



JULY 2019 | ISSUE 22

Coaching Perspectives

THE ASSOCIATION FOR COACHING
GLOBAL MAGAZINE



Creativity in coaching

Dame Katherine Grainger
– from champion to Chair

• Coaching and improv

• Robin Shohet on supervision
as spiritual practice



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I have been reading the incomparable Mary Oliver (1935-2019) this summer. Not her wonderful poetry, a volume of which I have by my side as I write, but her *Poetry Handbook*¹, her guide for those who wish to write good poetry. Our July edition of *Coaching Perspectives* is dedicated to creativity and coaching – including the value of poetry, of metaphor, improvisation and other creative tools to enrich the coaching experience. Oliver is a haven of intelligence and sensibility. It seems to me that we are living through times of stark contradictions: a looseness with the truth and probity by those who govern and guide our countries that is unsettling, and at the same time a tightening of moral policing on social media, in places of learning and elsewhere that can look like an attack on free speech and a regression to rigidity of thought.

This is why we need the arts. This is why we need to foster and support creative thinking. We need the experimentation and the flying free that comes when we are being creative. Business, schools, policy, the law – everywhere needs space for freedom of thought to flourish, for innovation and the joy that comes with finding elegant new solutions to thorny problems or new forms of expression that illuminate and inspire, opening new pathways. We need these spaces as we need blood in our veins and air to breathe. But as Oliver points out, true creativity requires discipline: 'Say you promise to be at your desk in the evening, from seven to nine,' she writes. 'It [the creative part of you] waits, it watches. If you are reliably there, it begins to show itself – soon it begins to arrive when you do. But if you are only there sometimes and frequently late or inattentive, it will appear fleetingly, or it will not appear at all.' When I read this I think of the coaching partnership: both parties must 'show up' for real coaching to take place. When they do, creativity happens – the sudden click, the 'a-ha' moment, the deeper insight, the opening of new pathways. Coaching is a profoundly creative activity founded, not unlike poetry, on practice, discipline, being present and holding the space for inspiration to visit – if we are lucky.

In this issue we look at both creativity within coaching and also at coaching to encourage creativity. Sam Wise and Lorenza Clifford explain why this is so critical today with the rise of artificial intelligence, and how fostering creativity in the workplace can help redress the 'educating out of curiosity' by our education systems. Clive Steeper asks how we can prepare coaches to work in this new world of rapid technological change, and Joseph Santora and Gil Bozer highlight the importance of coaching support for social entrepreneurs, who bring creative solutions to social challenges. Martin Vogel urges us to become more creative in our coaching, accessing approaches outside the normal repertoire to stimulate

creativity in our clients. And we must not forget the body, since we increasingly understand that the body 'keeps the score'²; for good or ill, the stories we tell about ourselves are stored in the body. Paul King reminds us that working with the narrative of the soma is an area of creative growth in coaching well worth exploring. Members of our Editorial Board share poems they use in their coaching, and we publish a poem on coaching by master coach Patrick Hobbs. This is a first for us, and we hope to encourage more author-coaches to step forward.

Just as Oliver engages us with the poetic rules that provide the structure that enables and supports personal expression, so Charles Wookey – founder of Blueprint for Better Business – places the idea of fairness in business within the discourse of governance structures which help ensure ethical behaviour in corporates and institutions: without good governance, how can we trust ourselves to experiment and fail, as in all creative endeavour? In a similar vein, coach supervisor Robin Shohet asks us to understand the structured regularity of coaching supervision as spiritual practice for the way it can build our capacity for the experience of oneness. Transforming our tendency to distance others through 'othering' to truly understanding the interdependence of all life is a deepening and refinement of systemic thinking – creativity in human action.

Two coaches, Pavel Wieser from the Czech Republic and Neil Curran from Ireland, share the value of improv and its parallels with coaching, exploring how to experiment within a structure and how this builds trust in one's intuitive and inventive capacities as a coach. You will find further tools for generating creativity from Vassilis Antonas, from Lily Seto (the creator of the 'Metaphor Magic box'), and from Liz Ford and Kay Matthews, plus a look at 'everyday small "c" creativity' within the context of team coaching from Rebecca Raybould.

Enjoy this edition of *Coaching Perspectives* and your coaching. Contact us with your comments, poems, stories from the field and creative endeavours. We always love to hear from you.

With warm wishes,

Hetty Einzig

1. Oliver M (1994). *A Poetry Handbook: a Prose Guide to Understanding and Writing Poetry*. Harcourt Inc
2. Van der Kolk. B (2014). *The Body Keeps the Score: mind, brain and body in the transformation of trauma*. Penguin

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The AC is an inclusive body for the coaching profession, not just coaches. This includes a full array of membership types - from coaches through to providers of coaching and coach training, academic institutions, not-for-profits and large global organisations or corporates that are building coaching cultures. Each type of membership offers its own type of benefits and services. Further details are available here: <http://bit.ly/ACmembership>

For membership enquiries, please email: members@associationforcoaching.com

AC membership includes discounts for:

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An easy-to-use online resource providing practical advice, from subject matter experts on over 130 management topics.

Association for Coaching Supervisors

An association dedicated to promoting the understanding and use of coaching supervision amongst coaches, mentors and organisations.



Getting involved in the AC

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

Share your thoughts with us

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Give us your feedback on the magazine:
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BOOKINGS NOW BEING TAKEN



An AC Masterclass

led by the renowned
Professor Peter Hawkins

'The Necessary Revolution in Coaching for the 21st Century'

Peter Hawkins, professor, leading consultant, coach, writer and researcher in organizational strategy, leadership, culture change and team and board development.

Join Peter for this AC masterclass as he speaks about:

- Achievement in coaching in the last 30 years
- Why the 21st Century needs something different
- The new paradigm in coaching
- Bringing the stakeholders' voice into the contracting and coaching
- Systemic coaching working in ways that address the needs of the coachee's team, organization, culture and the wider ecology
- Ten ways coaches can increase their beneficial impact for tomorrow's world

Join us on 20th November 2019

See the events calendar on the AC website for more information



THE MANIFESTO FOR SUPERVISION

In May, the AC launched The Manifesto for Supervision along with Henley Business School, with the aim of encouraging continued collaboration across the coaching sector and promoting the value of supervision. Monica Cable from the New South Wales AC Regional Team attended the launch event in London.

I was fortunate to attend the Manifesto for Supervision professional development meeting at the Association for Coaching (AC) in London. As I’m based in Sydney, Australia, and I have a large supervision practice, this was a timely experience.

So what is a manifesto? The dictionary definition is ‘a declaration of your core values and beliefs, what you stand for and how you intend to live your life. It functions both as a statement of principles and as a call to action.’ As Katherine Tulpa, the CEO of the AC, so eloquently describes it: ‘The intent of the manifesto is to demystify supervision and to put the spotlight on its greater importance within our work.’

Peter Hawkins and Eve Turner, co-authors of the publication along with Dr Jonathan Passmore, ran the event. Here in Australia, supervision is still a ‘nice to have’ rather than a ‘need to have’ part of a coach’s life. With the arrival of the AC into Australia at the beginning of this year, there is an increasing awareness of the critical importance of supervision for all coaches and, gradually, the word is getting out. It was exciting to meet so many supervisors and to know just how prevalent supervision is in the UK.

Peter and Eve spent the evening discussing the crucial importance of supervision and it was inspiring to hear how the AC has collaborated with Henley Business School. They have come up with the following twelve points for action:

UNIVERSITIES

1. Advocate the importance of evidence-based practice.
2. Undertake research to explore the impact of supervision, using both qualitative and quantitative methods to provide more evidence-based data.
3. Collaborate across institutions and professional bodies in research.

COACH AND SUPERVISION TRAINING PROVIDERS

4. Teach reflective practice as an integral part of all coach training.
5. Include formal supervision within all coaching and supervision training programmes and advise how the coach and supervisor can best use supervision to enhance their practice.

6. Support supervision research through collaborative research projects with professional bodies and universities.

PROFESSIONAL BODIES

7. Develop a shared view of supervision, which includes:
 - A shared industry definition, drawing together supervision and mentor coaching into an integrated approach for reflecting the different needs of novice and master coaches.
 - A shared view on competencies, capabilities and capacities required to be a coach supervisor.
8. Actively encourage, support and sponsor research into supervision to better understand its benefits and its contribution to practice.

PROFESSIONAL COACHES

9. Engage in supervision as a coach and supervisor, and communicate in the contract with clients the supervision arrangements.
10. Participate in research to explore the benefits and contribution of supervision.

ORGANISATIONS/COACHING COMMISSIONERS

11. Require coaches working in their organisations to participate in supervision and ask in their selection processes questions such as:
 - What supervision do you have, from whom and at what frequency?
 - Describe a difficult coaching situation that you took to supervision and how it changed what you did subsequently.
 - How does your supervision improve the quality of your practice?
12. Support research into supervision to better understand its benefits and its contribution to practice.

You can download a copy of the manifesto here:
<http://bit.ly/ManifestoPDF>



‘LET IT GO, LET IT GO...’

Marshall Goldsmith urges coaches and leaders to change their focus and feed forward at an event at Henley Business School.

‘Have you ever tried to change your husband, wife, boyfriend or girlfriend?’, asked Dr Marshall Goldsmith.

‘And how’s that going for you?!’

‘And have you ever found yourself trumping a colleague’s success story, in an effort to elevate your own value?’

‘Let it go!’ he proclaimed, echoing Queen Elsa’s anthemic plea in Disney’s *Frozen*.

Through such parallels between what we all want to achieve in our personal life and our professional ambitions, Marshall enthralled an audience of 35 senior business coaches from around the world at a recent event at Henley Business School’s Centre for Coaching.

But despite being recognised as one of the world’s foremost leadership thinkers, it was Marshall’s down-to-earth approach and infectious energy that truly inspired us all.

WE ONLY HAVE TWO ROLES: TO LEARN, AND TO HELP OTHERS

Citing his influences from Peter Drucker to philosophical Buddhism, Marshall takes an almost ethereal approach to leadership and coaching, urging us to throw off the shackles of our own egos and re-focus on helping others to see the light.

‘We are all conditioned to prove we are successful’, he asserts. ‘But we have to learn to let it go, and focus instead on the other person. After all, who is ever going to tell you that they miss that judgemental person that you used to be?’

‘If you’ve ever been prone to stubbornness, impatience or being a bad listener, just ask yourself: will other people be happy or sad if you manage to kick these habits?’

PAYING IT FORWARD

Marshall’s most recent venture provides free coaching to 100 leading American coaches, on the proviso that they then do the same. This approach has already gone viral in the USA, and Marshall’s visit to Henley was part of his quest to replicate it across Europe.

He gives away all his material for free, and has come to realise that philanthropy and generosity of spirit is the most enlightened way forward for all of us.

‘We’re all going to die anyway, so why not do some good!’ he says, but behind the morbid humour is a reality none of us can afford to ignore.

HOW TO BE A BETTER COACH, BY FEEDING FORWARD NOT BACK

Marshall suggests that in order to become a better coach – or leader – we have to assess what we want to preserve and what needs to change, set clear goals, and establish the value to the organisation of being able to facilitate that change.

For most organisations, the biggest cost of coaching is the time-cost for the senior people involved, directly or indirectly, so the cost of the coach becomes almost insignificant; thus, a frequent stumbling block for coaches is countered.

And despite being a pioneer of 360-feedback – which is typically historical – Marshall now points us firmly towards positive suggestions for future improvement, insisting that by doing so we can make a much bigger difference to our teams, our clients and ourselves.

Marshall’s concluding words emphasised the need to keep asking ourselves whether we are doing our best to set goals, make progress, be happy, find meaning, build relationships and be fully engaged. He asks us to imagine our elderly self, and what advice we would give to who we are today.

‘Appreciate what we have’, he says, ‘and don’t chase what we haven’t got at the expense of this. And have fun.’

For a rapt audience at Henley, Dr Marshall Goldsmith’s request to ‘let it go’ certainly struck a chord.



Dr Marshall Goldsmith

Dr Marshall Goldsmith has built a reputation for being a world-leading leadership thinker. He has coached CEOs from over 150 corporations and written several books, including the best-selling *What Got You Here Won’t Get You There* and his latest book *Triggers*.

In December 2018, *Mastering Executive Coaching* was published, co-edited by Marshall, Brian Underhill and Dr Jonathan Passmore, Director of the Henley Centre for Coaching.

To find out more about The Henley Centre for Coaching, visit www.henley.ac.uk/executive-education/coaching-and-behavioural-change

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TECHNOLOGY AND COACHING: A CREATIVE OPPORTUNITY?

As technology evolves it requires us to adapt in different ways. Executive coach and specialist in innovation **Clive Steeper** reflects on how this affects us both consciously and unconsciously, and as individuals and coaches.

In 2016, in the World Economic Forum's report on Industry 4.0, the UN Deputy Secretary-General was quoted as saying that in 2013 there were more mobile phone users in the world than people who have basic sanitation.¹ A staggering thought – yet what drives this change in basic human needs? And how does the arrival of new technology affect our willingness, let alone ability, to adapt to change?

It is widely recognised that society is in the midst of a period of rapid technological evolution, which some are calling a revolution. This period is often described as the Fourth Industrial Revolution, or Industry 4.0, a new era where the impact of digitisation reaches us in new and unexpected ways. Underpinning this is a range of technologies, of which nine of the primary ones are listed as follows:

1. Autonomous robots
2. Simulation
3. Horizontal and vertical system integration
4. IIOT – The Industrial Internet of Things
5. Cybersecurity
6. The cloud
7. Additive manufacturing
8. Augmented reality
9. Big data and analytics

If you think these technologies are not relevant to the coaching profession, think again.

As someone whose career was shaped utilising technology and innovation in F1 motorsport, Olympic sports and manufacturing, I am accustomed to thinking creatively. To gain an advantage by making something that has never been done before requires imagination, invention and innovation.

Therefore, when I think about how Industry 4.0 could create opportunity for coaching and coaches, I am stimulated by how creative coaches could become, and excited about how the profession could play a significant role in areas such as artificial intelligence and 'cobot'. Cobot is a term that refers to how humans and robotics collaborate and act in partnership. Broadly speaking, robotics can be more precise and reliable than humans and artificial intelligence can provide better pattern recognition and data analysis. Humans can provide higher levels of intuition, instinct and innovation to decision-making.

While there is a growing number of coaching applications becoming available using artificial intelligence (AI), they are quite possibly not at the cutting edge of what technology can offer. Computer scientists and technologists are developing more sophisticated algorithms which enable AI to combine audio, visual

and spoken language data with human intelligence scenarios, to create what are being called *semantic and cognitive technologies*.

Let's stretch our imagination, considering augmented reality vision tools; picture coaching spectacles as a training aid which feed information to the wearer on how the other person is reacting to the conversation, and then offers the coach real-time mentoring through an earpiece. Or coaching spectacles which track the coach's eyes and records the coaching conversation. The data could be used afterwards with a coaching supervisor, to review and learn from the session. This type of application is already being developed.

DEVELOPING CREATIVITY

How do we prepare coaches to be ready to adapt to these innovations? How and when do we, as coaches, bring creative questioning into a coach session or to develop your coaching? When you reflect on a coaching session, do you have any questions that assess how you could have been more creative, or where you could have utilised imaginative thinking?

Perhaps it's time for coaches and coaching supervisors to positively explore opportunities to be innovative or review new technologies and coaching applications that could bring more creativity to their work.

For example, it is now quite easy to record a conversation using an app like Otter.ai or with a Livescribe digital pen and have it automatically converted into a text file. Over a period of time, this can enable you to spot recurring patterns of language (by the coachee *and* the coach). Of course, there is a confidentiality issue to consider before using one of these methods, which would require the consent of the coachee and/or client, and which would need to be addressed in the coaching contract.

FUTURE SKILLS

The World Economic Forum, in their 2018 Future of Jobs Report², noted that employers estimate that, by 2022, 54% of all employees will require significant reskilling and upskilling. On the topic of how the human-machine collaboration might evolve in the time horizon up to 2022 it says: 'In today's enterprise, machines and algorithms most often complement human skills in information and data processing. They also support the performance of complex and technical tasks, as well as supplementing more physical and manual work activities. However, some work tasks have thus far remained overwhelmingly human: Communicating and interacting; Coordinating, developing, managing and advising; as well as Reasoning and decision-making. Notably, in terms of total working hours, in the aggregate no work task was yet estimated to be predominantly performed by a machine or an algorithm.'

Employers surveyed for the report expect a deepening of these existing trends by 2020, with machines and algorithms increasing their contribution to specific tasks by 57%. Relative to their

starting point today, the expansion of machines' share of task performance is particularly marked in reasoning, decision-making and administering. Soon, the majority of an organisation's information and data processing will be performed by automation technology.

