-discovery that empowers them to not just deal with their present issues or goals but also stay with them as a learning for the future. Such self-generated learning is bound to stick. Specifically, in developing and strengthening courage, it is the client's own lessons and learnings that would serve them in future much beyond the duration of the coaching program - to deal with similar or different fears or challenges that may come their way.

Finally, coaching facilitates a client's growth and, in the process, their autonomy too. The coach partners with the client to transform their learning and insight by putting them into action. In the context of building courage, it is not just awareness but putting it into practice via consistent actions that make it a part of the client's mindset and being.

Sometimes in coaching discovery sessions with potential clients, I have been asked to share session-wise details of what will be "covered" in the coaching program. I have had to politely explain that there is no set "syllabus" as such, an approach that is far removed from the core of the coaching approach – i.e., flexibility, space and co-creation by design. An important part of the coaching experience is a sense of operating with the unknowns and not learning from a set agenda. The client realises early on that they can flow in any direction they choose to, and the coach would flow alongside, together navigating twists and turns along the way. This process in itself is a new and different experience for many first-time coaching clients, opening them to many possibilities and being comfortable with a state of the unknown. They experience responding to situations as and how they emerge and begin dealing with them with curiosity and a sense of discovery. Developing comfort in navigating unknowns prepares them to deal with the other important fear of the unknown, thereby building courage. Courage, like any other muscle, can be built and will have its own memory. Courageous Leadership needs to be built and nurtured over time, and in my experience, coaching is one of the best ways to do this.

PART 3: Why and How do coaches embrace courage in their profession and show up as courageous leaders themselves?

Being a partner in another's journey of courageous leadership and holding space for deep growth requires one to embrace courage. That is perhaps a straightforward reason why coaches need to embrace courage in their own profession, overcoming the two important fears outlined earlier and showing up as courageous leaders themselves.

In fact, the theme of courage and its constituent elements of going beyond the fear of failure and working with unknowns is outlined in the ICF Core Competency Model, which serves as a comprehensive standard of practice for coaching practitioners. Specifically, the components of courage find reference in two of the four Competency clusters of *"Co-Creating the Relationship"* and *"Communicating Effectively",* and as a part of the three Core-competencies:

1. **Cultivates Trust and Safety**: demonstrates openness and transparency as a way to display vulnerability and build trust with the client.

2. **Maintains Presence**: employs a style that is open, flexible, grounded and confident, is comfortable working in a space of not knowing and demonstrates curiosity during the coaching process.

3. **Evokes Awareness**: adjusts the coaching approach in response to the client's needs.

The emphasis on vulnerability, openness, flexibility, not-knowing, curiosity, and responsive agility are significant for the coach to embody in the coaching partnership, irrespective of their credential level. In the early stages of my coach development, while I could well appreciate why these aspects were important, it was only through ongoing practice, my own experiences and experiments in embodying them, and through reflective practice I was able to understand their real impact and how it enabled me to be more courageous as a coach. My Mastery journey accentuated these in beautiful ways, as MCC-level coaching is about fluidity with which a coach shows up in the coaching conversation, in which courage plays a very important part. ICF's minimum skills requirement for MCCs clearly calls these out as:

1. **Cultivates Trust and Safety**: the coach's willingness to be open, authentic and vulnerable with the client to build mutual trust, and the coach's willingness to be vulnerable with the client and create a safe space for the client to be vulnerable in return.

2. **Evokes Awareness:** the coach shares observations, insights and feelings, without attachment, that have the potential to create new learning for the client, and the coach's way of being is consistently curious; the coach is willing to not know and allow the exploration to evolve based on the client's thinking, learning, and creating.

3. **Authenticity and Willingness to be Vulnerable and Sharing without Attachment**: this enables a Master-coach to truly be courageous without the apprehension or fear of failure. This also takes away any "pressure of performance", which could potentially shift the focus of coaching from the client to the coach. Similarly, consistent curiosity and willingness to not know but evolve based on the client set them up to be comfortable with unknowns and, in fact, leverage it as a strength of coaching.

If you are a coach reading this, I would invite you to reflect on these questions: *How does courage show up during coaching? For you and for your client? Is it important for you as a Coach? What are some of the ways in which you could deepen it further?*

PART 4: My Personal Experience and Learnings on Courageous Leadership

I'd like to begin this concluding part, which is about my experience and learning in courageous leadership, with two assertions: like many good leaders are/could become good coaches, the converse also holds good – good coaches are / could become good leaders; it took me inner work over the years, and, courage, now in this very moment as I write this to say – I am a Courageous Coach and Leader (Coach-Leader), and I embrace this being with gratitude. Below are some of my learnings in my journey of Courageous Leadership:

1. A courageous coach is not one who is fearless but someone who embraces fear and conquers it. Like in any other profession or vocation, there could be fears and anxieties that one faces in the course of work as a coach. A courageous professional is one who is able to acknowledge such fears and move ahead on the path of progress and development. Do note that the path may be filled with many a fall, which in itself propels one to stand back taller.

