

OCTOBER 2020 | ISSUE 27

Coaching Perspectives

THE ASSOCIATION FOR COACHING
GLOBAL MAGAZINE



Crisis and opportunity

- Peter Hawkins on how coaching can help evolve human consciousness
- Is the industry ready to coach cross-racially?
- Dr Cath Bishop on redefining success in a complex world
- Coping with crisis: new models for new times



ADVANCING COACHING IN BUSINESS AND SOCIETY, WORLDWIDE

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October

Tuesday 6th October

18:00 (BST)/ 19:00 (CEST)/ 13:00 (EDT)

Virtual

Understanding Cultural Transition

– Ruth Hughes

Tuesday 13th October

8:30-9:30 (BST)

Ireland - Virtual - Morning

Virtual Corporate Roundtable (Corporate only event)

– Joe Dobby

Wednesday 14th October

8:30-9:30 (AEST)

Australia, Sydney - Breakfast

Community Breakfast Series

Wednesday 14th October

9:30-10:30 (BST)

Ireland - Virtual - Morning

Virtual Café

Thursday 15th October

12:30-14:00 (AEST)

Australia NSW/ACT - Virtual - Afternoon

Meet the Author - Claudia Lantos and 'The Adversity Advantage'

– Claudia Lantos

Wednesday 21st October

18:00 (BST)/ 19:00 (CEST)/ 13:00 (EDT)

Virtual

Five Crucial Steps to a Highly Profitable Coaching Business

– Lisa Farr

Tuesday 27th October

18:00-19:00 (EST)

USA East Coast - Virtual - Evening

Sneak Peek: AC Leader Coach Accreditation Program

– Paul Lawrence

Wednesday 28th October

9:30-10:30 (BST)

Ireland - Virtual - Morning

Virtual Café

Thursday 29th October

17:00-18:30 (AEST)

Australia Victoria - Virtual - Evening

Learning to relax with uncertainty through Mindfulness - Part 1

– Angie Tenance

November

Wednesday 4th November

17:00-18:30 (AEST)

Australia Victoria - Virtual - Evening

Learning to relax with uncertainty through Mindfulness - Part 2

– Angie Tenance

Wednesday 4th November

18:00 (GMT)/ 20:00 (CET)/ 13:00 (EST)

Virtual

Adventures in Transformative Coaching

– Ben Dowman

Thursday 5th November

14:45 (GMT) / 15:45 (CET)/ 09:45 (EST)

Virtual

Climate Crisis : How Can Coaching Help?

– Hetty Einzig

Wednesday 11th November

10:00 (GMT) / 12:00 (CET)

Virtual Masterclass

The Heart of Real Team Coaching

– Georgina Woudstra and Allard de Jong

Wednesday 18th November

18:00 (GMT)/ 20:00 (CET)/ 13:00 (EST)

Virtual

Coaching Approaches and Styles

– helping you understand the differences

– Alex Morgan

December

Tuesday 1st December

08:15 (GMT)/ 10:15 (CET)

Virtual Masterclass

Understanding our 'impact' and the case for executive coaching

– Professor Erik De Haan

* Dates and times subject to change

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Welcome to the October edition of *Coaching Perspectives*. Our theme is 'crisis and opportunity: coaching's contribution to global challenges'. Everyone knows the world is in crisis – climate meltdown, biodiversity loss, fragmented institutions and states, economic recession, racism, the pandemic ramping up again. But while shock and despair may be tempting, they will not serve. Without discounting our legitimate feelings, how can coaches highlight and leverage the opportunities challenging times offer?

Today, as I write, TED Countdown* launched. Over five hours, a stellar range of leaders, political luminaries, actors, scientists, artists, experts and activists speak about the urgency of addressing climate change. They speak of the facts, figures and behaviours of the crisis, about how to lead, how to act, how to recycle, how to restore – and they speak of the trees. As novelist Elif Shafak says: 'You shelter under us, admire our flowers, carve your lover's name in our bark, cut us down, make furniture from our wood... But you do not see us.' I confess that I am in love with trees! Why isn't everyone awestruck by these extraordinary creatures?

In the northern hemisphere autumn has arrived: the trees are creating their symphony of change – reds, golds, lemony greens turning to brown, leaf-fall swirling to the wind or sodden with rain. The occasional day of blue sky and mellow sun illuminates their fluorescent glow. And, walking in the shadow of Covid, we feel lucky – the joy of being alive is as sharp as the cold air.

Among the Trees, an exhibition currently drawing visitors to the Hayward Gallery, London, celebrates the miracle and beauty of trees. My last bedtime read, *The Overstory*, while getting its narrative drive from the tales of a disparate bunch of characters, is really about the trees they love, fight and die for. Biologist Dr Patricia Westerford, is given the best lines, jolting our understanding:

'Men and trees are closer cousins than you think. We're two things hatched from the same seed, heading off in opposite directions, using each other in a shared place. That place needs all its parts. And our part... we have a role to play in the earth organism.'

That is the implicit question we pose in this edition – just what is our role in the 'earth organism'?

We kick off with a model from Peter Hawkins and Giles Hutchins', created to frame coaching approaches to environmental issues. Linda Aspey and Penny Walker explore the stories we tell ourselves that prevent those conversations, and Peter Tavernise investigates the Wounded Healer archetype for coaches working with climate crisis. We're proud to publish the landmark Joint Statement on Climate Change, signed by nine professional coaching bodies and the result of a unique collaboration. We hope you will join us at one of six events in November to discuss this initiative.

Maintaining the momentum of the Black Lives Matter supplement in our July edition, we continue to explore race and racism. UK coach Arit Eminue asks why the coaching studies tell us nothing about the

ethnic makeup of our profession (what an astonishing gap!) and urges coaching to contribute to anti-racist progress. Anita Sanchez, in the US, provides insights to coaching across race, especially in dynamic times, when old hierarchies are breaking down as fast as old certainties.

Opportunity is built on reflection combined with action – supported by good tools and fresh thinking. In this issue's deep dive, Martin Vogel and Simon Cavicchia propose we rethink how coaches can work with leaders, introducing the idea of 'leadership supervision' to enable more systemic and long-term partnership. Neil Scotton offers his new tool, 'Neil's Wheel', a repurposing of the Wheel of Life, to enable clients to explore their place and contribution in the world – looking at meaning and purpose, contribution, environment, fulfilment. Geraldine Haley calls on us to help leaders use the opportunity of lockdown to take risks, drop the masks and reinvent workplace rules. Navi Radjou, interviewed by Sue Stockdale, introduces us to the concepts of frugal thinking and coaching in convergence, while Karen Ellis and Richard Boston explain 'opposable thinking' and how it helps us manage complexity. Meanwhile, Olympian and diplomat Cath Bishop challenges our concepts of winning calling on us to drop our obsession with targets and rankings, and redefine success in a complex world.

A range of other skills can help coaches and clients respond to the opportunity within crisis. Professional declutterer Ariana Steigman discusses how Covid has refocused us on what really matters. Martha Freymann-Miser uses the engaging character of Frederick the mouse to remind us of the power of images created by artists and poets, sustaining and inspiring us in dark times. Soraya Shaw explains the neuroscience of living with threat, assuring us it's normal to feel exhausted. While Laura Simms, national systems influencer for the NHS in the UK, invites us to cultivate compassion, to humanise our organisations and make them more resilient.

Perhaps the most powerful of the 'Covid-gifts' is the slowing down. Perhaps this allows us to see the trees and the world they enable (including us as part of the whole), not as a disaster waiting for a hero, but as a vision of beauty and life that is ours too. What emerges loud and clear from our contributors is that the crises we face – if we do so together, and with hope, compassion and courage – present us with our time of opportunity.

Enjoy the read and do send us your comments. We love to hear from you.

Hetty Einzig
Executive Editor

1. A global collaboration choreographed by TED and Leaders Quest

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EVOLVING HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS: COACHING'S GREAT CHALLENGE

In the first of a three-part series, master coach and thought leader **Professor Peter Hawkins** outlines a new systemic awareness model, developed with future-thinker Giles Hutchins, to hasten the paradigm shift for the human species to be able to address the major interconnected challenges of our time. This first instalment explores why an evolution in human consciousness is needed.

Recently a senior leader said to me: 'coaches are fiddling around helping highly privileged executives with their personal development, while not just Rome but the world is burning.' We agreed that coaches have a critical role in the great work of our time – a role they share with educators, counsellors and psychotherapists, religious leaders and teachers, leadership development practitioners and many others. That role? To help evolve human consciousness at a speed never previously achieved in order to avoid ecological collapse across our one shared earth. How can coaches step up to this great work? I have been exploring these issues for some time and supporting initiatives to bring them to prominence.¹

Over the last year, the Climate Coaching Alliance (climatecoachingalliance.org) has done a great job of facilitating explorations across the globe, and in May 2020 nine of the world's leading coaching associations signed a joint statement declaring a climate emergency, along with announcing six open events for further discussion.²

Now we have to move from rhetoric to practical changes in coaching ethics, training and competencies, but most importantly in how we fundamentally revise the purpose of coaching in the world.

Coaches can help evolve human consciousness at a speed never previously achieved in order to avoid ecological collapse across our one shared earth

1. For more information and for examples, see Hawkins's and Turner's 2020 book *Systemic Team Coaching: Delivering Value beyond the Individual*, and Hawkins and Ryde 2020
2. Read the statement in full on p37

THE GREAT CHALLENGES OF OUR TIME

The human species has created the Anthropocene – a new geological age, and the first to be entirely dependent on one living species: homo sapiens. Living on this geology is a greatly degraded topsoil, and a biosphere where humans have, in our extractive and exploitative greed and omnipotence, greatly reduced biodiversity and driven thousands of wild species to extinction. The majority of other mammalian species are now entirely dependent on humans for their existence. Surrounding the biosphere is an atmosphere filled with human-generated pollution, carbon, nitrogen and methane. On our current trajectory, we are on course for significant rises in global temperatures, causing large rises in sea levels, which would make many parts of the world uninhabitable. Without significant change we could run out of topsoil for growing grains and vegetables within 60 years, and may see the extinction of our pollinating bees and insects even sooner.

Within this biosphere is the social sphere of human relationships, which are also greatly polluted: by racism, sexism, sectarianism and all forms of 'othering'; by gross economic and social inequality, which has accelerated exponentially in the last 40 years; and by an increase in the prevalence of mental illness and distress, and the loss of shared meaning and purpose. In 1960, the average CEO earned 20 times the salary of the average worker in their company; today they earn 271 times more. For the first time, more young men between the ages of eighteen and 40 die of suicide than die from wars or murder. Individualism has moved the enemy from 'out there' to inside us.

Traditionally, paradigm shifts in human thinking, as defined by philosopher Thomas Kuhn¹, have taken centuries to develop, take root and then spread across the globe. The current ecological crisis and climate emergency will not afford us that length of time. There is an urgent need to articulate the necessary shift in consciousness, and to create numerous interconnected pathways and practices through which it can be collectively evolved.

How this can happen will be covered in the second part of this article, which will appear in the January edition of Coaching Perspectives. The final part, illustrating the practical steps all coaches can adopt to be part of this great work, will be published in the April edition.

This article was inspired by a four-part video conversation between Giles Hutchins and Peter Hawkins, co-author of Regenerative Leadership and other books. Watch the series at bit.ly/3k1jK4j

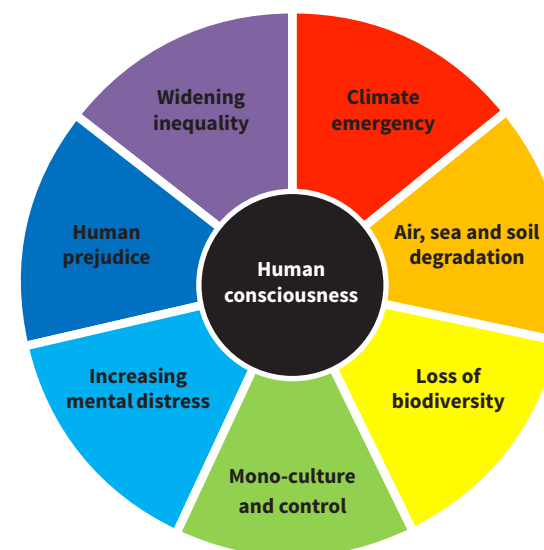
ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Professor Peter Hawkins PhD is Professor of Leadership at Henley Business School and Chairman of Renewal Associates. He is a global thought leader in systemic coaching, systemic team coaching, and coaching supervision and organisational transformation. He has been a coach, psychotherapist, supervisor, team coach and organisational development consultant for over 40 years. He now runs master's-level training programmes and supervises systemic team coaches globally through www.renewalassociates.co.uk and www.aoec.com, and is co-founder of the Global Team Coaching Institute with WBECS. He is Honorary President of the Association of Professional Executive Coaching and Supervision and the Academy of Executive Coaching.

i. Kuhn, T. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. University of Chicago Press, 1962

THE SEVEN INTERCONNECTED GLOBAL CHALLENGES



Technology and the scientific thinking that created the modern industrial world – which in its wake created ecological devastation – will not, by itself, reverse the destruction. Only with a massive transformation of human consciousness can we address the greatest challenges our species has ever faced.



ANOTHER PLANET? THE STORIES WE TELL OURSELVES

Coaches and sustainability advocates **Penny Walker** and **Linda Aspey** reflect on the stories we tell ourselves that get in the way of acting on the climate emergency.

‘But you may inhabit an environment that valorizes blindness, so you don’t look. Who or what is it you are blind to? In the end, I think it’s you. You become blind ... to yourself ... to your better self.’ⁱ

The gap between what we say we want and the way we behave is rich territory for coaches. People often get in their own way when aiming to achieve their goals; they make excuses for their perceived failures, blame others or assume too much responsibility. Our internal stories, the ones we tell ourselves, are one of the ways we do this. As coaches, our role to help people be more honest with themselves about what’s *really* going on and what their choices are.

There’s abundant research on what makes it hard for humans to engage with difficult issuesⁱⁱ, so the better we understand this phenomenon in ourselves the better we can, as coaches, help not only individuals but also organisations, societies and other systems.

The role of coaches in helping address the climate emergency has already been recognised in a number of ways: in July 2019, together

with Zoe Cohen and Alison Whybrow, Linda wrote an open letter to coaches, the coaching and coaching psychology professional bodies, and coach educators, calling on them to acknowledge and respond appropriately to the climate crisis. Since then, the Climate Coaching Alliance has been established, and many of the major professional coaching bodies have collaborated and issued a joint statement about the ecological crisis and the role of coaching.¹

WHAT ARE THE STORIES WE TELL OURSELVES?

There are widely accessible tools that enable individuals to estimate their personal contribution to climate change (see, for example, WWF Footprint²). There are also certain lifestyle choices that are known to reduce a person’s direct impact (e.g. eating a plant-based diet, and avoiding flying and fossil-fuel-based driving). It’s often clear which ‘bad’ behaviours lead to a high carbon footprint, yet personal change does not always happen.

A recurring theme is the gap between people’s conscious understanding of how human-induced climate crisis is real and recognising their individual contribution to the problem, for example through greenhouse gas emissions from their travel or household energy choices, or the destruction of carbon sinks like forests and peatlands, which is accelerated through individual’s dietary or shopping choices.ⁱⁱⁱ

One of the common ways in which humans respond to incongruences like this – which prevents us from addressing uncomfortable issues – is to generate stories. We hear many stories about climate change. Here we focus on three:

- The truth is unbearable
- I am only one
- Still I am one

When these stories emerge in coaching, it’s useful for us to recognise them *as* stories so that they can be appropriately approached and explored with curiosity and interest, rather than uncritically accepted or summarily dismissed.

STORY ONE: THE TRUTH IS UNBEARABLE

This story is a form of denial and we hear it expressed in a range of thoughts, emotions and behaviours:

- If it’s as bad as they say, it is unbearable. I can’t think about it and live my life/do what I have to do. I know it’s not as bad as they say. As the old German adage says, things whose existence is not morally possible cannot exist.
- The person believes ‘it is that bad’ and feels and expresses strong negative emotions such as grief, anger, sadness and shame. They may fear that these emotions will get in the way of day-to-day life, glimpsing the ‘unbearability’ yet ploughing on. ‘The tension between what’s possible now and what’s needed, may distract me from what I’m doing [to solve the problem] day to day.’^{iv}

1. Read the statement in full on p37

2. footprint.wwf.org.uk

- The ‘unbearability’ may mean turning away. ‘Anyone else feel like packing it in and going to the pub?’ (as said by a sustainability professional in a social media conversation).
- When a carbon-footprint or analytical tool shows things to be ‘bad’, the person responds by critiquing the tool. ‘If I were convinced that what we are doing now really is unsustainable, I’d think differently.’^v

STORY TWO: I AM ONLY ONE

This story is a form of the passive bystander effect: in a situation where many people could act, individuals wait for someone else to act first – they subsume their personal responsibility in the collective responsibility of the group. It reveals itself in a number of thoughts and self-justifications:

- I’m just one person. It’s just one flight. The plane would have flown anyway. Everyone else is flying.
- I am one person. I’m alone in this, so we don’t have a hope of solving the problem, and my contribution to trying to solve it is pointless or unnecessary.
- I have no choice but to be ‘bad’. I’m normal, and society gives me no real choices.
- ‘[Our company] is avoiding having this conversation – we haven’t put it on the agenda – we know individually that it’s right, but we are avoiding discussing it.’ (As said by a sustainability professional).^v
- ‘I’d like to eat less meat, but my partner won’t eat anything unless it has meat in it, so there’s no point in cooking something different for me.’ (From a conversation at a climate activist gathering).

STORY THREE: STILL I AM ONE

This story can seem helpful in promoting action. However, it can still get in the way of the client thinking clearly about the responsibility they assume for fixing the world and may result in burnout. It focuses on the power of one individual to effect change and reveals itself in thoughts or statements such as:

- The fact that I am just one person is not a reason to not play my part.
- Look at Greta Thunberg! If I knew I could make one change – even if small to start with – I’d make a difference *and* feel a lot better.
- ‘It will be a miracle if we pull it off. But it is still worth trying.’^{vi}
- ‘For me sustainability is a “life mission”. I do it in the context of a job so as to pay my bills. The job and the organisation in which I do that job, in any conventional sense, mean nothing to me.’^{vii}

THE ROLE OF ASSUMPTIONS

Nancy Kline, author of *Time to Think*, observed that ‘the quality of everything we do depends for its quality on the thinking we do first.’ Importantly, when thinking appears to be blocked and progress or action stifled, Kline says it is often due to assumptions that *seem* true, but when examined are not. She called these beliefs ‘untrue limiting assumptions’. We have noticed these in many stories, and they become clearer when the stories are voiced.



In coaching we might respond to these assumptions with: 'Do you think that's true, and what are your reasons for thinking so?' Often clients begin to realise that it's not 'true', and that an alternative, more accurate assumption is more liberating in promoting appropriate action.

THE ROLE OF DENIAL, CONGRUENCE AND INCONGRUENCE

Sigmund Freud used the term 'defence mechanism' to describe unconscious mental processes that enable a person to reach compromise solutions to internal conflicts. Defences protect individuals from threatening internal drives or feelings. A useful way to think of defences is as 'shock absorbers' from the harsh realities of our imperfect selves!

Outright climate denial could be seen as an extreme example of this, where – despite overwhelming evidence that man-made climate change is damaging our world – individuals deny its existence, claim it's a conspiracy or blame it on just one nation.