Industry 4.0 is likely to have a significant impact on employee skills, in that 35% of what are perceived to be core skills are likely to change in next five years. Across a wide range of roles, emotional intelligence, critical thinking and cognitive flexibility are skills that will come under greater scrutiny when performance is being assessed. Similarly, managing difference, agility and adaptability are likely to become even more omnipresent performance criteria for employees as the Industry 4.0 revolution takes hold.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

How will coaching develop as a result of Industry 4.0? When will there be coach-machine collaboration applications to help deliver aspects of coaching, possibly to support a coachee's actions in between face-to-face sessions? To what extent will you as a coach use creativity to develop your practice to keep pace with the demands that will be transforming your clients' ways of working?

This article has sought to pose questions and offer new lines of thinking which can help you reflect and be more prepared for the arrival of Industry 4.0. Creativity often means tempering the 'why not', accepting greater risk and uncertainty, and embracing new challenges with enthusiastic optimism.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Clive Steeper is a business mentor, leadership coach and coaching supervisor who has led several international manufacturing businesses with responsibility for developing and introducing new technologies. In today's world, where enabling technologies are changing the business and social landscapes, Clive works with organisations to implement innovation and help leaders and their teams to reach new levels of performance. Clive is an author of several business books covering risk, motivation, change and personality.

www.clivesteeper.com

1. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/what-is-the-fourth-industrial-revolution/>
2. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-future-of-jobs-report-2018>



GENERATING CREATIVITY IN YOUR WORKPLACE

Organisations need increasing levels of innovation as they adapt in response to market changes and global competitive forces, and as a result there is an appetite in organisations to increase creativity. In this article, **Lorenza Clifford** and **Sam Wise** explore ways to be creative and how to structure the conditions for creativity.

The main themes of a recent Future of Work Conference in Singapore were:

- 1. Robots are going to take over our jobs.
- 2. Curiosity is currently ‘educated-out’ of our children by the current system.

A recent large international research study reported in the *Harvard Business Review*¹ suggests that workers are more optimistic about the future than leaders. However, in our experience, while people in the workforce frequently question their ability to be creative, those working in robotics are clear that creativity is uniquely human and hard to replicate in artificial life.

To adapt well and to do it fast, we need to escape from two ideas: first, that creativity is a craft, and second, that either you are creative or you’re not.

We aim to explore ways to be creative and introduce a structure to create the conditions for creativity. We suggest looking at this

through two dimensions, giving four broad categories of creative thought, which we can each choose to use or experiment with (Figure 1):

- ▢ *Deliberate-Spontaneous*, from lightning-strike inspiration to the careful, structured and methodical thinking that suits some people better.
- ▢ *Cognitive-Emotional*, which divides the tangible, factual and intellectual from intuitive and feelings-based work.

Figure 1

Deliberate	Thomas Edison. Disney	Cathartic ‘a-ha!’ moment
Spontaneous	Newton’s apple. Eureka moment	Artistic epiphany
	Cognitive	Emotional

1. Deliberate/Cognitive: For when we know we need a solution, but we can’t wait for inspiration to strike. Put the work in, examine the possibilities, eliminate what doesn’t work till you find a solution. Brainstorming can help, but we need to accept that we will have to invest time and energy. This type of work involves the pre-frontal cortex, and requires us to pay focused attention, but also to have a depth of knowledge about a range of areas, so we can connect the information. Don’t be afraid to involve people with more knowledge when this type of creativity is needed. It can also require a great deal of persistence. Thomas Edison, famous for inventing the lightbulb, the record player, and many other things, famously said: ‘I have not failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won’t work.’

Example: Disney’s process of creativity

When Disney was still in the business of hand-drawn cell animation, creating film was very costly, and mistakes even more so. They used a three-stage process to create workable and fully realised ideas before ever starting to draw. The ‘Dreamer’ stage was conducted in a large, light room, with lots of space, where people were encouraged to explore all their ideas and imagine the best possible way to do what was needed. The idea would then move to the ‘Realist’ space, where they would think about what was needed to make these ideas feasible, and finally to the ‘Critic’ stage where, in a small room, the team would sit across the table from the idea and pull it to pieces, positing every reason why it could fail. Then they would return to the Dreamer stage and see whether they could take the newly honed and moulded idea further. This would continue until the Critic phase raised no further issues.

2. Deliberate/Emotional: When you pause to reflect and consider your contribution so far, and what would be better. This is also creativity, making new connections between feelings, behaviour and reactions from others. It is a creative developmental moment when emotional intelligence is built. When you devote time to reflection, self-examination, get yourself into a sanguine emotional state to optimise and be open to insights. High levels of optimism and positivity can blunt your ability to account for yourself clearly. So can excessive self-criticism. Aim for a calm and centred state to enter this kind of thinking. If it helps you, make notes, doodle or draw diagrams to facilitate recognition of what happened more forensically.

You may find structure useful for emotional reflection. Be deliberate about what outcome you want, and then play a video tape of the moment in your mind’s eye, identifying the emotions you felt and witnessing where these came from before looking at what happened, and what could have gone better from a place of self-compassion. Consider what assumptions you made, and what would be better if you were to do it again. Move towards the insight with courage. Many leaders and coaches will be familiar with this sort of

developmental creativity, knowing that it can be the prequel to important changes in beliefs, thinking and actions.

3. Spontaneous/Cognitive: These are the flashes of insight we suddenly get about things that have stumped us for a while. Your mind is a bit like a coffee percolator: you put in the ingredients, but the coffee doesn’t come out straight away, because there’s a process to go through. Continuing conscious focus on the problem impedes this process. If you find yourself out of options on an issue or are defeating your attempts to solve it using the other methods, or you don’t have the requisite expertise, remove yourself from the situation. Focus on other, unrelated work. This can increase your motivation, because you’ll see yourself making progress. Return to the issue periodically to give new insight the chance to surface, but don’t be surprised if the answer strikes you while you’re doing something completely unrelated. You may find that walking, being outside, or physical activity – which let your mind wander – can also achieve this in the most unexpected way.

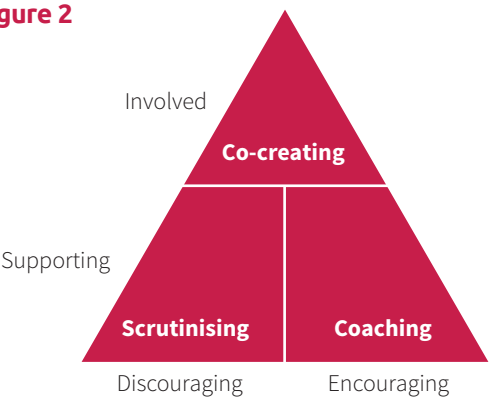
4. Spontaneous/Emotional: Someone once told Sam: ‘It is not that we write songs, but that they find us, and through us make their entry into the world.’ While professional creatives learn to create in cognitive ways, many will recognise the spiritual experience of real inspiration striking them. Sometimes a song will be written in ten minutes and be far superior to something that has taken hours.

While experiencing your emotions and having time to reflect both contribute to this type of creativity, it is hard to plan for. We may see this as irrelevant to the corporate world, and yet there are many businesses for which this type of creativity is their bread and butter. Hold the space for it to occur in your life and encourage yourself to believe it possible. Think back to an epiphany: notice what conditions allowed you to access your emotions in a helpful way.

CREATIVE COLLABORATION

Working creatively alone can feel soul-destroying, and the diversity of others’ input can spark really great ideas. Thinking about collaborating and finding effective ways to work creatively in groups has led us to develop the model you see in Figure 2, which groups can use to notice members’ preferred way of working.

Figure 2



SCRUTINISING

Within the creative process, there needs to be a space for discouraging ideas (but not people), to focus time, energy and effort on what will bring most value. The nub of this is how to use scepticism to help ideas grow. This may be counter-intuitive, but we believe that well-communicated scepticism is an excellent tool for the success of creative efforts. Here's how it can look and sound:

- Is now the appropriate time to overcome X or Y issue with our new ideas?
- Here's a future problem I can see we can solve for our clients elegantly.
- Can we consider which ideas to drop so we focus our energy?
- Let's look at risks arising that we can mitigate through our ideas in the long run.

Notice that this supports the overall effort, shared goals and values of the people in the group, while challenging, confronting or inviting people to account for reality through their creativity.

COACHING

Provide a framework of questions to support and draw out from others, choosing to keep your own agenda aside. Recognising each idea as a valid step in the creative process, invite open thinking, which sets up associations that would not otherwise occur. Find ways to free things up where people feel constrained:

- What if we scroll forwards 30 years? It's now 2049, what do we think is going on in the world?
- What trends do we know about already that take us towards this period of time?
- What ideas might you start now if you knew you couldn't fail/you had a magic wand/there were no financial constraints?
- I'm interested in what you are saying... how far could we go with this?
- What else?
- What are ALL the things that could possibly change?

CO-CREATING

There are times to dive in and involve yourself in the process of creativity; for example, when a burst of energy seems to be required. You can catalyse others' creativity with ideas of your own. Use humour and extremes to create laughter and deflect people from over-judging ideas:

- In the future we're all going to ride unicorns to work! No idea will feel crazy after that.
- What about stopping entirely?

We envisage that the two models detailed in this article could usefully be integrated and explored to better help people in each

of the four creative zones. Intentionally, you may create new processes to challenge and encourage people in each area of creativity needed.

A final note of caution: all this will remain academic unless you use it. Why not arrange to bring people together and practice on meaningful work right away?

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Sam Wise is a coach, learning consultant and learning designer with a reputation for creating groundbreaking ideas and new perspectives. With thirteen years' experience in leadership and organisational development, Sam partners with organisations to support the development of their workforces to meet strategic goals and build the culture they require. Sam's ideas and approaches have resulted in measurable financial benefits for clients, awards and a shortlisting for Learning Designer of the Year.

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Leadership insights: from champion to Chair

When you have achieved a long run of positive results and developed a reputation for success, it can feel risky to take on a new direction which is untried and untested. This is what Dame Katherine Grainger, Britain's most decorated female Olympic athlete, felt when she was appointed as Chair of UK Sport in 2017. She tells Deputy Editor Sue Stockdale how her experience in high-performance rowing helped her adapt to this new role.

Dame Katherine Grainger, a former rower, with medals from five successive Olympic Games, had no previous experience as a leader in sports administration. It was a risk, she says, for both herself and those who recruited her. 'It relied on those making the appointment to have faith in me – it was all about taking risks because there had never been an athlete in this role before, so there was a chance it might not work for any of us.'

She recalls that Liz Nicholl CBE, the CEO of UK Sport, the UK's high-performance sports agency, expressed initial surprise when hearing of Grainger's interest in the role, given her inexperience in sports administration. But Nicholl quickly thought of what an advantage a former athlete could bring to the role, and since Grainger's appointment she has been a great ally. Grainger reflects; 'she has never questioned anything that I wanted to get involved in, and just encourages me to be the best I can possibly be. Obviously you have to be a very fast learner and prove your capabilities early on, but with the credibility I brought from my sporting success it gave me confidence to acknowledge that I was not the finished product and to be open about the areas that I needed to develop.'

Grainger believes that the mark of a great leader is someone who is constantly improving themselves, and it is a powerful message within an organisation for the people at the top to acknowledge they are still learning and to admit when they've not got things right. But it's not always an easy thing to do. 'It's quite a vulnerable conversation to have – especially when you're coming into a leadership position – to then confess early on that there are areas where I think I'm not good enough yet.'

This is where coaching can be particularly helpful. 'I think great coaches are good at helping athletes and leaders to be open about their weaknesses. They recognise when to push people on and say there's more we need to do here, but also when to say that's enough for now, you are doing a good job. They find a way of making that a very positive experience, because of how they help you understand the situation. Then you can see it as a positive step to add to your knowledge and learning and become better every day.'

I think great coaches recognise when to push people on and say there's more we need to do here, but also when to say that's enough for now, you are doing a good job.

Staying at the top of your game in any sport these days is a relentless pursuit of improvement. Katherine reflects that what she loved about being an athlete, and still loves about working in a sporting environment, is the constant search for more and for better. She believes that creativity is needed to constantly ignite new directions and create new opportunities.

Having had over twenty years of training, feedback and a focus on performance, Grainger acknowledges that there is always more to learn – and it's rare that she ever feels like the finished article. In sport, she says, you don't just repeat the result you got last time because everything moves on so fast. You need to be creative in your thinking to find the next way forward.

'That need to push yourself constantly can be overwhelming, so you sometimes need to be allowed the freedom to be creative', says Grainger. 'I have observed people who are brilliant at being creative, and they do it by opening up their thinking instead of reducing it. Rather than believing that there is only one way to do something, they ask: what if we did something different? And it's that "What if?" question that makes it really exciting. I think sport is a brilliant example of a place where art and science can come together at their best.'

Grainger continues: 'The science side of sport is lots of valuable detail and number-crunching analysis. Sometimes it can feel quite rigid because it is fact-based. But the people I admire the most can take that incredible scientific knowledge and interpret it creatively. Regardless of whether it's instinct, good judgment, knowledge or experience, it's how you integrate this thinking with the science to take risks and make decisions.'

Having also spoken to the manager of the England national men's football team, Gareth Southgate, about this, I was reminded that he takes a similar view to Grainger – that it's often not until the performance analysts question you about some aspect of an instinctive decision you took that some of the factors in your subconscious come into your conscious awareness.

This ability to raise awareness in others through asking questions is what a coach can help their clients with. By providing a safe and trusted space to help a leader reflect on their behaviour and explore why they took particular actions and identify different options, the coach can help their client to develop more creative solutions in dealing with future challenges.

MAINTAINING THE HABITS OF CHALLENGE, ANALYSIS AND FEEDBACK

Challenging accepted ways of doing things is not the most comfortable place for any leader to be in many organisations, where maintaining the status quo is often easier and causes less conflict. Grainger believes, however, that part of her role as Chair of UK Sport is to challenge and question how things are done. Having lived twenty years of her life being challenged every day to improve, it is a discipline she is familiar with. While her role is part-time, she says it can be easy to get pulled into doing more when you enjoy working with the people, care about the role and are passionate about sport. She believes it is her duty to avoid getting embedded in the day-to-day detail, but instead to bring a viewpoint from a very different perspective. 'It's my job to bring other inputs from worlds beyond just my own office. If I feel I am getting too involved, I have to check myself



and step back a little, because the only way I can be creative and challenge what's going on is to be dispassionate and draw on a broad range of information. My job is about seeing the connections between seemingly unrelated pieces of information and putting it all together. That might mean just taking time to read the newspaper while I am travelling, or being able to meet a broad range of people from different backgrounds to get some new perspectives.'

Another practice from the world of high-performance sport that can influence creativity is that of performance review and feedback. However, this skill has not always translated effectively into a desk-based leadership role. As a rower, Katherine was used to having every element of her technique, psychology and physiology examined and questioned on a daily basis with the aim of seeking improvements.

'I used to get frustrated at times with the level of review we would do, but having left that now I realise it was an absolute gift to have people looking at and questioning my performance every single day. I realise now that while we can have time built in after board meetings to review, other things can get in the way and you don't ever catch up. There's no one there to ask, "How did that go?" or "What could you do better?". This is where you get your performance advantage by having the ability to clearly and objectively assess your performance. In sport – it's bread and butter, but not in business.'

Clearly and objectively assessing your performance on a daily basis is bread and butter in sport – but not in business.

This is an area where coaches can support leaders by encouraging them to build in time in their schedules to properly critique their own performance. It does not have to be an onerous activity. Grainger recalls that when the rowing team came out of the boat the athletes, along with their coach, could critique their own performance in less than fifteen minutes. 'Within minutes, we could score our own performances, capture what went well and what we would do differently. We had all already agreed on what we were going to judge ourselves on, so it was a quick process. It can be important to capture this in the moment and then look at it in detail later, but if you don't review straight away you rarely remember the key points later.' She adds: 'In a boardroom, one way of doing a quick review can be to ask those attending a meeting how they rated it on a scale of 1-10, and to state one thing that was good and one thing that could be improved for next time. That way it keeps the process short and snappy, but everyone has to want to do it.'

RESULTS V ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

As a public body, UK Sport has a responsibility to demonstrate that it delivers good value for money in creating Olympic and Paralympic success. This means everything must be accountable and be visibly measured. More recently, the agency has come under greater scrutiny after some sports hit the headlines due to athletes complaining about a negative culture, unacceptable behaviour and the relentless pressure to win medals.¹ This led UK Sport to put in place a series of Culture Health Checks, following an extensive consultation and survey with athletes, staff and stakeholders in the high-performance system in 2017.

It found that more than 90 per cent of athletes and staff felt proud to be part of their world class programme, while more

than 80 per cent of athletes and staff said that their programme encouraged them to be the best they can be.² It also found key areas that could be improved, including easier whistleblowing and reporting procedures, and more support for mental health.

I asked Grainger about how she balanced the need for results against having a healthy culture. She believes that the best results come because of the environments the athletes operate in, and that it's wrong to say that if you have a healthy culture you won't get good results.

