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Preface

The Transpersonal Coaching Handbook (TCH) is for novice and professional coaches, as well as anybody who is interested in learning the transpersonal approach to coaching.

In addition to introducing a transpersonal coaching philosophy, theory and practice, as well as outlining the value of a transpersonal perspective in the coaching profession, the TCH introduces a unique transpersonal coaching model (TCM) and describes how to use this model in a variety of coaching contexts. While various applications of the TCM are described in relative detail, important nuances and practical skills are required to apply this model effectively and ethically. These skills are taught in the first 2 of the 3 courses outlined below.

One of the main objectives of this handbook is to present multiperspective, yet grounded and analysed theories in support of the transpersonal approach to coaching. To fulfil this objective, transpersonal coaching essays by professional coaches and transpersonal coaching students have been included. This section of the handbook will grow and become more refined in future editions – for which we welcome essay submissions.

This first (2018) edition of the TCH is intended to serve as a learning resource for participants of the following courses:

1. **The in-person (live) Transpersonal Coaching course** – presented bi-annually in London (by Jevon Dangeli) and Cape Town (by Dr Hennie Geldenhuys).

2. **The online one-year Postgraduate course in Transpersonal Coaching Psychology** – presented by Jevon Dangeli through Alef Trust.

3. **The online ten-week course in Transpersonal Coaching Psychology** – open to anyone, and also an optional module on the MSc programme in Consciousness, Spirituality and Transpersonal Psychology. Presented by Jevon Dangeli through Alef Trust.

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Special thanks to Dr Hennie Geldenhuys (Transpersonal Coach and Trainer) for his valuable contributions to the content of this handbook.

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Introduction

Transpersonal coaching empowers people to transcend the ego states, mindsets and behaviours that inhibit their personal, professional and spiritual growth.

Trans (beyond) personal (ego) coaching (finding solutions and establishing resourcefulness) works with the whole person — body, mind and spirit.

Transpersonal coaches help people to resolve issues in their life, by facilitating processes that enable them to transform limiting self-constructs and debilitating beliefs into whole new ways of being.

Typical outcomes of this specialized coaching psychology include greater clarity, broader perspectives, improved performance and an enhanced sense of meaning and purpose in life.

Transpersonal coaching is the theory and practice of coaching that takes a holistic and integrative approach to supporting client growth and transformation. This is achieved through an individually tailored process helping the client to identify what provides them with a sense of meaning and purpose and, in turn, to support the client to find ways of purposefully expressing this – in their work, their personal life and within relationships. The role of the transpersonal coach is to support the client to develop a more expansive sense of self and, in so doing, to help the client access the necessary resources (social, emotional, psychological and spiritual) that will help them attain their fullest potential.

Transpersonal coaching involves shifting attention to create the space for transformation to happen and then generating willingness to integrate the client’s new awareness into the context where it is most meaningful to them. This can be considered as a bio-psycho-socio-spiritual approach to coaching, that helps clients to resolve issues concerning the body, mind, relationships and spirituality.

Transpersonal perspectives expand one’s self-construct and worldview. This may be of value in coaching through generating expanded states of consciousness and integrating
these in the context of everyday life. This way of coaching – beyond the ego – can help to transform a crisis into a spiritual awakening, which in turn can be leveraged in order to bring more resourceful perspectives and constructive solutions into challenging situations.

The transpersonal coaching model (TCM) described in this handbook is one of the Authentic Self Empowerment (ASE) approaches. ASE combines Transpersonal Psychology and Mindfulness based interventions with holistic applications of Neuro-Linguistic Programming to help people achieve meaningful and sustainable outcomes in all areas of life. At the heart of ASE is a specific state and perspective known as Open Awareness (OA). All the ASE approaches, including the TCM, are facilitated within the container of OA. Those who participate in our transpersonal coaching courses are trained to use the full range of ASE approaches, including varieties of TCM and OA applications to add value in all types of scenarios.
The Evolution of Coaching Psychology
(By Transpersonal Coaching Student - Johnny Stork)

The practice of Life Coaching arose out of athletic coaching in sports and is broadly defined as a collaborative process of helping someone improve performance or satisfaction in some aspect of their lives. In contrast with psychological counselling or therapy which is often focused on pathology rooted in past experiences or flawed thinking processes (cognition), Life Coaching is focused more on the here-and-now by working towards improving the present as well providing guidance and tools for achieving future goals in a client’s professional, relationship, creative or even spiritual aspects of life. Although distinct from the field of counselling psychology or psychiatry, Life Coaching is still fundamentally grounded in models and approaches from psychology and so the evolution of Life Coaching is closely tied to the evolution of the science’s behind human psychology and flourishing.

When we consider how the field of psychology has evolved since it was formally recognized as a distinct science in the late 19th century, we can recognize four major milestones or what are called "Forces" which reflect new or expanded understanding of human psychology and behaviour. These Four Forces mirror the growth of scientific, neurological and psychological knowledge as it relates to our evolving understanding of mind, consciousness, wellness and human flourishing. These Four Forces of psychology (broadly defined) have evolved through the following stages:

1) Psychoanalytic
2) Behavioral
3) Humanistic
4) Transpersonal

Although this is a very broad categorisation with a great deal of overlap, one can still see an expanding view of human psychology and wellness evolving first through a focus mainly on pathology and materialistic models of mind (Psychoanalytic and Behavioral), followed
by happiness and wellness (Humanistic) and now integrating the holistic, spiritual and transcendent aspects of the human experience (Transpersonal). This relatively new (since around the 60’s) Fourth Force of psychology called the transpersonal, integrates aspects of the mind, body and spirit into a broader and more holistic view of human wellness and flourishing. What makes this latest evolution of psychology so unique is that alongside the traditional neurological, cognitive and other approaches to understanding mind and consciousness, transpersonal psychology embraces science, research and approaches to wellness common to Eastern wisdom traditions as well as peak, mystical, near death and awakening experiences which include altered states of consciousness and self-transcendent states.

At least as far back as the beginning of recorded history and described in religious or spiritual texts from many traditions – particularly in the East – we find evidence that human’s have long had the capacity for powerful altered states of consciousness which break through the restricted boundaries of ego and produce profound alterations in our relationships to self, other and the cosmos. These self-transcendent “awakening” experiences have typically been identified with religious, mystical or shamanic contexts. However, as a result of various studies in transpersonal psychology, we now know these profound states of psychological transformation are far more common than we first thought and tend to occur most often outside of a religious or spiritual context [2]. Hence the term “awakening experience” (as opposed to religious or mystical experience) is now preferred and more accurately represents the secular (non-religious) and far more common expression of these profound transformational and psychological experiences.

A person’s psychology, perspectives on life and sense of self all tend to change irrevocably following such awakening experiences. Individuals who experience these transpersonal awakening experiences tend to become aware of their fundamental interconnectedness with all life which often leads to shifts of perception and changes in behaviour where they become more compassionate, altruistic and often re-evaluate their goals, careers or personal values. Perceptions of self and ego expand to include other people, all life, and even the cosmos. Some have even speculated that these awakening experiences are not only far more common than previously thought, but universal to all human’s and the capacity is simply dormant, awaiting the right situation or experience to be revealed and one day along our evolutionary path, may become the way we all experience the world all the time.

“… awoken people may be prematurely experiencing a state that is latent in many other people — and in the whole human race collectively — and that will become more common as time goes by, and will one day become the norm.” [3]
No doubt these powerful and transformational self-transcendent experiences shed light on the higher functions and potential of human consciousness. Therefore, the practice of Life Coaching would be remiss and incomplete, to ignore the transpersonal aspects of human psychology. Fortunately, the practice of Transpersonal Coaching has grown in recent years and Alef Trust (an academic institute providing university accredited transpersonal psychology MSc and PhD programmes) is pleased to have one of the leaders in the field, Jevon Dangeli, as part of their esteemed faculty.

“Transpersonal Coaching empowers people to transcend the ego states, mindsets and behaviours that inhibit their personal, professional and spiritual growth.” [1]

References:


The key differences between traditional coaching methods and transpersonal coaching

By Jevon Dangeli

Traditional (classic) coaching methods typically involve a dialog between a coach and a client aiming to address issues from a cognitive-behavioral perspective. This means that only issues in conscious awareness are addressed and their unconscious causes are left undealt with. Interestingly, neuroscience has demonstrated that our unconscious functioning precedes conscious awareness by at least 1/2 second (Libet, 1983 & 1993). The outcome of Libet’s experiments indicate that most, if not all, issues like motivation and procrastination, indecision, conflicting priorities, burnout, overwhelm and performance anxiety are a result of automatic (unconscious) reactions and patterns which occur before conscious awareness.

Traditional coaching methods rely heavily on conscious processing through questioning, analysis and tasking. It's like trying to steer a train by asking someone in the last carriage to change the direction of the entire train. It won’t be so effective, especially not in the long run.