However, in our experience, denial occurs on a daily basis – and in a state of fluctuation. A client story illustrates this well. While food shopping, the client saw a mouth-watering avocado from Mexico and put it in her trolley, telling herself 'I know it's naughty but I love them and it's already been freighted here anyway'. As she continued around the shop she remembered some of the many reasons to think twice: the carbon footprint of the refrigerated air freight; the amount of water needed to grow avocados when water is scarce; the contribution to deforestation and the relentless rise in monoculture; and the organised crime and fear behind much of the industry.^{vii} Her internal battle continued: should she buy the avocado and contribute to farmers' livelihood, or not do so and hope she had made the right choice? Still not completely sure, she put it back on the shelf. She concluded that in buying it she knew she would be perpetuating an unjust system and, as she added with a wry smile, 'every mouthful would be hard to swallow!'

In that one scenario our three stories play out:

1. The decision to put the avocado in her trolley: the truth is unbearable.
2. The client telling herself that 'it's been freighted anyway': I am only one.
3. The decision to put it back: still I am one.

Psychologist Carl Rogers observed that incongruence between a person's espoused beliefs and personal actions may not only be a source of profound discomfort but also presents practical challenges and can result in the instinct to push uncomfortable feelings away.^{viii} An exercise to explore this is described by Penny Walker in Michelle Lucas' book on coaching supervision.³

WORKING WITH OUR OWN STORIES

As coaches, we are not immune to generating stories and experiencing (in)congruence in relation to difficult problems. Many of us will have been faced with health, social or environmental work-related dilemmas. Take a long-haul flight to deliver an exciting coaching skills programme or offer to find the client someone more local. Facilitate an entrepreneurial leaders programme where the brief is to explore opportunities for growth and to not let them 'get side-tracked' on climate issues. Coach a client in the tobacco industry or not. Sometimes the decision to decline or accept feels crystal clear and easy, other times far less so. And if we accept a brief with an unspoken intention or hope that we will 'convert' said clients, how ethical is that?

Reflecting on this as coaches may enhance confidence to create opportunities for new stories. Increased awareness of what prevents or enables our own capacity to change behaviour can enhance understanding of how this might be done for others. Feeling a high

3. For a review of *101 Coaching Supervision Techniques*, see *Coaching Perspectives* Issue 26, p60

degree of incongruence can lead to self-doubt and defeatism, which makes it hard to help others. But low morale can be avoided by seeing incongruence as a phenomenon to be curious about, rather than as a failure.

As most coaches will tell you, change starts with the self. Bringing our own stories into the light can help us begin to explore how we might then work with our clients' stories from a place of insight, compassion and personal agency.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Penny Walker is a coach, facilitator and chartered environmentalist (CEnv.) Penny began her career as a campaigner, taking part in the first national day of action on climate in the UK, in January 1989. For the last 25 years she has been an independent consultant, facilitating and coaching in the wider arena of sustainable development. During this time, Penny has run numerous workshops for self-identified climate leaders and sustainability professionals, as well as for coaches and facilitators with an interest in these issues.

www.penny-walker.co.uk



Linda Aspey is a coach, supervisor, psychotherapist, facilitator, Time to Think Faculty. Linda has worked in individual, team and organisational development for 30 years, most recently focusing on climate-change psychology, sustainability and regeneration. A speaker with Extinction Rebellion and member of the Oxford University Climate Society, she is currently studying at the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership. She has been interested in the environment for many years, yet at times knew she wasn't congruent and told herself stories to assuage the discomfort. This led her to explore more deeply the role of coaching in relation to the climate emergency.

www.aspey.com

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Peter Tavernise, ACC, was trained by the International Coach Academy. Providing both leadership coaching and climate coaching, he works with executives, purpose-driven leaders and entrepreneurs in sectors from corporate to non-profit and social enterprise. He is also the executive director of the Cisco Foundation and director of Cisco Public Benefit Investment. He has a BA in English from Davidson College and a master's in Humanities from Duke University. He is a William C Friday Wildacres Leadership Fellow.

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- iv. Lowinger, Dr. Jocelyn. Blog Post: coachgp.com.au/2018/01/11/being-a-wounded-healer 'Being a wounded healer,' posted on January 11, 2018 by Coach GP. And Steinwedel, Janet S. 2017. *Authenticity as an Executive Coach: Waking up the Wounded Healer Archetype*. Chiron Publications.

The 'gift of a sacred wound' was described diversely as a portal, an activation, an initiation, an empowerment, an invitation and an avenue through which to recognise the reality of human oneness, our connection to everyone else who suffers or who has ever suffered. Through this recognition, the fundamental error and original wound of our perceived separation from the universe, our lived environment and each other is healed.

These coaches do not just understand human oneness as a cognitive awareness; they embody it. Stated as an insight that may be universally available: our body is given a visceral understanding through our openness to our own suffering, unlocking deepest compassion for how all others also suffer and arousing a simultaneous desire to be of service to those others. This service is a means to heal ourselves; the more aware of our oneness we are, the more capacity we have to heal ourselves and our relationship with our ecology.

Based on this recognition and empowerment, these coaches can then nurture such awareness and related healing in others. They do so without an agenda and without needing to know what their clients may need specifically. Simply being present and open to pain is enough, doing so compassionately, attentively and with curiosity about its source and sensations. These coaches report that such presence is often enough to bring clients greater ease and capacity.

As mentioned by one interviewee: 'we each manifest all the archetypes at all times, and whichever one is in the forefront is simply circumstantial.' Therefore, should this archetype resonate with you, please see it as an invitation to discover the broad palate of colours available via your inner Wounded Healer, and utilise it as an empowerment to facilitate a compassionate coaching space where others can heal themselves.

This article is both a set of observations and an invitation. The author recognises this is an initial survey and welcomes additional dialogue and research by colleagues who may find this topic of interest. If this article has struck a chord for you, please contact peter@infinitegamecoach.com

THE WOUNDED HEALER

The Wounded Healer archetype is based on the idea that someone is compelled to treat or 'heal' others because of personal pain or suffering. It is rooted in Carl Jung's concept of archetypes, in turn borrowed from Plato's *Republic*.ⁱⁱⁱ In the context of coaching, it specifically draws on the Greek myth of Chiron's wounded leg and his subsequent study of herbal healing, applied to the realm of therapeutic counselling. The concept was later adopted by other theorists and practitioners, including Joseph Campbell. This archetype has been considered useful in the coaching arena by authors such as Dr Janet Steinwedel and Dr Jocelyn Lowinger.^{iv}

CLIMATE COACHING AND THE WOUNDED HEALER ARCHETYPE

Speaking to coaches in four different countries, US-based coach **Peter Tavernise** explores how embracing the concept of the Wounded Healer archetype might support climate coaching.

Recently, I conducted interviews with ten climate coaches from across Canada, Mexico, the USA and the UK. Climate coaches seek to empower their clients to overcome grief, anger, helplessness and despair surrounding the global climate catastrophe, in order to facilitate effective action. The question I sought to explore was whether and how the Wounded Healer archetype [see panel] may be operating within the nascent field of climate coaching. To be fully aware of climate disruption and its implications for all life is to be wounded. How might some coaches use this realisation as motivation to be of service to the world?

The coaches provided a spectrum of answers: three interviewees objected to the idea of their woundedness (in relation to climate or otherwise) and to the concept that coaches heal others; six interviewees resonated in varying degrees with the archetype as representing their experience, with tangible contributions to their coaching.

Those interviewees who initially objected to the vocabulary of both woundedness and healing each later described climate disruption as an issue of moral and ethical distressⁱ, and the ways that healing takes place as *part* of the coaching process. Taken together, their objections are 1) they do not see themselves as specifically wounded in ways that might be termed sacred or empowering, and 2) they assert that coaches should not see themselves as healing

others, only holding space so that others may heal. This is in line with the distinction Dr Rachel Naomi Remen makes between helping, fixing and serving.ⁱⁱ They also felt strongly that coaching should keep the emphasis on the positive (mindset, growth, joy) rather than on wounds or the need for healing, or at least keep the two perspectives balanced. As one interviewee said: 'I'm not seeking out your wounds; I'm helping you find your magnificence.'

Those coaches who were drawn to the Wounded Healer archetype described their experience of wounding and healing in ways that were surprisingly common, including that their wounds enabled sensitivity, awareness, empathy and (most commonly) 'attunement' with their clients. These coaches' wounds included acute or prolonged medical crises, severe bereavements and childhood traumas. These coaches also cited climate disruption as a continuous wound, and stated they consciously transmute this as fuel for their work. This is not to say one must be wounded to be an effective coach, but it does appear to offer a useful perspective.

For these coaches, drawing on the Wounded Healer archetype means that their pain around climate disruption does not need to be resolved in order to help others. As Remen states, 'wounding and healing are not opposites. They are part of the same thing. It is our wounds that enable us to be compassionate with the wounds of others.'

COACHING ACROSS RACE IN DYNAMIC TIMES

Through decades of coaching and training in diversity and inclusion, **Anita Sanchez** has found that when coaching across race and culture is successful, both she and her client emerge with greater knowledge and wisdom.

*'S/he who knows others is learned and intelligent;
s/he who knows oneself is wiser still'*

- Lao Tzu

When you commit to being truly effective in coaching cross-culturally or across race, you may discover as much about yourself and the larger realities that exist than you do about your client – or more. This is particularly true for coaches from majority groups, though it applies to all of us. Similarly, white leaders routinely report that, when they mentor people of colour and other diverse groups, they are convinced that what they learn is greater than what they give their mentee. It is a beautiful example of the coaching dance, both growing through engagement.

A NEVER-ENDING JOURNEY: THREE INSIGHTS INTO CROSS-CULTURAL COACHING

In service to the goal of great coaching across race and culture, here are three foundational keys to being a genuinely effective coach for an individual (or a team) from a different race group than your own:

1. **Continually open yourself to the recognition that your understanding of the world is missing essential data.** This requires a commitment to seeing the world through different eyes, letting go of unconscious insistence that your perspective is the 'right' view of the world. To do so, we need to recognise, and learn about, our own culture and the ways in which it frames our understanding of the world. When we see how we have been trained to interpret situations and behaviours, we can begin to notice how we might misunderstand what others with different cultural frames feel, do and believe.

Without this insight, we will be blind to the ways in which we impose our way of being on our clients, through parochial insistence that our way is the only way or ethnocentric assertion that our way is the best way. If we aspire to effective cross-cultural coaching, we have to work towards achieving a multicultural perspective that there are many good ways of knowing and operating in the world.

2. **Believe the coachee's experience is real.** Believe that their personal encounters with individual bias and systemic racism are facts. When we accept that, the coachee does not have to expend energy convincing us. We can then honour them and be present in the work as they come up with their own insights and solutions to the problems and systemic barriers they face, as well as the opportunities that arise. Recently, a white coach told me that she kept telling her black client how to create partnerships, but that the black client kept saying employers wouldn't trust or hire them that way. The coach kept trying to get the coachee to see how her negative assumption(s) were holding her back. The white coach would say, 'How do you know unless you try?'. Upon reflection, the white coach owned that she did not believe her client – that she was not deeply hearing her client nor was she seeing through her client's eyes. As a coach, you can create so much power and safety for that black, or any ethnic minority, client by believing their experience, recognising that it is different

from yours. Furthermore, the white coach I was working with realised that she was actually, unknowingly, asking her client to confront not only biased individuals but also sizeable anti-blackness racism in the organisational system. The white coach realised that she could provide a lot more support by believing the client. With this container of trust, the client could feel acknowledged and supported. A racially aware, culturally responsive coach is able to support co-creating strategies that are more appropriate – and realistically safer – for the client.

3. **Even more consciously use the power of listening.** All too often, organisations normatively avoid allowing discussion of race. Leaders look to go anywhere else, making it difficult, even hazardous, to speak about experiencing racial marginalisation and prejudice. After decades of turning a deaf ear and a blind eye, the murder of George Floyd opened peoples' hearts and minds to the truth that people of darker skin around the world have a very different experience than others do when it comes to law, business, housing and other institutions.

As coaches, we can open the door by listening with empathy, holding the coachee of colour in the highest possible positive light. We can listen without judgement, understanding the impact of clients' experiences on their lives and their world views. The simple act of listening, allowing an individual to speak their experience and be fully heard, is a powerful one of support which facilitates emotional release and clears the mind to consider paths forward. To this end, practise listening with the softest part of your ear and an expanding heart, especially when working with someone of a different race.

As coaches, we have a potent impact on our clients and, often, the systems they live and work in. The good news is – if we are open to new information about the world and willing to believe what our clients tell us, listening to their stories – we can contribute to deconstructing racism and support dreams of the most positive possible future for all of humanity.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Anita Sanchez PhD, Aztec and Mexican-American, applies indigenous wisdom and modern science to guide leaders in creating caring and inclusive teams and organisations. She's trained tens of thousands of leaders in global corporations and non-profits, and is a board member of Bioneers, the Pachamama Alliance, and a member of the Transformational Leadership Council. She is the author of *The Four Sacred Gifts: Indigenous Wisdom for Modern Times*.

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ARE WE PREPARED TO COACH CROSS-RACIALLY?

Recent global protests have shone a spotlight on structural and individual racism. Black-British coach **Arit Eminue** asks if coaches are equipped to coach across culture and race, and challenges the profession to self-educate – now!

Among the sea of black squares posted on social media in solidarity with the black community earlier this year were waves of corporate organisations pledging to increase the representation of black people in leadership positions: research published by Business in the Community highlights that just 1.5% of top managers in British private companies are black.¹ Within this move toward a diverse workforce, there is an opportunity for coaching and the coaching profession to both play a role in dismantling racial inequality.

In June 2020 the ICF released a statement, *Condemning Racism and Systemic Inequality*², in which it noted: ‘As coaches, we consider our clients’ context, identity, environment, experiences, values and beliefs as we partner with them in unlocking their potential. However, we cannot help our clients reach their greatest potential unless we also work against entrenched conditions that limit it.’

Racism has touched us all. Structural racism is a feature of the social, economic and political systems in which we all exist. Is the coaching industry itself entrenched in conditions that limit its clients from reaching their greatest potential?

This article poses questions and offers lines of thinking that can help us explore the work we need to do collectively as a profession to effectively coach cross-racially and make a global impact on racial equality. In the spirit of the Black Lives Matter movement, the focus here is on the black experience (in the UK). However, this thinking can be applied intersectionally³ to include other racial groups and to other related issues such as gender, disability or sexual orientation.

Within this move towards a diverse workforce, there is an opportunity for coaching and the coaching profession to play a role in dismantling racial inequality

WHERE’S THE DATA?

I found no data readily available on the representation of black coaches in the UK.

The ICF’s 2016 *Global Coaching Study* – the ICF’s ‘most ambitious, extensive and expansive industry research effort to date’ – reports on gender and age but not ethnicity.

A 2011 study, *The Make-up of a Modern-Day Coach*, conducted by the Coaching Academy, asked UK-based coaches how they identified: 80% of respondents surveyed described themselves as ‘British’. However, in the absence of a clear definition of what ‘British’ is, it is unclear whether the statistic includes coaches like me – a child of immigrant parents – who (when asked) tick the ‘Black-British’ box.

In the UK Chapter of the ICF, according to its website, there are no black people on the board of directors, the associate board or on the office management team.

The global board and leadership team of the Association for Coaching is all white. Just one of the trainers listed on the Coaching Academy website is black.

Diversity starts at the top. With little attention paid to capturing ethnicity data, a lack of representation of black people in senior roles within key coaching organisations (in the UK), coupled with low-level representation of black professionals in neighbouring industries such as psychology, points strongly towards a predominately white coaching profession.

More corporate organisations are seeking to invest in the black community and work with professionals who have a lived experience similar to the minority groups they are trying to elevate. Coaches who are black can provide a more culturally reflective service to clients of the same background. This is because they are acutely aware of the impact of racism, micro-aggressions and biases in the workplace that manifest in the low visibility of black people in senior leadership roles.

1. For more on how intersectionality affects diversity in the workplace, see weforum.org/agenda/2020/07/diversity-inclusion-equality-intersectionality

Additionally, ‘buying black’ through investment in black coaching practitioners and black-owned businesses supports the economic advancement of the black community.

Further in-depth research could be commissioned (or made readily available) to explore the representation and experiences of black coaches within the sector. Appropriate initiatives could be put into place to ensure the profession is representative of the community it serves, and that black coaches are adequately supported to progress their careers.²

COACHING TRAINING

The journey towards understanding structural racism often requires black people to prioritise white feelings over their own. On the occasions when I have bitten the bullet and held an individual or organisation accountable for a racist remark or action, their good intentions (and white fragility³) trumps the impact their actions have had on me every time.

The opposite of racist isn’t ‘not racist’. In his highly acclaimed book *How to be Antiracist*, Ibram X Kendi explores a simple argument: we are either racist or antiracist, there is nothing in-between. Antiracism is rooted in action: it is the process of consciously identifying and challenging structural racism and our beliefs, attitudes and behaviours around race.

Should antiracism training become part of the make-up of coach-specific approved training? The biggest obstacle facing the industry, according to the 2016 ICF *Global Coaching Study*, was untrained individuals calling themselves coaches. Given the increased focus on racial equality, the biggest hindrance over the next twelve months could be trained coaches who lack an understanding of what it means to be antiracist. White coaching practitioners could be in danger of unintentionally perpetuating the exclusionary behaviours and attitudes the profession is well-placed to help dismantle.

GETTING COMFORTABLE BEING UNCOMFORTABLE

Coaching is not colour-blind, and avoiding discussions around race is a form of white privilege⁴ that disadvantages black clients. The statement ‘I don’t see race’ ignores the structural racist society that hamstring clients who are black. That is not to say that race must take centre stage. Instead, when coaching cross-racially, coaches should consider the client, and the racial make-up and dynamic within their organisation. Failing to understand this dynamic can mean coaches miss the chance to explore whether the client could be working in a racially toxic workplace, which underpins the challenge brought to the table.

Over the last few months, I have been commissioned to hold many open discussions on race with my corporate clients and their employees. The majority of attendees to these sessions have been white. All of them struggle talking about race with colleagues of colour because they fear saying the wrong thing. As a result, they avoid discomfort by shutting the door to racial dialogue.

As coaches, we are facilitators of change. Our role is not to do the work for our clients. We play a vital role in creating spaces that allow clients to do the work for themselves. Yet, who is holding space for coaching practitioners? Our success in moving the needle on race equality relies in part on our willingness to access the support we need as a coaching community to create safe spaces and do the work ourselves.

2. The ICF is due to publish a follow-up report in September 2020. I wrote to the ICF to ask whether the 2020 report includes ethnicity. However, at the time of writing, had not received a response.

3. For more on white fragility, see edition.cnn.com/2020/06/07/health/white-fragility-robin-diangelo-wellness/index.html

4. For more on white privilege, see washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/wp/2016/01/16/white-privilege-explained

What KPIs can we set as an industry? What role can organisations like the AC, the ICF, the Coaching Academy and others play in ensuring a global commitment to achieving those goals? I entered the coaching profession to influence change one individual at a time. The last ICF report tells me I am not alone: more than one in two practitioners believe coaching can influence social change. In the words of Nelson Mandela: ‘Of course the task will not be easy. But not to do this would be a crime against humanity, against which I ask all humanity now to rise up.’

ADDITIONAL READING

Below are some resources for you to dig deeper, if you choose, and get you started on your journey to understanding what it means to be antiracist, and how to become an ally to the black community.