She recalled: 'I remember when we first started really talking about this very publicly within high-performance sport, and some of the first reactions were: does that mean you don't want to win, because you want to focus on culture instead? For me, it's such an instinctive thing: if people are looked after, and supported and are able to follow their passions, they will get better results, and they'll continue for longer, and they'll encourage more people to come into that sport. I've witnessed it and done it myself; having such strong personal ambition and drive can mean athletes very willingly push themselves, sometimes too far.'

Grainger adds that support is crucial. 'What you need is a support system around them – to know when not to hold them back, but also to make sure that they are looking after themselves. Certainly, with everything I've done the goals often really did seem impossible at the beginning, but those really big, scary, exciting goals are what get you out of bed in the morning. But you also need to have the right people to help you get there. And when you are having those bad days, you need to know you have the right places to turn to. I think now that the importance

of culture has been promoted back up to the right level, results and culture should develop together at the same time to achieve sustainable results.'

Grainger believes that the general public are also interested in how our Olympic medals are achieved, so that when they look back at an exciting, inspirational moment they want to know it's been a positive experience for the athlete.

As we closed our conversation, Grainger was keen to point out that, while it is important that high-performance sport is lauded for its medal successes and achievements, it's also a story about humanness. 'Understanding the realities of what it takes to achieve success in high-performance sport, including the lows as well as the highs, can help to bring a broader perspective and understanding. Every athlete will be dealing with their own issues at some point. And that's because we're all human beings. We all have amazing strengths and weaknesses, and we're all trying to cope with life. And that's what unites us as human beings. This should be celebrated.'

ABOUT DAME KATHERINE GRAINGER DBE



Katherine Grainger is Britain's most successful female Olympic athlete, winning rowing medals in five consecutive Olympic Games. Originally from Glasgow, Katherine studied at Edinburgh University, where she took up the sport in 1993.

Alongside her rowing career, Katherine attained an honours LLB, an MPhil in Law and a PhD in the sentencing of homicide. She is currently Chair of UK Sport where she is building on the commitment to excellence that she witnessed as an athlete.

ABOUT SUE STOCKDALE



Sue Stockdale is an AC-accredited Master Executive Coach and coaching supervisor. Her clients include leaders in business, elite sport and not-for-profit organisations in the UK, Africa and North America. In 2014, Sue received a global coaching leadership award at the World Coaching Congress in Mumbai. She has represented Scotland in athletics and was the first British woman to ski to the magnetic north pole. As an author, Sue has written several books and is Deputy Editor of *Coaching Perspectives*.

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SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS NEED COACHES TOO

Joseph C. Santora and Gil Bozer explain how coaching helps develop the skills of social entrepreneurs.

Social entrepreneurs seek to improve society by discovering, creating and exploiting untried commercial opportunities to address pressing social problems.¹ Given decreased spending by governments and corporations on social sector initiatives, and the resulting mandate to 'do more with less', social entrepreneurship has become an increasingly important trend in the non-profit world. Often described as highly driven and highly motivated, social entrepreneurs aim to create self-sufficient organisations.² However, as well-intentioned as they may be, they frequently work in highly volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) environments, and frequently lack the business expertise, knowledge and skills required to create socially effective organisations which are financially successful and self-sufficient. In addition, they may be stymied by excessive regulations and by the challenge of liaising with various stakeholders with conflicting interests. All of this raises an important question: is there a way for social entrepreneurs to become more knowledgeable and skilful about business affairs, apply an entrepreneur mindset, acquire necessary leadership competencies and still remain loyal to their social mission?

* Mission drift describes the process where a non-profit organisation either finds that it has moved away from its original aim or the organisation consciously moves into a new direction from its mission statement.

** Based on the first author's consultancies with many non-profit leaders turned social entrepreneurs.

ENTREPRENEURIAL COACHING TO THE RESCUE

Executive coaching has the potential to enable social entrepreneurs to remain true to their mission while simultaneously developing self-sufficient social organisations.³ The Outsider-Insider coaching model has been successful in helping social entrepreneurs create meaningful social value for their organisations. Essentially, in this model outsiders – those not employed by the organisation or affiliated with it in any way – become insiders, coaching and advising executive directors on entrepreneurial issues. These individuals, typically executives from other companies, work closely with social entrepreneurs in three ways. First, to hone social entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics. Second, they coach social entrepreneurs to reconcile practical organisational philosophies and issues, such as 'mission drift' and strategic planning, by guiding and sharing business experiences and insights and applying them to social organisations. Third, they become sounding boards to help social entrepreneurs with self-reflection, professional demands and leadership exploration issues.

THE BUSINESS COACHING CONSULTANT MODEL IN ACTION

The Outsider-Insider coaching model thus makes use of business executives who want to 'give back' to the community. One component is the executive-in-residence (EIR), which is based on the idea of an executive loan from a company with a social conscience. The EIR's résumé may include leadership experiences – from project development to leading small- and large-scale intreprenurial initiatives." The EIR's main coaching responsibilities involve working with and advising the social entrepreneur on best practices for entrepreneurial initiatives. Often, the on-loan EIR is paid by their company, works a normal week during the engagement with the host social entrepreneurial organisation, becomes integrally involved in the direct administrative and other work activities, and focuses their attention on coaching and developing those business skills the social entrepreneur needs most. The timetable for such coaching arrangements may last as long as one year, although they normally last about six months, with the executive returning to a previous or new position in the home company.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Social entrepreneurship continues to be an important way to transform social sector organisations significantly, to better the lives of their constituents, to increase self-sufficiency, and to reduce reliance on government and other donor financial support in a severely tough economic environment. Entrepreneurial coaching is proposed as an effective practice for social entrepreneurs' development, and has proven highly effective in various settings (see *Seeds of success*).

Coaching can undoubtedly at times drive social entrepreneurs out of their comfort zones by forcing them to deal with difficult questions. However, if handled in a holistic way, it can be highly valuable in developing and implementing successful social entrepreneurial initiatives. Hence, the coach and the social entrepreneur working in tandem can create an effective social organisation for stakeholders.

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SEEDS OF SUCCESS

Several years ago, a retired real estate executive volunteered to work with, and coach, a non-profit social entrepreneur in his attempt to launch a for-profit real estate company. The purpose of the company was to purchase and rehabilitate apartment buildings and abandoned multiple-dwelling housing units and to then lease these dwellings to his constituents or to sell them on the open, competitive market. This initiative resulted in supplying housing to organisational constituents at significantly reduced rental fees, creating various employment opportunities for constituents as real estate agents or brokers and in the construction industry, as well as improving and beautifying the local neighbourhood and environment. The selling of rehabilitated houses and apartments and the reinvesting of profits into the non-profit organisation reduced resource dependency on external institutions and government agencies, plus promoted self-sufficiency.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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ENRICHING COACHING WITH POETRY

We invited Editorial Board members to tell us how they use poetry in their coaching and in addition publish two original poems, by Board member Stanley Arumugam and another by master coach Patrick Hobbs, reflecting on their practice.

STANLEY ARUMUGAM

Sitting Firmly

I sit firmly in my seat
Confident in my knowing
Flexible in my being
I am not shaken by doubt
By my fear of failing
By my need to perform

I sit firmly in my seat
To be fully available
I boldly reach out to you
Aware of your subtle resistance
Aware of my need to convince you

I sit firmly in my seat
Settled in a familiar knowing
Flexible in a responsive being
Vulnerable to your promptings
Grounded in my best intentions
I sit firmly in my seat

I wrote this poem after a coaching supervision session. We reflected on our vulnerability as coaches. The more we allow ourselves to be authentic, the deeper value we bring to coaching. This requires of us as coaches to navigate our self-doubt as we stay alive and available to those we coach. We are called to be both grounded firmly in our professional competence and flexibly adaptive in our responsiveness to the human encounter we are privileged to be a part of.

SHERRY HARSCH-PORTER

Sherry uses Robert Frost's seminal 1916 poem *The Road Not Taken* in her practice.

One of the exercises that I do with clients is called a Leadership Life Map, wherein the client creates a story scroll of their life, beginning with the moment of birth. It is not often we take the time to reflect on our lives in this way. When we do, we can see that the person and leader we are has been shaped by the people, places and decisions we've made along the way. *The Road Not Taken* is a beautiful introduction to the exercise.

TAAKA AWORI

Taaka uses her favourite poem, *The Guest Home* by Jelaluddin Rumi, translation from *The Essential Rumi* by Coleman Bark, to take a coaching session to a deeper level.

I could see the surprise in his eyes as I said, 'I have something for you that I believe you will find very helpful. It's a poem.' I was in a coaching session with a client who later confessed that he had not read poetry since his secondary school literature class. He had been struggling with a range of emotions, particularly self-doubt and anxiety, but was at the same time berating himself for having these feelings. I thought Rumi's *The Guest House* was just what was needed. We read the poem together. When we finished, he smiled; his eyes smiled. I sensed a new awareness arising. He talked about how he had never thought to welcome his feelings of self-doubt and anxiety (even though they were indeed 'a crowd of sorrows') nor to explore what message they brought from beyond.

As I observed his new perspective, I knew Rumi's poem had helped him more powerfully than I ever could have. I would have used too many words to convey what Rumi did in a few. I would have spoken to his head; Rumi spoke to his heart. The poem invited a different way of knowing and being. I could see that it reminded him, somehow, of that which he already knew – it drew on his innate wisdom.

I have used Rumi's poem in coaching and in training, particularly in sessions on emotional intelligence. Each time I am struck by how the poem takes the conversation to a deeper, more thoughtful place. This is truly the gift of poetry. I am eager to hear how other coaches are using poetry and which poems have been particularly useful as 'guides from beyond', as Rumi puts it.

GEOFF ABBOTT

Geoff likes to employ *How to Kill a Living Thing* by Eibhlín Nic Eochaidh, Ireland 2002.

I use the poem to remind myself and my students/clients about how we can inadvertently weaken and even destroy those around us – simply by not giving affirmation, love and care. It's resonated with many people and it is particularly salient with the rising incidence of suicide in young people. I have a client business where the daughter of one of the key leaders recently committed suicide – following the suicide of her friend. The ripple effect in the business was severe – surfacing many other stories of loved ones with depression and self-destructive thoughts.



KATHERINE TULPA

AC CEO Katherine, also a master coach and director of *Wisdom 8 coaching*, has chosen this quote by Lao Tzu:

Watch your thoughts; they become words
Watch your words; they become actions
Watch your actions; they become habits
Watch your habits; they become character
Watch your character; for it becomes your destiny

As coaches, who we are and what we project is our character. It also plays a part in what we bring to the coaching relationship.

MARTHA FREYMAN-MISER

One of Martha's favourites is *Love after Love* by Derek Walcott.

People often come to coaching with a well-developed habit of self-criticism that diminishes their sense of fulfilment and joy. Being able to observe this and having some mastery over the inner critic is a moment of transformation. This poem captures that experience of rediscovering and forgiving oneself.

PHILLIPPE ROSINSKI

Phillippe's favourite poem is *the last part of Two Tramps in Mud Time* by Robert Frost.

I have suggested using poetry in coaching for a long time and in fact wrote a section on this idea in *Coaching Across Cultures*, where this poem appears on page 167. I still find Frost's words essential. Confucius expressed a similar idea: 'Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.' However, Frost appears to aim even higher, referring to a calling, which is more than just a job.

Exploring desires (in Spinoza's sense of the word) is crucial in my coaching. Much more energy is needed to do something because we must rather than because we truly want to. When we (our coachees and us) can act in a way that is fulfilling, meaningful and purposeful, we become happier and better able to serve others and society at large. When we can find our calling, work becomes play. Coaching helps people to shape a life they can truly call their own and to shine.

CLIENT NOTES

**I hold his voice in my hand,
and follow it, into the building,
his house, the rooms he lets me in.
I hold open doors
for him and he goes through
or turns another way and looks
to see that I walk with him.
He speaks, he breathes, I breathe,
and feel the nails in the floor.
I hold up the opened book,
the mirror, the picture he lost
on his wall. I hold out
words, a question, he weighs them,
tests to see if they belong,
and then he lets them fall
or dance in his breath with his own.
We stop by a window and we laugh.
Sometimes he takes off his shoes,
some things I cannot hold,
sometimes the walls fall down.**

Patrick Hobbs, Master Coach

TO COACH FOR CREATIVITY, BE CREATIVE IN YOUR COACHING

Martin Vogel explains how coaches can bring the spirit of difference into organisations by helping clients access ways of experiencing that may normally be used outside of working life.

In the knowledge economy, creativity is at a premium. But the same economy encourages lifestyles and working routines that crowd out creative impulses. This isn't just bad for productivity, it's bad for wellbeing. It raises a two-fold challenge for coaches: how to stay fresh and creative in how we practice; and how to support clients to nurture creativity in their likely busy lives.

Digital technology, information abundance, the range of choice in how we use our leisure, opportunities for travel – these all offer rich stimulation to our senses and lower the barriers of entry to creativity. But filling our minds with information and our leisure time with activity brings its own stresses, maxing out our capacity simply to process experience. The journalist Oliver Burkeman has observed that keeping up with the news – once a contained and relaxing ritual (reading a newspaper, watching the TV bulletin) – has become a burdensome civic duty that (thanks to the inexorability of social media) no longer has boundaries.¹ The lost boundaries are not simply temporal; they are boundaries of decency and decorum. Browsing the news today exposes us to abuse, hyperbole and dark thoughts about the state of the world – inducing in many a constant state of panic and insecurity. Hardly ideal circumstances for creativity.

Cal Newport*, a computer scientist and writer on productivity, employs a powerful critique of how the norms of social media have infected the world of work. In many spheres, there's pressure on professionals to be publicly engaged in social media. And for many people, processing messages is what constitutes a working day (about 125 emails a day for the average knowledge worker, or one every 3.85 minutes).²

As Newport points out, this might be what fills their day but it's not the kind of activity that generates value. For that, people need to create space for what Newport calls *deep work* – 'professional activities performed in a state of distraction-free concentration that push your cognitive capabilities to their limit.'³

In a complex world, facing intractable environmental, social, economic and political challenges, it's obvious that hard, creative thinking is needed. But given the distractions of contemporary life, it's hard to create the conditions that sustain deep work.

It's hard because it's counter-cultural to block out a few hours a week for private, focused time. It involves, for example, detaching from the expectation of being immediately responsive to emails. (Or, perhaps, even detaching from being responsive at all. We put egoic pressure on ourselves to answer incoming mails, but will the sender really be perturbed if we don't reply? Possibly not.)

Creating space for creativity entails taking an honest look at the opportunity cost of the activities that consume our time. People can often point to some value in participating in Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn, or grazing boxed sets on Netflix. But is the value sufficient to justify what it squeezes out of life – such as relating to people face-to-face, reflecting on experience or simply being bored? Embracing boredom, it turns out, is an important part of nurturing creativity. Standing at a bus queue listening to a podcast might feel like time well spent, but when does the mind get a chance to stop receiving new input and simply wander (or wonder)? It's in the gaps between thinking that our minds often reach breakthroughs.

* <http://www.calnewport.com/>

Another reason why it's hard to find space for creative thinking is that corporate cultures rarely appreciate it. Working life privileges cognitive rationality, conformity and linear thinking. This carries risks – such as groupthink and wilful blindness⁴ – that frequently lead organisations into reputational scandals. Creativity, by its nature, draws on a more diverse range of intelligences (including emotional and aesthetic). It is non-conformist and open to intuitive leaps. But the insights thus generated may challenge institutional routines and are not incentivised. Creative thinkers can easily put themselves at risk of ostracism.

WHERE COACHING CAN HELP

Coaching can be an antidote to corporate aversion to creativity – not just fostering it but normalising it as a healthy aspect of working life. In order to fulfil this potential, coaches need to check that they are not colluding with rituals that are antithetical to creativity. Instead, we can trade on our status as licensed outsiders, bringing a spirit of difference into organisations.

I try to find ways of working with clients that represent a break with the conventions of office culture – to eschew the cues that make coaching seem like just another meeting in a client's busy calendar, and trying to find a spirit of playfulness. But I notice resistance to this, both in my clients and in myself, in the context of a professional relationship.

It can help to draw on the science of the mind to contextualise working in this way. Whether it is Iain McGilchrist's work on the brain's hemisphere differences⁴ or Daniel Kahneman's account of the mind's fast and slow systems⁵, the message is that our propensity for automatic, heuristic thinking often narrows our focus and overwhelms the more effortful and metaphorical thinking that allows us to see patterns and make sense of the whole picture. Crucially, given coaching's reliance on conversation, there's an imperative to get beyond the limitations of speech to access the non-verbal insights that are a strength of the right hemisphere of the brain. Beyond our mind's mental shortcuts lies our direct experience of reality – fertile ground for creativity.

I like to get out of the coaching room and into places like art galleries or parks. Just the experience of physical movement in a nurturing environment fosters freshness. Charles Darwin famously walked a path in his garden every day as he thought through his theory of evolution. Einstein is said to have made a breakthrough with the theory of relativity while riding a bicycle.