2. It is well known that vulnerability is an important aspect of being a better coach, but it is not easy to embody. It takes courage to show up with vulnerability in front of one's clients, and when one does so, it results in a very different coaching experience - for both the client and the coach- one that has more meaning and depth and is transformative.

3. Coaching with courage is about readiness and comfort in travelling to places in the conversation that could be sticky, uncomfortable or out of one's comfort zone. This travel calls for authenticity combined with candour, along with respect and kindness. It is about travelling deeper to address strong or difficult client emotions, gently challenging the client as required while being detached from the outcomes.

4. Courage has been an important element in my path to Mastery. The deeper I travel, I learn another nuance about being courageous.

5. Courage and authenticity go hand in hand. Being courageous allows us to show up with authenticity, be accepting of ourselves, and be comfortable in our skin. And being authentic and simple is an important part of being courageous.

6. From being uncomfortable with "unknowns", courage has allowed me to find joy in "not knowing". This joy shows up in every client engagement – to work with clients from different cultures, sectors, backgrounds and life stages, with very different expectations from coaching. Even seemingly "challenging coaching engagements" seem to me as opportunities for growth for both the client and myself.

7. Building courage does not lessen fear. Neither does being a Master Coach. It simply allows one to respond differently and with more grace and groundedness. I still experience many a "butterfly moment", but I'd say it keeps things real and makes coaches and leaders human.

8. Developing courage has guided me to go beyond personal mastery to envision contributing systemically to the greater good. It has had me thinking – *"What does it mean and take, to courageously pursue a vision and contribute to societal growth and change?"* A courageous approach to systemic challenges enabled me to facilitate and lead a high-impact and large-scale grass-roots initiative in the face of adversity at the start of the pandemic in March 2020 called **CoachesForYou**, which supports pro bono coaching conversations for all. Personally, for me, as a coach, it allowed me to show up as a volunteer leader and change agent, something that was perhaps always core to me but had never found its manifestation.

9. Courage also enables professional leaders to have a dream, a vision and a purpose - for the good of the profession. Something that will serve the profession, in how it's viewed

and respected, in how it keeps raising the bar and builds confidence in society, and about how its constituent professionals can grow individually and collectively.

10. In my journey as a Coach-leader (more specifically in my volunteer service and tenure as President of ICF Chennai Charter Chapter), being courageous has propelled me to think about questions and inspire other like-minded leaders, such as: What is the real purpose of our profession? Why do Coaches exist? What is our role in society? How can coaching become integral to society and truly accessible to everyone? It gave me wings and the faith to lead **Coaching For Growth ITOS 2021,** a unique, global coming together of the coaching ecosystem virtually from Chennai, India, in the middle of a very difficult second wave. Alongside a team of committed leaders from across the country and outside, we hosted the landmark ICF India Conclave 2021, which came to be known as a milestone event but, more importantly, a lesson in courage, resilience, growth, and the manifold possibilities of coaching.

11. Courage also enabled me to articulate my dream for the profession that I call out here, "*Making coaching accessible, less confusing and simple. I would love to see coaching having its place in society along with other well-recognised professions and creating meaningful social impact.*"

Conclusion

Building on these four parts, where I have attempted to look at the interconnectedness between courage, leadership, coaching and coaches, I would like to conclude my thoughts by quoting Maya Angelou, *"Without courage, we cannot practice any other virtue with consistency. We can't be kind, true, merciful, generous, or honest."*

> "Without courage, we cannot practice any other virtue with consistency. We can't be kind, true, merciful, generous, or honest."
>
> – MAYA ANGELOU

As humanity navigates difficult and demanding times, it needs more courageous leaders, now more than ever. And each one of us has the potential to be one. Leadership is not the prerogative or responsibility of a few, it is for all to embrace. Both courage and leadership can be built with the right mindset, one experience at a time.

About the Author

Vijayalakshmi is an experienced Master Coach & Mentor (MCC - ICF & MP - EMCC) with three thousand plus hours of coaching experience across Executive, Leadership, Wellness and Conflict coaching. She is a Systemic and Team Coach as well as an accredited Mediator, and amongst the first worldwide to earn the distinguished ACTC. Viji was the first recipient of the ICF India Coaching Excellence Guru Award 2022. She was also awarded special recognition as '*highly commended*' in the EMCC Global Coaching Awards 2021. Viji serves on the board of ICF Chennai as Immediate Past President; she also served as Chair of the ICF India Conclave 2021 – Coaching For Growth ITOS. She can be reached at www.linkedin.com/in/mastercoachviji