Books to read

Why I’m No Longer Talking to White People About Race, by Remi Eddo-Lodge

Natives: Race and Class in the Ruins of Empire, by Akala
White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism, by Robin DiAngelo

So You Want to Talk About Race, by Ijeoma Oluo

Online resources

Let’s talk race over a LATTE, by Arit Eminue

Uncomfortable Conversations With a Black Man, by Emmanuel Acho

Article: 103 Things White People Can Do for Racial Justice, by Corrine Shutack

How ‘white fragility’ supports racism and how whites can stop it, by Robin DiAngelo

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Arit is the founder and director of DiVA, an award-winning recruitment and training organisation helping companies in the entertainment industry to recruit and retain the best talent. Her client list includes the BBC, WarnerMedia, Sony Music, Universal Music and many leading brands. As a leadership and careers coach she supports women to take ownership of their careers through employment, entrepreneurship or a mix of both. Arit is passionate about creating safe spaces that connect communities to bring about racial equality.

www.ariteminue.com

www.divaapprenticeships.com

i. bitc.org.uk/news/black-livelihoods-matter-less-than-2-in-top-management-roles-are-black

ii. coachfederation.org/blog/icf-releases-statement-condemning-racism-and-systemic-inequality

COACHING IN THE AGE OF CONVERGENCE

Executive coach **Sue Stockdale** talks to scholar and leadership thinker **Navi Radjou** about why he believes we are entering the age of convergence, and how the coaching profession needs to adapt.

No person is an island. This truth has become even more obvious during the recent pandemic, which has reminded us that we are all interdependent – what happens in one country has an impact on others – and has accelerated the urgency to create a more sustainable future for the world.

While thinking about this, it was serendipitous that I was invited to a webinar led by Navi Radjou – an Indian-born French-American leadership thinker, who brought into our consciousness the idea of ‘frugal innovation’, the concept of how to do more, and better, with less. His TED talkⁱ on the subject has received almost 2 million views. In 2013, Radjou received the prestigious Thinkers50 Innovation Award, given to management thinkers who are reshaping how we think about and practise innovation.

His multi-cultural background has given him the advantage of looking at the world’s challenges through the lens of both Eastern philosophies and Western management principles. Radjou describes this convergence as ‘problems without borders’, where global issues collide, leaving us with the challenge of how to do better with less. Radjou’s ideas apply to not just businesses looking to meet a growing demand from value-conscious consumers (for example, making low-cost cars with fewer and recyclable components, as the Renault-Nissan alliance has done with the Dacia brandⁱⁱ); they are also relevant to people issues.

I was curious to find out more about how Radjou thinks about thinking, and what we can learn from his experience. Radjou recognises that there are two ways to think, the first being the analytical way, ‘where you take a problem and you tear it in parts and you analyse the different pieces, try to understand it and then

try to improve it, or solve the problem.’ He describes the second approach as integrative thinking.

‘The world is already so divided, so everything I do is aimed toward figuring out how can we bring together seemingly different concepts that typically don’t relate to each other or seem unreconcilable, for example frugality and innovation,’ explains Radjou. ‘The term ‘frugal innovation’ sounds like an oxymoron. When we think innovation, we often imagine big research and development labs with billions of dollars invested, such as those in Silicon Valley. And similarly, when you think about innovation like an iPod or some fancy gadget, it is not frugal. So, what I do is develop new “integrative” concepts that bring together ideas and phenomena or even cultures that typically don’t talk to each other.’

Radjou’s description reminded me of the technique of ‘parts integration’: a neuro-linguistic programming¹ technique that allows us to integrate parts at the unconscious level in a client’s mind and go beyond the boundaries these parts have created, in order to find a higher level of intention and wholeness.

Radjou has applied this idea to his own life. Recently he sold all of his possessionsⁱⁱⁱ and moved to New York with only one suitcase. He says that part of the reason for doing so was to give himself permission to become whole and de-fragment his life.

1. A set of models and approaches to communication and self-improvement developed by Richard Bandler and John Grinder in the 1970s

‘Recently, when I have been doing webinars on Zoom’, Radjou reflected, ‘I felt a bit awkward, sitting in my living room, kind of exposing myself, but what I realised was I was becoming whole and showing that to the world. We play multiple roles, and we put on masks, and sometimes, by assuming so many different roles in different contexts, we lose sight of who we are at our core. This is why I come back to the idea of being whole, or ‘integral’ – a term that comes from the Indian philosophy of Sri Aurobindo², who says that amidst diversity we should look for the underlying unity. If I am an integral being, I know the essence of who I am. However, I see that many of us have lost the connection with our essence, and that’s why we feel a sense of fragmentation.’

Radjou believes that the Covid-19 pandemic has brought an opportunity for us to become whole again, not just on an individual level but at a macro level on issues such as climate change. ‘Until recently I was living in California, the sixth largest agricultural exporter, and water is becoming so scarce it’s a ticking time bomb for farmers there,’ Radjou explains. ‘But water shortage is also a major issue in France, and India too, so irrespective of age, sex, ethnicity, income level, religion, we are all connected in this sense of interdependence, and therefore the growing need to solve these problems together, to create solutions without borders.’

His view of the situation resonated with me, particularly as the Access to Inspiration podcast^{iv} series that I host has a similar principle underlying it – the need to learn from people who are unlike us. So, how can coaching play a role in addressing these challenges?

FRUGAL LEARNING

Radjou is concerned that, if coaching remains a predominantly one-to-one interaction, we will develop ‘islands of enlightenment’ as he calls them, and that will not be enough to transform the world. He is keen to see more coaching done in a collective setting, bringing together diverse views in order to learn, share ideas and develop solutions together. Using Gandhi’s ‘be the change’ principle, Radjou’s thinking is moving towards utilising both a collective and individual transformation approach.

‘In a way, coaching is like being a guru – a teacher who removes the veil of ignorance,’ Radjou says. ‘You are raising awareness, and I think we are moving to a new learning model, which I call frugal learning.’ This learning paradigm has three pillars:

1. Peer to peer learning (group)
2. Learning by doing (activity)
3. Integral learning (self-knowledge)

Coaches play important roles in all these areas. They become the facilitators for peer learning, accelerating the insights within groups; they help individuals to practise new behaviours and reflect on what they have learned using empirical knowledge; and they help people cultivate emotional intelligence and develop self-knowledge and self-awareness.

Learning must take a similar approach to frugal innovation, utilising the same formula that Radjou describes in his book *Frugal Innovation*^v:

2. The Indian philosopher and yogi who developed the spiritual practice of integral yoga. For more, see britannica.com/biography/Sri-Aurobindo

Greater value (for customers, shareholders and society)

Fewer resources (natural resources, capital, energy, time)

Coaching and leadership development need to maximise value for all stakeholders while minimising use of resources. Achieving that will require reinvention to achieve. This may require extensive rethinking, and a disruptive approach from the coaching profession as a whole to work out how best to serve its community in the future. The pandemic may have brought us challenges, but Radjou’s ideas may also have found their time to be heard and actioned.

ABOUT NAVI RADJOU



Navi Radjou is a New York-based innovation and leadership thinker who advises senior executives worldwide on breakthrough growth strategies. He is a fellow at Cambridge Judge Business School. His talk at TED Global 2014 on frugal innovation has had nearly 2 million views. Navi co-authored *Frugal Innovation: How To Do Better With Less* (2015) and the global bestseller *Jugaad Innovation* (2012). He is currently writing a book on how individuals, organisations and societies can reinvent themselves purposefully in the post-Covid-19 world.

naviradjou.com

ABOUT SUE STOCKDALE



Sue Stockdale is an AC-accredited master executive coach, coaching supervisor and podcaster. Her clients include leaders in business, elite sport and not-for-profit organisations in UK, the Middle East, Africa and North America. Sue has written and co-authored eight books as well as the report on *Enabling Leadership: developing a leader coach mindset*, published by the AC. She is podcast host for *Coaching Perspectives* and *Access to Inspiration*.

www.suestockdale.com

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MATERIALISM IN TIMES OF COVID: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A PARADIGM SHIFT

Professional declutterer **Arianna Steigman** brings her coaching skills to bear on people's relationship with 'stuff' and sustainability

During the Covid-19 pandemic, millions of us hunkered down in our homes in a bizarre form of house arrest. Whether we secretly relished the slowing down and seclusion or hated and stressed over it, lockdowns forced us to focus on our close environment and day-to-day habits. All of a sudden, those everyday actions most of us had been doing the same way for ages without a thought had to be planned, questioned and sometimes radically changed. Going to the shops for groceries became a military campaign of donning protective gear, hoping to score toilet paper and pasta; cooking became an endless cycle of feeding the whole family three times a day; catching up with family and friends became a technological operation involving Zoom calls and competing with schooling and work for Wi-Fi and devices. And there was no more travelling, and no more shopping for fun.

HELLO, I'M YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBOURHOOD DECLUTTERER

I am a professional declutterer, which involves being part super-organiser and part coach. I search for the 'why' in people's shopping or hoarding habits, in order to 'unknit' them and replace them with more constructive behaviours. I use techniques borrowed from the coaching world such as focusing on clear personal goals and finding well-tuned motivations, and combine them with simple practical advice like where to place one's laundry basket and how to recycle old charger cables; we talk about the rougher edges of life while pairing socks and sorting shampoos.

Doing so allows an instant and intimate view into people's lives. As one client put it: 'You knew about my favoured style of underwear and my childhood struggles with body image within five minutes of learning my last name!' These accumulated insights lead to a more general understanding of one's relationship with 'stuff'. It also allows me to offer my personal values of environmentalism and sustainability in a way that's relevant and helpful to people's day-to-day lives.

A CHANGE IN PERSPECTIVE

Most of us can identify with that happy feeling of buying new things – that 'high' of amassing paper bags laden with new clothes or gadgets on a shopping trip – even if deep down we might know that comfort-shopping doesn't make us happy in the long run. Once the newly acquired item settles into our established collection of belongings, it rarely keeps its shine and original appeal.

But as we were denied this momentary gratification through lockdown – whether due to the restrictions themselves or to the associated financial constraints – many people's relationship with 'stuff' shifted: with no new things coming in, and nowhere to go, many focused instead on what was already there.

Without the camouflage provided by the endless ticker-tape of daily duties and diversions, we started to notice things we had become desensitised to: the clutter hogging our space, time and energy, and the unceasing assault it mounts on our minds and senses. Judging

by the number of bags placed outside charity shops, and Facebook posts offering giveaways and pocket-money sells, many of us balked at this clutter and started shedding¹.

We began to edit and sift, room by room, in an effort to rid ourselves of this excess baggage and make our homes more spacious, serviceable and fresh. My sense was that, as individuals – even communities – perhaps we felt the burden of shouldering so much stuff and were 'shrugging off' the dead weight of unused, unloved or frankly unrecognised things. So out went clothes, knick-knacks, old toys and chipped crockery.

It gave some of us a sense of control – in a small way – in these strange and confusing times, and a sense of much-needed purpose to those of us left without a job.

AS WITHIN, SO WITHOUT

This slowdown had a noticeable effect on the space outside, too. As we stopped driving and flying everywhere, and the air had a chance to clear from the previously omnipresent smoke and fumes, and the level of noise and light receded, our cities turned quiet, sweet-smelling and clean. And as we retreated into our homes, leaving the great outdoors to other creatures, we saw animals take over the streets², come out of their hidey-holes in broad daylight and venture into the territories we had so long ago conquered.

Nature showed us that, if we just let it be, it can and will recover. We haven't ruined it beyond repair – yet. And thus our eyes and minds have been opened to the possibility – and with it, I believe, the duty – of sharing our planet in a more considerate manner with its other inhabitants, and of taking better care of it for our own and our descendants' sake.

This isn't an abstract, theoretical point. This involuntary retreat of humanity from nature has forced many of us to pause and consider our material influence on the world – and our collective responsibility for it. To put it simply, our voracious shopping and hoarding generates more waste than we can handle. Despite commendable efforts – by individuals, organisations and governments – to recycle our rubbish³, much of it accumulates in landfills or pollutes oceans⁴ and drinking water⁵, affecting our homes, our communities and our environment.

None of us can claim ignorance any longer. The information is out there. Our eyes have been opened to it. The question now is whether we harness this awakening to generate a positive change, or sigh in resignation and fall back to our familiar ways. I think that's where we – coaches, declutterers, anyone who claims to affect people's state of mind – come in.

SHIFTING PARADIGMS

We've lost so much to the Covid-19 pandemic – in productivity, income, socialising – that if, after this novel coronavirus is beaten, 'normal' life resumes and we simply go back to our old ways, we will have failed ourselves and our descendants. If we don't gain something from this, learn, let it change us and do things better from now on, it would be a tragedy of historic proportions.

Those of us who work with people can serve to distil and bottle these tentative realisations about our place in the world and how

we can better occupy it. As a professional declutterer, I help people reach this state of mind: to understand that stuff without purpose is pointless at best, and a burden at worst. We can free ourselves and our environment from this dead weight by saying 'no' to mindless purchases, by being thoughtful and mindful in our decisions regarding shopping and waste. Even a simple decision like wearing an item of clothing for a few months longer than we otherwise might would make a significant reduction in the amount of waste the textile industry creates.¹

This year is bringing this point home to many people, and we are in a unique position to ensure that this lesson learned at great cost isn't lost, but rather generates a real shift in our collective attitude toward ourselves, our homes and our environments. In giving ourselves permission and time to be introspective, in appreciating the comfort and beauty of useful items well-worn, and in manufacturing less and producing less waste, we are giving the planet a chance to recover.

We have an opportunity to be movers and shakers rather than just service providers. Let's make this critical moment in human history a paradigm shift, and not just a curious anecdote.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Arianna is the founder and owner of Reclaim your Space, a London-based decluttering and home-organising service dedicated to turning confused, stressful houses into beloved, functioning homes. Her aim is to teach people how to gain focus and calm through decluttering and tidying. She's active in promoting ecological and environmental awareness and behaviours within the decluttering industry as well as on her home turf. She's accredited by and an active member of APDO (the Association of Professional Declutterers & Organisers)

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iii. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-49827945>

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HUMANITY FOR A FINITE LIFE; THIS IS AN INVITATION

In her role as National Equality & Inclusion System Influencer Lead in the NHS, **Laura Simms** asks us to reflect on how we might use our experience of the past year to shape a more compassionate world.

With Covid-19 affecting life around the globe, 2020 has been a year of profound loss, acute and painful reminders of the inequity of human experience, and deep learning and reflection, all against a backdrop of a changed world. The things that kept us distracted from real issues – consumerism and bright, shiny and noisy distractions – no longer seem the same, and now feel a bit like gaudy party decorations left hanging long after the celebration is over.

It has been enlightening to see how people have found the strength to survive during these strange times. Some have taken up new hobbies and fitness regimes, or have become immersed in work. Others have found comfort in the deepening of relationships, or through connecting more deeply with the self. For some, survival has been more primal: a case of staying alive, keeping food on the table and finding safe shelter. For many, big existential questions are emerging. What does it mean to be human? How do I live with loss, change, global threat and a new reality?

It is too early to say what impact all of this will have on us in the long term, but I'm curious about how – now we are ostensibly past the initial peak of the virus, at least in the UK – things seem to be shifting already. There is a growing need to be 'normal' again. At work, we quietly slip back to old ways, despite what we learned when we shared a common enemy. The commitments to be better allies because #BlackLivesMatter now seem to take up less social media space. 'Exhausted' and 'fatigued' are common adjectives for how we are, but the virus is not 'over'.

I imagine that some of these big questions are now regularly the focus of therapy and coaching sessions; certainly, it seems to be so judging by conversations I've had with family, friends and colleagues – and from my own reflection.

I have been reflecting upon my time working in cancer treatment and palliative care, working close to the fear or real threat of death, and holding in wonder those who still live rich and significant lives regardless of how close to death they may be. Those of us that are surrounded by death at work are assumed to be living more wholeheartedly as a result. The literature on that is, in fact, mixed and suggests that many of us get through life by instead putting off or burying thoughts of our own deaths.

The Death Café movement¹ encourages us to accept that we each have one finite life (on this earth and in this body, at least, depending upon your beliefs), with the intention of inspiring us to make more conscious choices regarding how we spend our time alive. The importance of this was illustrated so poignantly when the movement's founder, Jon Underwood, died suddenly and tragically aged just 44 in 2017. Jon's wife, Donna, shared that 'he lived every day reflecting very consciously on the fact that none of us know how long we have and focused completely on being present in and making the most of every minute. We all know this on some level, and try and act accordingly, but it's so easy to forget...'

How then do we learn from this crisis and create opportunities for a new way of living – one which is informed by our shared global

ancestral history and fit to help us create the future we wish to see.

The pandemic has presented each of us with a window of opportunity to decide how we want our world to be. As leaders, coaches and mentors, we may naturally look to do this work through others. This is an invitation to start with us first.

For me, that means inviting a deeper connection with myself; celebrating who I am, imperfections and all, and bringing forgiveness and compassion to myself for ways of being that I'm less proud of. It means holding myself accountable through new growth, then learning more about others' struggles and my role in them. What has my role been, and what is it now? How will I choose to be in the future?

Doing this work will require compassion and inclusion practices², and new opportunities to connect. The arts, humanities and nature will also nourish me, and help with wholehearted living.

There is no longer a 'normal'.

How might you choose to create a new future?

One finite life. This is an invitation to use it well.

1. For more information, see deathcafe.com
2. In my work, these include #5minMeSpace and #10minPauseSpace, compassion circles or Taking Care Giving Care Rounds. For more information, see people.nhs.uk/guides/10-minute-pause-spaces

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Laura Simms brings over 30 years of experience to her National Equality & Inclusion System Influencer Lead role in the UK National Health Service People Directorate. Her deep passion for compassion and inclusion was ignited during her student nurse training, and was put to the test through various clinical and healthcare leadership roles, including being executive director of a regional palliative care service. Laura remains committed to working with others towards a compassionate, inclusive, fair and joyful world for all.

@Laura_J_Simms

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SUPPORTING LEADERS TO TAKE PERSONAL RISKS IN A TIME OF CRISIS

In the light of the pandemic, coach psychologist **Geraldine Haley** reflects on the opportunity coaches have to help leaders reinvent the rules of working life and wellbeing, and increase their capacity to focus on the things that matter now.

Coaching leaders during the Covid-19 pandemic has caused me to reflect on what is important for the new world we are emerging into. At the core of this is the willingness for leaders and coaches to take personal risks by acting outside their comfort zone and being willing to explore the unknown.

EXPERIENCES IN LOCKDOWN

In the early days of lockdown there was a basic need to focus on how to get virtual work environments connected and productive. My coaching gravitated towards helping leaders explore how to create psychological safety within their teams, so that people felt safe to speak up about their work and personal problems and challenges. This allowed team members to feel able to ask for the support and flexibility they needed, knowing their leader would listen and be an active sponsor. By asking the question 'How are you feeling?', a leader changes the dynamic between themselves and their employee/s, but I found that in many cases doing so took the leader outside of their comfort zone. Roleplays as part of coaching helped, as did encouraging leaders to share their own personal highs and lows with their team members. For leaders, this role-modelling of openness and authenticity with their team involved taking personal risk, and set the tone for their team to follow.

Working from home – via video – had a profound impact on leaders' recognition of individual differences among their team members. As one leader told me: 'I am used to seeing my team show up dressed the same, and we sit in meetings acting the same. But now that I see them in different clothes – with pets, children and home-schooling to contend with, or isolated from their families – I realise the enormous differences in their needs.' Responding to these insights required leaders to challenge their own beliefs and habits about work and work-life balance. During coaching sessions, the simple question 'What have you noticed?' led to a rich exploration about team culture and expectations, and created an opportunity for leaders to be intentional and innovative about new ways of working.

In the midst of all this I had two interesting insights.

Firstly, some sophisticated companies were addressing wellbeing with gusto, offering employee assistance programmes and online activities ranging from mindfulness to yoga. One of the leaders I coached assumed the issues of their team's wellbeing were covered, without really understanding what the problem was in the first place. To get to grips with the reality, we ran a wellbeing survey that allowed people to speak up anonymously, and brought to light some challenges. The survey showed that slow and diffuse decision making, the need to reprioritise workload and losing connectivity with colleagues all impacted self-ratings of wellbeing during lockdown.