But from a coaching perspective, talking while walking presents opportunities for working with found objects, such as an artwork or an arrangement of trees, to facilitate the client to make an imaginative leap in the coaching issue. Or one can simply notice what the body is communicating, in a way that might not show up in the coaching room. Jonathan Hoban, a practitioner of walking therapy, says: 'Sometimes clients are angry, but they don't even know it. They say they're fine, but I notice that they're kicking pebbles as we walk. So I say, "You're fine, but how are your feet?" That's when they realise.'⁶

Another approach is not to look at art with a client but to help them create it. Anna Sheather has developed a coaching methodology around this. In her book, *Coaching Beyond Words*, published this year, she explains how she draws on art therapy and mindfulness to guide clients through drawing a representation of their coaching issue, often having to overcome an ingrained fear of drawing.⁷ Among the benefits she lists are: accessing emotional depth; communicating in a way that words cannot; making sense in a complex and paradoxical situation; and playfulness, joy and wellbeing.

Approaches like these access ways of experiencing that we normally bracket out of working life. But they are not just novel ways of coaching. By inserting into the client's day a pause for play, restoration and reflection, you model ways of nurturing creativity that people can migrate to their working life. Productivity advisors such as Tony Schwartz⁸ and Caroline Webb⁹ emphasise the need to manage one's energy by means of scheduling focussed time in 90-minute blocks, inserting micro-breaks between meetings and protecting time for reflection. Their message is that, to be creative, one must take one's wellbeing seriously and not expect to work like an automaton.

We need more diversity in our lives, pauses to recover our ground and the curiosity to get out of our reflexive ways of thinking. We sometimes think of creativity as an endowment of talented people, but it's accessible to all of us if we can build a routine that supports creative orientations.

** For more information, see *Wilful Blindness: Why We Ignore the Obvious* (2012) by Margaret Haffernan

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Martin Vogel is a coach and writer. He's a founder-director of Vogel Wakefield, the counter-consultancy. He blogs at vogelwakefield.com.

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COACHING THE NARRATIVE OF THE SOMA

Coach and somatic movement expert **Paul King** explains how our body holds our 'self story', and how we can help people change these deep unconscious narratives.

'Soma', from the Greek, means the living body in its wholeness, or for those of a more neuroscience bent I might say the 'distributed brain in action'. It is our head, heart and guts – all our physical, emotional, cognitive and spiritual energies in relationship.

Every soma tells a story, a unique embodied experience of culture, family and personal experience organised upon the framework of our evolutionary inheritance. Modern science is now clearly showing that life experience starts to shape our patterns of identity and behaviour in the womb and during our early years, prior to the development of our explicit memory and our speech and language centres. Our learning at this time is primarily sensory and movement-based, meaning our early story and established patterns are not readily accessible via the conscious mind. However, they are most certainly present in us, stored within our body-mind.

The deeper activated narrative of humanity at the moment, particularly for those of us living within the western mindset, is increasingly one of disconnection, division, separation,

fracture and opposition. This carries through into individual experience and embodied patterns of stress, armouring, 'over-efforting', tension, and feelings of inadequacy and, despite the West's affluence, of scarcity. These patterns are embodied and habituated, so they are mostly out of our conscious awareness, especially since many of us in this culture live disconnected from our body in one way or another.

We create narrow dimensions of existence as a strategy to face a challenging world. This both reflects and causes constant firing of our fight-or-flight survival system: over time, we develop armouring and muscle-tension in ever-readiness to fight or flee. This is highly energy inefficient. Triggered, we react rather than act. We find ourselves following our embodied scripts rather than reflective conscious choice. By engaging the body in coaching we can reveal these patterns and develop more resourceful alternative responses. Sometimes the mind cannot change the mind, because the mind is not aware of this deeper patterning. Under stress, our deeper out-of-conscious patterns of the body win out over more thoughtful actions.

The current narrative is certainly out of balance. Living systems are not just interconnected but interdependent: within ourselves, with others and with nature. The world is at last recognising this, at least ecologically. This has been evident recently through the well-publicised strikes by schoolchildren in the name of climate change, global protests by Extinction Rebellion and the vibrant speaking of Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg, which has caught the public imagination.

The issue, as in seemingly all aspects of human life today, is to re-establish the creative, sustaining and enhancing engagement with life's experiences and dynamics. The body functions on 'stabilised instability': we lose our balance to find our balance. Positions are not held but are in transitional process. We are in co-creative conversation with our context. In this way, the mind can facilitate the body's release from old patterns and the development of new ones through use of the imagination.

As the poet David Whyte^{*} says, we need to get into our *full* body and thereby into the imagination before we tap into the intellect of the strategic mind. This calls forth a completely different identity from what we might be used to and comfortable with, even as we may fear we will lose our intellectual capacities if we connect with the body.

PUTTING AWARENESS INTO PRACTICE

I practice and teach a form of tai ji (chi) that encourages creative freedom within the form. The form is the context for exploration within which a person can discover their own tai ji. We explore the *complementarity* of 'opposites', not their confrontation. We discover creativity and fluidity through curves, not straight lines; through the dynamic interplay of the peripheral and the immediate; the masculine and feminine; the right and left brain; of yinyang.

In this world we tend to value fast over slow and are taught to be hard not soft. But the body-mind learns through increments and through softening. I notice that many people (including coaches) find it a real challenge to release their embodied tension and the need for speed. Research at Case Western Reserve University¹ has found that when the brain's analytic network (which is focused on doing) is engaged, our ability to appreciate the human cost of our action is repressed: so we have a built-in neural constraint on our ability to be both empathetic and analytic at the same time. The doing body strives and in so doing becomes a 'tension body'. We start to identify with our tension body, and thereby lose sensitivity to our inner word and our outer world. In my experience so much of this is invisible to people.

^{*} For more information, visit <https://www.davidwhyte.com/events>

One pharmaceutical executive recently said to me, 'I feel genuinely empowered with a more embodied awareness of my tendency to see others as "resistors" and then engage in resistance myself, which is an exercise in futility. It occurred to me that with many of the things that "come at me" in life – emails, needs from my team, family demands (or perceived demands) – I over-engage and invest in addressing such items, at a cost to my greater purpose and needs. I've a hunch that my excessive busyness, taking the place of self-care and peace in life, is because I get lost engaging in this resistance versus staying on purpose.'

The starting point for exploration is to become aware of how we shape ourselves according to the contexts we are in, especially when we feel under pressure. As mentioned, many patterns run deep and were created before the development of our conscious memory, but they are held in our unconscious and revealed through our body and behaviour. To see a body in action, sitting or standing, one can see a psycho-emotional world at work. In the embodiment-coaching I practice, I often use gentle partner work and also role-play in group coaching situations. These aim to reveal reactive patterns and to develop and embed more resourceful psychological, emotional and physical pathways. The stimulus must always be light: too much pressure and the body-mind goes into overwhelm and reaction, resulting in no learning being achieved. It goes without saying that such work must always be contracted for between client and coach.

SMALL CHANGES, BIG DIFFERENCES

People are often surprised at how they respond in these activities and how this opens up fresh exploratory conversations between body and mind. Having just experienced their reaction and finding it recurs in response to repeated stimuli, a person cannot deny what just happened and they get curious. While there may be generalised meanings to apply to certain reactions, one must view any response alongside the reactive patterning of the rest of their individual system.

For example, one client had their head tipped forward, which put them in a slightly bowed position; this was energetically protecting their heart and themselves from being visible. Raising their head a fraction to look forward and open up, they found themselves contravening a lifetime's submissive pattern, provoking

gentle tears. Another client's head tip reflected their expectation of hitting resistance, as if always walking into the headwind of life. Raising their head, again but a fraction, released tension throughout their system, and a new ease and orientation to putting their ideas and themselves forward. Small physical differences can create big shifts in energy and resourcefulness.

Greater creativity and freedom are enabled when we shift from being contracted, separated and oppositional in our response to a perceived threat and move to being open, energetically extended and inclusive of the triggering threat. In this openness we come into relational conversation – responsive and creative – and can develop a capacity to be with what is present without judgement. Through the support and shaping of the body we can gradually learn to be open and centred in situations where there are greater and greater levels of energy and disruption.

This is the essence of somatic coaching and embodiment work: to know our baseline embodied patterns. Not necessarily with the intention of changing them, but rather to learn the transition pathways to embodied shaping, which builds clear perception, compassion and confidence, and creates new choices of being in the world. Ultimately, rather than turning away or armouring, this work strengthens our capacity to be willing to turn and face and be what is. It fosters our capacity to engage with the world as 'self', wellbeing of which, interdependent as it is with our own, may be nourished alongside our own healing.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Paul King is co-founder with Marie Faire of The Beyond Partnership. Paul has been a coach, consultant and trainer for more than 25 years with a passion for integral, holistic and somatic approaches, and works in Europe, North America and Asia. His early career was with Deloitte and PWC. Paul was the first person in Europe to be certified to train Conscious and Leadership Embodiment by Wendy Palmer. He is a NLP trainer, a tai chi teacher and is qualified in Feldenkrais (Movement Re-Education) and Polarity Therapy.

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GETTING A FAIR SHARE OF THE PIE

Charles Wookey, CEO of A Blueprint for Better Business, challenges us to consider if fairness should be a core value of businesses.

I recently heard that a (now former) financial services CEO was asked by his team if 'fairness' should be one of their core values. 'No! That's ridiculous. Life is unfair,' said the CEO. Undoubtedly, one of the foundations of our economy is that competitive markets create winners and losers. So is it helpful to challenge businesses to be fair or is it just wishful thinking?

Fairness is a recurring topic in public discourse about business. Much of the current distrust of business – especially big business, the multinational commercial and financial corporations – comes from a perception of unfairness in the distribution of rewards and benefits, but it goes much deeper than pay. Accusations of unfairness, of using knowledge and power to exploit rather than serve people, and externalising environmental and social costs, lie at the heart of the disconnect between business and society.

In practice, however, we are often conflicted about what fairness means in a given situation, and in particular how to translate it into the complexity of business life. We all recognise manifest unfairness when we see it, even if 'it's unfair!' is often used merely as an emotive device. In a society riven by austerity, shocking inequality and growing anger and resentment, we also know that – beyond just avoiding manifest unfairness – business has a vital and urgent task in doing more to help create a fairer society and a more sustainable world.

When we considered this at Blueprint, we felt the best way to start was to think about the human roots of business, and how the desire for fairness is deep-seated in all of us.

Fairness is a universally recognised, if contested, concept. As humans, we like things to be fair, and we get upset at the first sight of unfairness. It seems to be something deeply ingrained in our psyche from the earliest moments of our lives. Children have a great sense of fairness, particularly when it comes to themselves. As one recent empirical study suggests:

*'Children, even young ones, show remarkable sophistication not just in their understanding of, and conformity to, norms of fairness but also to enforce fairness in others and to flexibly tune fairness to different situations. These exciting developments dovetail with work showing that adults are often fair even when they could be selfish, and suggest we need to overhaul the notion that humans are fundamentally out for themselves at the expense of others. Instead, we should adopt the idea that fairness is a key part of our developing minds from as early as they can be studied.'*¹

This recognition of the human desire for fairness becomes even more important when we combine it with the thought that businesses are fundamentally social organisations: a series of human relationships with customers, suppliers, employees' communities, investors and so on. Because it makes sense to ask of any relationship whether it is a fair one or not, once we view a business this way, then the question 'are we acting fairly?' naturally arises with all of those the business engages with. In Blueprint's 'Framework' for good practice, the challenge of accepting this human-centred approach is embraced:

*'Each person is a someone, not a something... show respect for the dignity of each person and the whole person; never use people merely as a means to achieving business success. Respecting the whole person includes thinking of people in all their various roles in relation to the business: as employees, customers, suppliers, investors, and citizens. Demonstrating respect means setting a purpose and seeking outcomes that enable each person to reach his or her full potential, not least being able to contribute fully to building relationships and communities both within the workplace and beyond.'*²

Thought about this way, fairness becomes a condition for ensuring the continued development of every business relationship. Having fair processes, treating people with dignity and respect, and communicating the basis on which decisions

are made can illustrate that businesses are trying to act fairly.

This is where the insights and perspective of a coaching approach can help. Much of the profound challenge here is in uncovering and raising the underlying assumptions at play within a business about how people are motivated and what matters to the business. This is all about how people behave, and how the operational pressures within the business shape decision-making on a day-to-day basis. A good place to start is by asking why fairness matters to your business. Ask also who, and what, you think about when evaluating whether you are acting fairly.

At Blueprint we argue that, in thinking about what it means to act fairly, three things matter: how a decision is made, in what frame of mind, and with what result. All three are essential, but the most important is the frame of mind – which of course goes back to purpose and what the organisation sees itself as existing to do. This frame of mind sees acting fairly not as a constraint but as an aim. It requires clarity of purpose and consistency of having fair processes, treating people with dignity and respect, consulting and communicating the basis of decisions made, and enabling and welcoming scrutiny. It invites the difficult question of: what are we going to give up to become fairer? Most importantly, it needs careful thought about how those that are affected by decisions – but whose voices are seldom heard or silent, or from distant communities or future generations – are appropriately represented.

Fairness in business is often posed as a distributional problem: in other words, receiving a fair share of the pie. But a more exciting challenge for business leaders is to think about what their business creates – which, we argue, is ultimately human relationships. In thinking in this way, it is clear that the goal of businesses should be to grow the pie. We've found that the most effective approach is to avoid thinking about fairness as a tick-box activity to be completed, but instead as a creative process based on asking questions that bring the importance of human relationships to the fore.

One example that highlights this approach is the challenge to the future of jobs from artificial intelligence. Jason Stockwood, CEO of Simply Business, raised this topic at a recent Blueprint event. Offering his own experience, he argued that thinking about a workplace in the context of human relationships was vital to his organisation's approach to managing against the potential obsolescence of staff. In thinking about people's future now, Simply Business decided to use the opportunity offered by 20% automation not merely as a cost saving, but as a way to create more meaningful jobs – ultimately freeing up people to do better work. Big data and automated systems are being harnessed by the business to generate positive growth, and staff are currently trialling a four-day week in their Northampton office.

1. Scientific American, 23 August 2017, Prof Katherine McAuliffe, Prof Peter Blake. 'Do kids have a fundamental sense of fairness?' See also studies of the Ultimatum game, which indicates pro-social attributes of most adults, now increasingly being researched in neuroscience.
2. Blueprint Framework, <http://www.blueprintforbusiness.org/framework2/>

HOW CAN YOU APPLY THIS IN YOUR WORK?

We've put together a set of questions (which are illustrative, not exhaustive) which helps test and expose underlying assumptions about the real importance of fairness in how decisions are made, combining focus and an awareness of potential unfairness. A few are listed below – but a more comprehensive set of questions can be found in our paper, *Fairness in Business*.

- How best to act fairly when the long-term success of the company demands cuts and closures?
- How does a company ensure all other options have been considered, affected employees fully consulted, mitigating measures taken and help given to communities affected?
- How should international companies reconcile different pay rates and benefits for expatriate and local workers doing the same job?
- How should a company seek to reconcile a desire to retain terms and conditions where there are intense competitive pressures, and a competitive risk of retaining a higher cost base?
- How should companies recover the cost of internalising higher environmental standards, and how do they decide what is a fair distribution of burdens?
- How do companies reconcile the insatiable desire in the developed world for cheap goods with paying low wages in the developing world?
- If fair pay usually means the going rate for the job, is it unfair to pay the CEO the going rate for their job?

Ultimately, fairness is something people feel. It is in every interaction and every gesture. The desire to act fairly is also a more profound invitation to go beyond the avoidance of manifest unfairness and the requirements of contracts. It helps turn what might otherwise be a mere financial vehicle into a vibrant community of people that can do lasting good while delivering sustainable financial returns.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Charles Wookey is CEO of A Blueprint for Better Business, an independent charity that works as a catalyst to help businesses be guided and inspired by a purpose that benefits society. Our work is about stimulating and energising a different way of thinking and behaving in business. Prior to playing a central role in founding Blueprint, Charles worked in business and across government, in an economic think tank and, latterly, advised on public policy for a major faith institution.

blueprintforbusiness.org/charles-wookey/

EVERYDAY LITTLE 'C' CREATIVITY

Surely our role as coaches is to respond to our clients' needs rather than seeking to express ourselves in different ways? Schools coach **Rebecca Raybould** finds her views about coaching and creativity changed through a new understanding of team coaching.

In some ways, seeking to be creative in coaching feels misguided. However, my experiences following the Association for Coaching's team coaching webinars led me to reflect on the importance of being able to draw on a range of approaches and perspectives in a creative way. The emphasis is not on the coach's creative endeavour as a goal in itself or a vehicle for self-expression, but on inviting the coachee to be more creative. In this way, the coachee can generate a wider range of possibilities for future actions, and thus move beyond familiar patterns of behaviour to new ways of being.