Transpersonal coaching works with the unconscious processes that are at the root of most of our problems in life, yet it does so in a natural, conversational way that makes this methodology versatile and effective. This unique approach to coaching identifies the unconscious triggers and patterns that give rise to one’s current thoughts, feelings, behaviors and their resulting circumstances. It helps people to establish resourceful states and perspectives and then anchor these into the contexts where they experience challenges.
Another unique quality of transpersonal coaching is that the coach is trained to identify and make constructive use of the transpersonal phenomena that may also be influential in terms of the client’s issue, or which may spontaneously arise in coaching sessions. These phenomena may be unnoticed, neglected, misunderstood, or pathologized in traditional coaching or healthcare. While it is important to identify if the client requires clinical care, it may be equally important to help the client cope with, make sense of, and integrate their transpersonal experience in a non-clinical setting.

One could think of transpersonal coaching loosely as the different perspective that leads to a different outcome.

References


The Presuppositions of Transpersonal Coaching

The following list of presuppositions serves as constructive viewpoints that transpersonal coaches should have in awareness throughout sessions with clients. This list is exhaustive, but hopefully it is representative of the ‘industry standard’ among highly effective coaches who incorporate transpersonal perspectives.

1. Mind-Body-Spirit is one holistic system.

2. All coaching interventions should lead to integration and wholeness.

3. Self-actualization is the process of unveiling who we already are on more intrinsic levels.

4. Personal problems are linked to limited self-concepts and narrowed modes of perception, thus –

5. Expanding one’s self-concept and opening one’s mode of perception can be generative and transformative.

6. All human beings are more than they think they are, therefore they are capable of more than they think.
7. How we perceive and relate to people, influences their perceptions and capabilities in our presence.

8. All states are constantly changing; therefore, we always have the choice to change how we experience any situation.

9. Everyone and all phenomena are interconnected on some level(s), and it is possible to experience degrees of this interconnectedness to the point of unity consciousness.

10. Transformation in coaching is promoted by transcending our sense of separateness and cultivating a sense of interconnection and oneness.
How does transpersonal coaching work?

This specialized type of coaching involves a dialogical relationship between a coach and client with the intention to resolve issues in the client's life, by engaging in processes that serve to transcend the client's self-constructs and limiting beliefs. Typical outcomes of this form of psychological coaching are an enhanced sense of meaning and purpose in life, bringing with it greater clarity and resourcefulness.

The transpersonal coaching (TC) approach is effective at helping clients to overcome the limiting beliefs, debilitating emotions and negative reactions that prevent their success and happiness. This integral approach to coaching makes use of transpersonal states and perspectives to address issues in any context — personal and/or interpersonal and/or spiritual.

TC processes by their very nature can lead to transformation or spiritual awakening, which in turn, becomes embodied and integrated into everyday life. This type of coaching can, if necessary, elicit the root causes and other unconscious determinants of the client’s issues. Sessions include processes that are remedial and generative — guiding clients to clear their past and become more fulfilled and empowered in the present.

The main TC methodology focussed on in the following pages is the Transpersonal Coaching Model (TCM) that I have been developing since 2008. While the practice of transpersonal coaching that is covered in this handbook addresses mainly applications of the TCM, our TC course participants also learn a variety of other ASE approaches to make coaching session effective.
The Basic Transpersonal Coaching Model (TCM)

Introduction to TCM

The job of the transpersonal coach is to hold a liminal space (open, receptive and emergent), walking the client through a transformative passage of questioning and helping the client to reintegrate their new, widened and resourceful perspective into their lives.
How the TCM works

The TCM incorporates seven interconnected levels on which we experience our lives, and ourselves namely:

1. Body (physical health & performance)
2. Mind (mental health & performance)
3. Emotion (motivations & reactions)
4. Shadow (unconscious aspects of the personality)
5. Connection (relationships & inter-relatedness of phenomena)
6. Soul (subtle essence of individuals & groups)
7. Spirit (causal & non-dual realms)

The TCM integrates ten key aspects that influence our current perceptions, motivations, abilities and outcomes, namely:

1. State (current mental, emotional & general condition)
2. Trigger (stimulus that evokes one’s state & behaviour)
3. Behaviour (actions resulting from the trigger & identity)
4. Identity (part of oneself that is most identified within a specific context)
5. Beliefs (related to identity & values)
6. Values (highly valued criteria related to beliefs & mission)
7. Mission (outcomes generated by values & vision)
8. Vision (overall impact of mission & purpose)
9. Purpose (manifesting energy of the vision)
10. Source (origin or essence of purpose)
The Basic TCM Overview

Coaches who are familiar with the TCM are able to utilize this model as a conceptual framework in which the causes and other determinants of clients’ issues can be pinpointed. Following that, the TCM can serve as a compass to help clients navigate their way to liberating outcomes. Circumstances in life might be difficult to change, but transforming the meaning and effect of those circumstances is achievable with the TCM. Furthermore, the TCM’s holistic approach promotes integration, which in turn gets all ‘parts’ of you on board, playing for the same team, driven by a clear vision and in alignment with a meaningful purpose.

There are various starting and ending points when using the TCM, and a variety of ways in which the model can be applied – depending on the nature and context of the issue to be addressed. The following pages include examples of common issues, with guidelines to use the TCM constructively. These guidelines are examples of one general approach for different categories of issues. They don’t include all the other specialised transpersonal coaching skills that are necessary to facilitate thorough and effective coaching sessions. These skills are taught at the TC courses that are introduced in the Preface of this handbook.

In a nutshell, the TCM (in combination with other ASE approaches) makes use of attention shifting processes to promote resourceful states and responses – despite the severity of the challenge being faced.
The Basic TCM Exercise

Setup: Have your client lay out the TCM cards (issued to our TC course participants) on the ground in a clockwise circle. Each card should be one step away from the next, from card 1 to card 10. The “Learning” card is placed in the centre of the circle.

1. The client steps into the centre of their ‘sacred circle’ (above the Learning card).
   Guide your client into Open Awareness (OA) and enter the state with them.

2. Once both you and your client are in OA, ask your client to step above card 1 (State) and ask them questions to elicit their current mental, emotional and general condition in the context where they have asked you to help them resolve an issue.

   *Note: The words below the title of each card indicate what you want to elicit from your client when they are standing above that card.*

3. Walk the client around the circle of cards. Each card represents a stepping-stone for the client. You walk alongside the client on the outside of the circle, indicating when it is time to take the next step. The client is ready to take each successive step, once they have answered the questions that are associated with each step and explored your questions fully.

4. After having answered the questions that are associated with the last card in the circle (10. Source) the client steps into the centre of the circle above the Learning card. Here you ask them: “What have you learned about yourself through this process”?

5. Once your client has expressed a constructive Learning, ask them to pick up all the cards, starting with the Learning card and then from card 10 to card 1. As they do so, they should reflect on the value of their realisations from each card, in light of their Learning.
In certain cases, the Basic TCM Exercise works well in reverse – starting at card 10 and continuing to card 1, ending with the Learning card. When and how to use the reverse application is discussed and practiced at the TC course.

While the Basic TCM Exercise can be applied to self (as a self-coaching exercise), it is useful to have a qualified coach take you through the process in order for them to offer you different perspectives and encouragement.

*For examples of how to use open awareness in coaching sessions and teach it to your client, download a complimentary copy of our [Open Awareness Handbook](#).*
TCM applications for specific issues

The guidelines on the following pages serve as general TCM frameworks for typical coaching scenarios. The types of issues are listed, followed by examples of how you can apply the TCM to help clients to resolve those types of issues.

The TCM cards can be used in the ‘sacred circle’ format (as described in the Basic TCM Exercise), or you can apply TCM without the cards, by following the steps described on the next pages.

Although one round might prove to be sufficient for a client to achieve their desired outcome, multiple rounds in different directions, as well as other ASE techniques may also be useful. Depending on how the client’s process unfolds and what emerges, it might be appropriate at any stage to leave the TCM aside in order to apply another means of intervention, and then return to the TCM to complete that session.

Always maintain open awareness so that you can pace the client’s current experience and adapt the session spontaneously according to their arising needs and desired outcome.
Clockwise version of TCM

For issues relating to distress, depression, anxiety, fear, performance or motivation issues, PTSD, negative emotional reactions, anger, shame, loneliness, sadness, etc.

2. Elicit client’s issue state, including how they are being affected on all seven levels.
3. Elicit the most common trigger of the client’s condition.
4. Elicit the problem behaviour that gets triggered.
5. Elicit which part of themselves they are most identified with in the context where the issue prevails.
6. Elicit what the client believes about themselves and their capabilities when they are in the identity role from above.
7. Elicit the value of the beliefs from above.
8. Elicit the meaningful outcomes (mission) that are generated throughout the client’s life by the values from above.
9. Elicit the overall impact (vision) of the mission from above.
10. Associate client into their vision to feel the energy of it, then elicit their purpose – either for their entire life, or in the context where the issue prevails.
11. Guide the client to identify and merge with the source of their purpose.
13. Elicit what the client has learned about himself or herself through this process.
14. Elicit what the client’s next step will be toward fulfilling their purpose or learning from above.
15. End with Self-appreciation in soma centred open awareness (see next page for example).
Soma Centred Open Awareness

The following is one of many approaches to establish open awareness. These are covered in the free Open Awareness Handbook.

The steps below can be followed either in a standing, sitting or lying down posture. Your body should be in a comfortable position and symmetric (left and right sides aligned adjacently in the same posture). You should only progress from one step to the next once you have fulfilled each successive step’s task.