The survey revealed that the team members needed leaders to sponsor managers to have empathetic and solution-focused one-to-one wellbeing conversations, and also to create personalised wellbeing plans. They also needed guidance on how to hold team wellbeing conversations – and they needed support to make mindset shifts about wellbeing. As they moved towards being proactive, solution-focused and collaborative as a team, wellbeing results improved. High-performing teams encouraged shared responsibility for wellbeing: between the individual team members, the manager and the organisation. Where a sense of self-efficacy was met with genuine responsive action from leadership, people felt empowered and supported.

Elsewhere, I coached a leader struggling to create an impression of self-assurance and confidence, while simultaneously feeling guilty about not knowing what advice to give to his team or how to support them during lockdown. After exploring his beliefs and assumptions, he recognised that he was trying to take too much responsibility for his team members. He decided to experiment with trusting his team to find their own way, with some external facilitation. This felt very risky to him, but the team embraced the opportunity. After a month of working constructively on their own, there was a glorious exchange in which the team openly acknowledged their respect for their leader and an awareness of the difficulties he was facing. The team members explained how they planned to collaborate differently in order to address current challenges and provide said leader with some capacity to step away from areas they could cover themselves. Again, this leader took a huge personal risk and discovered that his team stepped up and not only supported him but protected him. They are now openly discussing problems and how to solve them together. And the leader now recognises, with some relief, that he doesn't need to have all the answers.

WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY

This has been a period of revealed, shared humanity. And it has required new vulnerability and capacity from leaders. I anticipate that emotional intelligence will give way to a new enthusiasm for 'wellbeing intelligence', as we increasingly expect leaders to be able to explore and discuss wellbeing and mental health; proactively identify and address risk in advance; and support their teams to develop wellbeing as an essential skill at the heart of effective working life.

So how can we coach leaders to take the personal risks required to promote team growth and wellbeing? I see many windows of opportunity opening up.

Many leaders are reflecting on how the impossible has been made possible. IT teams have been galvanised, setting up effective homeworking systems overnight. Financial traders have transported workstations to home and partners at law firms have learned to go paperless, both deemed 'impossible' before lockdown. This has helped leaders adopt more of a 'growth mindset'ⁱⁱ and a sense of challenge, which will serve them well in an uncertain future.

As big issues emerge and are met with this sense of possibility, leaders have an opportunity to drive broader change. Coaches can ignite exploration with questions such as 'What is happening in the world that matters to you?', and 'What is the difference you can

start?'. I have found that encouraging leaders to start these types of conversations with others can build relationships and facilitate change. One internal email, asking if anyone was interested in discussing gender issues, led to over 200 replies and an international conference being hosted by the organisation in question – all from one tentative email.

Coaching conversations have an opportunity to work with the 'future you' rather than the 'present you', which helps coachees explore their potential as change agents over the longer term. Great questions such as 'In a year's time, what would you have wished you had paid attention to now?' and 'What else?' can open up new perspectives. This is potentially hard work for the coachee, who will need to put aside short-term gains and focus on longer-term rewards.ⁱⁱⁱ

As coaches we have the opportunity to challenge ourselves to take our coaching forward, in order to take leaders forwards. We need to leverage the psychological safety we have created with our coachees, allowing them to take risks and ask more uncomfortable questions. Nancy Kline's Time to Think approach^{iv} helps me step into new territory with my coachees. She helpfully sets the agenda by suggesting a question and adds simply... 'What are your thoughts?'

I remain convinced that we are privileged to be working as coaches at the present time, with the opportunity to enable leaders to explore their values, ethics and networks of influence. In doing so, they may build outcomes not just for their organisation but for a world rediscovering itself and what it is capable of.

If you are interested to explore the topics discussed here further, then please connect through geraldine@geraldinehaley.com. I hope to encourage a coaching community to share experiences.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Geraldine Haley is a chartered psychologist with twenty years of coaching experience. She set up the OD practice GH Consulting Ltd after a successful global HR career, latterly with Standard Chartered Bank, living in the UK and Asia. Her interests include working with CEOs, senior executives and teams in commercial and non-profit sectors. Article contributor Anna Fraser is a wellbeing advisor and coach to teams and individuals. Together they explore new boundaries for change management.

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THE LONG WIN: REDEFINING SUCCESS IN A COMPLEX WORLD

Our obsession with winning and competition, forecasts and predictions, and results and rankings may have suited the world a century ago, but it's now holding us back. Olympian, diplomat and coach [Dr Cath Bishop](#) explains why, in the face of current complex challenges, we need a 'long-win' approach.

How do you win a crisis? What does success look like when the world is turned upside down by unpredictable events? How can you beat uncertainty? These questions may have crossed minds in 2020, whether for Olympic athletes who saw the rock-solid certainty of a quadrennial Olympics taken away, or business leaders who saw their carefully crafted annual forecasts and targets swept aside by an unexpected pandemic. But are these the best questions to ask? What are we trying to win in the complex world we live in? How might we reframe the way we think, behave and interact to help us find a better way to explore our potential together?

While military, political and business worlds have focused on battles for supremacy and domination for centuries, this approach is no longer fit for the challenges of our times. Today, in our complex, interconnected world, 'winning battles' doesn't have the permanence it used to have. Outcomes and costs of winning are not just measured in financial and power terms, as we track wider social and environmental impacts which usually affect the 'winner' as much as the 'loser' – if it's even clear who the winner is.

It's clear that the greatest problems humanity faces – from climate change to inequality, global health to international trade and prosperity – require a collective response, an understanding of multiple perspectives and collaborative solutions. These are not

finite issues; they can't be 'won' or 'beaten' but require 'long-win thinking' – a more meaningful sense of purpose, a focus on learning and collaboration, and the prioritisation of human connections above all.

WIRED FOR COLLABORATION

It is time to challenge the assumption that we are 'wired to win' and compete endlessly. There is part of our brain that responds to the experience of winning, giving us a dopamine hit and leaving us wanting more, albeit with diminishing returns. But we could choose to develop the part of our brains that responds to meaning and purpose, tapping into a stronger, longer-term source of motivation and more sustainable basis for performance.

We shouldn't overlook the findings of anthropologists that suggest it's cooperation, rather than brain size or the use of tools or aggression, that defined the first humans. There is no biological or psychological reason why we can't collaborate on a much greater scale if we choose to. Business CEO and author Margaret Heffernan sums up how the last 50 years of Western culture has focused purely on competition to make us 'bigger, tougher, meaner, more successful competitors'. She writes: 'the entire culture has been

caught up in a testosterone-fuelled feedback loop, we've been persuaded that if we aren't top dog, we must be underdogs; if we aren't winners, we're losers. What's striking in its absence is the equivalent effort to hone our collaborative gifts.ⁱ

THE LONG WIN

We can work toward this more collaborative process using what I call 'the long win' approach. This offers a different path to success, through the 3Cs of clarity, constant learning and connection.

Success is based on **clarifying** our broader purpose: the social impact and change that we want to see. Research about how purpose-led businesses outperform their peers is extensive. However, too often, companies have not gone further than purpose statements. Purpose needs to be intrinsic to the way people think, behave and interact.

Constant learning fuels growth, adaptability and innovation. Doing so shifts focus away from results and outcomes that depend on unpredictable external factors.

Connection is the glue that links up all three Cs. If we don't connect as a team, it's hard to create clarity about purpose; if we don't connect with customers, colleagues and our wider network, then it's hard to keep learning, adapting and preparing for the uncertain crises and opportunities to come.

Learning to develop a collaborative mindset is a fundamental part of all three Cs of long-win thinking and requires a change of perspective, new priorities and different behaviours – which coaching can help to unlock. Three key areas need particular attention:

- exploring when employees and leaders make key decisions to compete rather than collaborate and recognising the structures and incentives that drive the mindset of the former rather than the latter;
- improving the quality of interactions, conversations and connections – which are the glue of teamwork, resilience and adaptability, and ultimately underpin performance;
- and recognising and rewarding behaviours that develop collaboration and build trust, create inclusive environments and contribute to the communities beyond the four walls of our (home/work) office.

THE LONG-WIN APPROACH IN PRACTICE

As an Olympic rower, my early career was dominated by obsessive competition. It was self-defeating, and by the time we came to race the rest of the world at major championships we were burnt out, with a lot of human collateral damage along the way. A more collaborative high-performance culture later in my career enabled me to win medals when it mattered and to learn from fellow athletes as we supported and challenged each other. Despite competing for selection, it was in our shared interest for us all to maximise the gains we could make together.

When I worked as a diplomat, connections sat at the heart of our work as we sought to build deep alliances with partners who had seemingly unsurmountable barriers between them – cultural,

linguistic and political. Whatever the intractable disputes and complex issues we were negotiating, the most powerful tools we had at our disposal were human relationships and the conversations we shared. This allowed us the possibility of co-creating a new way forward in the darkest of conflict-affected situations. A large amount of time was spent trying to expand mindsets from a zero-sum mentality – where one side can only win at the cost of the other – to a win-win mentality. This allowed us to find solutions that, through compromise, resulted in gains for all and a collective step forward.

As much as we pored over complex, technical briefs ahead of a negotiation, progress relied mostly on the mindsets of those in the room. Whether it was persuading the bitterly opposed political representatives of the ethnic groups in Bosnia to work together to agree reforms to move their war-torn country forward, or trying to persuade the Spanish and Gibraltarians to work together more cooperatively, the common challenge was shifting mindsets to explore hitherto unexplored possibilities, opening up opportunities rather than closing them down.

This meant we needed to facilitate 'unlearning' old ways of seeing the world – in particular the need to find an enemy or opponent and defining success around their defeat. The crises and opportunities arising now should release us from our obsession with fixed results and predicted certainty. The question is whether our mindsets, behaviours and relationships are ready to be released.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr Cath Bishop is an Olympian, competing at three Olympic Games in rowing in Atlanta (1996), Sydney (2000) and Athens (2004), winning the World Championships in 2003 and an Olympic silver the following year. She worked as a diplomat for the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office for 12 years, with postings to Bosnia and Iraq. Cath now works as a business consultant, coach and speaker and teaches on executive education programmes at the Judge Business School, Cambridge University. Her new book, *The Long Win: The Search for a Better Way to Succeed*, is out now.

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Choice

OPPOSABLE THINKING IN AN OPPOSABLE WORLD

In a world that's ever-more polarised, **Karen Ellis** and **Richard Boston** encourage us to develop our capacity for opposable thinking to better navigate the tensions of a complex world.

We live in a hugely polarised world right now. We're being asked to choose between health and prosperity; individual freedom and collective responsibility; compassion and accountability; equality and focused investment; crisis and business as usual.

Each choice brings with it those who favour A and those who favour B. The higher the stakes or stress levels, the more passionately and irrationally people argue their case and the less willing they are to listen to others.

It's an environment that tests our capacity for 'opposable thinking' – a term we coined inspired by Roger Martin's *The Opposable Mind*. The more developed our capacity for opposable thinking, the more effectively we can navigate the conflicts and tensions in our daily lives – particularly when we find ourselves in complex situations that are continuously evolving.

As we argue in our book *Upgrade*, opposable thinking is one of four 'meaning-making' capacities that we rely on increasingly as the world around us gets messier. It's the capacity F Scott Fitzgerald was referring to when he defined 'a first-rate intelligence' as 'the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function.'

We're far more comfortable externalising polarities than looking within

It's also the capacity we typically find hardest to truly develop – at least in the Western world. We generally understand it on an intellectual level, but we struggle to switch it on. Why? Here are two reasons:

1. For centuries Western culture has encouraged us to 'pick a side'. We've equated strength with taking and defending a position. Focus, goals, linear progress and persistence: all are presented as virtues. Reversing is anathema; changing tack is a sign of weakness. It's a narrative with numerous sources: medieval monotheism's focus on the duality of good and evil; cherry-picked messages from the classical Greek philosophers that focused on parts, not the relationships between them; and legal systems pitting one side against another.
2. Think you're immune? How often have you helped clients work diligently towards a clearly defined goal? Do you encourage others to adhere to their values more tightly and consistently, or hold them more lightly and questioningly than they currently do? Every value has its dark sides, after all. We're far more comfortable externalising polarities than looking within.

As we develop our opposable-thinking capacity, we become increasingly aware that the polarities [see panel] causing tension around us almost always also exist within us. In the past few months, most of us have experienced some internal tension between doing what's personally convenient and doing what's socially responsible. Most of us have said we believed one thing and then done the opposite, breaking our own 'rules'.

We've learned to loathe hypocrisy. So, we avoid exploring the uncertainties, inconsistencies and polarities within ourselves or our 'in group'. We focus our attention (and others') externally. We claim one side of the 'divide' as ours and find an 'out group' to brand as epitomes or champions of the opposing position. The higher the stakes and the more personally confronting that polarity is, the more blindly and passionately we defend the distinction between 'us' and 'them'.

Think you're immune? How many coaches do you know who believe the opposite to you when it comes to climate change or social policy? How well do your actions day to day show you've resolved the polarity between taking a 'nurturing/collaborative' approach to life on this planet and one that's more 'extractive/exploitative'? Notice that those labels are almost as polarising as 'good' and 'evil'? Who would even consider looking for positives in the 'exploitative' side of the debate?

A polarity is 'a pair of interdependent opposites – if you focus on one of those to the neglect or exclusion of the other, then at some point in time you dip into negative unintended consequences.'

David Dinwoodie, Center for Creative Leadership

PROGRESS IN PRACTICE

Most tools compensate for a lack of opposable thinking, but do less to actually develop it.

If you've used coaching tools to help people work with dilemmas or polarities, you'll have seen some people take to them more easily than others. That's probably because they're operating at different developmental levels when it comes to opposable thinking. In *Upgrade*, we focus on four of these levels: our 'Level 1' is the benchmark most people in organisations have already reached.

Tools like risk-benefit analysis, polarity/dilemma mapping and line-ups do a really good job of helping people create a physical representation of the various opposing perspectives in the situation they're facing. What they don't do nearly as well is help the individual (or team) upgrade their actual capacity for opposable thinking.

An individual operating from what we'd call 'Level 2' will quite readily switch from 'either/or' thinking to 'both/and' thinking. They'll seek to tick everybody's boxes or craft a compromise. However, they'll probably still privately cling to their preferred position.

At Level 2, people are unlikely to go beyond a creative compromise to engage in the kind of 'Level 4' thinking many complex situations demand. These tools aren't enough to help them reinvent the entire narrative – rejecting the prevailing Western tradition that demands that we all pick a side – or gain buy-in to a way forward that will continuously and consciously evolve. They're also unlikely to internalise any work they've done with the tool. So, they're unlikely to apply the same mental and emotional processes to future challenges.

SO, HOW SHOULD WE PROCEED?

You're already developing your own and others' capacity for opposable thinking – whether you call it that or not. We wrote *Upgrade* to help accelerate that development. One small step, though, is to step back from messy, emotive situations – perhaps pausing right here and now – and ask:

- What am I attending to? What's missing?
- In what ways am I polarising?
- What conflicts around me am I avoiding seeing within me?

When coaching a client, ask:

- What might I be inadvertently imposing on them?
- In what ways might I be polarising with them, perhaps by taking a side?
- Am I 'rescuing' them from the discomfort of facing an important polarity?

Rather than simply helping them resolve a polarity they're facing right now, help clients develop their underlying capacity for opposable thinking so they're better equipped to solve ever-more complex problems themselves. And let's all free ourselves from that old-fashioned nonsense of seizing a metaphorical hill, fencing it off and spending our lives defending it without ever exploring the rest of the world.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Karen spent 30 years as an executive coach and is now a management consultant with an increasing focus on adult development and meaning-making. Having researched all of the main theories in this field, she is determined to demystify and democratise these ideas and help others make practical use of them. Co-authoring *Upgrade* is part of that, as it captures the learning in a way that has practical application for people in organisations as well as other coaches and consultants.

www.velopconsultation.com



Richard is a psychologist who draws on a range of other disciplines to inform his work with individuals, teams and organisations. He has consulted across six continents, helping a diverse client base simultaneously enhance their performance, culture and contribution. He is MD of LeaderSpace, co-author of *Upgrade* and author of *ARC Leadership* and *The Boss Factor*. He also contributed to Routledge's recent *Practitioner's Handbook of Team Coaching* and co-wrote a Henley Business School report on the future of leadership development.

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DO YOU CARE ABOUT THIS TOO?

Coaching can't be done in an ethical vacuum, says **Neil Scotton**. So how do you raise and resolve potential conflicts without compromising your coaching or your client?

OK, so I'm going to make a few assumptions here.

First, that you are a professional coach.

Second, that you care about what is going on in the world: whether that be inequality, discrimination, exploitation (of people and places), climate change, breakdowns in trust and the social contract in governments and businesses, political and social division, physical and mental health and well-being, endless apocalyptic predictions and much more – what people are having to face now and the realities and possibilities our children are going to have to deal with in years to come.

Third, that as a professional you feel an obligation, or a desire, to take responsibility for the ripple out of your work. You want to do good, and you want your work to do good. For your client, certainly. And ideally beyond.

Fourth, that a conflict then arises for you – maybe it's between you and yourself, or between what you feel you and your client should be talking about in these times and what they initially put on the table, or between what you think as a professional coach you can and can't raise with your client.

So how can you resolve these conflicts? How can you ethically raise the bigger picture without compromising the client's agenda? Well, here's how.

Ask a simple question: invite your client to reflect on these issues, and the possible unfolding futures, and to consider all that matters to them, and then ask, 'Do you care about this too?' It's that simple.

If they say 'No', there could be 100 other good reasons for working with them. And if none of those apply to you, you are free to signpost them to someone who you think may serve them better. Contracting is two way. And don't pretend you don't operate as a professional in alignment with your values because, yes, you do have an agenda – and it will leak out in your questions and responses. It's more professional to be aware of it, to own it, and where appropriate to name it and let the client know about it.

If they say 'Yes, I do care about this', then you're into an open contracting conversation: which issues? Why are they important to them? What would they like the coaching to do? How does this sit in relation to everything else?

TWO IMPORTANT PITFALLS TO AVOID

1. You don't need to know about circular economies, the science of climate change, the history and theories relating to race and gender issues or any other detail before you ask the question, just like you don't need to know about company law if they are going through a take-over.
2. Don't think you can only ask 'Do you care about this too?' when you are at the beginning of an engagement. Events are unfolding daily. Everyone is affected in some way. Ask whenever something happens that you feel affects your client and their team/organisation/future, and their personal sense of purpose, meaning and contribution.

OK, THEY CARE. WHAT NOW?

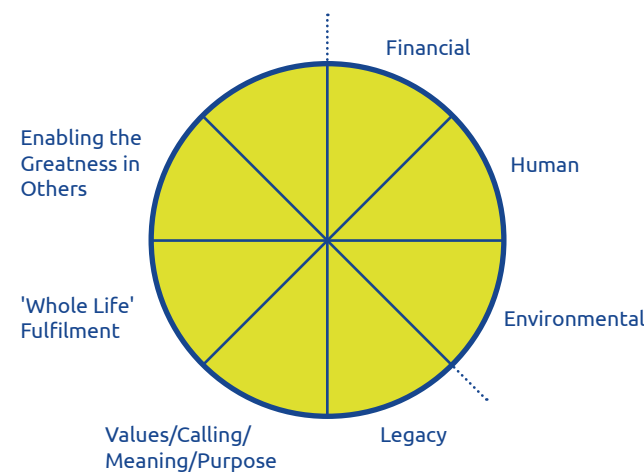
The simple answer to you as a coach is 'You have all that you need'. As a professional coach you can follow the thinking and the energy with them as you always do. And... you may feel that a proven tool and framework will help. Let me introduce Neil's Wheel¹ [see figure 1].