WHY TEAM COACHING?

Part of my work involves coaching leaders in schools, and I had become increasingly aware of the importance of empowering teams to work together. As in many spheres, education has moved from a 'superhero' picture of leadership to a more distributed model. However, while there is a growing understanding of the importance of teams, developing the skills to work effectively together can be extremely challenging. With this in mind, I was interested in participating in Professor Peter Hawkins' team coaching webinar series.

I thought that several of his arguments were particularly relevant to the school context. These were the importance of:

- Placing more emphasis on the interconnections between people rather than the individuals themselves.
- Recognising that much conflict stems from the different roles individuals have and that expressing and working through this conflict is vital for the success of the team.

- Recognising a continuum of team activities from facilitation through to transformational coaching. At one end of the spectrum the coach focuses on internal team process, while at the other on enabling the team to change the way they work together for the benefit of their stakeholders.

HOW CAN I APPLY THE LEARNING?

Following the series, I was keen to explore how I could apply the learning. I recognised that my enthusiasm for applying the learning needed to move backstage. By thinking through the current contexts of the leaders (including their own and their schools' learning journeys), I was able to identify some ways to develop my practice. These included:

- Listening more attentively for what was happening both in and between the relationships that the coachee was describing. This could be captured by diagrams or pictures when appropriate and 'played back' to the coachee.
- Where conflict emerged as an issue in a coaching session, asking questions to help the coachee reflect more deeply on their own and their organisation's attitude to conflict, and the extent to which these attitudes were helping all to work at their best.
- During meetings with those who are commissioning my coaching, being more explicit about different types of professional development that could be used to complement the individual coaching – including team facilitation sessions and team coaching sessions.

It's early days, but I have noticed that:

- Using diagrams and sketching pictures to capture something

about the relationships has been helpful for the coachees.

- Talking about conflict has resonated with leaders in several schools. They noted that there was a need to develop ways of expressing healthy professional conflict within and between their teams.
- Over time, leaders have identified the most useful forms of facilitation and coaching for their current needs. For example, some newly appointed senior leaders who had been participating in individual coaching wanted a team coaching session, as they now had shared responsibilities.

Overall, I have found that I have raised my awareness of the points made by Hawkins and used them to put some more 'tools' into my coaching toolkit, to be used only when they felt appropriate.

A CREATIVE JOURNEY?

So, where's the creativity? I did a little bit more listening, used visuals and questions to uncover what was happening within and between relationships, surfaced attitudes to conflict, and supported identification of professional development activities that would help individuals and the team. We could argue that that's just what the coach should do. But I think these small adjustments in practice are examples of what Anna Craft termed *little 'c' creativity*¹. Different to *big 'C' creativity*, which changes world perceptions in significant ways, but the everyday endeavour

of being open to a greater range of possibilities for thinking and acting. As the coach taps into their little 'c' creativity they can help the coachee connect with their own creativity. From this, they are empowered to view things in different ways and – you never know – some big 'C' creativity might emerge from their actions.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Rebecca Raybould coaches leaders in schools. She has experience as a headteacher, advisor, facilitator, university lecturer and researcher. She is passionate about empowering leaders to meet the needs of their pupils and staff while also fulfilling their personal and professional goals and attending to their own wellbeing. She works independently with middle and senior leaders in a range of school contexts and is also an associate at CUREE (The Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education).

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USING IMPROV SKILLS IN THE COACHING RELATIONSHIP

Coach and improviser **Neil Curran** explains how the skills required for improvisation reflect those needed by a coach.

The art of improvisation (or ‘improv’) is unscripted theatre created in the moment, often presented as a comedy performance. Improvisers entertain audiences while having no idea of what is going to happen during the show. While entertainment is the objective of an improv show, the skills and techniques used by the performers are firmly rooted in a zone of enhanced communication and listening skills. Sound familiar? As coaches we are required to approach our coaching conversations with similar skills. Coaching is an unscripted interaction, where coaches utilise their communication skills to aid the client on their journey. No two coaching conversations are ever the same.

When I am training or coaching improvisers, I am often asked how, as individuals, we can assess the effectiveness of our own improv skills during a show; I always respond that the measure of how effective your skills are is by how tired you are from listening after a performance.

However, while there are similarities in the skillsets, improvisers and coaches aren’t necessarily utilising those skills in the same way. In this article, we look at how some of the skills used in improv can benefit and enhance the coaching experience.

LISTENING WITH INTENT

One of the most crucial skills improvisers require is active listening. On stage, not only are improvisers contending with hearing the dialogue for the first time, they’re also trying to read the other performers’ body language and tone, and interpret the emotion behind what is being said. Improvisers become a sponge for

information, soaking up everything that is unfolding. Every sound, moment of silence and movement could be a key clue as to the next step in the show. There is no room for distraction. You can’t go into the improv with a preconceived idea about where it will go. If an improviser is not truly present or is anticipating what might happen next, then the skill of active listening is replaced with planning, and the brain cannot focus on these two tasks at once.

Throughout the coaching conversation, coaches are required to be present and actively listen to clients. That means surrendering all assumptions about what could happen next or what we think is good for the client. After all, if we jump to conclusions too soon, we jeopardise listening to everything the client is trying to communicate. This may seem like a rather obvious point; however, how often do we meet a client with a coaching goal that we have coached others on hundreds of times previously? Or how often are we reaching for a coaching tool in advance of, or during, a client’s time to speak? Given how challenging it is to actively listen for extended periods of time, our brains will often seek out a release or shortcut from the state of flow we have tuned into. Be aware of how we can be distracted; focusing on being present helps us remain engaged for extended periods.

THE POWER OF ‘YES, AND...’

One of the key components to improv is the concept of ‘Yes, and...’. In other words, the premise of acceptance and support.

On stage, improvisers use the concept of ‘Yes, and...’ to accept the choices made by co-performers. Whether a performer says a line of dialogue or makes a physical move to establish a location or occupation (also known in improv as ‘making an offer or gift’), every single co-performer will accept that offer as their reality and support that offer through their reaction. This requires performers to support these offers unconditionally and without judgement. By taking this approach, improvisers develop an open mind that allows them to embrace the unexpected and be open to everything that unfolds on stage.

Embracing a ‘Yes, and...’ philosophy in the real world gives us the opportunity to be more adaptable and open to the many unforeseen events and challenges that we face, be it in our careers or personal lives. The role of a coach involves us facilitating that journey for clients and very often the coaching journey feels improvised. If coaches adopt a ‘Yes, and...’ mindset then they can also empower their clients to adopt this attitude.

The first step for a coach to embrace some of the skills of improv is no different than what a coach expects of a client: having an open mind. Improv guru Keith Johnstone once said:

‘There are people who prefer to say “yes” and there are people who prefer to say “no”. Those who say “yes” are rewarded by the adventures they have. Those who say “no” are rewarded by the safety they attain.’¹

Improvisers recognise that, no matter how experienced they are, the skills of active listening and utilising the concept and philosophy of ‘Yes, and...’ require adaptability and the humility to recognise that we are all constantly striving to be better.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Neil Curran is a corporate trainer, executive coach and professional improviser. He previously worked in finance with over twenty years of management experience. He incorporates improv training into all of his training solutions and specialises in the areas of team development, executive presence and presentation skills. He holds a Master’s in Training & Education. Neil often travels the world performing his signature improv show, *Neil+1*

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AC Workshop Events – Your Questions Answered

What are Workshop Events?

Association for Coaching (AC) Workshop Events are essentially engaging topics that are delivered by expert speakers in a friendly group environment. Workshop Events include thought-provoking discussion and participative exercises which allow participants the opportunity to learn and develop both their skills and professional career. They are an effective and efficient way to top up your continuing professional development (CPD) too.

What are the benefits of participating in a Workshop Event?

- Developing knowledge and learning new skills.
- Applying skills learned to perform even better as a coach.
- Improving your future employment opportunities through CPD*
- Increasing your self-confidence.
- Connecting you with fellow professionals.

* Attendees receive a CPD certificate on completion of an AC Workshop Event in UK and Ireland. Certificate of attendance name may differ in other countries.

Who can attend Workshop Events?

Our events are aimed at coaches from all backgrounds and all types of organisation, at whatever stage of their career, and open to both members and non-members.

What types of Workshop Events are available?

- Skills Development workshops offer the opportunity to develop professional, personal or business skills.
- Masterclasses introduce the innovative thought leaders of the moment, who will bring the most up-to-date thinking on skills and knowledge.
- Coaching Exchange workshops are an opportunity to network with members and non-members, as well as have the benefit of a skills update delivered by the chosen speaker of the day.



Visit our Events Calendar to stay up to date and keep on track with your CPD

**Association
for Coaching**



HOW COACHES BENEFIT FROM IMPROVISATION

Do you like to learn by playing? Czech coach **Pavel Wieser** outlines the similarity of the competencies needed by improvisational theatre actors and coaches.

I've been playing theatre since childhood. I love acting. I perform on stage with or without a script.

When I discovered coaching, I was intrigued by the fact that few scenarios were used, yet it seemed to me that the coaching session displays a similar perfection to that of a scripted theatre play. A coaching session is coherent, works with tension, takes a similar course and makes a point in the end.

Every action on a theatre stage – every move and every prop that appears on the stage – should fit in with the overall concept of the show. Everything on stage should play its part. It's a similar story in coaching. It is the task of the coach to be aware of these details: words, emotions, hints, repeating patterns. The coach tries to make them all part of one story. They help the client to gain a comprehensive view, orientate and achieve higher congruence. I wondered what was behind this similarity between theatre and coaching. I looked for an answer in improvisational theatre.

Improvisational theatre(or 'improv') also does not use a script. But even without a script, experienced improvisers can enact an hour-long story that you wouldn't believe had not been written

beforehand. The story develops from nothing right in front of your eyes. In the same evening you have the premiere and *dernière* of the show. How do improvisers do that?

I am convinced that the skills used by coaches to help clients achieve integrity (or a 'good gestalt'¹), are in part the same skills that improvisers need when they are thrown into the void and have to somehow make something meaningful from nothing.

Improvisation skills which parallel coaching skills

- ▣ Focused listening.
- ▣ Developing the other person's idea instead of promoting your own.
- ▣ Accepting mistakes as a natural part of experimentation and learning.
- ▣ Attention to repetitive behaviour patterns.
- ▣ Paying attention to emotions and body language, not just words.
- ▣ Accepting what the present moment offers.

Here are two activities that have helped me in developing these skills, both as an improviser and also as a coach.

GAME: 'YES, AND...'

Instructions

Two people are having a conversation and developing one idea together. Each sentence begins with 'Yes, and...'. Players can only say one sentence at a time. Using your imagination is critical in this exercise.

Example

Opening theme: Where could we go on vacation?

Person A: We could go swimming in the sea.

Person B: Yes, and dive there.

Person A: Yes, and we might discover some treasure.

Person B: Yes, and it will be 10,000 years old.

Person A: Yes, and we will grab it and tell no one.

Person B: Yes, and we will buy our own hotel by the sea.

Person A: Yes, and it will be a diver's hotel ...

What to watch out for?

You might say 'Yes, but...', however this does not develop a story nor cooperation. 'But' will force you to find a reason for why something is impossible, instead of building on it.

What are you learning?

I believe that both improv and coaching should focus on exploring and developing ideas and possibilities. This corresponds to the principle of 'Yes, and...'. Neither the coach nor the improviser knows in advance why it was worth meeting that day. Any sentence or emotion may show up as a treasure later on. Therefore, before you say 'no', learn to give 'yes' a chance.

What else do you learn?

We have a tendency to form hypotheses, constructs, and prepare in advance what we say. However, we do this at the expense of the present moment; usually what lies beneath our noses and what the client is really telling us runs away. Do not invent ahead. Listen and react.

When you say the phrase 'Yes, and...', you have to react and build on what the other person just said. In other words, you cannot prepare anything in advance, but you must pay attention to the present moment.

Try to play!

The second game is similar to the first game and is at least as fruitful!

1. From a law in gestalt psychology: the Law of Good Gestalt explains that human minds tend to group elements and objects together perceptually if they form a regular, simple and orderly pattern, which helps derive meaning out of complexity. ([wikipedia.org/wiki/Gestalt_psychology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gestalt_psychology))

GAME: FIVE SECONDS' SILENCE

Instructions

Have a conversation with the other person. Talk about whatever topic you want.

Before you speak, you have to be silent for at least five seconds each time.

Example

Person A: I heard you have a new relationship.

Person B: (five seconds of silence) Did Peter tell you that?

Person A: (five seconds of silence) I didn't want to catch you out.

Person B: (five seconds of silence) Cool, I expected you to ask.

What do you notice?

What happens in those five seconds?

How much information is contained in the way you look at each other?

What emotions occur between you?

How does the previous sentence resonate within the five seconds of silence?

What are you learning?

You deepen your ability to actually hear what the other says.

Don't just hear words, but what's behind them.

Try it!

I hope I have inspired you a little and will be glad for your comments on what games you use in coaching and coaching training.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Pavel Wieser is a systemic coach, psychologist, improviser and lecturer. He obtained a master's degree in psychology at the Charles University in Prague and completed a four-year training programme in Person Centered Approach in psychotherapy. Between 2014 and 2018 he was a Member of the Board at ČAKO – the Czech Association of Coaches. As an improviser he has performed in Berlin, Bangkok, Seattle and many other places. In 2018 he was a Czech representative in the European project Our Lives, in which 28 improvisers from 28 EU countries met on one stage.

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CREATIVE COACHING: MAKING IT UP AS YOU GO ALONG

Executive coach, psychotherapist and OD consultant **Vassilis Antonas** shares two of his favourite tools for generating creativity in the coaching encounter.

I can still recall my first day at my psychotherapy postgraduate training. Eager to get on with it, as I always am, when asked what my request was, I responded: 'Bring out the tools and methodologies, line them up on the table and teach me how to use them.' It was the mid-90s and I had just completed my mandatory two years relevant experience for this training, serving in the Greek Armed Forces as a psychologist. Prior to that I had completed my studies at an American university. Both appointments placed a heavy focus on diagnosis and classification, so my attitude was: 'If I can classify it, then I know what needs to be done with it.'

The years went by and my four-year training in humanistic integrative psychology did not provide me with a single tool. Neither did my outstanding supervisor, Renos Papadopoulos, who, despite being an expert Jungian analyst, never used a single Jungian term in the five years we worked together. My hopes lay with my executive coaching and organisational development training, but by the time I got to it I had realised that tools and methodologies will only get you so far. Making a difference for coaching clients, helping them enhance their performance and increase their influence is mostly dependent on the art of relating. And relations are, for the most part and despite recurring patterns and archetypal configurations, unique. As such, our approach, strategy, methodology and tools also need to be unique, customised and consequently creative.

For 'square' characters such as myself, who lean towards pre-defined or templated actions, this can be a challenge. It is even more challenging for coaches who originate from a

business background (in the same way it is very challenging for practitioners who originate from a counselling background to comprehend that when corporations pay for their executives to receive coaching, their primary concern is their ROI^{*}). I see this everyday with my supervisees and trainees. As coach Hetty Einzиг puts it: 'I sympathise with people's desire for answers, sure-fire tools and conclusions.'¹

I have therefore attempted to generate a theoretical and practical context, whereby coaching practitioners, regardless of predisposition and background, will be enabled, with relative ease and comfort, to progress and take appropriate risks with their coaching interventions; this is a context that allows for method and creativity to co-exist and complement each other.

The following are two of these concepts, antithetical in nature, which will hopefully stimulate your thinking and enrich your coaching intervention arsenal.

1. CUSTOMISED 360 SURVEY

The 360 survey is a standardised tool, used extensively by HR departments in the context of employee performance appraisal. For anyone unfamiliar with 360s, they comprise a set of questions (usually on a Likert scale^{**}) regarding the

* Return on investment

** A psychometric scale used in questionnaires where respondents specify their level of agreement or disagreement on a symmetric scale for a series of statements.

employee's performance that is distributed to supervisors, colleagues, subordinates and an external associate (and at times the employee themselves). While one couldn't expect HR departments to generate a different questionnaire for each one of their hundreds or thousands of employees, a coach could do this, when for example working with a high potential executive.

The way I generate a customised 360 survey tool with my clients is to split the questionnaire into two parts: the first part represents the company's values, mission and strategy. For example if the company places focus on being agile, I will include a question about this. This might look like: 'The executive can change direction whenever needed with ease and speed.' This first part satisfies the company's needs as the paying sponsor.

The second part of the 360 focuses on the employee's needs and aspirations. In order to formulate these questions, I begin by asking them: 'If you could get into people's heads and listen to their thoughts, what would you mostly want to find out about, regarding your impact on them and how they view you?'

This invitation usually takes them by surprise and, despite causing some initial discomfort and anxiety, usually yields some stimulating responses. In addition to making use of the data collected, the very process of creating this questionnaire generates thought-provoking coaching dialogue, supports the creation of rapport and advances the coaching relation and the depth of exploration that can be achieved. I recommend this one wholeheartedly.