1. Focus on the rising and releasing of the belly with each inhalation and exhalation.

2. Become aware of the entire volume of space that your whole body occupies. As you do so, also keep track of your inhalations and exhalations, as well as any other sensations in the body.

3. Extend your awareness around your body - surrounding yourself with awareness - like a permeable cocoon or an aura of light/energy.

4. Be curious as to how you might experience your body being breathed, as opposed to you doing the breathing.

5. Notice how the awareness in your body and the awareness around your body are the same ‘substance’. Your breath serves as a bridge between your inner and outer experience.

6. Allow your awareness to continue expanding and notice what you notice, while remaining present with the breath. You might experience your sense of self ‘enlarging’ and may begin to feel a deep connection with everything in life.

7. To finish, focus your awareness inside the belly area once again, feeling the physical sensations of your breath. If you feel disoriented at the end, then ‘ground’ yourself by removing your shoes and walking barefoot on a natural surface for a couple minutes.
Anticlockwise version of TCM

For issues relating to indecision, procrastination, inner turmoil, conflicting priorities, dilemma, uncertainty, overactive thinking ('monkey mind'), sleep problems, chronic fatigue, burnout, etc:


2. Guide client toward the source of their existence as much as possible using the **ASE Present Resourcing** method.

3. Elicit client’s core purpose for their entire life on earth.

4. Elicit the overall impact (vision) that fulfilling the client’s purpose can lead to.

5. Elicit the outcomes (mission) that the client can foresee, being inspired by their vision.

6. Elicit what is important (values) to the client about achieving the outcomes stated above.

7. Elicit the client’s beliefs (about themselves and their capabilities) that support their values.

8. Elicit client’s identity with the above beliefs, values, mission, vision and purpose in awareness.

9. Elicit the behaviours that the client can conceive of when motivated by their identity and purpose.

10. Elicit the client’s next step (trigger) to get the ball rolling toward fulfilling their purpose.

11. Have the client imagine taking the step from above while feeling the energy (state) of what it’s like to fulfill their purpose.

Addictions and unwanted behaviour patterns

Use both versions of the TCM outlined above (clockwise and anticlockwise) in one session.

In general, start with the clockwise version up to step 11 (source), then have your client change direction to anticlockwise, guiding them back along the steps in descending order for the purpose of integrating their higher-level insights on all levels.

The expectation is that by the time the trigger is discussed at the end of the anticlockwise round, it will no longer have the same meaning or impact on the client. Once the trigger no longer results in the state that drove the client’s unwanted behaviour, they will have more freedom to choose a new response in that type of situation. It will be important to implement a thorough ‘3-Phase-Future-Pace’ (outlined in step 7 on page 33) so that the client can fully establish and integrate a new resourceful response in the presence of the trigger.

Addiction cessation TCM example:


2. Elicit the client’s preceding state that drives their need to indulge in their unwanted behaviour.

3. Elicit the client’s most common trigger in the issue context.
   
   *Note: Most often triggers are external - something that the client sees or hears, which in turn provokes a certain feeling and thought process. However, triggers can also be internal - in the form of an unsolicited emotion.*

4. Elicit the problem behaviour that gets triggered.

5. Elicit which part of themselves they are most identified with in the context where the issue prevails.

6. Elicit what the client believes about themselves and their capabilities when they are in the identity role from above.

7. Elicit the value of the beliefs from above.
8. Elicit the meaningful outcomes (mission) that are generated throughout the client’s life by the values from above.

9. Elicit the overall impact (vision) of the mission from above.

10. Associate client into their vision to feel the energy of it, then elicit their purpose – either for their entire life, or in the context where the issue prevails.

11. Guide the client to identify and merge with the source of their purpose.

   **TURNING POINT**

12. Elicit the overall impact (vision) that fulfilling the client’s purpose can lead to.

13. Elicit the outcomes (mission) that the client can foresee, being inspired by their vision.

14. Elicit what is important (values) to the client about achieving the outcomes stated above.

15. Elicit the client’s beliefs (about themselves and their capabilities) that support their values.

16. Elicit client’s identity with the above beliefs, values, mission, vision and purpose in awareness.

17. Elicit the behaviours that the client can conceive of when motivated by their identity and purpose.

18. Ask your client to imagine being in the context where the trigger (elicited in step 3) might prevail, then implement a thorough ‘3-Phase-Future-Pace’ (outlined in step 7 on page 33).


**Note:** All steps should be completed in one uninterrupted session.

The above addiction cessation TCM example can be integrated into more comprehensive addiction cessation programmes.
Health issues

For issues relating to physical pain, psychosomatic disorders, allergies, autoimmune diseases, chronic health issues that medical care has not resolved, etc:

1. Guide client to place all their awareness on/in the main symptom, allowing it to be as it is (current state).

2. Guide client into open awareness with the main symptom being at the center.

3. Elicit how the symptom affects the client (trigger) on all relevant levels (starting with body, ending with spirit).

4. Elicit the message of the symptom – its purpose (often a hidden benefit or a call to action).

5. Elicit what the client will do to address the purpose of the symptom – a new behaviour.

6. Guide client into open awareness with the symptom being at the center – and then have them observe how their experience of the symptom shifts progressively (new state).

7. Have the client visualize him- or herself completely healed and enjoying a life of greater well-being and vitality (new identity, mission & vision).

8. End with Self-appreciation in soma centred open awareness.
Personal and Spiritual Development

For challenges on the path of personal development, existential crisis, difficulties relating to spiritual awakening, problems with transpersonal phenomena, etc:


2. Help client to identify and articulate their present state on all seven levels.

3. Extend open awareness further by elaborating on the expanded sense of self and the interconnection of phenomena.

4. Using the ‘ASE Present Resourcing’ method, guide client to identify how their present state has come into existence.

5. Guide client toward the source of their present state as much as possible.

6. Elicit the core purpose of the source of the client’s present state in relation to their current life situation (from step 1).

7. Elicit the overall impact (vision) that fulfilling the purpose can lead to.

8. Elicit the outcomes (mission) that the client can foresee, being inspired by their vision.

9. Elicit what is important (values) to the client about achieving the outcomes stated above.

10. Elicit what the client’s beliefs are (about themselves and their capabilities) that support their values.

11. Elicit the client’s identity with the above beliefs, values, mission, vision and purpose in awareness.

12. Elicit the behaviours that the client can conceive of when staying true to their identity and purpose.
13. Elicit client’s next step (trigger) to get the ball rolling toward fulfilling their purpose.

14. Have the client imagine taking the step from above while feeling the energy (new state) of what it’s like to fulfil their purpose.

15. End with Self-appreciation in soma centred open awareness.
Working with groups

This version of the TCM can help to resolve issues in the contexts of leadership, management, organisational change, corporate image, team building, business performance, interpersonal problems, communication breakdowns, etc:

1. Have the group sit in a circle and guide them into a collective open awareness – with emphasis on the space in-between all members of the group.

2. Elicit the state of the group in the context where they are experiencing the main issue.

3. Elicit the most common trigger(s) of the state from above.

4. Elicit the main problem behaviour(s) resulting from the trigger(s).

5. Elicit what the group’s dominant identity is in the context where they are experiencing the issue.

6. Elicit what the group beliefs are about itself and its capabilities in the issue context.

7. Elicit the group’s values in this context.

8. Elicit the meaningful outcomes (mission) that these values are (or could be) generating.

9. Elicit the overall impact (vision) of the mission from above.

10. Associate the group into the experience of what it would be like to fulfill their vision; then elicit the group’s purpose in the context where their issue prevails.

11. Guide the group to sense and feel the current energy/state of the entire group, by once again focusing on the space in-between all members of the group (source).

12. Elicit what the group has learned about itself through this process.
13. Elicit what the group’s next step will be toward fulfilling their purpose or learning from above.

14. End with a discussion and agreement about how to implement the step from above.
TCM Summary

Although one cycle of the model (per session) might be good enough, the coach can include as many cycles as necessary until the client has achieved a satisfying result. Alternatively, after one clockwise cycle, the client can then be taken through the process in an anticlockwise direction in order to make it a more thorough process. The most thorough process is to elicit all aspects of the client’s issue: state, trigger, behaviour, etc. on all relevant levels: body, mind, emotion, etc. in each segment of the spiral before moving on to the following segment – first going around in a clockwise direction, then in an anticlockwise direction. There are certain circumstances when the TCM should only be applied in one direction (this is addressed in TC certification training).

While variations of the TCM have been outlined above for addressing typical coaching issues, please note that no specific variation will always be the ‘winning formula’ for a specific issue. Transpersonal coaches are trained to use all variations of the TCM, as well as how to adapt them according to each client’s needs and goals, as well as their unfolding process in the session.

It is important at all stages in the coaching process to ‘hold a liminal space’ for the client and to be responsive to their conscious and unconscious communication (feedback) throughout the coaching process. In our TC courses we teach you how to adapt the TCM according to every client and their unfolding process in each session. In addition to the TCM, participants on our TC courses are also trained in complimentary approaches like the Authentic Self Empowerment (ASE) methods and Open Awareness (OA) skills. As such, transpersonal coaches can spontaneously merge suitable variations of the TCM with complimentary techniques to add maximum value to the client’s experience and their outcomes.