The tool is designed to be as easy to use, but also invites people to see the relationships between themselves and the wider world; between what they think and feel and do as a whole person and being part of one world, one humanity, one future; between where they are now and the future they want to help bring into the world.

A number of criteria guided the Wheel's design. Namely that it should:

- Be free so that millions can use it.
- Be simple so there are no obstacles to use it.
- Invite new thinking, perspectives and insights
- Reflect certain realities: that whilst we have independent thinking, freedom of choice and agency to act, we are nevertheless interconnected and interdependent simultaneously.
- Be effective – creating genuine new awareness and action.
- Be adaptable to enable people to reflect their unique thoughts, experiences and way of looking at the world, without the coach imposing an agenda.

And it has to do all this without complicated explanations or detailed theories – it must be self-evident.



THE IDEAS BEHIND THE WHEEL

The first three sections map against John Elkington's 'People, Profit, Planet' responsible leadership approach, inviting 'beyond-self' thinking. The next section, Legacy, ensures the 'beyond now' and 'stakeholder perspective' conversation. The next segment focuses on connecting deeply to our feelings – we all know it's not enough to just think about something if we want to be motivated to do it. The 'Enabling Greatness in Others' segment is based on two realities: nothing is achieved alone, and when it comes to the big issues of the day it's easy to fall into either the messianic or martyrdom traps. It invites us to recognise we're not alone, and it ensures that it's not all about us. The final section is intentionally blank: the client can use

this to highlight anything that creates a fully whole and wholesome picture for themselves. In practice, however, it doesn't seem to need an explanation. People seem to see it and get it.

USING THE WHEEL

There's no single correct way to use the Wheel. The segment titles are intentionally short and open to allow people to explore their own meaning and interpretation. The segments can be subdivided to reflect different parts of self (e.g. me as leader, me as citizen and me as parent) or different levels of organisation (personally, as a team or as an organisation) or any other way that makes sense to the client. It can be marked with lines, scores, pictures, words or with nothing at all. It can be used at the beginning, middle or end of an assignment. You can work through the segments in any order, or just work with a few or just one. Each segment can be a conversation in itself – though the biggest impacts happen when people experience the chemistry of combinations of segments.

The tool has been tested by twenty coaches with international perspectives and experience, co-coaching each other with it, and it's been introduced to 70 members of the Climate Coaching Alliance. Coaches find using it liberating: clients are helped to find their own puzzle pieces, and coaches find that the Wheel does the 'heavy lifting', releasing them to listen with joy to the client and explore together. My vision is of a ripple-out of millions of conversations as people find their way to respond and make a difference. I hope it helps you and your clients find your parts of the puzzle.

The tool is free to use and can be found at neilswheel.org. All that is required is an attribution to Neil Scotton and neilswheel.org. For coaches wanting to practise with peers before using the tool with clients, an introductory experience is available through the website

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Neil Scotton is a globally awarded coach and catalyst. He is driven by a future conversation: what are we going to tell the children of tomorrow about we did in these times? A professional coach since 2004, and a past president of ICF UK, he was nominated External Coaching/ Mentoring Person of the Year 2019. Coaching communities across Europe invite him to inspire them and bring them together. He creates safe spaces for people to come together for the conversations that matter.

1. Visit neilswheel.org for a more in-depth exploration of how to use the wheel and explanatory videos and reviews from coaches and clients.

IT'S ALL IN YOUR HEAD: THE BRAIN'S RESPONSE TO CRISIS

Executive coach **Soraya Shaw** uses applied neuroscience to explain how people react differently to uncertainty – with important lessons for coaching.

When the initial Covid lockdowns were introduced, like many of us I experienced a range of sweeping emotions: incredulity at what was happening; powerlessness and vulnerability; fear for those we love; uncertainty about the future; and an inability to focus or make decisions, coupled with continuous questioning: 'What are we going to do?', 'How can I cope with this?', 'When will we be back to normal?'

Vulnerability and shock were inevitable as our brains struggled to make sense of what was happening and predict what would happen next, navigating feelings of helplessness and concern for our futures.

From a neuroscience perspective, experiencing uncertainty leads to the release of stress chemicals such as cortisol. This activates the protective behaviours associated with fight-or-flight reactions, and the resultant impacts on our physiology, including our immune and cardiovascular systems, as well as our emotional and cognitive responses.

This engages a network of brain processes that results in the pre-frontal cortex (PFC) shutting down and impairing top-down cognitive control. The PFC carries out our higher-order functions: behaviour control, critical thinking, emotional regulation, planning, decision making, and problem solving. The impact of stress on the PFC and our executive functioning is unhelpful enough on an individual level, but scarily so across an entire global population.

With the PFC offline and the limbic system (the feeling brain) switches into a more primeval form of survival control, and our ability to formulate abstract thought, focus, access our working memory, engage goal-directed behaviours and make strategic decisions becomes impaired. This leads to feelings of helplessness and exhaustion as precious cognitive resources are used up.

Personal helplessness was mirrored in business, and compounded, when many businesses ground to a halt as a result of the pandemic. Organisations had to rethink their strategies and plans, set up home workstations, adopt furlough schemes and make online meetings the main mode of communication.

This meant navigating a cascade of operational challenges and an unclear future with little precedent or information to turn to. Leaders were also affected by uncertainty in their daily lives and relationships, but at the same time were required to make on-the-spot decisions, exacerbating feelings of fear. Living in a world seemingly out of our control, putting a handbrake on our lives and businesses, could have so easily stymied solutions, new ideas and empathic support, and crushed spirits. But it didn't.

YOUR BRAIN, MY BRAIN

Each of our brains is mapped differently, supporting different personalities and mindsets. Likewise, we are each shaped differently by our DNA, cultures, environment, experiences and memories. As a result, people's reactions to the pandemic differed. Some saw it as a challenge to embrace; others were paralysed by it.

Our brains learn to predict situations, but each in a unique way. When we predict positive situations, we tap into the PFC. When we predict negative ones, we remain within the limbic system, blocking access to higher-function thinking.

This is why, seemingly overnight, we saw amazing demonstrations of ideas and solutions. Mercedes AMG stopped working on Formula 1 cars and collaborated with University College London and University College London Hospital to create a new ventilator, secured the approval of health regulators and launched it – all within one week. Many people in different countries and from different disciplines have created remarkable products and inventions to halt the virus's destruction and protect those at risk.

Research shows that a positive emotional mindset – whether we see the glass as half full or half empty – is central to releasing the cognitive and emotional constraints that might prevent us from embracing solutions in difficult times.ⁱ Adopting a positive mindset toward stressors can broaden and build cognitive and behavioural repertoires to support flourishing and learning, resulting in mental and physical wellness.

Whether we view a situation as a challenge or a threat is especially important in times like these. Research shows that practising emotional regulation (such as mindfulness) helps to deactivate the amygdala (our primitive threat reactor).ⁱⁱ Coupled with recent research into neuroplasticity (the brain's ability to adapt) this suggests that, through new learnings or experiences, an individual's perceptions of a situation can adapt, shifting from a perception of threat to one of challenge.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR COACHES?

So how can we best support our clients? My recent research and coaching focus has been on modifying stress mindsets to view stress as enhancing rather than debilitating, thereby building positive resilience to support long-term health, wellbeing and performance. To achieve these, I suggest the following strategies:

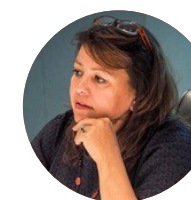
1. Share with clients the roles that emotions play in our day-to-day lives, remembering that for some people and within some industries emotions are not encouraged. Practising emotional regulation helps to alleviate negative impacts, quietening the amygdala and reactivating the PFC. This allows people to cognitively re-engage, become more solution-focused and lose the mind-fog they may be experiencing.
2. Work with clients to understand and balance the meaning of their individual emotions – sadness, fear, anger, shame, guilt, hopelessness. Attending to their feelings and solutions will result in more positive outcomes and a better sense of control. The importance of ongoing emotional self care cannot be underestimated. Check in with one's self to rebalance the stress response and maintain optimal brain health and resilience.

3. Explore future scenarios with your clients; consider what is positive, what their purpose is, and how they can embrace challenges and transitions. This helps them to switch from fear to excitement, shifting perspectives to something their brain can focus on and plan for.
4. Remember that many people have not had the chance to replenish cognitive and emotional resources, and that this has been exacerbated by the pandemic. This can result in emotional exhaustion, ill health and distress. Encourage clients to take care of their wellbeing: promote exercise, good diet, mindfulness, internal and external cognitive conversations, and rest. Self care has also been shown to have a positive crossover effect on other people, helping them to mitigate distress and support a recovery process, so a win-win.ⁱⁱⁱ
5. Support clients to create a culture and environment of psychological and physical safety, both at work and at home – one that rewards new ideas and solutions. This helps promote agility, flexibility and proactivity.

This situation really is unprecedented. People are feeling exhausted. Many have not before had to juggle such uncertainty, lack of security, and home and work responsibilities – all the while trying to find meaning in the chaos.

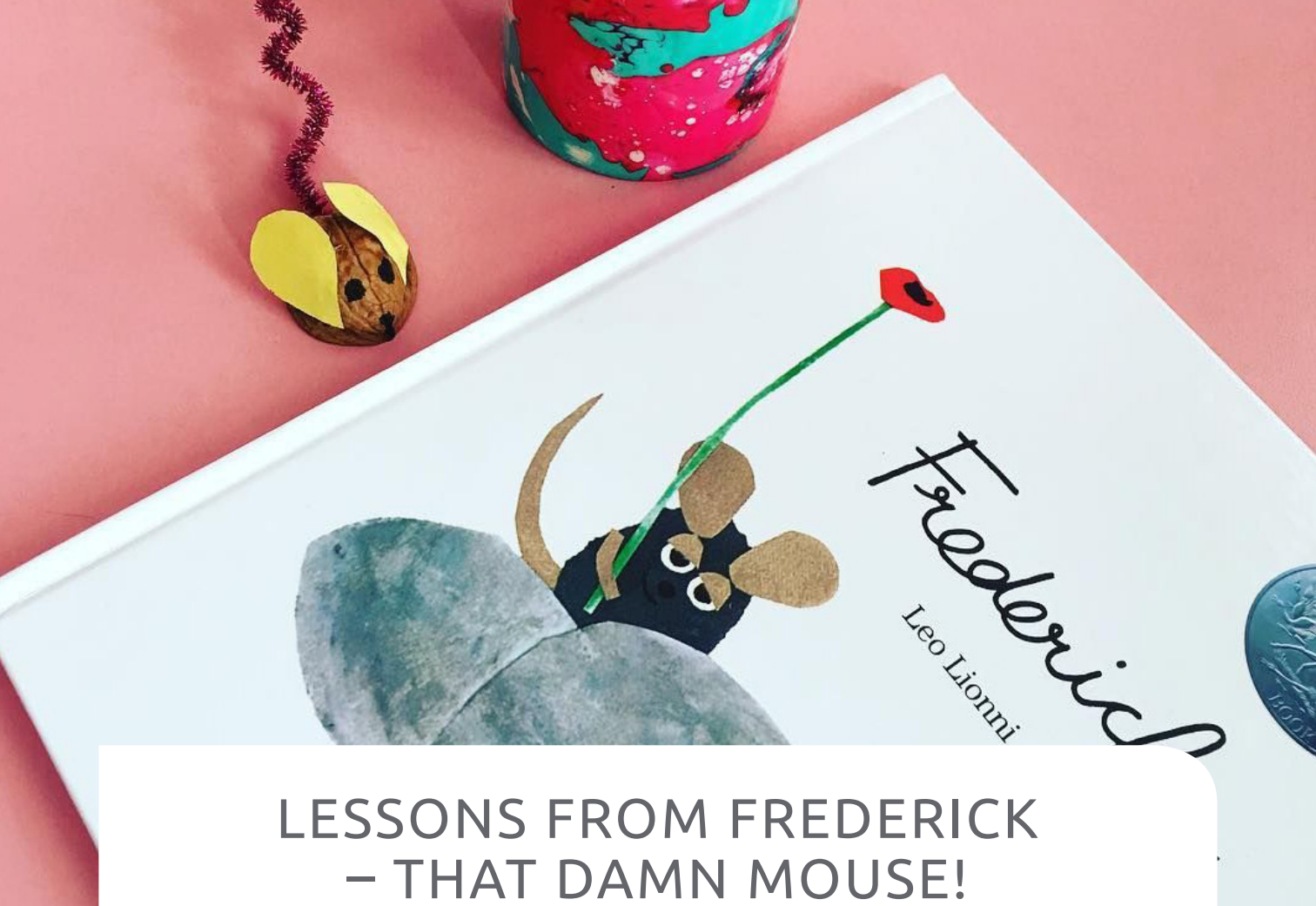
As things ease our energy will return, plus the new behaviours we are developing will create new habits and thinking patterns, which will eventually feel more 'normal'. We are experiencing change and, while it is disruptive and we don't know what the future holds, this change also brings opportunities, new challenges, new learnings and the ability, through the power of technology, to stay connected and meet new people.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Soraya Shaw is the founder of Springboard Coaching. She advises and coaches senior leaders, business innovators and future leaders to approach – from a brain perspective – ways to achieve resonant leadership, resilience, wellbeing and business transition. A founding member of the Association for Coaching and an executive coach for over seventeen years, Soraya is one of two people globally to complete a new MSc in Applied Neuroscience in Organisations. Her work and research into positive resilience and wellbeing mindsets continue.

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LESSONS FROM FREDERICK – THAT DAMN MOUSE!

Coach, teacher and writer **Martha Freymann Miser** reminds us of the power of images created by artists and poets to sustain and inspire us in dark times.

I keep thinking about Frederick.

As a coach, I've tried other images to help me make sense of these challenging times. But that damn mouse keeps creeping into my head — insisting he has something to say about leadership and beauty and poetry.

Frederick is a classic children's book about a 'chatty family of field mice' preparing for winter. When my kids were young, it was one of many books we would share at bedtime before they finally settled down and went to sleep. In the years since, my husband and I have given away most of our children's library, so I was surprised to find the slightly dog-eared little book sitting on my bookshelf. I guess you could say Frederick was waiting for me.

First, I was curious: where did *Frederick* come from? The book was written in 1967 by Leo Lionni.¹ Born in Amsterdam, Lionni learned to draw by making sketches at the iconic Rijksmuseum, the Dutch national museum in Amsterdam and home to great masters like Rembrandt, van Gogh and Vermeer. In his lifetime he became a world-famous illustrator and the author of more than 30 children's books.²

As it happens, I'm well acquainted with the Rijksmuseum; my family spent four magical years in Amsterdam, living a few blocks from it. Today my son lives a short walk from that famous landmark. Writing this brings back a flood of treasured memories. For instance, I remember my first trip to Amsterdam — Easter 2000 — two years before our move. It was a quiet, sunny morning and, feeling disoriented, jetlagged and far from home, I took a walk. Rounding a corner, I suddenly found myself facing the castle-like Rijksmuseum, sitting back on a lush green lawn, sparkling in the sunlight. It was a breath-taking, unforgettable image.

Which is a good segue because, you see, *Frederick* is very much about the power of images.

Here's a quick synopsis: Frederick is a member of a family of field mice. Anticipating winter, the family does what mice do: they all 'gather corn and nuts and wheat and straw'. All, that is, except Frederick. When the other mice ask Frederick why he isn't working, he says: 'I gather sun rays for the cold dark winter days', or 'I gather colours . . . for winter is grey', or 'I am gathering words, for the winter days are long and many, and we'll run out of things to say'.

Eventually the mice go into their winter hideaway in the rocks. At first, they have lots to eat and lots of funny stories to tell. But as the temperature drops and the food begins to run out, they fall silent. That's when Frederick climbs up on a large rock. 'Close your eyes', he says. 'Now I send you the rays of the sun'. Imagining the sun, they feel warmer. Then he tells them about the blue periwinkles, the red poppies, the yellow wheat, the green leaves and the berry bush, and they see 'the colours as clearly as if they had been painted in their minds'. There's even a drawing showing the mice imagining blotches of blue, red, yellow, green and purple. At the end, when Frederick recites a poem, they applaud. 'But Frederick', they exclaim, 'you are a poet!'

A WINTER LIKE NO OTHER

So why has Frederick been whispering in my ear these past few months? Because, I suppose, like Frederick and his family, we've all entered a winter of sorts, forced into our hideaways amid our own metaphorical rocks.

Clearly this is a winter like no other — a time so uncertain, chaotic and paradoxical we lack a vocabulary to describe it. On the one hand, we share a profound sense of dread. We fear illness, economic collapse, oppression, ecological destruction and social unrest. Conversely, new possibilities emerge like green shoots through cracked pavement: ending racism; tackling climate change; rebuilding relationships; innovations in science, business, education and the arts.

By now millions of people have faced the terrible darkness of the Covid-19 pandemic. Like many others, my family has managed to stay well, but loss has found us nonetheless in the form of lost jobs, lost freedom, discarded dreams and even the death of my sweet mother, who slipped away peacefully on an early August morning. Still, we carry on. In Boston, USA, where I live with my husband, we're enjoying the sunny days and cool evenings of an early New England fall. Each day, much like the last, is not unpleasant. And yet, I notice, the sheer banality of existence — the sameness of my day-to-day routines, the illusion that work continues unchanged (albeit online) — numbs me to these losses and to the reality of my exile from the world beyond our home. Without conscious thought, I've begun to shrink myself, my expectations and my aspirations, all to fit inside this smaller life.

Similarly, for many of my coaching clients, leadership has become a joyless task. Seeing no end in sight, they are worn down by the relentless succession of disembodied video calls, by the hypervigilance, by the burdens of care at work and at home. Listening, I see myself and know I must shake off this mood. For unless I can challenge them to rise above their immediate concerns, find new sources of vitality and envision new possibilities, we may all succumb to complacency and resignation.

NOURISHING THE SPIRIT IN EXILE

Poets like Frederick understand these dangers. Leadership expert Meg Wheatley reminds us that exile historically has been used to punish and to break the human spirit.³ Similarly, says poet David Whyte, those deprived of community or meaning or a life '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'.⁴

Poets are also masters of imagery. They know that our capacity to hold an internal image is not a simple exercise in memory. It's a

practice as vital to human flourishing as food and water. To illustrate, Whyte tells the story of a Jewish concert pianist who, locked by the Nazis in a confined space with dozens of others, 'survived by playing mentally through her entire repertoire of Chopin while everyone died in a standing position around her'.⁵ Though less dramatic, Frederick's images of the 'sun rays and colours and words' are equally profound.

And what of my images, my blotches of blue, red, yellow, green and purple? It takes little effort to summon them. Like Frederick, I've been gathering them all my life. There are arresting images of a rushing waterfall in Glacier National Park and the majestic snow-topped Grand Tetons. There are beautiful images of the yellow-green-red Tuscan landscape and the sun glinting on a Caribbean beach. There are spiritual images of the haunting plains of South Dakota, and serene and silent Squam Lake in New Hampshire. There are also intimate and tactile images: wrapping my arms around my children and grandchildren, stroking the ears of a beloved dog, feeling the soft papery skin of my mother's hand. Each image has its own story, meaning and magic. And each awakens and breathes new life into me.

FOLLOW THE POETS

But what about words? Frederick gathers words as diligently as he gathers sun rays and colours. He knows that 'the winter days are long and we'll run out of things to say'. He knows that words, in the hands of a poet, convey images as powerful as a painting or a photograph. He knows that his choice of words can create apathy or excitement, despair or hope. And he knows that the most potent words remind us who we are in the middle of the most terrible of times.