2. GENERATING ADVERSITY-ACTIVATED DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SYNCHRONISTIC INTERPRETATION

We will frequently come across coachees who have been referred to us by their company for support during transitional times or who have come to us privately to revitalise their momentum following challenging professional developments. These may range from assuming a new role in a new country (a frequent phenomenon in multinationals) to being bypassed for promotion, to receiving a low performance appraisal or being made redundant.

When it comes to success and failure, I subscribe to a binary model. You either succeed or fail and the new age glorification of the latter has not done anything to shift my mind one bit from my position in 2015 when I wrote about the glorification of failure.² At the same time, the fact that your lack of performance, insight, foresight, preparation or simply luck yielded poor or unwanted results in the past does not mean that you cannot or should not utilise or take advantage of those results for the future.

And this is where Carl Jung's theory of Synchronicity conveniently comes in, or at least the version that I have chosen to interpret and utilise when it comes to supporting my clients' evolution. According to Jung, 'the connection of events, may in certain circumstances be other than causal and requires another principle of explanation.'³

We don't need to expand further on Jung's philosophical and at times metaphysical explorations. All we need do is subscribe to the statement below, in order to utilise his concept to the advantage of our clients:

*'We cannot imagine events that are connected non-causally... but that does not mean that such events do not exist. Their existence or at least their possibility – follows logically from the premise of statistical truth.'*⁴

In other words, our task as coaches is not to find out what caused the misfortune or challenge that our coachee is facing. Our task is to generate and extract meaning in relation to the event – meaning that will generate action, mobilisation and direction. Therefore, the question that a coach can ask a coachee under such circumstance is: 'What purpose does this turn of events serve for you?' And in case this particular position is difficult to grasp (and it usually is, since people are not accustomed to attributing purpose to negative events or behaviours), we can support this exploration with complementary questions such as:

- What are the new possibilities that this event opens for you?
- Which set of skills are you being invited to enhance and develop, based on this event?
- How does this turn of events lead the person you were yesterday to evolve into the person you wish to become tomorrow?

I hope that these two methodologies will encourage you to take some creative risks and come up with customised approaches of your own.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Vassilis Antonas is an executive coach, psychotherapist, organisational development consultant and Course Director of Impact's diploma in executive coaching and organisational development (AADCT), globally the first training to receive accreditation from the Association for Coaching. Vassilis is the author of *Coaching for Impact*, as well as a musician, a senior martial artist, a free diver, former motorsport driver and a devoted world traveller.

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USING THE METAPHOR MAGIC BOX IN COACHING AND COACHING SUPERVISION

Global coaches and coaching supervisors [Lily Seto](#) and [Louise Schubert](#) share their experiences of using a coaching tool created by Lily, the Metaphor Magic Box.

LILY'S STORY

I first learned about the power of symbolic metaphors in my coaching supervision course with the Coaching Supervision Academy, and have since adapted it to my coaching practice as well. I began packaging boxes of small objects and using them in a metaphorical way in my coaching. As coaching clients and supervision clients became curious about the power of these boxes, I started to facilitate workshops on how I use the Metaphor Magic Box.

The box itself consists of approximately 21-25 small charms and a mat to work on. We begin with the coaching question. Once we clarify the goal and the importance of the session to the coachee, they are invited to choose a sealed Metaphor Magic Box out of two to four present on the table, and then select items to represent various parts of their system; for example, an item that best represents the coachee in the future state, other people or elements related to the coaching question, and anything else that the coachee deems important in their scenario. The client then places them on the mat in a kind of constellation. Once this metaphorical landscape is built, we begin the discovery of what the various items represent in the presenting scenario or issue, and their relationship to each other.

Questioning is used to shine a light on the symbolic meaning of each charm. We look at this representative landscape from different perspectives (including physically moving and viewing the mat of charms from a different place in the room). We unpack each piece and then the patterns that have emerged from the exercise. Finally, the coachee is invited to consider what is needed to get to where they want to be in terms of their aspirations and goals.

The open-ended questions are short and tight, making room for delicious silence for the coachee to think and feel in. I can sense the coachee unpacking their scenario; eyes closed, processing, feeling. I overlay some questions from different tools – Time to Think¹, somatic work, energy work, clean language – and lean into what is wanting to happen and what is emerging. We examine the emotions and insights, and I am always confident that long after the short session the coachee will continue to process the results and find insights on the metaphorical landscape that they have designed both consciously and unconsciously.

Some lightly held principles for using the Metaphor Magic Box are:

- Each box is slightly different and will energetically gravitate to the right owner.

- Between 21 and 25 items is about the right number of charms, as having too many tends to distract the coachee.
- Once the scenario begins, the coach does not touch any of the items, and the coachee is invited to deconstruct the scenario after the session.
- Use the question 'what else?' repetitively in order to invite the coachee to go deeper in their reflections.
- Hold space and silence that invites the coachee to go deeper. Look for cues on when to ask the next question; usually the coachee will indicate something to you with their eyes or energy.
- While the coachee is constructing and interpreting their metaphorical landscape, the coach stays out of the way as much as possible; questions are short and open.
- The box is useful to reflect on relationships (between people and/or things).
- If your coachee seems stuck, you might want to offer the Metaphor Magic Box as a different tool to process what is happening. Sometimes it is used for ten minutes, other times you can use it for an hour.
- Consider using the Metaphor Magic Box in coaching, supervision and team coaching – as well as group supervision.

LOUISE'S STORY

Working with Lily using the Metaphor Magic Box in my coaching supervision sessions with her is like undertaking a journey to a world of fantasy and new discoveries. I am invited to touch, feel and visualise – to use my imagination in a playful way to create a story using different characters – and from this to make new meaning of the situation that I bring to the session to work on. To illustrate how this occurs, I will describe my experience of a recent session.

First, I chose my box. It was the design and the colours of the picture on the lid that first caught my eye. I took it in my hand; a comfortable size, slightly smaller than a pack of cards, I opened it with a click to discover a little see-through textile bag. Once in my grasp, I opened it with anticipation. I carefully laid out all the curious little figurines, 23 of them, and placed them the right way up. I looked at them with a mixture of curiosity and fun. Each piece, so intricate, told its own story.

Lily asked me to take out the little felt mat that was left in the box and open it up. I then found myself picking out different charms that represented different aspects of the question I was considering. I chose a unicorn, for its relative size compared to the other charms. It's a piece that feels solid, with a noble and proud look about it. Somehow it reminded me of the person I was thinking of in the session. I was then asked to pick an object that represented me, and I picked a traditional style key with a pretty head. This suggested that it was no ordinary key. As I picked out more items, I was attracted by the significance that each one represented.

Lily's questions and the silence she held after each one – especially her question 'what else?' – invited me to discover curious insights. What was significant about the power I was attributing to the main character? It's size and charisma? As I walked around and viewed the pattern I had created with the figurines from a different angle, particularly by putting my head level with the table, I again saw the juxtaposition of the unicorn in relation to the other characters. I went back and changed the pattern of the figurines on the mat.

Curious even after we finished the session, images of the charms were playing around in my mind. I had further fascinating insights a couple of days later. I now have a different energy and am more relaxed about the situation I brought to the session to work on.

I am curious about how the key will be working with the unicorn the next time they come together.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Lily Seto, MA, PCC, ESIA is a global leadership coach and coaching supervisor. She lives in Canada and is always enchanted and grateful for the insights that the Metaphor Magic Box offers her coaching and supervision clients. For more information on the Metaphor Magic Box, or to learn how to use it, please contact her at:

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SUPERVISION AS SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Robin Shohet explores the concepts of fear and otherness through a mixture of the personal and theoretical, before looking at the application of these ideas in coaching supervision.

There is no spiritual being who can be so useful as a good human supervisor. (Rowan, J. The Reality Game, p170)

WHO AM I? THE IMPACT OF CREATING OTHERNESS

A lawyer once asked me for an explanation of supervision, and I replied that I saw supervision as helping to take the fear out of people's work lives and perhaps – if some of the teaching carried over – out of their personal lives. I was surprised by my explanation as I had not given this before, but it was very relevant to him as he said his workplace was full of fear and the management consultants he had employed had never mentioned the word fear. Later I described my life's purpose as one of helping to reduce fear – this coming from a timid person who is in great need of that reduction himself! We teach what we most need to learn.

Some readers may know of constellation work. In this therapeutic method, one person chooses to 'work' and sets up a situation, often a family one, choosing people in the group to represent members of their family. These representatives are placed by the 'working' person in a certain position and direction in the room, and then asked to report on what is happening for them. They are given no other information. Time and again, what the representatives report with absolutely no prior knowledge corresponds exactly to the person they are representing. For example, I was once asked to represent a family member and I reported that I couldn't stand, something was wrong with my right leg. The person whose constellation it was shared that this person had lost their right leg. The facilitator was asked how this could happen. He replied that it was a mystery, but he had seen it happen so many times before that he now took it as a given. I said that I thought the mystery was why we even saw it as a mystery. If we take it as a given that we are all interconnected, then the mystery is rather how we have stopped ourselves from tuning in at this level. Or perhaps even more importantly *why* we have stopped ourselves.

In many ways, for me the answer is quite simple. We have chosen to identify ourselves as separate individuals. I am Robin: you are John, Mary, Françoise, whoever. This is so apparently obvious that to even question it seems absurd. There is an exercise where you sit opposite someone and say 'tell me who you are' repeatedly. You go past the layers – I am a man, father, therapist, husband – and eventually you get to a point where the mind has nowhere to go. When this happened to me, I did not know whether I was in the world or the world was in me. There seemed no separation; there was still an 'I', but it was so much vaster than anything I (the separate I) could have imagined. In that state of being, fear would have no place. It would be like the fingers of the hand being frightened of each other, or each finger claiming it was the only one who counted or, even worse, wanting to cut the other fingers off, feeling threatened by the others.

The Upanishads, a collection of ancient Indian holy texts, include a saying: where there is another, there is fear. If I see you as 'other' then I will feel on guard, fearing potential attack. Otherness creates fear, which in turn creates otherness. I am not a Christian, but I have long pondered the message of the crucifixion and the resurrection. I can only see it as Jesus wanting to convey the message that he would refuse to make the crucifiers 'other', and in this way he could not be destroyed. This is the meaning I attach to the resurrection. At the moment of true forgiveness (as opposed to one of moral superiority, an especially toxic way of creating otherness), then one joins with the other. The attack is seen in such a way that joining becomes more important than creating otherness.

I think virtually everyone has had an experience of realising there is more than just this personal 'I', and inevitably it comes with an experience of some kind of peace, awe and gratitude. Almost invariably the personal 'I' reclaims its kingdom afterwards, but somewhere inside us this experience lives on. It is this transcendent separateness that I now want to address as part of supervision.

APPLICATION TO SUPERVISION

When something is brought to supervision – whether client, colleague or workplace – I would suggest that what is brought has become 'other'. And that the job of the supervisor is to help the supervisee become more present to this other, so that they can join this otherness and not make it 'other'. In doing so, the apparent difficulty will resolve itself, because the difficulty was not in the situation but in *the creation of otherness*. The following summarises this nicely:

'Conflict and suffering arise from introjected misperceptions which engender and then project the feeling of being a separate self... They are messengers which signal that misperception, introjection and projection are taking or have taken place. Conflict and suffering are not something to get rid of. Rather they are signposts that point out the underlying misperception

that is holding the belief in separation in place. When this belief is exposed and deconstructed, conflict and suffering disappear, having served their ultimate purpose.¹

Or more succinctly:

If you want to know the truth, get an enemy.²

I think both these quotes point to the insight that whatever is disturbing us is an opportunity to see how we have separated from a person or situation. An enemy, I think, is an extreme version of the separation that goes on much of the time.

When a situation is brought to supervision, I listen carefully to how the supervisee is presenting their issue. Are they seeing the client as a problem to be fixed? Are they looking for a solution? Both of these are focusing on the problem rather than the person. So I wonder if they can imagine themselves in their client's shoes, and I might ask them to leave the room and re-enter as their client. How able they are to do this might completely change the supervisee's perspective. One supervisee was complaining about their tyrannical boss: on 'becoming' her boss she reported, 'I feel scared.' This brought a totally new perspective. There might still be issues, but they can now be approached by the supervisee with compassion rather than with fear and anger. They could no longer identify with making their boss so intensely 'other'.

It is also useful to ask if the supervisee might be similar to their client – or perhaps, more likely, 'how are they similar to their client?' Or, 'was there a situation where have they felt like this before?' In the previous example the supervisee saw their boss as their tyrannical father and was shocked to see how much of that relationship was still present in this current situation. How could their boss be anything but 'other' if that was going on? I mischievously suggested they ask their boss for forgiveness for not seeing her, while acknowledging my need to do the same with some people in my life. Physician heal thyself.

I believe on one level it is true to say *there is no client*, only a version presented by the supervisee, which is why helping them see differently can of itself resolve a difficulty. We can choose the lens we look through but the context of supervision offers us the space to inquire into the way we are looking.

Seeing the wider system and thinking systemically are also important practices that loosen the Western tendency to see separate individuals. So, in the previous example the supervisee saw that their boss had been put into a double bind having been appointed CEO of a family business while the founders still had an enormous influence. This again had the effect of the supervisee seeing this boss less as 'other', but more as someone who was also subject to the dynamics of the organisation.

Finally, of course, there is the supervisor/supervisee relationship. I pay close attention to how the presentation of an issue has an impact on myself. This can be done even more powerfully in a group, where we have several sources of information. I take the view that what a supervisee is bringing is something they have not been able to digest or something or someone they have made ‘other’. I use my own feelings as a guide to what might not have been digested, being present to what has been made ‘other’ to enable the supervisee do likewise.

I would like to finish with an example from a supervisor accreditation process. I am doing this to show how all of the above can be applied once there is a willingness to go into any situation with the idea of dissolving otherness and the fear that comes from it.

I was asked to be an external moderator for a supervision diploma course. This entailed working with a colleague and watching five supervisors conducting live supervision, one at a time, in another room which was streamed to myself, my colleague and the four other supervisors taking the diploma.

I started the day by saying that they had all passed their live supervision module before they had even done it. There was much laughter and relief but I noticed that I did not feel good. ‘Otherness’ was still very much in the room for me. I fed this back and they shared that after the initial relief certain thoughts arose, such as: ‘I don’t trust this (or him)’; ‘What kind of a course is this if everyone passes before they even start?’; ‘Is this a trick?’; and ‘I think I am better than others and want that recognised.’ These are all statements of separation, but once they had been voiced the students settled down and were able to provide robust and useful feedback to each other. The fear of failing which inevitably creates separation had been removed and the feedback was welcomed as it was seen as coming from a place of joining.

CONCLUSION

In this article I have aimed to show how an issue presented in supervision as a problem stems from seeing otherness, whatever the situation. My experience is that supervision can offer a place of inquiry to help dissolve this otherness and the fear that goes with it, and thereby take us to a place of compassion and connection. I call this spiritual practice as it can transfer to all aspects of our lives.

I will end with one such example. Byron Katie, an American woman who had a spontaneous awakening, was visiting a woman who had cancer. As she was leaving, the woman said to Katie, ‘I love you.’ Katie’s reply was: ‘Not possible. Until you love your cancer, you can’t love me.’ Initially shocked, I then saw that Katie was inviting this woman not to see her cancer as ‘other’ but to join with it, and potentially with everything, through loving it. A supervisee brings otherness and the supervisor opens the door to another way of looking.

As this Sufi maxim puts it: *fear knocked at the door. Love answered and there was no one there.*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Robin Shohet has been supervising for over 40 years and is the author and editor of several books on supervision. His next one, which he is co-writing with his wife, Joan Wilmot, will come out in 2020. He is also editing a book, *Love in the NHS; Stories of Caring, Kindness and Compassion*. He has recently started learning the accordion and is in love with his music teacher.

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1. Richard Miller in *The Sacred Mirror*. Ed. Fenner and Krystal. Prendergast (2003), p224
2. Byron Katie. www.thework.com

Coach Training Accreditation support for new applicants

Coach Training Accreditation Clinics starting in August 2019

It is important to the AC that you feel supported through the accreditation process for all our schemes. Due to the success of our weekly Coach Accreditation Clinics, we are pleased to announce the launch of the same member benefit to Coach Training Accreditation applicants.

Starting in August, you will be able to join weekly Coach Training Accreditation Clinics to ask about the process, eligibility the level to apply for or any other questions you may have. We will take you through the Applicant Guide step by step, so you feel confident that you have included all the required information before you submit your application.

The AC accredits Coach Training Courses at four different levels, from the delivery of foundation skills for the novice coach to Master’s degree level skills for the highly experienced and knowledgeable coach. By getting your coach training accredited, you are demonstrating to purchasers of training that they are investing in a well-designed, balanced programme that meets a set of quality criteria which encompasses the AC’s Coaching Competencies.