While the TCM, ASE and OA methodologies may suffice to help clients resolve issues and achieve a fulfilling outcome, their effectiveness and the sustainability of the client’s outcome will be largely determined by how thorough the coach was in each session. The TC Session Outline on the following two pages provides a general framework for a thorough coaching session from start to end.
Transpersonal Coaching Session Outline

The following 9 steps provide the general structure of a typical TC session

(Important nuances and specific things that the coach should calibrate to at each stage of the process are covered in our Transpersonal Coach certification training)

1. Inform your new client about how you work and what they can expect from the session(s) with you.

2. The client's intentions (including core issue and desired outcome) may be elicited upfront in your initial communication prior to the session, or only on the day of the session. This can be left up to the client, although you might want to get some indication of what you'll be dealing with if they have booked a series of sessions.

3. At the start of the session, ask the client what they would like to work through or resolve. When they reply, listen out for (and take note of) what the client's attention is most fixated on in the issue context. This will be the trigger of their issue. Also elicit the client's unwanted state and resulting behaviour(s) that the trigger initiates.

4. Neutralise the client's state after discussing the issue, before moving on to elicit their desired outcome (in case you haven't already done so) or before beginning an intervention.

5. Facilitate a context for change: Guide the client to experience open awareness (OA) using whatever means occurs to you as most appropriate for that client on the day. When both you and the client are completely in OA, have them think about and/or talk about their issue. Depending on how the client experiences their issue at this point, there are several ways in which you can proceed:

   I.) If the state and perspective of OA is enough to neutralise the effect of the trigger and evoke a new and resourceful response to it, then no further intervention is required. Continue to step 6.

   II.) If further leverage is required, then an appropriate version of the TCM (and/or ASE technique) should be applied at this point. You only continue to step 6 once the
trigger of the issue that was elicited in step 3 no longer negatively affects the client.

6. After the client has cleared the issue (by neutralising the trigger) and while they are still in their resourceful state, have them express and commit to what their next smallest step will be that leads them toward their desired outcome.

7. Bring the intervention to a close with the 3-Phase-Future-Pace:

   I.) Ask the client: “If a situation arose in your future, like that old issue (the one that has just been resolved), imagine now how you can feel more ________ [insert the words that the client used to describe their desired outcome] in that type of situation”.

   II.) Once the client has congruently indicated a more resourceful response in the presence of the trigger and they’re satisfied with that, ask them to: “Think of yet another potential future scenario that used to be a problem and notice how you are different now”. Then ask them: “What has changed/shifted”?

   III.) Once the client has expressed a positive change/shift, say to them: “Well done, now, think about ________ [insert the words that the client used to describe the issue’s trigger]”. Then ask them: “What are you noticing now?”

**NOTE:** The expectation at this point is that the client has integrated (embodied) their new state and response in the context where they were experiencing the issue. If this has not yet been achieved (based on the client’s feedback) then further intervention in successive sessions will be required.

8. Have the client spend a few minutes appreciating themselves for being able to release “that old issue” (if not now, then later) and achieve more of their desired outcome. This can be done with eyes closed or while taking a mindful walk.

9. Ensure that the client is reoriented and grounded before bringing the session to a close.

*For examples of how to use open awareness in coaching sessions and teach it to your client, download a complimentary copy of our [Open Awareness Handbook](https://authentic-self-empowerment.com).*
IMPORTANT NOTE:

Those who have completed the entire 12-day live Transpersonal Coach Training (plus the accompanying online course and supervision), and those who have completed the Postgraduate Certificate Course in Transpersonal Coaching Psychology through Alef Trust, receive comprehensive training in the various applications of this coaching model. Only those who have completed either of the two aforementioned courses are sufficiently trained to facilitate all versions of the TCM and adapt them accordingly.

Most important in transpersonal coaching (and at the core of the TCM) is the coaches’ ability to maintain Open Awareness for the purpose of “Holding the Liminal Space” in which the client’s process can unfold.
“Open Awareness- Holding the Liminal Space in Transpersonal Coaching”

(Adapted from the article written for the Integral Transpersonal Journal)

by Jevon Dangeli and Dr Hennie Geldenhuys

“Holding The Space” is the metaphorical container for the interaction between the transpersonal and the client. It is a phenomenon commonly and anecdotally described by coaches, therapists, counsellors and healthcare practitioners in the caring and healing disciplines. This is especially true in the transpersonal setting. Despite the popularity of the term and wide anecdotal recognition of its importance, its character remains numinous and its description in the academic literature elusive. Although Holding The Space is largely experiential and intuitive, transpersonal practitioners, coaches and therapists are presented with a challenge: examining and describing this space, in order to research and teach it, develop the skill, and make it consistently reproducible in practice.

In this article, we explore the concept of Holding The Space, and then propose a simple yet effective method for facilitating the state in coaching and therapy. “Open Awareness” is a calm and receptive state of applied mindful awareness with aspects of introspective, extrospective and somatic awareness, accompanied by a sense of interconnectedness, compassion and a presence in the space-in-between (Dangeli, 2015).
The nature of “Holding the Space”

The held space has been described as a liminal space that is open, receptive and emergent and that promotes transpersonal knowing (Dangeli, 2017). Liminal relates to a transitional process or something that occupies a position at, or on both sides of, a boundary or threshold (Liminal, n.d.). It is the co-created medium in which coaching or therapy is performed that facilitates exploration, discovery and healing in a safe and responsive setting. In transpersonal interventions, this includes the freedom to access altered states of consciousness; experience of the physical, emotional and spiritual self; the psyche’s shadow; interpersonal dynamics; and perceptions of interconnectedness beyond one’s self constructs. Components of Holding The Space include rapport and mutual resonance (Bandler & Grinder, 1976; Siegel, 2013), a participatory perspective (Ferrer & Sherman, 2011), mindfulness (Siegel, 2010) and intentional attitudes such as unconditional acceptance and beneficence (Watson, 2004). In a coaching and therapy context, we propose to add a further dimension, namely a state of conscious awareness that moves the client as well as the coach or therapist away from a fixated tunnel awareness, to a state of openness, receptivity and equanimity.

The concept of spiritual resonance between the coach and their client is an important one for the transpersonal practitioner. In the therapeutic intervention there is an expanded awareness in which the boundaries between individuals and objects become more diffuse, ego identification is less prominent and a sense of mutuality between all things is fostered (Siegel, 2013). In the transpersonal context, this resonance allows a medium in which more subtle and abstract emotional and spiritual experiences can be detected, stabilized and explored toward integration and healing. One might consider this an “energetic joining” between client and practitioner (Siegel, 2013). A receptivity of this nature on the part of the practitioner is intuitive, but it is likely that the conditions for it to develop can be created through the induction of a specific state of awareness. A joint reciprocal state of awareness of this kind is the transpersonal equivalent of rapport originally described in other disciplines such as Neuro-Linguistic Programming (Bandler & Grinder, 1976). Rapport could be considered an unconscious empathetic relationship and the ability to relate to others in a way that creates trust and understanding (Overdurf & Silverthorn, 1995).

Dr Jorge Ferrer’s participatory vision of spirituality (Ferrer & Sherman, 2011) finds pragmatic application in the held space. Ferrer writes that “the participatory approach holds that human spirituality emerges from our co-creative participation in a dynamic and
undetermined mystery or generative power of life, the cosmos and spirit” (2011, p2). The capacity to facilitate a dynamic setting in which this participatory vision finds manifestation is a core skill in both transpersonal coaching and therapy. The skill is one of intentional receptiveness and openness to an unfolding shared narrative on the personal, interpersonal and transpersonal levels. This merged and co-creative mode of interaction is an evolution of the traditional mechanistic relationship between practitioner and client. It allows multiple perspectives to contribute to the common therapeutic space, extending beyond the client and practitioner, to include other people, other entities and other dimensions of reality.

What is the role of mindfulness in Holding The Space? If we recognize that at least both the practitioner and client contribute to that dynamic space, and that the subtle resonance between practitioner, client and all the other entities in the space influence the outcome, how can the practitioner maintain an awareness of all those energetic factors? The answer may be in a particular type of mindfulness. Dan Siegel, referring to the role of mindfulness within the psychotherapeutic container, observes that:

Resonance makes two a part of one system, at least temporarily.
Attuning to ourselves within mindful states, we have the observing and experiencing self in resonance. Attuning to others, we open ourselves to the profound adventure of linking two as part of one interactive whole (Siegel, 2010, p55).

Mindfulness of what is happening inside the coach, inside the client, and in the co-created space in between them, may be the difference between a random, chaotic or confounded outcome of a session, and a more facilitated, applied and useful outcome. The coach or therapist needs to be sensitive to the myriad of factors at play in the session, some preconscious, not all from the client only, many not obvious, and changing all the time. An attempt to track these factors cognitively is likely doomed to failure, whereas the mindful state allows a continuous, holistic intuitive processing through the active, non-judgmental moment-to-moment awareness of mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

Another aspect of Holding The Space is an intentional attitude of unconditional acceptance and beneficence. This dimension is a well recognized cornerstone of any therapeutic relationship in all branches of psychology, coaching and caring (Watson, 2004). Watson, writing in the context of the caring nursing relationship (2004), not only identifies this deep sense of compassion, but also explores the intentionality with which it needs to be cultivated by the practitioner. In the transpersonal context, this may find expression in certain meta-states that the coach enters and cultivates in order for them to become ingrained,
intuitive and automatic, such as compassion and loving-kindness. By no accident, these are qualities valued by the contemplative traditions including meditation and mindfulness (Hanson, 2011). The intention of these qualities is not in forcing or pretending in a superficial way, but in purposefully participating in a process that allows access to these humanistic traits, and integrating them to prominence in the space.