I'm glad to have my own stockpile of words, for the days of quarantine are long, and I've exhausted things to say about designer masks, virtual meetings and disinfection routines. So, following Frederick's gentle guidance, I pause and consider how my life has gone from logging airline miles to this unexpected homecoming. And in that moment, the opening lines of *Love After Love*,⁶ a favourite poem of mine by Derek Walcott, come to me:

*The time will come
when, with elation,
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror,
and each will smile at the other's welcome,
and say, sit here. Eat.*

Frederick © 1967 by Leo Lionni
© renewed 1995 by Leo Lionni



The poem continues: 'You will love again the stranger who was your self' — the one 'who knows you by heart', the one 'you ignored'. Slow down, remember, forgive, rejoice. The poem concludes: 'Sit. Feast on your life'.

What could be more perfect in this time of solitude than to joyfully greet myself at my door and then spend time reflecting on my life? Which is why I say 'follow the poets'. They will always lead you back to yourself.

As we move ahead into an unknowable future, there will inevitably be more dark days that threaten to crush our spirit. Days when we will be called on as leaders and coaches to summon images of hope and humanity, and the words to help us remember who we are and what we stand for.

On those days, think of Frederick, climbing up on the rock, sending rays of sun and sharing the warmth of his imagination.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Martha Freymann Miser is founder and president of Aduro Consulting, a Boston-based coaching and consulting company specialising in leadership and change for purpose-driven companies. Prior to this, Martha held leadership positions in both private and public sector organisations, including Global Head of Leadership and Change for ING in the Netherlands. Martha holds a master's degree in public administration and a doctorate in leadership and change. She teaches at George Washington University and is on the editorial board of *Coaching Perspectives*.

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Joint statement on climate change

From the professional bodies for coaching, coaching psychology, mentoring and supervision

Dated 20/10/2020

Humankind faces one of its biggest challenges in the current climate and biodiversity crisis. This challenge has been building for decades; many experts concur on the understanding that we have at most a ten-year window of opportunity to address the changes needed to slow down and stabilise the worst-case scenarios of runaway climate change before an irreversible tipping point is reachedⁱ.

We write this statement in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. It is noteworthy how swiftly people have changed their behaviours in response to the pandemic, how they have come together to collaborate, share resources and do what needs to be done in the face of danger. This response provides many clues and possibilities for useful actions as we face the ongoing greater threats to our climate and ecology which equally provides us with a landscape of learning.

The facts of the ecological crisis are compelling and can be seen in reports by organizations such as the IPCCⁱ. Hundreds of organisations, including governments, have acknowledged and declared a climate emergency. The WHO have estimated that between 2030 and 2050, climate change is expected to cause approximately 250,000 additional deaths per year, from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress aloneⁱⁱⁱ. For some climate change represents a concern for future generations. For others crop failures, floods, economic breakdown and stark choices around survival are a current reality. The crisis is highly complex with many interlocking aspects, ranging from protection of natural environments to economic and social issues to mental health concerns.

The interconnectedness of all species and earth systems means this situation can only be tackled through collective action and collaboration at local and global levels. Thankfully, collaboration and connection are hard wired into our DNA and offer us the opportunity to come to this challenge with hope and love, rather than with fear and anxiety.

Coaching, mentoring, coaching psychology and supervision are concerned with developing the potential of human beings, of raising awareness to enable people to take responsibility for their actions and ownership for their contribution. We have a significant role to play in fostering new ways of being in service to a healthy human society and a healthy planet.

As professional bodies who are dedicated wholly or in part to the role of coaching, coaching psychology, mentoring and supervision, to develop individuals, teams, organisations, and to create social value,

we have committed to work together to play our part in addressing the climate emergency.

We consider our role in four dimensions:

- As individual human beings
- As individual coaches, coaching psychologists, mentors and supervisors
- As individual professional bodies
- As a collective of professional bodies.

It is in this fourth dimension, as a collective of professional bodies, that we make the following joint commitments. These are based on two principal acknowledgements: that learning at pace is now critical, and that well informed professionals, building on core skills of raising awareness and responsibility, envisioning and positive mindset, are well placed to make a significant contribution in this area.

To address the reality and urgency of the climate emergency we commit to:

- Raising awareness and knowledge with our members through sharing information and research
- Creating safe and challenging spaces for coaches, coaching psychologists, mentors and supervisors to reflect on and reconsider their role and their practice
- Raising awareness and offering support to our clients to enable them to redesign their organisations in response to changing needs and good practices
- Collaborating to share knowledge between professional bodies and pool resources for free access by all coaches, without the need for membership. We will model the behaviour we seek and always collaborate not compete
- Developing our thinking and research to further consider how coaching and mentoring can serve to support society's transformation through our client work.
- Working towards carbon neutrality in our events and activities
- Continuing to seek and invite other professional bodies to sign up to this commitment.

Given the ever-changing nature of our global context, we commit to regularly reviewing and revising these shared commitments and active promises as our understanding and our landscape continue to shift.



i. IPCC reports on climate change – <https://www.ipcc.ch/reports> and <https://www.ipcc.ch/2018/10/08/summary-for-policymakers-of-ipcc-special-report-on-global-warming-of-1-5c-approved-by-governments/> and <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/spm/>

ii. As above

iii. WHO (2018) Climate Change and Health: who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health

LEARNING THROUGH LOVE, NOT FEAR

Coach **Sonia Mayor** uses the wisdom of our bodies to develop stories that can guide us to wholeness and correctness during this time of disruption.

*‘There is more wisdom in your body than in your deepest philosophy.’
- Nietzsche, from Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Transforming the way in which we address issues of inequality, unfairness and injustice requires a shift in consciousness; from values of self-protection, self-interest and individualism to a collaborative and compassionate way of operating in the world. Making this shift in our external world relies on how we look at things.

How we respond to any situation or person depends on previous experience, and how we have learned and been taught to interpret those experiences. Everything we experience comes from within us and forms our ‘story of the world’ and our place within it. We tell ‘our story’ at many different levels – politically, psychologically and spiritually – and these versions can often contradict one another, depending on the lens we look through. Even though we all have our own view of reality, as global leadership consultant Margaret Wheatley says: ‘some views are more accurate than others as they are based on more information and life-affirming values. We need to look carefully at what happens with a story; people need to be held accountable for what they put out there.’

STORIES FROM FEAR AND STORIES FROM LOVE

Fear and love, the two ends of the spectrum of human emotions, take us in two different directions and greatly influence the actions we take individually and collectively. So, what is the difference when we tell a story from a place of love to from a place of fear?

It takes great awareness to understand our own ‘story’ and our habitual responses to danger and unpredictability. Only when we do so can we make genuine choices and be intentional in our actions. One model developed by the supervision consultant Tony Morrison helps us make sense of two contrasting ways we respond to uncertainty and anxiety both individually and collectively, often referred to as the red and green cycles.

In times of crisis, where fear dominates, our primitive fight/flight defence mechanisms are triggered as a way of helping us adapt to a threatening situation. This is recognised as a natural response to unpredictability. Our behaviours may be defensive, protective

or reactive. This is referred to as the red cycle. In the contrasting green cycle, a compassionate approach is taken to manage uncertainty and the accompanying feelings of anxiety. Stressors are acknowledged, mistakes are seen as opportunities for learning, new ideas are encouraged, and there is cooperation and persistence in searching for shared solutions.

SHIFTING THE STORY FROM FEAR TO LOVE

Exciting developments in neuroscience are questioning the predominant narrative of competition and individualism, revealing instead that our survival depends upon forming strong bonds with each other and working collaboratively in groups. They also show that our emotions are contagious, in that we mirror those around us. This again reinforces the benefits of working in the green cycle. Similarly, research shows that how others feel has a huge impact on how we feel and behave ourselves. These findings urge us to nurture our emotional lives, create safe environments and foster healthy connections. It seems we all flourish when we are in environments where we are met with compassion, empathy and love.

Our survival depends upon forming strong bonds with each other and working collaboratively in groups. Research shows that our emotions are contagious, in that we mirror those around us

Organisations and individuals that manage uncertainty from a green cycle use their emotional intelligence (EI) to create the conditions for our basic human qualities of generosity, contribution and love to be evoked no matter what. As Daniel Goleman, the renowned psychologist and author on EI states, ‘it is in our DNA to embrace loving connections for our survival’.

Using the wisdom of our body and our innate desire to connect, we can use our insight and compassion to lead people back to an understanding of who we are as human beings. The four-step LOVE process outlined below can help us shift into more green-cycle behaviours and can be applied to ourselves and our work with others; with it we may notice how we might be responding to a time of uncertainty and in turn help ourselves respond to an uncertain situation with love rather than fear.

(L) LISTEN

Pay attention to how and what you hear. Listen closely to all the ways ‘stories’ are told. We often listen to the story, but it’s also important to listen to the storyteller, and listen closely to the beliefs behind the story, the language being used, how much of that language is reactive and how much is accepting of their experience. It is the quality of how we listen to each other that shapes the

quality of our conversations and interactions. Conversations have the ability to trigger emotional and physiological reactions. Words either cause us to connect and bond, releasing more of the hormone oxytocin into our bodies, or they cause us to break rapport and think of others as a potential threats, which leads to a rise in the stress hormone cortisol.

(O) OBSERVE

If we can pay attention and observe our feelings and behaviour when we are gripped by strong emotions, without the need to deny or judge or even analyse our story, then we can begin to notice our automatic reactions to a situation. Pausing for a moment reminds us that we have a choice in how we respond to a situation. We can learn a lot more about ourselves by observing our bodily impulses, gestures, posture, facial expression and pace as opposed to simply our words. Yet, most of us have not learned to pay much attention to more than the verbal content of our story.

(V) VALUE

When we can empathetically connect to others’ feelings, without the need to correct or change the experience in any way, we feel understood, heard and valued. This often is the best antidote to stress: it calms the stress response and helps us make more-informed choices about our behaviour. No fixing interpretation or advice is required. When difficult emotions are met compassionately, there is less of a need to justify, protect or defend a position.

(E) EXPERIMENTAL ATTITUDE

Developing an experimental attitude helps us deal with panic and fear. It requires the ability to let go of the need to know, and instead shift into a more inquiring frame of mind. From this place we are more likely to be surprised and intrigued by the different and new ways of seeing, rather than scared.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Sonia is an independent consultant focusing on leadership and team development, reflective supervision, inter-agency collaboration and resilience. Her specialism is in supporting others to adapt to change and uncertainty by combining her knowledge and experience in workforce reform, community engagement, diversity and psychotherapy. She is a national trainer on the UK’s leading programme on supervision. Previously, she has held leadership roles in the civil service, housing, children’s policy, workforce reform and safeguarding.



WHY COACHES NEED MENTORS

Entrepreneur and award-winning coach **Marian Evans** reflects on what drives her to mentor others and how a great mentor can help coaches weather the Covid storm and other crises.

Mentoring has been a big part of my life for the last ten years. As I climbed the ranks in the financial services sector, strong female role models were few and far between. It was almost by default that, as I became more experienced, I started to attract mentees looking for support. One of my regrets is not seeking out a mentor myself in my twenties.

Today, I feel an almost maternal instinct to support and nurture ambitious individuals. Let's not forget: it is also incredibly rewarding. Whether it stems from a desire to make the path easier for others or to protect them from the pitfalls, mistakes and failures I have suffered on the way to building my businesses, I certainly gain as much from the mentoring relationship as I give. As an entrepreneur and award-winning executive coach, I find myself mentoring these days as often as I am coaching and consulting. So, which hat and when?

Much of my business consultancy is based on co-creation, so I offer a blend of services spanning coaching, consulting and mentoring. Often this relationship is defined in the contracting phase; at other times it evolves gradually as I and the client discuss how I can best serve them, and how they can best serve themselves. Coaching is often a short-term, goal-orientated endeavour, while mentoring focuses more upon a client's career development over the long term. Pure coaching relies heavily on great questioning. However, when I am asked to mentor, there is an additional expectation and understanding that I share my knowledge, experience and learnings. When someone is seeking 'pure coaching', in theory the coach need not have in-depth knowledge of the sector or issue. However, my mentees are looking for expertise in business first and foremost. Credibility and a proven track record are important characteristics to look for in a mentor.

Training and supervision are of course essential for helping coaches and organisations ensure that high-quality standards are upheld and that coaching practice is as effective as possible. The greatest benefits of supervision are the opportunities to reflect, raise awareness and continually develop. Coaching supervision provides a wide-angled lens through which to review coaching practice. This is quite different from the relationship between a mentor and mentee, which is less about coaching practice and more about encouraging the wider development of the mentee through knowledge-sharing, experience, connections, insight and expertise on what it takes to get ahead.

Change is constant, and the need to adapt the way we work has never been more relevant. Every threat brings with it an opportunity. Quite often, the skill is to recognise our potential and not be afraid to tackle what it is that holds us back. Of all the models I have studied, the books I have read and the courses I have undertaken (and there have been many!) few skills – if any – are more important than the skill of listening: actively listening. As coaches we are used to listening to others but we do not always listen to ourselves. We are often our own worst critics, and I am struck by the number of coaches who neglect their own wellbeing, and thus never truly fulfil their own potential.

As coaches we are used to listening to others but we do not always listen to ourselves

Covid-19 has amplified this issue: there are those who are busier than ever and those who are struggling to survive. I'm not suggesting that mentoring fixes these problems, but it is a highly effective intervention. Where a coach might help a fellow coach tackle an immediate crisis, the right mentor will help the coach develop the skills to weather the storm. I encourage my mentees to recognise and embrace their strengths and weaknesses. Who we are is what makes us great. We can decide to be limited by that, or empowered by it.

Of late, I find that I am spending more time helping coaches to reflect on the key elements of resilience, both as an individual and in terms of their organisations. To me these include mental toughness, physical wellbeing, emotional balance, purpose and connectivity. When things are out of kilter, we need to refocus on the areas we are neglecting.

SOME TOP TIPS FOR COACHES

If you do nothing else, seek out a great mentor. This should be someone credible and ideally someone you admire; it may be that their strengths lie in the areas that you find most challenging. In my view, a mentor needs to have proven themselves; they need to be able to demonstrate that they have the skills required to help you. Other must-haves include:

- A clear outline of expectations (contract well at the outset – just as we do with our coaching clients).
- A commitment to take action (setting SMART objectives never goes out of fashion).

- An agreement to meet regularly (virtually or face to face) and to be 'present' when you meet.
- A positive mindset.

We all need encouragement, reassurance and a helping hand at times. Find someone who has some energy and enthusiasm – it can be priceless.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Marian Evans, BSc (Hons) ACII, FInstLM, FCMI, is the winner of Inspirational Woman of the Decade (WIB Awards) and Mentor of the Year (WIFA Awards). Marian is a business owner, fellow of the Institute of Leadership & Management and Chartered Management Institute and non-executive director. With a background in financial services, Marian is both a chartered broker and a formidable property investor. A qualified executive coach and facilitator working with leaders of some of Wales's top organisations, clients recognise her dynamism and proven ability to deliver transformational change.

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 Association for Coaching

TRUTH

SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

Coach, supervisor and trainer [Marie Faire](#) invites us to learn from current crises and speak truth to power if we are to be part of the solution in creating a more compassionate and equitable world.

As many of my friends and clients would tell you freely, I am outspoken – as well as, like everyone else, opinionated. I like to think this is mitigated by the fact I am also a good listener, have a well-developed sense of humour and, in my defence, am (mostly) self-aware. Most importantly, I seek to understand how others have come to different opinions than mine.

In the last six months, I have had many conversations that, sooner or later, have arrived at some aspect of the current crises we are facing: climate change; gross inequalities in access to water, food, education and healthcare in many parts of the world; pollution; disappearing biodiversity; environmental degradation; poverty; Covid-19; white supremacists and the frightening move further and further to the political right.

In 2009, following the last financial crash, John Blakey and Ian Day published their paper/article about the sub-prime mortgage crisis: *Where were all the coaches when the banks went down?* (later to become their book *Challenging Coaching*). But more than ten years on, I wonder what have we learned since then about the role of coaches in crises?

Gregory Bateson said that if we are to understand anything fully, it is a necessity to gain multiple perspectives. So, I contacted several coaches, supervisors and contractors of coaching for their views on the role of a coach in a prejudiced, racist, coronavirus-ridden, economically failing, climate-changing world?

All life forms, including human beings, are self-corrective systems, programmed to return to the status quo; 'disturbances' are ignored, reframed or side-tracked. We are wired to be risk averse and to be cautious of change, which has made us a remarkably successful species. There are times, however, when change is required. If we don't take risks then we may, like other previously successful species, become extinct.

Are we at that moment as a species? As a profession?

Is the required 'new normal' really just the same as it was, but wearing a mask? Or do we need to radically rethink the path we are on? Is our role as coaches to help people adjust to wearing the mask or to change the direction and the way we travel?

I think that we cannot go back to 'normal'. We need to learn from the horrors and opportunities that are staring us in the face.

I've often thought that part of my role as a coach is to be a court jester. In medieval times, the court jester was just a fool and, therefore, despite the mocking or satirical messages they could deliver, was unlikely to lose their head. As a coach we are, I think, in a privileged position where we may see and comment on things that others cannot and often dare not. We can offer an alternative perspective that may lead to a shift in direction or even a shift in paradigm. We can be a role model for speaking truth to power.

Before lockdown, one of my clients asked if I would attend a team day of theirs. I was happy to and enquired whether he wanted me to facilitate the day. To my surprise he replied that they'd got the event sorted. 'That sounds like a good day, so tell me, what do you need me for?' I asked. His reply (to my delight) was: 'You will tell us if we are being really stupid!' So I earned my fee that day with just one word – 'Really?!?' – delivered as they were agreeing a course of action focused on task and profit, which cut right across some of the core values that they espoused and truly believed in. They were forced to stop, reflect and reconsider.

My client knew I would hold up the mirror, risk speaking truth to power and be his Jiminy Cricket. The success of this role is evidenced by the team now asking each other 'what would Marie say if she were here?'

In an interview, film director Alek Keshishian was asked what it was like to work with the popstar on the film *In Bed with Madonna*, given her notorious reputation for being difficult. He replied: 'It was easy. I went in every day prepared to be sacked. That is the only way to

do your best work.' Are we as coaches willing to risk that? No matter how carefully we do so, there is always an inherent risk to speaking truth to power.

In 2017, long before Covid-19 or the recent resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement, Hetty Einzig wrote that 'coaching is at a fork in the road'. She described the difference between coaches whose journey is to become master craftsmen and those who engage in 'New Generation Coaching'. These are the coaches that work systemically, take an integrative approach and 'challenge the orthodoxy... of impartiality... who see themselves as citizens with an active part to play in society and feel able to encourage their clients to explore their own contribution in the world.'ⁱ

There is, of course, always a role for empathy: for holding the space and for exquisite listening to those who are suffering distress, grief or hardship. People need to be able to tell their story and have it heard without a rush to fix or solve it. Many will also require the skilled questioning that can result in more options and hope. Master craftsmen (and women) are much needed.

I would argue that we desperately need coaches to take their craft with them and take that other path at the fork in the road.

One thing that I am still opinionated about is that we all need to speak out and challenge. Gone are the days where we can hide behind the excuse that coaches (or indeed business leaders, journalists and public figures) must not make political comments or question morality for fear of upsetting their clients (customers, fans and stakeholders). While it is not our role to proselytise, it is our role as coaches to question, and make transparent and examine the values and morality of what we are observing and therefore party to. Silence is complicity.

As Martin Luther King Jr. said: 'Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.'

I hope that coaches will, in addition to their pastoral role, choose the path less travelled and be part of creating a more compassionate, equitable and sustainable world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Marie is co-founder of the Beyond Partnership Ltd and is an AC accredited master executive coach and AC accredited coaching supervisor. She runs coach and coaching supervisor programmes; is the AC Supervision Accreditation Assessment Lead; and is one of the ACGSE hosts. In addition to being opinionated(!), she has a reputation for being both supportive and challenging, passionate, relational, and bringing humour and compassion to all her work. Marie has two events coming up: a virtual coaching supervision training programme in November, and a virtual workshop, 'Speaking Truth to Power', in Spring 2021.