The clinics are complimentary for AC organizational members and take place via the GoTo Meeting platform. They can be booked here: [AC Events Calendar](#)

Just find a date and time that works for you and register. We look forward to connecting with you soon!

AC Group Super-Vision Experience Calls

Connect with peers from across the globe for reflective practice

“I leave uplifted, focused and with fresh ideas of how to develop my practice.” Participant

As a benefit of AC membership, we invite you to participate in a no-fee call to connect with up to three other coaches for a one-hour session, hosted virtually by one of our highly committed group of volunteer host coach supervisors.. The hosts offer their experience, skill and passion, providing members with an opportunity to collaborate with peers and share their practice, questions and tips.

The calls are available throughout the year on the third Thursday of every month. We hope to accommodate different times zones across the world by offering calls at 8.00 and 12.00 and 18.00 UK time. Check out the website for details, timings and sessions themes.

Our aim is to give members the opportunity to experience a flavour of group supervision through:

- engaging with peers
- experiencing ‘group super vision’ and diversity of thought and ideas
- reflecting and finding new ways of thinking to apply to your practice
- co-creating a sense of connection and community with other AC members across the globe



To book a place on one of the calls please visit the [AC Events Calendar](#). For more information please contact Naomi on accreditationoffice@associationforcoaching.com

USING VISION BOARDS IN SUPERVISION

Coaching supervisor [Liz Ford](#) and coach [Kay Matthews](#) explore their creative use of vision boards during a supervision session in the style of ‘over the fence’, giving us access to the thinking of both.

SUPERVISOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Liz: I've been working with Kay for three years, and during this time we have used many creative techniques in our work together. These have included experimenting with creative ways of reflecting, using picture cards to explore feelings, and discovering inspiring spaces to coach and supervise. Much of our work is done over video call platforms like Skype or Zoom, although we also meet face-to-face every few sessions.

One of the areas Kay has been working on over the last few months is her application for accreditation with the Association for Coaching. Although she has been enthusiastic about it during our supervision time, we have noticed a pattern of avoidance and procrastination between sessions. When we delved deeper into this we discovered that Kay was seeing the application as a chore and as something separate to her and her work; an inconvenience playing on her mind.

I remembered how motivational Kay had found vision boards in the past, using them for her supervision and personal goals each year, and asked if she thought it might be helpful to

create a vision board for her accreditation submission. Kay was encouraged by this and, as we started exploring the positives of what accreditation might bring her and her work, she started drawing. Once she had some ideas, Kay went away to further develop this sketch.

Below, Kay explains how the making of her accreditation drawing shifted her thinking about accreditation and freed her motivation.

SUPERVISEE'S PERSPECTIVE

Kay: Liz introduced me to the method of using vision boards when we first began working together, and I've since developed a vision board each year. I enjoy creating them and reflecting back on my progress and achievements.

One of my goals this year is to work towards accreditation with the Association for Coaching. Liz and I had discussed this on several occasions, and although after each session I felt more motivated, I had only taken small steps – around 10-15% of my



application. Obtaining accreditation does take time, as there are high standards to be achieved; however, I was beginning to feel frustrated with the slow progress I was making.

One barrier for me was the size of the task and I had begun to feel daunted by it. Another was that I'd chosen to do this, and I wasn't letting anyone else down if I didn't complete it. This meant that things that did involve others always took priority over my accreditation preparation. I also realised that I had become apprehensive about who would be assessing my work. When Liz explained that I'd receive feedback from a professional experienced coach who had gone through this process themselves, I was able to visualise a 'real person' at the end of the assessment – someone who could give me feedback and provide an opportunity to improve my skills.

Liz reflected back that, as I'd had success with vision boards previously, it might be useful to create one for my accreditation journey. It was a light bulb moment! I knew immediately that this was right for me and I made a sketch of my accreditation vision straight after our supervision call.

As I got into the flow of the drawing, I realised that the most imposing part of the sketch was the sunflower, which represents my solution-focused coaching. I realised how much I love this style of coaching, and how supportive it is for me and my clients. The emphasis then shifted to: how can I learn more about

solution-focused coaching and keep on growing? I changed the title from 'AC Accreditation' to 'Personal Growth Vision'. The emphasis had changed from something I was doing because I felt I 'should' do it to something that I was doing for me and my family, friends and clients.

I'm now 60% of the way through the accreditation process, with time booked in the diary to finish the other 40%, and I'm looking forward to taking this time and enjoying the learning that takes place. I've even added a sunflower icon next to the dates I've set aside in my diary!

ABOUT THE AC GROUP SUPERVISION CALLS

The Association for Coaching provides a group supervision experience on the third Thursday of every month. The calls are held via video link or low-cost teleconference line and are facilitated by experienced AC coaches, who donate their time to support fellow AC members. The calls last up to one hour with a maximum of five participants. AC Group Supervision calls are designed to offer members a taste of what supervision is like and what can be gained from participating in it. The calls are available for AC members regardless of location across the world. For more information:

www.associationforcoaching.com/page/EventsGroupSupervi

BOOK REVIEWS

THE BUSINESS DEVELOPER'S PLAYBOOK

Carole Thelwall-Jones discovers an insightful guide to influencing outcomes that will enable you to succeed in life and business.

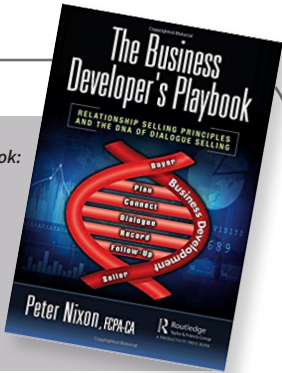
If, like me, you 'hate sales', then *The Business Developer's Playbook* by Peter Nixon is for you. This readable book is both inspirational and practical. A range of scenarios (from professional services to matrimony!) explore what it means to sell services and ideas. Nixon presents a compelling case for undergoing a shift in mindset, moving from a focus on 'selling' to something more like a 'dialogue' that is based on relationships.

The five stages of the dialogue selling process – Plan, Connect, Dialogue, Record/Synch, Act – are described in detail. A logical progression explores each step, offering practical concepts and tools. Nixon illustrates how network mapping will identify and segment your contacts into a business development roadmap. In addition, tips will guide you on how to appropriately share your powerful value proposition and explore relationship threads to identify to client needs and opportunities to stay in touch.

Nixon's 'Bulldog opportunity tracker' helps you assess your business development dialogues. Qualifying your opportunities will let you prioritise them to suit your business and life goals. You can then decide if you will pursue the opportunity personally, refer it to others or note it for the future.

The author's personal stories illustrate life lessons gained from family, colleagues, thought leaders, clients, competitors and self-reflection. For example, helping your buyers say 'no' might seem counter-intuitive, but will allow you to maintain good relationships and not waste effort. Nixon details 21 relationship principles, and divides them into three groups: Indra (relationships), Karma (behaviours) and Mandala (persistence), reinforcing the need for these three attributes when you are relationship selling.

TITLE: *The Business Developer's Playbook: Relationship Selling Principles and the DNA of Dialogue Selling*
AUTHOR: Peter Nixon
PUBLISHER: Routledge
PUBLICATION DATE: 2018
HARDBACK PRICE: £30.99
ISBN: 978-1-138-32258-5



Discussing the 'nitty-gritty' of a business developer's work day, Nixon explores activities such as creating your 'cockpit' and 'dashboard', thinking clearly, emphasising presence when making sales calls, reflecting and looking after yourself.

Nixon offers insights from his years of experience as a negotiator working in different cultures. These include de-escalating conflict by changing time or space, creating choice and persisting with compassion. Useful appendices summarise ten key tools.

This book lets you learn from the 'a-ha' moments experienced by an internationally experienced consultant. His five-step process and 21 principles offer you the chance to integrate these insights into your own sales practice.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Carole Thelwall-Jones is an independent training consultant with expertise in volunteer engagement and leadership. For ten years Carole developed and implemented the English Rugby Football Union's national volunteer strategy. Carole has been helping individuals, teams and organisations in business, sport and the charity sector for the last six years. She is a member of the board of Get Berkshire Active.

Follow her on Twitter @OWL_Ltd

GLOBAL LEADERSHIP & COACHING

Lynne Cooper is enthralled by an insightful, wide-ranging and well-researched book written by an author with a wealth of relevant experience.

This title is an eclectic collection of case studies on leadership excellence and coaching insights, woven together into a book that, to my knowledge, is like no other in the field. Rachel Ellison has drawn on her experiences as a BBC news correspondent, a leader of international development aid programmes and latterly as an executive coach, researching and presenting some captivating and powerful stories of leading in challenging environments. It's not often that one finds a real page-turner amongst the coaching genre, but at times I found myself compelled to keep on reading.

For coaches, this is a leadership book with a difference. Full of accounts of real-life experiences, it illustrates the need to have a systemic and cultural understanding of the leader's situation. It reminds us of the importance of the stories within the narrative and the stories behind the narrative – the complexity of the world in which we live and the human condition *with* which we live.

The case studies are based on the author's research amongst her former coaching clients, her own leadership experiences, interviews with others and some very personal stories. Contexts range from Afghanistan to the neonatal unit, from prisons to the Paralympic Games and from conflict to diversity. There are chapters on coaching locations, safe psychological spaces and confronting stereotypes in coaching.

Well-researched and skilfully written, it was Ellison's voice that held the book together for me rather than a clear beginning, middle and end. However, the book is more than just an interesting and enjoyable read: it has a distinct focus on supporting the reader's learning. There is rich analysis and exploration of the stories the author has shared and the learning those accounts encapsulate. At the end of each chapter the author invites the reader to some guided reflection on the concepts emerging from

TITLE: *Global Leadership & Coaching*
AUTHOR: Rachel Ellison
PUBLISHER: Routledge
PUBLICATION DATE: November 2018
PAPERBACK PRICE: £21.99
ISBN: 9781138564961



the content, with pertinent questions for both coaches and leaders.

There is much that leaders can learn from dipping into this book and gaining perspectives from leadership in many contexts other than their own. In turn, coaches will come away with a deeper grasp of leadership challenges and the importance of working systemically, with uncertainty, with ethical complexity and cultural diversity. I will certainly be revisiting its content and reflecting on its application in my practice.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Lynne Cooper is an AC Accredited Master Executive Coach and accredited coaching supervisor with twenty years of experience in coaching leaders and senior leadership teams. The founder of The Five-Minute Coach and Managing Partner of Change Perspectives, Lynne is the co-developer of The Five-Minute Coach, a pioneer in the use of clean language and metaphor in coaching, and an author. She is an Honorary Life Fellow of the AC.

HOW TO CREATE A COACHING CULTURE

Anyone involved in the process of creating a coaching culture could benefit from this handbook for culture change and coaching, finds Karin Ovari.

This is a well-constructed book with examples describing both the challenges and the ‘how to’ of creating a coaching culture. It is not as simple as it looks...

Anyone who has ever had the pleasure of being involved with creating any type of organisational culture change will appreciate the journey that everyone involved has to take to get there. It is a long road with many obstacles. Creating a coaching culture elevates cultural change to whole new level by incorporating change beyond the strategic.

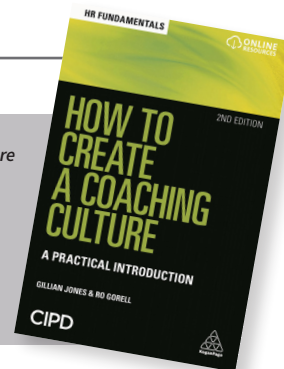
Luckily, this book will guide you along the way. It provides a wealth of information for anyone working in HR, leadership and development teams and/or as a coaching professional, be they internal or external.

The authors share their experience by creating a roadmap with many models and frameworks to simplify and assist. It is more of a manual than a story, and should be kept close at hand as a companion rather than read cover-to-cover, but it is an interesting read nonetheless.

The book begins by reviewing the question of what a coaching culture actually is. Various insightful questions prompt you to think about and create a vision for the future before moving on. Next is understanding why it is worth embarking on the journey and the benefits to the organisation. Searching for answers through powerful questions will help to define the worth of the venture to the coach and the client.

The authors stress the importance of aligning coaching culture with strategy. Everyone involved has to be clear on the intention, vision and strategic fit. A chapter is devoted to helping you understand these links, clarify why you’re doing what you’re doing, and develop the strategy to move forward.

TITLE: *How to Create a Coaching Culture*
AUTHORS: Gillian Jones and Ro Gorell
PUBLISHER: Kogan Page
PUBLICATION DATE: September 2018 (2nd edition)
PAPERBACK PRICE: £19.99
ISBN: 978-0749483272



Further in the book you will take a deeper dive into coaching capabilities from many angles, such as internal v external coaches and managers as coaches, accompanied by useful tools and checklists – including sample training programmes. A section of planning tips suggests what material to collect, and a model of the ten stages of a coaching culture suggests how to report on your findings, how to use diagnostic tools and how to hold a workshop with relevant stakeholders.

You will take a deeper look at what the ROI¹ may look like. This is often an overlooked area, and through the sharing of experience and models you will be able to design and satisfy the relevant persons and overcome the oft-touted confidentiality issues. The authors believe it is possible and in my experience is key to long-term success.

The overarching premise of the book is that there are no one-size-fits-all frameworks. Every organisation is different and at a different stage of the process. The examples, reports, questions and tools gathered in this handy book – many of which are available to download online – will guide you. Enjoy the journey.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

With a background in behavioural safety and human factors, Karin’s passion lies in creating a world where managers are leading, teams are performing and safety is a core value. Her coaching focuses on providing discrete support to senior technical leaders working in remote and challenging environments. As a global citizen she has a broad understanding of people and cultures and loves working with cultural change and diversity. Core coaching frameworks include ontological coaching, conversational intelligence, emotional intelligence and safety culture.

1. Return on investment

CRITICAL MOMENTS IN EXECUTIVE COACHING

Deputy Editor Sue Stockdale finds delving into this intriguing world of critical coaching moments a fascinating read.

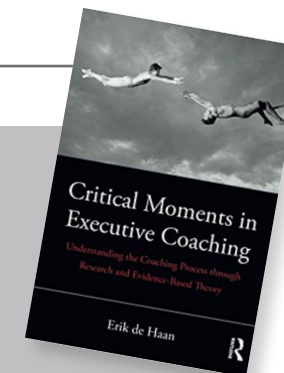
The phrase ‘opening the kimono’ comes to mind when thinking about this book, because it is rare to learn about what happens in coaching sessions, let alone what is going on in the minds of coaches, as executive coaching is such a private experience. Yet here we are invited in, not only to discover the thoughts, fears and anxieties of both inexperienced and more seasoned coaches, but also to get the insights from sponsors about what they perceive to be the critical moments in coaching engagements. It is a heady cocktail.

The book contains the results of a number of qualitative research projects on the topic of critical moments in coaching, using evidence- and research-based approaches. This results in a substantial amount of description, an outline of the methodology used, and the results and synthesis of these findings. For someone like me, with a big picture preference, this was hard going at times. That said, I can wholeheartedly see the value of including this because there will be researchers and students who want to refer to the evidence and understand the research methods. I just wanted to skip to the end to find out ‘what happened next’; luckily, the author met my needs too by providing a handy summary at the end of each chapter.

As a coach, what one realises from reading the varying viewpoints of coachee, sponsor and coach is that each party defines a critical moment quite differently. There seems to be more agreement, perhaps understandably, between coach and coachee compared to the sponsor perspective. This caused me to consider how tough it can be to measure the success of a coaching engagement when everyone’s perspectives vary so much. The use of supervision is included and the book outlines how it plays a role in helping coaches seek reassurance and guidance. This topic provides another viewpoint to reflect on.

De Haan details a neat way of categorising critical moments. For less experienced coaches, critical moments

TITLE: *Critical Moments in Executive Coaching*
AUTHOR: Erik de Haan
PUBLISHER: Routledge
PUBLICATION DATE: May 2019
PRICE: £26.99
ISBN: 978-0-8153-9691-8



are primarily associated with doubts during coaching – about the conversation, the relationship itself and oneself: ‘how well am I doing?’ By comparison, it appears that experienced coaches’ anxieties include managing boundaries, their own intuition and contribution to the relationship. It is here that the rigour of the analysis and research summaries come into their own, as De Haan provides participant statements from the study describing these moments. Examples of anxieties in a coaching session include wondering about a request to share notes and what information could be shared with whom in a three-way contract. I found this part of the book to be my ‘kimono moment’: reading these findings and knowing that other coaches share similar concerns during a coaching session made me feel less isolated. Plus, you get the perspective of the coachee, and sponsor too, something that coaches rarely have awareness of.

There is also a fascinating chapter on looking for the *Rashomon effect*¹. De Haan raises the question: ‘when two parties have a conversation, would they say similar or different things about it afterwards?’ By contrast to the earlier chapters where the participants were asked about critical moments ‘after the fact’, this chapter provides an interesting twist, showing greater congruence in views when immediate feedback is sought.