In addition to the recognized qualities of the held space discussed above, we propose that developing a sense of interconnectedness not only enhances the therapeutic relationship and resonance, but in and of itself is a constructive intervention. Clients become clients because their attention is fixated in a narrow mode of perception and they have lost the capacity to grasp a balanced, wider and more holistic perspective. The client's thought and emotional patterns, as well as their experience of spirituality may be locked into a rigid set of preconceptions, triggers or ingrained habitual responses (Bandler & Grinder, 1976). We propose that this phenomenon is so common in coaching and therapeutic settings that the faculty of Holding The Space needs to include a priori the facilitation of expanding the client's state of awareness from their metaphorical tunnel awareness toward a more open awareness.

In summary, the important skill of “Holding the Space” in a transpersonal coaching setting has a number of components which include: 1) resonance and rapport; 2) a participatory vision; 3) mindfulness; 4) intentional attitudes of acceptance, compassion and loving-kindness; and 5) opening the aperture of one's awareness as an antidote to tunnel awareness. In the following section, we propose a methodology called “Open Awareness” for maintaining a state of awareness that includes all of these components.

The nature of Open Awareness

Open Awareness is a distinct state of awareness characterized by Dangeli (2015):

- a mindful mode of perception
- a calm and receptive emotional and mental state
- metacognitive introspective awareness in which the mind can observe its own state and activities - an awareness of the mind itself
- extrospective awareness - heightened sensory and somatic perceptions
- a reframe of one's current experience of oneself, placing perceived phenomena within one's frame of reference (as opposed to these being experienced outside of oneself) leading to a sense of interconnection and compassion
• balance and adaptation between conscious focused attention and peripheral sensory awareness
• a flexible, fluid and dynamic state, enabling one to access a variety of channels of perception through intent and appropriateness to the current context

Open Awareness involves the intentional observation of one's thoughts, feelings and sensory perceptions in the present moment through opening the aperture of one's awareness. In addition to identifying the subtleties of one’s internal experience, Open Awareness includes becoming receptive to the energetic and relational links between oneself and others and the environment. To varying degrees, the individual experiences a felt sense of expansiveness and interconnection resulting from disidentification from their limited self-concepts. Open Awareness is more than a technique, it is a natural mode of being that can be tapped into and intentionally cultivated. Someone in Open Awareness is non-reactive, equanimous, aware of inner and outer processes and has a deep sense of interconnectedness.

Open Awareness is often described as an expanded and receptive consciousness (Dangeli, 2015). There is a balance between cognition and intuition, between action and acceptance, and between the sensory and the conceptual. On a transpersonal level, the coach or therapist in Open Awareness intuitively taps into the dynamic space that is co-created by practitioner and client, and is receptive to subtle shifts in energy, facial expressions, body sensations, and other variables. Importantly, the practitioner is also sensitive to his or her own shadow reactions, and how those may be influencing the interaction.

We propose that the state of Open Awareness facilitates all the aspects of Holding The Space: resonance and rapport through a subtle and responsive awareness; a participatory vision through the sense of interconnectedness; a mindful presence; a sense of goodwill and compassion brought on by a unifying state of awareness; and a natural widening of one’s perception of reality.

The how to of Open Awareness

As lofty as the desired state of Open Awareness appears, the state is easily attained through a basic methodology that can be taught and practiced. The methodology is simple
enough to learn relatively quickly, and profound enough to allow an evolution of consciousness with deepened practice.

There are various means to facilitate Open Awareness (see Tables 1 and 2 for examples). In general, the means begin by identifying one’s present experience of self, by first focusing attention through the senses, then noticing mental objects such as thoughts and emotions, and then broadening awareness to the context and the container that allows for one’s current experience. As Open Awareness expands, there is a widening mindful experience of the energetic field between objects and individuals. As Open Awareness deepens, one’s experience of the space-in-between refines, the subject-object divide dissolves, and the more subtle realms come into awareness. There is a progression from an awareness of the concrete, fixed and separate, to an awareness of the subtle, dynamic and interconnected.

In practice, the process of opening one’s awareness typically begins with attention to the content of one’s current sensory experience (e.g. visual, auditory, somatic), and then progresses to a more subtle background experience of the senses, a meta observation of mental objects (e.g. patterns of thoughts and emotions) with an intent to allow extension to a more energetic awareness of the space in-between everything. The expansion is both inward (to the deep personal) and outward (to the interpersonal and transpersonal). In the context of coaching and therapy, clients are guided to embody the experience and root it in positive next step actions, behaviours and responses. Open Awareness can be both an open eye, conversational technique as well as a closed eye meditative practice. While this extending of awareness is imagined and therefore subjective, the object here is not to pretend that one is having any particular kind of experience, but rather to prime one’s consciousness in order to bring forth more of what is already present in the background of awareness.

Open Awareness creates a highly present state that has numerous applications. It can have a profoundly healing or transformative effect on the individual who practices it regularly. It can serve as a constructive technique in coaching or therapeutic interventions, in addition to its previously described application in the context of Holding The Space for the client’s emerging process (Dangeli, 2015). It can also be utilized as a tool for meditative insight and growth.
Open Awareness in relation to other methodologies

The earliest tracings of Open Awareness appear to stem from Buddhist origins (Gunaratana, 1996) and it was possibly first introduced in the West through the teachings of George Ivanovich Gurdjieff in the early nineteen hundreds (Ouspensky, 1971). Aspects of Open Awareness have been integrated into some of the techniques of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) (Bandler & Grinder, 1976; Overdurf & Silverthorn, 1995) and other psychological interventions, although it has received only nominal attention from the mainstream scientific community (Farb, et al. 2007; Hanson, 2011). There are similarities to and differences between similar approaches such as Open Focus (Fehmi & Robbins, 2008), Open Monitoring, Focused Attention meditation (Lippelt, Hommel & Colzato, 2014; Kabat-Zinn, 2003), and Focus-defocus (Pillay, 2017).

Open Focus is the name of the attention training programme created by neuroscientist, Dr Lester Fehmi (Fehmi & Robbins, 2008). Fehmi showed through neurofeedback EEG readings that certain styles of attention promoted synchronous whole brain activity that may be associated with mental and physical wellbeing. His four attention styles theory identifies four combinations of two styles of attention: diffuse versus narrow (attention takes in the bigger picture versus focused on a single object) and objective versus immersed (dissociated observation versus more direct experience). His model supports Open Awareness in at least two important aspects. Firstly, he recognizes that it is the flexibility and movement between attention styles that is important. This controlled plasticity is also a feature of the Open Awareness state. Secondly, his proposed techniques for reaching the optimal attention style, similar to Open Awareness, utilize an experience of the perceived space between and within objects and the physical body (Fehmi & Robbins, 2008).

Although Open Awareness is not a meditation technique per se, it shares properties of awareness and attention with various forms of mindfulness meditation. These include Open Monitoring (Lippelt et al, 2014), and the complementary perception of the focused attention and peripheral awareness streams of awareness (Yates, 2015). The inherent mindfulness component of Open Awareness cultivates the ability to adapt and regulate one’s thoughts, feelings and actions according to the situation. Rather than perceiving mental and emotional states as fixed, the mindful approach identifies their impermanent nature and treats them as transitory phenomena (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Williams & Teasdale, 2002). To note here is that Open Awareness is a functional and pragmatic approach designed for application in real life scenarios and within coaching and therapeutic sessions. In an important way, the Open Awareness approach incorporates salient elements of mindfulness, and applies them within
both coaching and therapy frameworks. Mindfulness meditation however, often has a different goal, namely the attainment of enlightenment through insight and non-dual awareness (Yates, 2015).

Open Monitoring is a mindfulness approach wherein the focus of awareness becomes the monitoring of awareness itself. In contrast to focused attention meditation, no single object or experience is focused on, instead there is a non-judgmental, unattached moment-to-moment awareness of all mental objects and sensory experiences that are within the field of awareness (Vago & Silbersweig, 2012). Open Awareness harnesses a form of open monitoring, but also includes the potential to respond to objects in the awareness in an intuitive and appropriate way.

An over-fixation into the attentive focused processing mode of awareness to the exclusion of a wider, less processed and unfocused mode has been identified as a barrier to growth and creativity: a focus-defocus imbalance (Pillay, 2017). Yates (2015) delineates the complementary different roles of attention and peripheral awareness (Table 3).

We propose that the nature of Open Awareness - with its incorporation of widening background awareness while maintaining conscious focus- is ideal for facilitating the dynamic complementary relationship between attention and peripheral awareness. This facilitates the skill of the coach or therapist to be in an open, mindful space and simultaneously apply therapeutic strategies with both cognitive and intuitive elements.