IN A TIME OF CRISIS AND OPPORTUNITY, WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE COACH?

Answers from around the world



'The most precious role is to support the development of empathy. One of the most powerful ways to do this is by asking questions and listening to stories. As I observed in my online group sessions, leading these conversations creates empathic dialogues, ending with people talking about creative solutions in new

situations. Perhaps now, coaching will become even more important as a way to support individuals and organisation given these challenging times. There is never been a time when people needed to experience more care, candor, and constructiveness.'

Günay Özarin, developmental coach and supervisor, Göz Consulting and Coaching

Istanbul, Turkey



'Despite these difficult times, we are currently looking to increase the size of our workforce significantly by the end of the year; I put this success down to the ways the company has embraced its values, which are focused on a 'one team' mentality. Coaching has played a major part from the top down. As a

company we have embraced the value of coaching and invested in increasing and strengthening our people team, so that our development of people touches the whole business. We need to give our employees the tools to get the best out of everybody. An external coach allows our team to rethink some of their behaviours, as well as pick up and learn from others what "great" looks like.'

James Neil, managing director, Dalcour Maclaren

England, UK



'I believe coaches are in a wonderful position to help their clients to navigate their way in times of crisis and opportunity. The nature of the relationship allows coaches to provide a safe container for clients to express their hopes, fears and feelings, and to have conversations that they might not have elsewhere. Coaches can help their clients to be more grounded, centred and resourceful in ambiguous and uncertain situations. This helps them to gain fresh perspectives and insights that can stimulate their creativity and problem-solving skills.'

Joan van den Brink, executive and team coach, Araba Consulting

Amsterdam, Netherlands

i. Einzig, H. *The Future of Coaching: Vision, Leadership and Responsibility in a Transforming World*. Routledge, 2017.

UNCOMFORTABLE CONVERSATIONS LEADING TO POWERFUL INSIGHTS

Coach supervisors [Lily Seto](#) and [Benita Treanor](#) met virtually as part of a global supervisors CPD network. They share their reflections on their conversations, which covered issues ranging from social justice to climate change.

THE SUPERVISOR

LILY In the role of supervisor, I took a couple of deep breaths to ground myself and calm my nerves, and to shift my energy into the supervisor role. Benita and I had agreed to a supervision session around coaching culturally diverse clients. I am aware, as a Canadian First Nations woman of colour, that I am a visible minority working as supervisor to a white, British, educated woman. When I look at Benita, I see a wise, centred, white woman with a British accent. The nervousness that emanated from her is not consistent with my previous experiences of her calm, centred being, and yet it parallels how I am feeling. I remind myself that, like Brené Brown says, we are in co-creation and co-discovery and that I am enough.

Benita shares some of her past experiences and the new awareness that is awakening in her around being privileged and white. I can feel some pain in my heart, and she puts her hand on her heart at the same time I do. I feel this instant connection. She shares some of her past traumas and how those memories, as well as climate change and social justice issues, are creating some dissonance within herself. I hold the space as she begins to share her questions around

working with a black client. This is a struggle that some of my white clients seem to have in response to recent social justice movements, notably Black Lives Matter, which have gained momentum across the globe.

I become aware of how I am feeling the need to examine and deepen my understanding of where some of my personal narratives come from: around social justice and systemic barriers that I have faced, and yet how I still feel incredibly privileged. I set that thought aside for now. Benita says she is becoming aware of being the white oppressor and that instantly softens my heart to hear more. I feel that she is choosing to become an ally in this social justice movement. I notice parallel processes around boundaries, privileges and the different traumas that we have living within us.

I sense these are the deep inquiries that the world is asking of us, as coaches and supervisors. The willingness to be still and question who we are and how we might have been complicit in the system that is being shaken. Regardless of whether you are white or a person of colour, I look forward to many more of these types of inquiries.

THE SUPERVISEE

BENITA We chose to take a risk to experience supervision with the focus of how we together, as women of different colours and cultures, might be open to uncomfortable, previously unexplored questions. Taking risks brings fear of the unknown, as there are no assurances that things will turn out the way one plans. However, avoiding risk brings greater burdens for oneself and others, and results in non-action. In trusting my intention to develop further my coaching practice and bring voice to silent internal thoughts about working with a black client, risk was to be a crucial friend.

I recall taking in a deep breath and letting go. I was fearful of bringing into view previously silent, perhaps unconscious, private conversations I had within myself. Shall I? Dare I? Wrestling with my fear of 'getting it right' or 'appearing ignorant' was uppermost in my mind.

I took a good long look at Lily through the Zoom camera. I saw, reflecting back at me, a wise, kind, gentle, fierce human, a woman of colour who was open and willing to challenge the material I was presenting with good intentions. We began to create conditions for the types of positive interactions that Mary Francis-Winter writes about in *Inclusive Conversations*.

I felt vulnerable and unsure of what might be uncovered. Questions arise. Am I good enough to work with this client? Is it helpful to raise the obvious: that I am white, and my client is black? What impact might this have on our work? What am I not seeing? What judgements am I making?

My tendency is to look at the wider whole and feel overwhelmed by the enormity. Lily calmly held the space where I felt safe enough to risk exploring previously uncharted waters. Her question to me was brief, yet so powerful that it continues to create ripples throughout my practice: 'If your client were to enter the room today, how would you be different in that encounter?' This question is a gift: it's challenging, encouraging and creates space for new possibilities and conversations.

In researching further, I came across the 'diversity awareness ladder' in David Clutterbuck, Michelle Lucas and Carol Whitaker's *Coaching Supervision: A Practical Guide for Supervisees*. It explores the inner and outer conversations that address fear, wariness, tolerance, acceptance and appreciation. During our supervision sessions we embodied all of these – opening pathways less known or explored.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Lily Seto is a mentor coach and accredited coaching supervisor who lives in Canada. Her global clients are executive managers in public, private, educational, financial and non-profit sectors. She partners with First Nations communities in British Columbia and global supervision groups, where coaches meet and work in a systemic and cultural space.

www.lilyseto.com



Benita Treanor is a coach, supervisor, psychotherapist and facilitator who lives in the north of England. She offers supervision and coaching to a wide range of clients and organisations globally. Benita is a volunteer with the Association of Coaching as part of a team developing supervision globally.

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A JOURNEY IN DEVELOPMENTAL REFLECTION

Executive coach **Suzi Skinner** reflects on the joys and lessons of her accreditation journey through the new AC Recognition-of-Prior-Learning pathway.

As an experienced executive coach, I was delighted to be introduced to the Recognition-of-Prior-Learning (RPL) pathway.

I found the new Association for Coaching (AC) RPL process to be valuable; a positive learning journey unto itself. Having completed several accreditations across my twenty-year coaching practice, I would go so far as to say that the RPL pathway enables a level of personal and professional reflection that is profound. In case you are considering this for your own professional development, here are some of the highlights.

In line with the mission of the AC to 'inspire and champion coaching excellence', the attention to reflective practice, as well as to coaching supervision, is progressive. Experienced coaching practitioners know the importance of reflection in daily practice – for clients as well themselves. The AC accreditation process builds on this by requiring coaches to articulate their unique coaching purpose and process. It had been a long time since I had reflected on my broader coaching philosophy. Taking stock of the life events, clients, new knowledge and the evolution of my practice was thought-provoking and inherently useful. The process grounded me again in the 'why and how' of my current coaching practice, consolidating elements of my 'coach identity' and refocusing me on the areas that continue to grow and evolve.

Writing a case study was also helpful. Supervision enables the coach to unpack the dynamics of a coaching assignment and identify developmental themes. However, writing the case study was an opportunity to recount fully the beginning, middle and end of a client assignment and notice the interconnectedness of the challenges, wonders and surprises I experienced in this particular assignment. My client received my request to write the case study as a compliment to the great work that he (and we) had done. That in itself was an important learning. Often we can gloss over the work we have done with our clients, or not be cognisant of the ongoing impact that it had on their lives (and ours), as we turn our attention to supporting the next client. So, taking the time to stop, reflect, notice and savour this case study was worthwhile and important – and provided an opportunity to acknowledge what can go by so easily unseen or unappreciated. This exercise also brought to the foreground how much we live in language, both the importance of the narrative we employ as well as the complexity of the nested reflections we invoke in our work. These multifaceted reflections are so rich; our reflection on the client's challenge, goals and developmental needs; on

their progress; on our own progress; on our own challenges, goals and developmental needs; on their system; on our system; and so forth.

The explicit focus on the organisational context (embedded in both the accreditation process and the AC competencies) is pioneering. Effective and experienced coaches are highly vigilant about the layered context in which their clients are operating. They recognise they too are involved in these human systems and that the coaching assignment is a form of influence and co-creation on the broader system. This recognition in the AC process is vital and reinforces the underlying premise that coaches must be attuned to the diversity, power, privilege and complexity dynamics of their client's worlds.

This was time well invested. I recommend anyone considering this option to dive in and explore the wisdom inherent in their own approach. As executive coaches, we are committed to ongoing learning and serving our clients. This process is another step in that direction, and one that will further your personal and professional growth.

Thank you to the AC team, including Dr Paul Lawrence and Jeannette Marshall, for making the process both seamless and enjoyable.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Suzi Skinner, M.Appl.Sc., MCC, PhD candidate, is a published author, international leadership practitioner and global executive coach. Suzi's approach combines the proven evidence base of executive coaching with fresh research perspectives on tapping into the leader identity and leadership potential of every individual. Suzi and her international team collaborate with organisations worldwide to create cultures of 'leadership at every level'. Her book, *Build Your Leader Identity: A Practical Guide to Leading Authentically from Any Position*, has sold thousands of copies globally.



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BOOK REVIEWS

UGRADE: BUILDING YOUR CAPACITY FOR COMPLEXITY

Gary Buxton is delighted to find a practical and timely guide to coaching in a complex world.

As a coach, I am fairly sure you've already noticed how the world is becoming increasingly complex. As the complexity of decision making increases, so does the need for trusted thinking environments in which to consider the options. What a shame we can't all buy an upgrade chip for our brains!

While, sadly, Boston and Ellis haven't invented a chip, they have written a book that gives the reader a really practical guide on how to 'vertically develop' one's thinking in order to deal with some of the most complex situations.

The book argues that the way we work is much like a phone. Sometimes we need to upgrade the operating system rather than just the applications. Learning new skills is great, but changing our capacity for thinking is the key for those next-level challenges.

The concept of vertical development (or adult constructivist development theory) was first mused by Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, who used it to explain child development. It's based on the concept that there are very defined milestones in our developmental growth and that it's typical that you have to master one before you can move onto the next.

The book focuses on four main areas of our 'vertical development': sense making, perspective shifting, self-relating and opposable thinking – each of which have four clearly defined levels. One way of grasping the four capacities is to think of sense making as mainly cognitive, perspective shifting as primarily interpersonal and self-relating as intrapersonal. The final one, opposable thinking, feeds into all three areas. Given our increasingly polarised world, opposable thinking seems like the one we should all be working on first!

This book perfectly answers the 'So what?' question. After initially giving us a quick canter through some of the psychological theory, the book's main goal is to give you some practical tools to apply to yourself, or to support the way you work with a client. Some of the tools feel familiar, but with a new slant. For example, 'gestalt chair' work or 'NLP meta mirrors' have influenced a new exercise in perspective shifting that has four positions. Other tools were brand new to me and definitely something I could see myself using with clients. The book offers lots of coaching questions throughout and the case studies really brought a sense of this being tried-and-tested material.

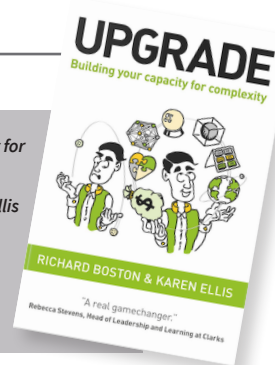
TITLE *Upgrade: Building your capacity for complexity*

AUTHORS Richard Boston and Karen Ellis

PRICE £19

PUBLISHER LeaderSpace

ISBN 978-0992944568

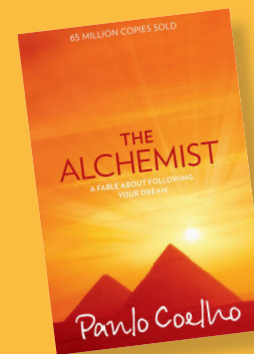


The thing I loved most about this book is that there's no fluff. It's succinct, pragmatic and very much something that you can refer back to easily. The pictures and worksheets included mean that it's really easy to recap on a concept or apply a tool to a coaching session. I'm feeling upgraded already!

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Gary Buxton is a UK-based executive coach and non-exec director who loves working with senior leaders and people managers to navigate complexity and change. You can contact Gary through his site:

www.garybuxton.co.uk



PAUL HEARDMAN: BOOKS THAT HAVE SHAPED MY COACHING

The Alchemist, by Paulo Coelho

I'm a self-confessed learning junkie. Like probably many coaches, I have devoured innumerable coaching books over the years. But a book I first read 25 years ago – one which ostensibly has nothing to do with coaching – has slowly emerged as one of my greatest coaching influences: Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*.

The story follows Santiago, a Spanish shepherd boy, as he goes looking for his treasure, overcoming challenges and obstacles on the way. It is an archetypal hero's journey, in the tradition of Joseph Campbell. Each obstacle hides an important lesson. The story draws much from Carl Jung's teachings on synchronicity and the connection between our inner and outer worlds.

As my own journey has unfolded, both as a coach and as a human being, so I've returned to Coelho's simple story time and again, always discovering something new on each visit. Let me share three examples.

THE POWER OF TEACHERS

Coelho's shepherd boy receives guidance and help at key moments on his journey, but the teachings don't always come in the form, or from the people, he expects. And so it has been with my own journey as a coach. There have been twists and turns I'd never have anticipated when I started out. And my greatest teachers have often turned out to be my coachees. Carl Jung reminded us of the alchemy of coaching when he said: 'the meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances: if there is any reaction, both are transformed.'¹

Santiago learns to trust his intuition on whom to learn from and, crucially, whom not to. Like Santiago, I've come to realise that intuition is my best guide, even when it takes me in unexpected directions. These days, it is much more the quality of being of a teacher that draws me, more than someone's formal knowledge or position. And trusting this has led me to much richer treasures than I'd have otherwise known.

THE POWER OF PARADOX

The great transpersonal psychologist Roberto Assagioli taught about the importance of being able to hold the truth of seemingly

contradictory polarities – or the power of paradox. *The Alchemist* gently weaves in many examples of this wisdom. The shepherd boy is charged at one point with carrying a spoon with two drops of oil without spilling any. The oil is a metaphor for staying focused on his quest. But his teacher reminds him also of the importance simultaneously of staying fully open to the wonders of the world around him.

Even the tone of the book is paradoxical: the boy's quest is deathly serious. Yet there is a lightness, almost childlike quality to the story's telling. I like how this reminds me that, in coaching, we may be doing deeply important work and yet bringing a quality of playfulness and wonder is vital.

THE INNER JOURNEY

Much of *The Alchemist* is about the shedding of old attachments. Santiago begins the tale by letting go of his flock of sheep. But, as Santiago travels, it is letting go within himself that emerges as the alchemic transformation he must make. In essence, this is a book about trusting the wisdom of the heart and what we sometimes describe in coaching as the shift from doing to being. Doubtless the reason this book resonates with me is the parallel with my own journey, and that essential move from the head to the heart.

For those who have not read the book and who might wish to, I won't spoil the ending. Suffice to say that these words from TS Elliott's *Little Gidding* are apt:

***We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.***

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul Heardman is a coach and coaching supervisor, working mainly in the UK public sector.

i. Jung, C. *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*. 1933.

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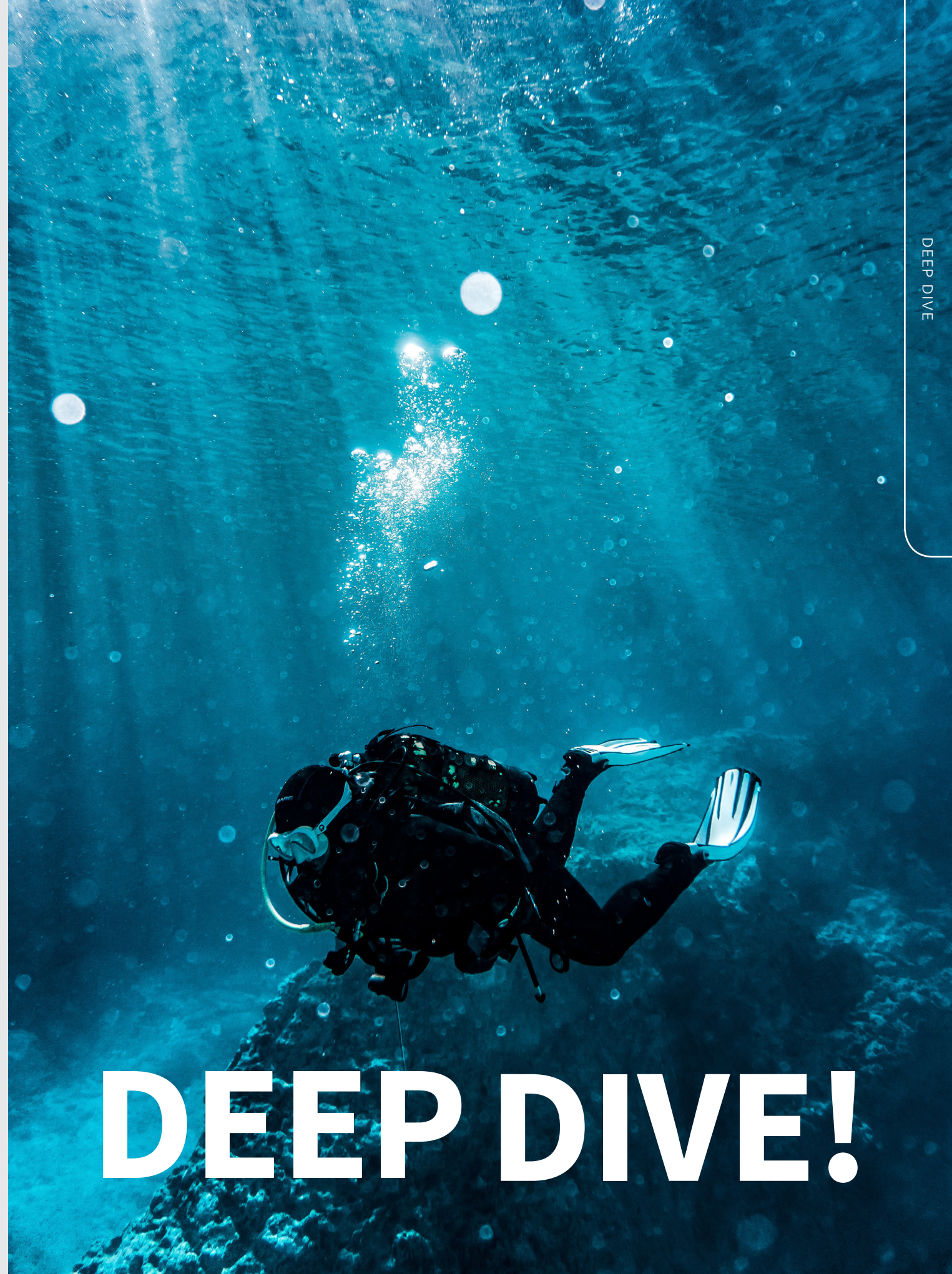
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Leadership supervision: reframing coaching for turbulent times

Master coaches and supervisors **Simon Cavicchia** and **Martin Vogel** ask what ways executive coaching can respond to turbulence and support leadership by drawing on the practice of supervision. Is there space for a practice we might call 'leadership supervision'?