The remaining chapters focus on the sponsor perspective, which is markedly different from the coach and coachee, and then how to apply the lessons in practice. Finally, there is a meaty appendix (over 100 pages) which contains short pen pictures of critical moments as defined by the coaches who took part in the research. I found it fascinating to see so many similarities in what causes anxiety and doubt in coaches. Overall, the book provided robust research findings, and left me curious to explore this subject more.

1. From the 1950 film of the same name by Akira Kurosawa, which tells the same story from the perspective of three different people.

Beware coaches lauding authenticity!

Australian coach Paul Lawrence argues that to help people be more authentic we ought to help them uncover different aspects of the self, rather than assuming that they have only one persona.

The coaching and leadership literature urges us all to become more authentic, and it commends us as coaches to help our clients become more authentic in service of helping them be more effective in work and in life. This ubiquitous mantra is not new. As long ago as 1890 William James wrote:

‘Seek out that particular mental attribute which makes you feel most deeply and vitally alive, along with which comes the inner voice which says, “This is the real me,” and when you have found that attitude, follow it.’¹

This article is not about to challenge the worth of becoming more self-aware, but it is going to suggest that many of our efforts to help people become more authentic are misguided and unhelpful. If we want to help people to get to know themselves better, then I believe we must have a working theory of self. In the absence of such a theory we will most likely assume an implicit theory of self, the theory underlying pretty much everything that gets written about self, which is that we have just the one self.

How many of us work with personality tests and multi-rater surveys? These instruments all assume we have a single self. I am personally accredited in more than a dozen of these tools and have attended lots of accreditation workshops. I recall attending one such workshop before which we were asked to complete a 360 survey. My survey suggested that I showed up differently in different contexts. Ratings from people in one work environment were different to ratings in a second work

environment, which were different again to ratings from friends and family. The person debriefing me, someone trained to use the tool, suggested I needed to become more authentic. If I was showing up differently in different contexts, they said, then in some of those contexts I was not being my true self.

This is quite possibly nonsense. Unhelpful, distracting and disempowering. Such a narrative is based on the premise that we each have one single self; that our quest in life must be to truly understand that self, and to free ourselves of the fears and anxieties that cause us to behave unlike that true self, to rid ourselves of the ‘gremlins’² that seek to detach us from being that self. While this idea of a single self may feel intuitively true – and appears often throughout human philosophy and teachings – the only real evidence is our subjective experience of being. This sense of self may be helpful but is almost certainly illusory^{3,4}.

MULTIPLICITY THEORY

Scientists and philosophers have been debating the nature of self for thousands of years. Multiple-self or multiplicity theories date back to at least the time of Plato, who argued that the psyche comprises logic, spirit and appetite. Freud, of course, wrote of the *id*, the *ego* and the *superego*. Eric Berne wrote about the parent, the adult and the child. While single-self theories may resonate intuitively, the evidence leans more toward multiplicity. Benjamin Libet and colleagues, for example, found that brain activity in the cerebrum preceded conscious intention.⁵ In other words, one part of the brain was already preparing to act before the conscious part of the brain had made a decision. This suggests that many of the decisions we make, that we label as conscious decisions in retrospect, are made by other parts of the brain. Conscious may be an illusion, and the entirely conscious self just a story.

There are lots of multiple-self theories, and they have things in common and areas where they differ. Early theories, such as Freud’s, suggested that the adult psyche is relatively fixed in nature, the outcome of early childhood development. Other writers suggest the self continues to evolve. John Rowan, for example, doesn’t believe that parent figures are the only source of sub-selves.⁶ He suggests that the roles people play, and people’s heroes and heroines, are also important. Some theorists believe there is an executive self standing over all the other selves, notably Roberto Assagioli and his theory of sub-personalities. Other writers, such as Tatiana Bachkirova⁷, believe that there is no such overarching self; different selves are constantly interacting, each self relatively busy or quiet at any one time. These are just examples as to how these theories differ in some respects.

Bachkirova is the only author to have devised a theory of self that is specific to coaching. Her theory features self-as-experience, self-as-actor and self-as-story. The first aspect of self is the pre-reflective self, a primitive, inarticulate entity. The second aspect of self is the ego, comprising a network of mini-selves, some conscious and others unconscious. Some are simple, others are more complex. They engage with each other and may come into conflict. In a relatively unformed ego, levels of collaboration between these different selves is low, while in a mature ego, the mini-selves interact with each other effectively. The third aspect of self is the narrator, a linguistic function of the conscious mind that is forever making up stories to explain how we, as whole beings, interact with our environments. These stories are ultimately just stories, since the narrator doesn’t really know what is happening in the subconscious. To understand the function of the narrator, just think of a time when you behaved ‘out of character’. How did you rationalise this to yourself? What story did you make up to explain your actions?

There is evidence to support the idea of a narrative self. Starting in the late 1980’s, Michael Gazzaniga and colleagues conducted a series of studies on split brain patients.⁸ These patients sought relief from epilepsy by undergoing surgery to sever the corpus callosum, the part of the brain connecting the two hemispheres. When they projected an image to the right visual field (the left hemisphere) patients could describe what they saw. But when the same image was displayed to the left visual field (the right hemisphere), patients said they saw nothing. Interestingly, if Gazzaniga asked the patients to point to an object similar to the one being projected, they did so easily. The right brain saw the image and could mobilise

a non-verbal response, but it couldn’t talk about what it saw. In another experiment each hemisphere was shown four small pictures, one of which related to a larger picture also presented to that hemisphere. The patient had to choose the most appropriate small picture. So, the right hemisphere, for example, correctly picked a shovel for a snowstorm, and the left hemisphere correctly picked a chicken to go with a bird’s foot. But when Gazzaniga asked the patient why the right hemisphere was pointing to a shovel, the left hemisphere made up a story, about using the shovel to clean out a chicken shed. In other words, the left hemisphere, the part of the brain with a voice, made up a story to explain what the non-verbal right hemisphere was up to. Gazzaniga called this part of the brain the Left Hemisphere Interpreter (LHI). The LHI, Gazzaniga says, works constantly to seek out order and reason and relays this story to the conscious self. If this is how the brain works, it explains why it feels like we have a single self, whereas in fact there are other subconscious selves working away silently, unable to speak.

BACK TO THE QUEST FOR AUTHENTICITY

Let’s return to Bachkirova’s formed and unformed egos. In a relatively unformed ego, remember, our different selves don’t work together very well, whereas in the formed ego they all get along splendidly. This redefines what it means to be authentic. Remember the 360 debriefer encouraging me to be the same person in every context. From a multiplicity perspective this isn’t going to help me be more authentic, quite the opposite. This is a strategy that encourages me to privilege one of my selves and to pretend the others don’t exist. Psychologist Mary Watkins says that the hallmark of healthy psychological development is the progressive elaboration of different characters within ourselves, and a process whereby we encourage each of these characters to get to know each other better through imaginary dialogue. This is a very different strategy for becoming more authentic, in which we embrace our inner diversity and welcome difference. Richard Schwartz takes this idea to another level. His ‘Internal Family Systems’ model (IFS)⁹ encourages people to regard their inner selves as a family, and to explore their group dynamics.

NARRATIVE COACHING AND MULTIPLICITY

Some people remain unconvinced. Aren’t these different selves just aspects of the same self? From a practical perspective I don’t think it really matters. The key message

is that the effective coach helps the coachee actively seek to understand and get to know every aspect of self, rather than just selecting one and ignoring the rest. This approach may sit particularly well with the narrative coach. Whereas the mysterious nature of self may worry a modernist seeking an 'objective' truth, it ought to be less troubling to the post-modernist, happy to work with the idea that we are the story we tell ourselves. As Mick Cooper puts it:

'The question is not whether self-plurality is objectively measurable from the standpoint of an objective measurer, but whether it is possible to experience self-plurality from the standpoint of a subjective experiencer.'¹⁰

The narrative coach listens to the conflict in stories. Often these stories quite explicitly name different selves, but the extent to which a person experiences themselves as a single-self with multiple aspects or as multiple in essence doesn't seem to matter very much. Whatever the frame, coach and coachee may find it useful to explore this rich inner world using whatever metaphor appears most useful at the time. The post-modernist perspective is consistent with the underlying principles of narrative coaching, as defined by both Reinhard Stelter¹¹ and David Drake¹². Although neither Stelter nor Drake write much explicitly about multiplicity theory, Joye Weisel-Barth suggests the narrative approach be expanded to reflect the idea that people hold many stories at once, stories which may come into direct conflict.¹³ She uses the example of a patient experiencing multiple convictions with regard to her unfaithful husband. As a therapist, Weisel-Barth saw her role as being to bring these different convictions to the patient's consciousness, and to help her resolve the conflict between these different aspects of self.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COACHING

So, what implications does multiplicity theory have for coaches? I can think of at least six.

1. If we have multiple selves, then the selves that show up in the coaching room are unlikely to represent the full myriad of selves operating outside the coaching room. Coach and coachee should avoid moving too quickly to a single interpretation of events, nor indeed to committing too early to a single version of a desired future state.
2. A multiplicity perspective encourages coach and coachee to spend time together outside the coaching room, so that the coach can experience the coachee in different contexts, demonstrating different aspects of self.
3. The coach can enable the coachee to adopt a more empowered and sophisticated approach to deciphering multi-rater survey data. A multiplicity perspective encourages the coach to be more curious as to the nature of the data, and to afford the coachee more space to determine what the data means.
4. A multiplicity perspective leads the coach to reconsider the application of psychological theory more generally.
5. It also encourages coaches to become more systemically self-aware. Blockers to effective coaching may include the presence of a critical, striving self, or an approval-seeking self, anxious to demonstrate progress to the paying client. A multiplicity perspective demands of the coach an understanding as to how these different selves to each other in different contexts.
6. Finally, and more generally, the multiplicity perspective may help the coach function more effectively in today's complex world. If the self is as complex and dynamic as described here, then it is a brave or foolish coach that purports to speak authoritatively upon the personality of another.

Case Study

This story takes place in a pharmaceuticals company, PKM, based in Australia, a subsidiary of a global multinational with head office in the US. The coachee, Bob, joined the company 18 months before the assignment began. He was a pharmacist by trade who moved into a corporate role in part because he wanted to grow and develop his people skills. He joined PKM as an account manager, and within six months was promoted into a business development role with a place on the senior leadership team. In the business development role, he was responsible for leading two teams and for building a new business model for a key market segment. In this role he reported both to the CEO of the Australian business and to the global head office. The assignment was commissioned at the request of Bob and his line manager through the HR function. Bob and line manager recognised Bob's creative abilities and his capacity to understand and work through complex issues. They sought coaching initially to help him improve his abilities to: i) prioritise and organise; ii) influence stakeholders in both the Australian and global organizations; and iii) manage his teams more effectively.

In early sessions Bob explained his desire to be able to articulate a clear message and talked about the effort it took to manage 'a thousand thoughts down to five'. At the same time, he expressed concerns about bringing too much structure into his thinking. Would this not compromise his spontaneity and creativity? I sensed two aspects of self; a desire to be creative and a desire to be more organised, aspects that appeared to be in conflict. I invited Bob to give character to both aspects of self, a suggestion he responded to quickly. He characterized the first aspect of himself as 'Crazy Juan'. Crazy Juan (CJ) was 'sunshine yellow', bringing to Bob outside-the-box thinking, energy, humour and a capacity to join the dots. CJ was male, dressed in Speedo swimwear ('budgie-smugglers') and a sombrero. Bob characterized the second aspect of self as the 'Aggressive Librarian'. The Aggressive Librarian (AL) was dressed in a suit. The AL was grounded and

driven, focused on process and information. He was the nay-sayer who wanted to run the show but didn't, because he felt untrusted, unskilled and tired.

Bob believed that PKM management wanted to see more of the AL, whereas he wanted them to appreciate the qualities of CJ instead. One of Bob's early actions was to stage a conversation between these two aspects of self to see if they might find a better way of working together. Bob talked about striking a good balance and how this balance was different in different contexts. He wondered how he could manage this balance better, deciding in the moment whether to bring forth CJ or AL. Over the next few months Bob reported making great strides in his capacity to prioritise and organise.

He shared the idea of CJ and AL with his team, asking them to let him know if CJ appeared to be getting out of control. At one stage he even hosted a company quiz night in the persona of Crazy Juan, wearing only a swimming costume, sombrero and a big smile. Ultimately Bob, his line manager and the HR manager all declared themselves satisfied with the outcomes of the assignment, citing evidence of Bob's enhanced effectiveness in the new role. Ultimately Bob left PKM. Before writing this case study I sought Bob's permission to tell this story and in response he wrote me an e-mail. In it he said:

'Things are well this end and the new organization has a far more "authentic Bob" in their ranks ... one that empowers CJ and AL to make decisions on who leads and enables the other to "tag along for the ride" rather than be cast out. Overall, a far more dynamic outcome from a better relationship between the figures we created.'

All names have been changed to ensure anonymity

PRACTICE

Here are four things to think about if you're considering a multiplicity approach:

1. Determining whether a multiplicity approach is appropriate

The coach doesn't have to explicitly talk about multiplicity, but some coachees may find that useful – and interesting. Some people love working with new ideas and theories, others want to stick to the pragmatic and tangible in service of coming up with actions. It is for the coach to decide whether to introduce the idea of multiplicity.

2. Identifying and naming multiple selves

Several writers describe working with multiplicity. Lester, for example, suggests the practitioner simply ask the individual to identify multiple selves, and to hypothesise how they may interact.¹⁴ Opportunities to experiment with multiplicity frameworks may present themselves often quite naturally in coaching, for example when a coachee is contemplating internal conflict (see case study).

3. Encouraging interaction between different aspects of self

Various writers, including Schwartz and Bachkirova, all point to the role of the practitioner in facilitating a deeper relationship between different aspects of self. Examples of specific techniques include psychodrama, internal team building¹⁵ and empty chair exercises.

4. Encouraging interaction between different aspects of self and others

Many coaches already invite other stakeholders into the coaching conversation, for example the line manager. The coachee-line manager relationship is an example of a specific context, one in which particular aspects of self may reveal themselves.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



After completing a PhD in Psychology, Paul Lawrence embarked upon a corporate career with BP plc, leading teams and businesses in the UK, Spain, Portugal, Australia and Japan. Paul has been working as a coach and consultant since 2007 based in Sydney, Australia. He authored the books *Leading Change: How Successful Leaders Approach Change Management* and *Coaching in Three Dimensions: Meeting the Challenges of a Complex World*. A third book, *The Tao of Dialogue*, is due for release in 2019. Paul teaches coaching at the Sydney Business School, University of Wollongong.

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AUGUST

Wednesday 14th August

7:30am - 9:00am AEST

Sydney, Australia NSW, Breakfast

Monthly Coaches Breakfast

Wednesday 28th August

12:30pm - 1:30pm AEST

Sydney, Australia NSW, Lunch

There are Always Alternate Narratives

Adrian van den Bok

SEPTEMBER

Thursday 5th September

5:30pm - 7:30pm AEST

Sydney, Australia NSW, Evening

Opportunities and Issues with Using Adult Development Theories in Coaching

Tatiana Bachkirova

Wednesday 11th September

7:30am - 9:00am AEST

Sydney, Australia NSW, Breakfast

Monthly Coaches Breakfast

Tuesday 17th September

12:30pm - 1:30pm AEST

Sydney, Australia NSW, Lunch

Managerial Coaching: What organizations can do differently

Sangeeta Pilger

Tuesday 17th September

6:00pm - 8:30pm BST

Edinburgh UK, Evening

Creativity in Coaching

Anna Bell

TO BOOK PLEASE VISIT OUR EVENTS
CALENDAR ON THE AC WEBSITE

More events are added regularly*

* Dates and times subject to change

OCTOBER

Tuesday 8th October

6:00pm - 8:30pm BST

Cambridge UK, Evening

The Future of Life and Work

Salema Velu

Wednesday 9th October

7:30am - 9:00am AEDT

Sydney, Australia NSW, Breakfast

Monthly Coaches Breakfast

Monday 14th October

8:30am - 10:30am BST

Belfast, Northern Ireland, Breakfast

Corporate Roundtable

Corporate only event

Friday 18th October

Save the date

Athens Greece

Inaugural Event of the Association for Coaching (AC)

– AC Greece and Cyprus

Wednesday 23rd October

12:30pm - 1:30pm AEDT

Sydney, Australia NSW, Lunch

Mental Health Issues in Coaching

Glenn Dennett

NOVEMBER

Tuesday 12th November

6:00pm - 8:30pm BST

Edinburgh UK, Evening

System-Orientated Coaching and Facilitation

Eileen Moir

Wednesday 13th November

7:30am - 9:00am AEDT

Sydney, Australia NSW, Breakfast

Monthly Coaches Breakfast

Wednesday 20th November

9:00am - 4:30pm BST

Hertfordshire UK, Day

The Necessary Revolution in Coaching for the 21st Century

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