**Conclusion**

Holding the liminal space is a core competency in transpersonal coaching. Facilitating the optimal setting for this work requires intuitive resonance and rapport, a participatory perspective, mindfulness, an accepting and compassionate attitude, and a shift in both practitioner and client from a narrow to an expanded state. The entering of the state of awareness with all these elements is a skill that can be learnt and practiced. One methodology for doing so is the Open Awareness technique. Open Awareness is a refined state of awareness with a mindful mode of perception, including both introspective and extrospective awareness, a sense of interconnectedness and compassion, and a dynamic balance between conscious attention and peripheral awareness.
We share our vision of making the simple and applied skills of Open Awareness available to transpersonal practitioners, coaches and therapists as a core skill as well as an adjunct to their existing methodology. We propose that Open Awareness is simple enough to be easily taught, and extensive enough to allow advanced applications within transpersonal coaching and therapeutic methodologies. Next steps include making the methodology more widely available, and exploring variations and further applications. There is also a need for research to investigate the effects and refine our understanding of the components. In order to do so, we have identified the need for a taxonomy model for states of awareness in a coaching or therapy setting, and a model to understand the outcomes that flow from the process, and innovative research methodology to investigate the link between the two.

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>An abbreviated example of a general Open Awareness technique.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keep your head facing forward and eyes open throughout the following 6 steps:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Extend your visual field of awareness as far as possible to the left and right simultaneously.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Expand your field of awareness all around you and sense the entire volume of space that your whole body occupies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Notice the pauses or space between your breaths (continue for at least 30 seconds).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Bring awareness into the space between you, all people and everything in the area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Notice how your breath connects you to the unlimited and unifying space that we all share.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Observe your moment to moment experience from the perspective of space itself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End by focussing on your breath for at least 30 seconds.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.

An example of an Open Awareness method to Hold The Space in coaching and therapy.

1. Start by focusing on the space between you and the other(s).

2. Access peripheral vision (180 degrees left and right).

3. Expand your field of awareness all around you and the other(s).

4. Sense the entire volume of space that your whole awareness occupies.

5. Notice how everything that you experience, including the other(s), is within the extended space of your awareness.

6. Have the intention to embrace and gently hold the other(s) within the space of your expanded awareness.

7. Bring into the space your intention to be of unconditional support and service to the other(s) who are being held in your open awareness.

End by focussing on your breath for at least 30 seconds.

Table 3. The dynamic interaction between Attention and Peripheral Awareness (adapted from: Yates, 2015).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attention</th>
<th>Peripheral Awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isolates and analyses experience</td>
<td>Observant from a holistic and contextual perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More processing, slower response</td>
<td>Less processing, quicker response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selects information from awareness</td>
<td>Filters incoming information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrow, fixated, singular</td>
<td>Open, receptive, interconnected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal ‘self’ centred</td>
<td>Self-other-relationship-context centred (objectivity)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


Open awareness (OA) is a particular mode of perception in which individuals are attentive to both their own thoughts and feelings as well as those of others, including the context that connects them. It is a type of attention that is close to being simultaneously inward and outward focused, thereby making one more conscious of the interrelatedness of phenomena.

In the context of coaching, OA enables clients to feel felt, as well as connected to others and part of life as a whole. Coaches in open awareness perceive their clients beyond (but not excluding) the client’s expressed self-concept, while simultaneously maintaining an expanded perception of themselves and the coaching relationship. My observations of coaches who take this approach is that not only do they enhance their coaching effectiveness, they develop deep rapport with their clients and naturally ‘hold the space’ that promotes transformation, which in turn develops a coaching relationship that nurtures growth in both the client as well as the coach. Commenting on transpersonal approaches to therapy, Friedman (2013) states:

“Both therapist [coach] and patient [client] may be in a modified state of consciousness and exchange information and energy at levels that can include lower unconsciousness, normal consciousness, and higher consciousness. This is one reason why we think transpersonal psychotherapists must undergo a demanding training, allowing them to monitor themselves and become available at several levels simultaneously, increasing their capacity to resonate with their clients” (p. 582).
Approaches that don't incorporate the expanding of perceptions on the part of the client may still serve to improve certain conditions, but might not necessarily lead to an evolution in consciousness or personal and transpersonal growth. Transpersonal coaching interventions lead to more integration of the aspects of consciousness that have become obscured or disconnected by overwhelming or persistent stressors. Open awareness is a useful resource when it comes to identifying and integrating the unconscious aspects of ourselves that inhibit us from being fully functional (aligned in mind-body-spirit). A fully functional human being is not only one who has learnt to cope with the challenges of life, but one who thrives regardless of them. Fully functional human beings are not a perfected breed of humans, they are normal and natural people who live from the awareness that everyone and everything is interconnected and we all exist for a reason. Therefore, coaching approaches that promote this type of awareness are encouraged.

One might argue that the value of transpersonal perspectives and practices like open awareness might be exaggerated and that the qualities of empathy and compassion will suffice in coaching contexts. While the value of empathy and compassion should not be undermined, they are not always easy traits to cultivate in the presence of 'difficult people' and with certain clients. Those with experience in using the skill of open awareness in coaching contexts have reported that it promotes empathy and compassion toward one's self and others (including their 'difficult' self-constructs) regardless of their behaviour.

Open awareness is recommended as a useful skill in transpersonal coaching to help clients broaden their level of perception for the purpose of becoming more fully integrated, whole and functional.

Reference


Download a complimentary copy of the Open Awareness Handbook.
The States of Awareness Model
(developed by Dr. Hennie Geldenhuys)

“What you need is to be aware of being aware. Be aware deliberately and consciously, broaden and deepen the field of awareness. You are always conscious of the mind, but you are not always aware of yourself as being conscious.”

Sri Maharaj Nisargadatta

Introduction

Can we know what awareness is and what consciousness is and how they differ? The contemplative traditions have been grappling with these concepts for ages (one example is Nisargadatta - see references at end). A functional definition for transpersonal coaches is that consciousness is the conceptual perception that “I am, I exist” - and therefore other things and people also exist and things are separate from each other and I relate to those others in some way or another. It is our conceptual “beingness” and how that relates to the world.

Awareness is the capacity or the faculty for or the process of perception. It is that which perceives and experiences. Awareness leads to being conscious, but is not conscious itself, exists beyond the ego consciousness, and is a more intuitive, direct and less processed faculty.

Why is this important? For coaches and change workers, it is useful to realise that how we are aware (the process and nature of perception) determines how consciousness fluctuates (how we relate to ourselves, to others and to everything else). Awareness forms the content and nature of consciousness. We need to be aware of something for it to be in our consciousness. So by changing awareness we change consciousness. By changing how we are conscious, we grow out of limiting perceptions of problems or limiting beliefs.

**AWARENESS → CONSCIOUSNESS → HOW I RELATE TO MYSELF AND THE WORLD**

The aggregate (sum total) of how our awareness “is” at any point in time (of course, it isn’t really because it’s not a thing…), is called a “State of Awareness”. States of Awareness are not static, but dynamic from moment to moment. Although most of us are not ordinarily aware of how our awareness is shifting, it turns out that with practice and technique we can
teach our awareness to become more aware of itself, and even modify itself, thereby changing our consciousness and the very nature of who we are and what we do. That “meta awareness” is how the magic happens. Simply by cultivating meta awareness, awareness widens and “self corrects”, leading to potentially profound insights and integrating inner resources.

Rather than the content of experience or perception influencing awareness, it is more likely that awareness influences the content. Changing the mode of perception of an issue (the how), for example, is more efficient and way more likely to succeed than grappling with the content of that issue (the what). States of Awareness lead to certain patterns of perception, thoughts and emotions, certain reinforced memories and biases, and resulting projections and behaviours. Understanding and utilizing states of awareness therefore, has direct application to coaching and therapy, and to personal development.

Some states of awareness are more conducive to growth and healing than others. For example, the state of Open Awareness (OA) is described as a calm and receptive state of mindfulness accompanied by expanded modes of perception and experience that can lead to personal interpersonal and transpersonal responsiveness (Dangeli, 2017).

What if we could describe and apply a working understanding of the concepts and terminology around awareness (a functional taxonomy) and how they interrelate in the context of coaching? The States of Awareness Model presented here is an early attempt to do so.

Our state of awareness in any particular moment has certain characteristics. Although each moment of awareness is unique, complex, and nuanced, we may be able to tag some generalized characteristics or variables to describe how the state is in that moment, or during a series of moments.

Curiosity about states of awareness is not new. How we approach constructing a taxonomical frame of reference is dictated in large part by the tradition from which we come. For example, neuroscience bases its understanding on how the complex neurological and biochemical interactions within the brain-body system give rise to fluctuations that we experience subjectively (Siegel, 2012). The meditative and contemplative traditions aim to develop awareness as a tool for mindfulness, insight and awakening (Yates, 2015).

Coaching disciplines, such as Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), hypnosis, transpersonal coaching and refined variants such as Authentic Self Empowerment (ASE), harness states of awareness as therapeutic and developmental interventions (Dangeli, 2017). It is this last application that is primarily addressed by the States of Awareness Model. The model is
simple, and is not meant to be academic, existential or philosophical. It is designed for functionality in the context of a coaching or therapeutic context, particularly a transpersonal intervention.