The 21st century has been punctuated by a series of shocks, which cumulatively have upended our assumption that we live in an orderly, predictable, manageable environment.

Discourses on leadership and executive coaching routinely refer to the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous nature of the working environment (Stiehm, 2002). But, at least until this year, business has carried on broadly as usual. Now, leaders are confronted with the experience of not knowing and at the same time having to act.

Traditional views of coaching can be seen as a response to an outmoded view of leadership from the modern/ industrial era when management held a short-term focus on pre-determined goals on the assumption these could be achieved as intended.

Our times call for new constructs of what it means to lead and, therefore, what it means to develop leaders. We must pay closer attention to how leaders are being impacted by the situations they face, how they make meaning from these experiences and how these meanings inform choices regarding action to be taken.

How can executive coaching find ways to respond to turbulence, and support leading by drawing on the practice of supervision? Synthesizing traditions of reflective practice, holding complexity, collaborative meaning-making and acting intentionally and ethically, supervision offers a perspective on executive coaching which can respond to the realities that leaders inhabit.

Potentially, it offers a way to loosen attachment to some legacy views of leadership that still inform coaching.

AFTER MANAGERIALISM

Leaders and coaches have been shaped by a worldview, managerialism, that for three or four decades has been the organising ideology of corporate leadership and subsequently of Western society in general.

Managerialism is not the same as management. Conventional management theory owes a great deal to its roots in the production line of the industrial era. The analogy of the 'organisation as machine' took hold, with management construed as a linear, positivist endeavour of managing predictable resources with predictable outcomes. This fostered a highly individualist view of leadership: the manager as lonely hero; ever ready with 'solutions'; under normative pressure to be 'world class'. This was the ground from which grew managerialism.

As described by Robert Locke and J.-C. Spender (2011), managerialism is the discourse of a self-serving caste who (consciously or not) pursue their own enrichment at the expense of the broader communities of which they are part. Managerialism has become the lingua franca of our age, to the extent that its privileging of logic-based self-interest – the movement of factories to the locations with the cheapest sources of labour, the disavowal of responsibility for negative externalities and so on – came to be seen as neutral, almost natural, forces.

Managerialism was enabled by, but is different from, the shift to free market nostrums ushered in by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s. As Thomas Klikauer (2015) puts it:

'For managerialism, managerial techniques are the guiding principles, for neo-liberalism the guiding

principle is the free market. . . Inside the neo-liberalist project, democracy and politics remain important. Inside managerialism, no democracy and no politics exist. For managerialism, there are no democratic solutions to problems, only managerial ones.'

FROM COMPLICATED TO COMPLEX

The twin forces of free market capitalism and managerialism, whatever their downsides, undoubtedly fuelled an era of technological and logistical development and unprecedented advances in standards of living around the world. The factory-inspired model of leadership remains appropriate in what Snowden and Boone (2007) describe as complicated settings where linear logic and expert advice can still lead to controllable outcomes.

The problem is that, as a result of societal and technological changes, most organisations now inhabit complex settings, where the boundaries between interlocking enterprises are blurred and where linear predictability breaks down. Complexity is defined by Snowden and Boone by its very unpredictability. It is not possible to know in advance how to get from A to B, and any causality there might be can only be seen in retrospect. This calls for a very different kind of leading.

Complexity is defined by its very unpredictability ... This calls for a very different kind of leading

Consider the disruptions of the first 20 years of this century: the terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001 and the rise of Islamist networks; the financial crash of 2007 and the subsequent national populist backlash; the twin ruptures in 2016 of Brexit in the UK and the election of Donald Trump in America; the dual crises of climate change and the decline in biodiversity.

In 2020, the disruption has intensified. The Covid-19 pandemic has given us a crash course in how quickly social and economic life can be dislocated by natural forces beyond our control. The casual killing of George Floyd by a police officer in Minnesota ignited protests of pain and anger across America and a re-examination of racism around the world.

The complex, interdependent global society and economy we inhabit is not amenable to the pseudo-certainty of management-think

Democracies look incapable of resolving their evident systemic dysfunctions. There is little incentive for politicians to make the argument for long-term strategies given the outcomes would only be realised several electoral cycles beyond the timescales in which today's political leaders might gain credit. In this US election year, there is widespread anxiety about the future of American democracy. It is not just populism that has made democracy look fragile. The adoption of surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019) to finance the development of tech businesses has enabled networks to grow beyond the capacity of their owners to regulate them, leaving democratic systems open to subversion by bad actors.

Radical accountability movements – such as #MeToo, transgender rights, and the narratives of privilege and intersectionality – have established new progressive standards. But they have also contributed to a cancel culture whereby social norms around the civil mediation of differences are replaced by intimidation of those who don't conform. Leaders are afraid of taking the initiative for fear of transgressing the diktat of a social media mob. These are not the conditions in which to lead reflectively, still less with vision.

Responses to the Covid pandemic, exemplify many of these issues. Britain's hesitant response encapsulated the cost of denigrating managerial expertise with a simultaneous lingering attachment to managerialism's propensity to conjure apparently simple but abstract solutions to complex problems. Absent a strategy, the UK Government's (mis) handling of the crisis was characterised by grand declarations of intent that they were unable to effect (such as the delivery and distribution of PPE, the attempt to replace national exams with an algorithm or the promise of a 'world-beating' test and trace system, when one that is even properly effective has yet to be put in place).

MANAGERIALISM AND THE HUMAN PSYCHE

This highlights what managerialism has been denying for decades: that the complex and interdependent global society and economy we inhabit is not amenable to the pseudo-certainty of management-think. Managerialism's abstract simplicities ('Brexit means Brexit', 'Move fast and break things') can achieve top-level results at speed. But it is extremely weak in managing the complex outcomes of its initial designs.

Managerialism provides a legitimising and reinforcing context for the narcissistic processes in the human personality which are focused on projecting, shoring up and defending self-images of competence and greatness. These processes exist in everyone to varying degrees. They act as defences against inevitable feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt in the face of complex reality. But their adverse impact can be seen in politicians with strong, sometimes extreme, narcissistic traits. Leaders such as Trump, Johnson, Bolsonaro, Putin, Duterte and Orban trade in simplistic messages which blatantly deny multiple and complex data that might threaten desired images of greatness or undermine the ideologies and actions that reinforce them.

THE INTERREGNUM

Coaching as a practice has colluded with the positivist construct of leadership – binding itself to linear cause-and-effect logic and a privileging of pre-determined goals. This has encouraged the profession to join in the affected apoliticism of managerialism – with coaches uncritically aligning with the organisational objectives of their sponsors and reticent about referring to externalities or wider societal considerations.

However, we seem to be in an interregnum between the passing of managerialism as the dominant organising force and a new determinant that has yet to come into shape. Managerialism was discredited by the 2007 financial crash. Since then, corporate interests have been on the back foot – brushed aside, for example, in Britain's decision to back the unspecified idea of Brexit without properly debating the implications of detaching itself from the complex integration of Europe's supply chains. Even so, managerialism still informs constructs of leadership in many organisations – particularly, corporations and state bureaucracies.

Faced with a reality that is multi-layered, complex, socially constructed, ambiguous and problematic, leaders need to be able to relax attachments to idealised self-images of their own competence and greatness. Instead, they

might try to manage the unrealistic expectations of their followers and tame their own egos (no mean feat, and one which is actively deprecated in current dominant approaches to leadership development).

In what ways might coaching assist leaders to develop in this way?

THE CHALLENGES OF LEADING IN COMPLEXITY

When the route from A to B cannot be discerned in advance, leaders must be experimental and adaptive – using intuitive sensing alongside logical analysis. If they are called to set a direction in the face of the unknown, leaders will routinely need to work on becoming more comfortable with uncertainty. This will mean finding the psychological safety to be less fearful about admitting error, so that they can change course if they realise they have taken a wrong turning. Leading occurs at what Cavanagh (2006) calls 'the edge of chaos' – where there is enough instability to encourage discovery and invention but not so much that the system collapses over the edge into chaos itself. To be a leader at the edge of chaos is unnerving. It demands self-awareness, humility and an openness to one's own and others' vulnerability that is not well supported in most corporate environments.

As citizens we expect more stewardship, wisdom and compassion of leaders... We will demand honesty about the difficult trade-offs ahead and to be invited into adult-to-adult discussion of them

Complexity expands the expectations placed on leaders. They are held to account not just on their performance against self-interested corporate objectives but by a wide range of stakeholders regarding societal needs. Many citizens will expect more stewardship, wisdom and compassion of leaders as we emerge from the Covid-19 crisis. They won't indulge leaders in simplistic fantasies about the way forward. They will demand honesty about the difficult trade-offs ahead and to be invited into adult-to-adult discussion of them. This is already evident

in, for example, the demands of Extinction Rebellion for politicians to 'tell the truth' about climate change and to engage society in an honest deliberation of the options through a citizens' assembly.

Instead of two-dimensional superhero fantasy characters, we need leaders who are multi-faceted human beings. People who can anchor themselves in modesty and moderation in order to bring to the surface their deep sense of what is valuable and true; who can regulate their stress, anxiety and power complexes in order to function even while the threat signals in their nervous system are activated. They need to combine awareness of self with high levels of relational skills and sensitivity to the complex eco-systems (Western, 2013) in which they operate.

Instead of two-dimensional superhero fantasy characters, we need leaders who are multi-faceted human beings

SUPPORTING AND DEVELOPING LEADERS

The support we propose considers not just the role effectiveness of leaders but holds up an ethical standard of leadership good practice in order that leaders can assess how they are meeting society's needs of them. Instead of an emphasis on the performance-focused goal achievement of traditional coaching, leaders will benefit from reflective space where they can feel contained in uncertainty; where they can cultivate self-awareness, creativity and systemic sensing; where they can locate themselves within pluralistic perspectives, at a distance from the specific dogmas that prevail within their networks. They need to encounter accountability in safety to pre-empt being exposed by the radical accountability that awaits them in the public sphere.

Leaders face two obstacles to responding appropriately to current challenges. Many are operating at the wrong level of cognitive and emotional development because the complexity we have created outpaces most people's perspective-taking capacity (Garvey Berger, 2012; Kegan & Lahey, 1995). This relates to the second problem: most are stuck in the linear, positivist leadership discourses which fail to account for the multi-dimensional nature of human experience.

Most leadership development focuses mainly on the individual, viewed as orchestrator of their organisation or department. Leaders need to understand themselves more broadly as located in interlocking networks, over which they have varying influence. These may be within and outside their organisation, and within and beyond their role as employee, leader or job-holder. Their insight and impact as leaders could be enhanced by integrating into their work frames of reference more of their identities as parent, citizen, consumer, activist, and so on (Einzig, 2017). Leaders need to understand their own inheritance – their family and culture of upbringing, communities of choice, and their membership of the human species, sharing the planet with other creatures. Inheritance shapes how we respond in the here and now.

LEADERSHIP SUPERVISION: BRINGING PLURALISM AND ETHICAL MATURITY TO LEADING

It is time we stopped thinking of managers as simply agents of their employers but, like all professionals, accountable to society as a whole. The practice of leading needs to integrate questions of ethics, governance and stewardship at the core of what it means to be a practitioner, not as a nice-to-have bolt-on to the real business of management.

This entails changing how we construe leadership development. Transactional interventions focussed on delivering concrete impacts may still have a place. What's missing is the normalisation of ongoing, long-term, reflective support by which individuals can draw their full personhood into their work identities, and find the ground on which they can cultivate their own sensing, judgment and discernment. We need to enable people more easily to draw out the wisdom, creativity and compassion they already possess by virtue of being human. Coaching should blend exploration in depth of the self with enquiry from a societal perspective of what is demanded of a person as leader in their specific context and beyond.

As contexts shift, expectations upon leaders expand. There is a corresponding need for approaches which support the ongoing development of leaders to evolve. Importing ideas and orientations from the field of supervision into leadership coaching and development presents a number of possibilities.

This is not about defining what a reified concept of leadership supervision is and is not. Rather, it is an exercise in revitalising and expanding existing assumptions and norms around coaching. In the same way that leaders need to be able to relax attachment to

fixed ideas about what leadership is, to make space for innovative thinking and action to emerge, the same is true of approaches to executive coaching which might then be termed leadership supervision.

Coaching should blend exploration in depth of the self with enquiry from a societal perspective of what is demanded of a person as leader in their specific context and beyond

A regular process in many of the helping professions, coaching included, supervision offers a particular kind of reflective conversation in which supervisees might come to understand better the forces impinging upon them socially, environmentally and psychologically. This space allows attention to be paid to how meaning is made from these experiences while also broadening perspective beyond familiar models and sense-making. Supervision treats meaning not as a truth but as a construct that can generate new insight. This in turn supports a greater capacity for creating and experimenting with novel strategies that might be more context-relevant than approaches based in the past.

Creating space represents a radical challenge to assumptions about time-structuring and value predicated on busy-ness and frenetic activity. For supervision to be effective, the psychoanalyst Thomas Ogden (2005) insists, supervisor and supervisee each need to feel that they 'have time to waste'.

THE FOUR DIMENSIONS OF LEADERSHIP SUPERVISION

We see four dimensions of supervision that can be applied to leadership development:

1. Leading as continuous learning in ethical practice
2. Relationship over time
3. Pluralism in the cultivation of maturity
4. Emergent process

1. LEADING AS CONTINUOUS LEARNING IN ETHICAL PRACTICE

Supervisory approaches to learning acknowledge that technical knowledge and expertise alone are insufficient for ensuring professionalism, practice efficacy and ethical rigour in a complex environment. There is a need to frame the task and the requirements of professionalism in terms of continuous improvement and learning.

Leading in this light is seen as much as craft as technique. Expertise and the precision of scientific disciplines will always have their place. Yet the Covid-19 pandemic has amply demonstrated that, in fast-moving complexity, not only do specific disciplines offer an inevitably partial picture, but the interpretation and use of expert knowledge to inform policy and practice decisions is a social process. It is mediated by unconscious dynamics, subjective assumptions, personalities, prior conditioning and ideological bias. The science might have clearly demonstrated that early lockdown was vital in containing the spread of infection but it was assumptions that determined the timing of announcements and action. For example, in the UK the assumption that the British public might not take kindly to the imposition of restrictions contributed to delay. Delay that the science is demonstrating resulted in a significant number of unnecessary deaths.

A supervisory orientation to supporting and developing leaders recognises that evidence-based data and theoretical principles need to inform thinking and decision making. But the viewing angle is widened to acknowledge, track and explore the uniqueness of leaders in their specific contexts. It brings into enquiry their personal stories and dispositions as well as the multitude of forces influencing how leaders experience themselves and their situations, and the way these shape how they think and might act.

It thus moves beyond a constrained focus on organisational objectives and brings to the surface tendencies to groupthink which can pressure individuals to behave as leaders in ways they might find uncomfortable in their identities outside work.

In the face of complexity and uncertainty, there is intrinsic value in the space to pause, reflect, and think together with a supervisor. Without it, there is a risk that, in the grip of anxiety and overwhelm, leaders become stuck in more rigid and limited perspectives and range of responses.

2. RELATIONSHIP OVER TIME

Leadership supervision offers the possibility of reframing the nature of the executive coaching engagement from a short-term, purely goal-focused engagement to a relationship developed and deepened over a longer time frame (Cavicchia & Gilbert, 2018). This enables the coach as leadership supervisor and the leader as leadership supervisee to collaborate to build and maintain the psychological safety and containment of anxiety required to support exploration of the multifaceted and personal nature of leading in complexity. The relationship as container becomes the crucible in which the formative, normative and restorative (Proctor, 1991) functions of supervision can be applied to leading.

A longer process of engagement and commitment further supports the depth of learning and development required to expand traditional leadership mindsets. It helps develop the perspectives, personal mastery, resilience and agility required for leading in complexity and taming the ego. As a further corrective to the lonely hero archetype of leadership, the supervisory relationship recognises and normalises the inevitable and ordinary human vulnerabilities experienced when navigating uncharted territory with only partial information ever being available.

3. PLURALISM IN THE CULTIVATION OF MATURITY

Supervision provides an orientation which embraces pluralism and critical reflection in relation to theoretical frames that inform meaning making and leading.

Existing theories and disciplines such as psychology, systems theory, complexity theory, organisational discourse, best practice and ethical principle might float into consciousness to inform this exploration. But the basic premise is that no pre-existing strategy or single orientation can be assumed to be an appropriate resource or response until multiple factors contributing to the supervisee's context and situation have been surfaced and considered.

This is a departure from a narrower view of managerial supervision which is primarily concerned with ensuring adherence to established protocols and best practice methodologies (which can only ever be yesterday's practice). Instead, the focus is on closely observing the process whereby supervisor and supervisee make meaning together about the situation the leader is in. It explores the challenges and questions the leader faces that are personal and particular to the context. It reaches consideration of what might be required in terms of

right action that is concerned with impacts beyond the immediate spheres of the individual and the organisation.

Leaders are supported in this process to inquire and clarify their motivation, intentions, strategies, actions and capacity to own and live with consequences. They surface and reflect on any inconsistencies between these domains of attention to ensure that they can account for their choices clearly and transparently, especially when scrutinised. As in the case of ethical maturity (Carroll & Shaw, 2013), where it has long been recognised that the same rules governing ethical conduct cannot be applied without question in all contexts, so a stance of leadership maturity approaches each leadership situation and any response in its situational uniqueness.

Where new strategies and choices emerge in the supervisory space, the relationship with the supervisor can also support acting on new possibilities. The aim is to enable a leader to experiment with approaches that, by their necessarily innovative nature, may be difficult to contemplate if they appear alien to existing knowledge, methodologies and approaches. Supervisor and leader will consider not just the nature of the innovative action but the influencing that must be undertaken to socialise the initiative. In this way, supervisees can be supported to embody experimental attitudes and approaches to change-agency and network and relationship management.

4. EMERGENT PROCESS

By embracing the need for reflection, innovation and experimentation in practice, a supervisory frame for coaching offers an implicit and evolving research orientation to developing leaders. It reaches for diversity of modalities to disrupt perspectives and prevent routines of interactions from becoming ossified. It celebrates creative approaches, such as using artwork or found materials, to access non-verbal insights.

Supervision balances the fostering of 'considered pragmatism' for leaders with contributing to the research base informing contemporary discourses about leading. In this way, leadership supervision stands to close the gap between theoretical abstractions about leadership (as often taught on leadership programmes) and the translation of abstraction into informed experimental action for leading with impact.

JOIN THE DIALOGUE

The relationship with the supervisor stands to support leaders to regulate and manage their psychological state in the face of the impossibility of knowing what will emerge. It helps restore reflective objectivity when feelings are running high and develop the capacity to continue thinking and choosing how to respond when familiar reference points are limited or non-existent.

A supervisory approach stands to act as a corrective to the transactional orientation of managerialism, integrating reflection and sense-making with action. It creates space for leaders to step outside of stale and constraining institutionalised habits of thought and to approach the big challenges of our age with freshness and perhaps radicalism.

We offer this article as an opening statement to a dialogue that we hope will evolve to explore the potential contribution of the supervision tradition to leadership development. We will be hosting online conversations. If you would be interested in taking part in these discussions, please get in touch.

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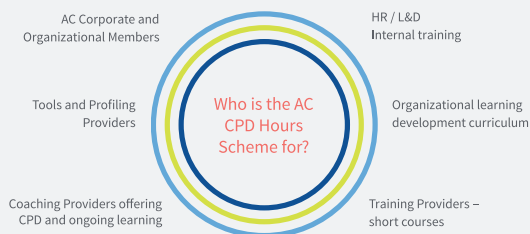
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