**Potential applications**

The model may have at least three general applications. Firstly, coaches and therapists commonly observe that clients are clients because their difficulty or issue is rooted in a certain fixed and rigid mode of awareness. The solution is often to loosen awareness from that fixed state to a more flexible state. Healing then occurs spontaneously. An understanding of a fixed state of awareness can be facilitated in the therapist and client by applying the model to “map” the current state of awareness. A therapeutic change in awareness through the appropriate intervention can also be tracked applying the same model. So the model is both an indicator and a metric.

Secondly, the model can guide and inform the actual intervention. If the coach realizes that the client "does the issue" when stuck in a certain state (e.g. attention repeatedly fixated on a singled-out external event that takes a conceptual form such as a thought, self talk or a mental picture) he has a clue as to the mechanism of facilitating a shift in that state (e.g. widen the scope of awareness to include awareness of internal, grounded and interrelated sensory experiences).

A third use of this model is for training and research purposes in transpersonal coaching or therapy. Its review and analysis, including its limitations and strengths, facilitates discussion and insight into shifting states of awareness - a core skill for the transpersonal coach and trainees.

**Caveats and limitations**

The model should not be applied mechanically or in a linear fashion. Transpersonal interventions are by nature partly intellectual but in large part intuitive. The model is not a paint by numbers blueprint, but a tool to be assimilated into the coaching pattern. Awareness is infinitely complex and dynamic, much more than any model can describe. There are any number of finer aspects not included in this model. This is done purposefully to keep it as simple and functional as possible in the context of coaching and therapy. There is danger in generalization, and all models are generalizations.

There is potential for confusion of terminology, which may be partly epistemological (a
diversity of knowledge bases and traditions), and partly semantic (caught up in the language). The description of the model below attempts to clarify the intent behind the terminology, acknowledging that the actual words are themselves just symbols, a map, and not the territory. The model is based on a synthesis of an intellectual understanding of awareness from various disciplines, from feedback and hermeneutic (interpretive) experience of coaches and their clients, and from personal exploration by the authors in a mindful experiential setting.

The State of Awareness Model
(developed by Dr. Hennie Geldenhuys)
Description of the States of Awareness Model

The model is visual, has two main parts (Modes of Perception, and the Awareness Complex) and two directions of movement (on the three-dimensional plane of modes of perception, and expanding/contracting). The modes are represented by three planes that form a three-dimensional matrix. The attention complex is a defined circle within the hazy wave of peripheral awareness.

The **3 modes of perception** represent the direction and quality of awareness and have opposite poles:

- *Introspective* (awareness turned inward from the outside) and *Extrospective* (awareness turned outward from the inside)
- *Experiential / Sensory* (directed toward direct experience of the senses) and *Conceptual / Mental* (directed toward abstract mental objects such as thoughts, self-talk, mental pictures, emotions, labels and summations)
- *Spatial / Unifying* (integrated, merged, indivisible, diffuse) and *Objected / Distinguishing* (distinguishing one thing from another, relationship between objects, autonomy of objects)

Certain secondary modes may arise from these 3 primary modes - such as time orientation (present vs past/future) and association/dissociation.

The **Attention Complex** represents the relationship between focused and defocused type awareness, and has 2 subparts:

- *Attention*: analytical, focussed awareness, conscious, cognitive
- *Peripheral Awareness*: unfocused, background awareness, mostly preconscious, intuitive

**The dynamic relationship between Attention and Peripheral Awareness**

There is an important relationship between Attention within Peripheral Awareness. Attention is like the “active arm” of awareness. It synthesises and integrates different elements from our perception i.e. plays the director, executive or mediator role. All information available to
Attention comes out of the Peripheral Awareness field. The Peripheral Awareness also stabilizes and protects Attention. Yates (2015) describes this as a set of sub-minds that process different senses and that are integrated in the space of attention awareness. Attention is therefore heavily modulated by Peripheral Awareness. Attention itself is probably a mostly fixed faculty (it can’t be changed), but Peripheral Awareness is amenable to modification and development.

There are **two types of related movement** in the model:

- The Attention Complex is always located somewhere in the three-dimensional matrix of planes, at some point along each of the three planes, and can move along the planes in either direction on each of the three planes (from introspective to extrospective, experiential to conceptual, spatial to distinguishing).

- The Peripheral Awareness field can move concentrically (expanding outward, or contracting inward). The Attention circle can also contract or expand, but in a more limited fashion. Because the movement is concentrical, Peripheral Awareness expands or contracts in all directions along the three planes simultaneously.

The shape of the three planes (elliptical with less space toward the ends and more space in the centre) means that:

- **When the Attention Complex is toward a more extreme end of a plane** (mode of awareness is more biased and skewed toward one end), there is less space for expansion and Peripheral Awareness is contracted (less flexibility, “boxed in”).

- **When Peripheral Awareness expands**, the Attention Complex is moved toward the centre where there is more space (more flexibility and freedom), and away from the extremes of the planes.
Putting it all together: the working of the model

In a coaching and therapeutic context, awareness is optimal when it has the following properties:

- It is flexible as opposed to rigid (attention is not fixated in one mode or extreme)
- There is choice and holistic control (attention can move fluidly according to intent)
- Maximum and varied information from the internal, external and transpersonal environment is available to attention to perform its choice-making/executive function

Consider that awareness determines how we process and integrate information and influences our reactions and behaviours.

In terms of the model this means that in an optimal state of awareness:

- The field of Peripheral Awareness is wide so that Attention has plenty of room in which to move
- Attention is not stuck in one end or mode, but can move freely between different modes of awareness through intent and choice, because the field of Peripheral Awareness in which it moves is expansive. Attention is dynamic and has access to elements of all modes of perception simultaneously (sensory and conceptual, discriminatory and unitive, internal and external).
- Peripheral Awareness, from which all information is filtered into awareness, is spread wide, meaning that the amount and type of input information potentially available to attention and awareness is extended
- Attention is stable, meaning that it is not overly loose ("monkey mind") or overly fixated ("tunnel awareness")
- There is a “unification of perceptual poles”, holding seemingly contradictory types of perception (e.g. outer vs inner, mental vs sensory, separate vs merged) in awareness simultaneously

These are the characteristics of the optimal state of awareness we know as “Open Awareness”. On the model, Open Awareness would be depicted as the Attention Complex positioned in the wide centre within the three-dimensional matrix, a wide field of Peripheral
Awareness that is expanded over the entire centre portion in all directions, and freedom of movement of the Attention ring within Peripheral Awareness.

Think of a common issue that clients may have and how the underlying state of awareness differs from Open Awareness. How can we express that issue in terms of this model?

When the field of Peripheral Awareness expands beyond a certain point, it develops the capacity to “turn back onto itself”, so in effect awareness becomes aware of awareness (“Metacognitive Internal Awareness”).

In terms of coaching process, this model has some implications:

- When we optimize awareness, our way of being and functioning spontaneously become more resourceful
- Cultivating expanded Peripheral Awareness is key
- In cultivating Peripheral Awareness, attention becomes spontaneously more flexible, better at finding creative solutions and has more information at its disposal
- The balanced quality of the state of awareness is fundamental and the process of expanded awareness is more important than the content of awareness
- Meta-awareness of the process of awareness facilitates personal, interpersonal and transpersonal growth through insight into the habitual psychological patterns and mechanisms that create the problems for which we seek solutions

Having presented the main elements of the model, and considering what could flow from an optimal state such as Open Awareness (Dangeli, 2017), the next question is how to facilitate such a state in the coach and client. These are the approaches and techniques that are taught in the Open Awareness and ASE courses.

References:


Exploring the validity of transpersonal states and their value in coaching psychology

By Jevon Dangeli

In this essay I will explore the validity of a specific category of transpersonal states of consciousness called "holotropic states" (Grof 1992) and comment on their value in the context of coaching psychology.

Consciousness researchers interviewed by National Geographic in 2009 provided compelling evidence in support of what wisdom traditions across cultures have claimed for ages: that certain transpersonal states of consciousness can have healing, transformation and heuristic value (Fadiman, Grob, Griffiths, Nichols, C., Nichols, D., et al.). Stanislav Grof coined the term holotropic (meaning "oriented toward wholeness") to describe the category of transpersonal states of consciousness in which individuals may gain personally meaningful insights as well as experience healing and transformation (Grof, 1992). As a psychiatrist having researched holotropic states for half a century, Grof's findings (2000) precede yet support more recent research (Fadiman et al., 2009) which suggests that subtle levels of reality in
which human beings can experience a deep sense of interconnectivity with each other as well as with other living beings including the ecosystem and existences beyond time and space as we usually experience it, may have validity. This research indicates that there may be heuristic value in holotropic states of consciousness, however the question still remains: are these truly valid perceptions of reality? The next section will explore what "valid perception" means.

Walsh and Vaughn (1980) suggest that each state of consciousness reveals its own picture of reality, which in turn makes one's perception of reality only relatively real, therefore one's perception of reality is a reflection of one's state of consciousness. What one identifies depends largely on the state of consciousness in which the mind or self are observed. This echoes the overarching idea in quantum theory that reality is observer created, or as Anaïs Nin stated it, we don't see things as they are, we see things as we are (1961). Another concept in alignment with this is one of the presuppositions upon which the field of Neuro-Linguistic Programming is based, namely that each individual is the co-creator of their personal map of reality (Bandler & Grinder, 1976). Furthermore, Hartelius & Ferrer (2013, p. 196) suggest that one's location in life is their starting point - from where one relates to one's experiences - giving each experience meaning based on the implications of their starting point. On this basis then, valid perception - as agreed upon in Western scientific models have been determined because of their general location, one that is based on the Cartesian subject-object split. In the context of coaching psychology, one of the primary roles of the coach is to recognise the meaningfulness and usefulness of the client's current perception (starting point), and then implement an appropriate means of intervening in order to help the client expand their self-concept and map of reality until a more meaningful and useful location has been established.

Each individual's personal reality (how one experiences and interacts with the events of one's life) demonstrates that there seems to be no solid or consistent boundary separating one's subjective and objective experience. If one was to transcend the metaphysical assumption that subject and object are separate (which holotropic states of consciousness may facilitate) then what might one experience? Jung's description of the collective unconscious infers that various aspects of the mind or self can be 'seen' as part of one interconnected whole manifesting on different levels. This supports the proposition that the separateness of subject and object is a kind of optical delusion of consciousness (Einstein, 1977) resulting from looking at reality through a Cartesian lens. Einstein apparently understood the value of
establishing new levels of awareness in order for the world to overcome its problems associated with this dualism. Even if one were to argue that the unavoidable process of internalising experiences creates the perceptions through which one continues perceiving others and the world as separate, then it would stand to reason that any such perception is constantly changing according to one's experiences. This would mean that a valid perception is only valid within its own situatedness, or to the extent that one is involved in the context of the perception and thereby co-creating the experience. The point here is that the intimate interplay between object and subject can be so interwoven that disregarding it would be undermining the scope of our existence.

Perhaps the question should be: "Which type of perception or level of awareness is best suited to the task at hand?" Quite obviously a particular mode of perception would be best suited to the job of completing a tax return at the end of the fiscal year, but such a mode of perception would likely be less useful to an artistic seeking creative inspiration. Similarly, people who feel stuck in stressful situations are often unable to find a satisfying solution until they employ a means of shifting their mode of perception, or put metaphorically - opening the aperture of their awareness in order for relevant ideas or insights to arise in consciousness and reveal a satisfying solution. Holotropic states are commonly experienced in different contexts, for example, - being in the flow, moments of creative inspiration, the "runners high", during meditation, hypnosis, sexual intercourse, as a potential result of the after-effect of intense suffering or near death experiences, as well as being induced by means of psychedelic substances, rituals and other examples. In such states the way in which one perceives themself, the situation, or life as a whole is usually significantly changed. Such changes in perception may bring with them a sense of connection with subtle levels of reality, which lay beyond our normal ways of perceiving and which may be meaningful as well as useful to the individual who experiences them. Experiences in holotropic states are usually remembered. They are either disregarded or applied, meaning that their effect can range from very little to significant and permanent shifts in perception. The technique of "open awareness" promotes a holotropic state and has been reported by Rick Hanson (2011) and John Overdurf (2013) to facilitate awareness of the more subtle realms of consciousness, where the boundaries between object and subject seem to dissolve and where a sense of unity and interconnectedness arises. Open awareness serves as a transpersonal coaching intervention to help clients transcend the perceptions that inhibit them from experiencing and integrating more resourceful states.
Mindfulness is another approach to enhancing one's awareness. Research in the eight week Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programme developed by John Kabat-Zinn (1990) suggests that practicing MBSR techniques does have certain health related benefits, but such research does not validate all aspects of mindfulness in the way that it is known to a Buddhist practitioner or someone who has practised the art for several decades. Similarly, the study of holotropic states experienced for the first time by an individual who has used a specialised technique and/or psychedelic substance to induce the condition cannot be compared to the experience of holotropic states that have been cultivated, explored and embodied over a lengthy period of time by an experienced practitioner. This is not suggesting that profound levels of holotropic states and their related phenomena cannot be experienced by those having such experiences for the first time, but rather that the meaning, value and application of such states will most likely differ between initiates and adepts. Some who meditate or practice yoga for a long period of time might not experience deep levels of spiritual awareness, but as long as they are committed to their practice, they do seem to achieve levels of personal development from it. They may grow psychologically, become more resilient, and can experience healing and transformation from their practice (e.g., Ott, 2004; Kabat-Zinn, 1990). On the other hand, someone who takes LSD in a social context can have an extraordinary "out of this world" experience that they may even consider to be spiritual, but after the effect of the LSD has worn off they are generally no more developed in terms of psychological health. Thus, the manner in which one engages with practices that induce holotropic states of consciousness and how one integrates the effects of such states over time (i.e., how the individual participates, puts to service and embodies it) is to be explored as a measure of the holotropic state's heuristic value.

Stephen Wright (2013) declares that "we cannot not be involved in something". How we participate in the events of life depends largely on what we've embodied (integrated into our personal unconscious). This is distinctly noticeable when observing one's reflexive reactions in threatening or stressful situations where one's behaviours are clearly determined by the unconscious mind's programming. Therefore, in order to bring about sustainable change in behaviour and/or mental/emotional responsiveness, those changes need to take affect in the unconscious mind. The work of a transpersonal coach is to help clients identify and transform the unconscious patterns that control their thoughts, feelings and behaviours. When it comes to the practices that result in holotropic states, Wright (2013) suggests that for the practise to be truly healing it must in some way expand our awareness and transform our way of being in
the world, making us more whole, more at-one with ourselves, more loving, and more willing to be of service. From what Wright has emphasized, for holotropic states to have heuristic, transformative and healing value, they should lead us from self to Self - a process that includes active participation in the transformation of others. Through embodying the insights derived from holotropic states, or being the change, they become so fully integrated and automated that the necessity for conscious intention to apply them eventually becomes obsolete. Similarly, regular practice of open awareness can lead to this holistic perspective of oneself and one's life becoming one's default way of being in the world. The individual is changed through having embodied the shift in their awareness. The spiritual teacher Sri Aurobindo described it as the conscious awakening of the very cells of the organism (Satprem, 1982). This embodied awakening can be more accurately articulated in terms of bodyfulness - where the psychosomatic organism becomes calmly alert without the intentionality of the conscious mind. According to Ferrer (2008) bodyfulness reintegrates in the human being a lost somatic capability that is present in panthers, tigers, and other big cats of the jungle, which can be extraordinarily aware without intentionally attempting to be so. Embodiment of the awareness that arises from holotropic states through participation and service can be seen amongst a vast amount of individuals in various cultures worldwide. They are not only the Dalai Lama, Mother Teresa and Nelson Mandela, they are also the many people who through their own extraordinary life experiences have learnt and understood the value of what it means to be fully human. These people are walking and talking examples of how holotropic states can be heuristic as well as lead to healing and transformation.

Holotropic states may offer the opportunity to transcend one's location - dissolving the boundary between self and the divine. The experience of feeling interconnected with the whole to which everyone and everything seems to be part of has the potential to be heuristic, especially when that experience is participated in, put to service and embodied. In Grof's own words:

Inner transformation can be achieved only through individual determination, focused effort, and personal responsibility. Any plans to change the situation in the world are of problematic value, unless they include a systematic effort to change the human condition that has created the crisis. To the extent to which evolutionary change in consciousness is a vital prerequisite for the future of the world, the
outcome of this process depends on the initiative of each of us.
(Grof, 1985 p. 432)

The transpersonal approach to coaching may be of particular value when it comes to identifying holotropic states and how these can be leveraged for sustainable change. This coaching methodology can also be useful when it comes to detecting and dealing with psycho-spiritual crises in the context of coaching. In general, most transpersonal interventions, including this specialised type of coaching, can be of value for the purpose of transforming a crisis into a spiritual awakening.

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Exploring the value of transpersonal coaching for healing emotional and psychosomatic disorders

By Jevon Dangeli

This essay explores Stanislav Grof’s perspective on how therapeutic applications of a specific category of non-ordinary states of consciousness can have healing and transformative value, especially in relation to emotional and psychosomatic disorders, as well as in treating traumatic memories. Comments are made regarding how Grof’s insights and lessons can be put to use in the field of transpersonal coaching.

In his lecture at the Scientific and Medical Network’s 1995 Beyond The Brain conference, titled “The Heuristic and Healing Potential of Non-Ordinary States of Consciousness”, Grof used the term “primal mind” to describe a fundamental level of consciousness that is intrinsic to every human being. Grof suggests that accessing “holotropic states”, a subdivision of non-ordinary states of consciousness, enables access to the primal mind, which in turn reveals levels of awareness that have been reported for ages and across a wide variety of indigenous cultures and practices, such as shamanism, Aboriginal rites of passage, healing rituals and mystical practices. According to Grof (1995), “holotropic” literally means moving toward wholeness, and the experience of holotropic states is what lead Carl Jung to assume the existence of the collective unconscious.

Grof highlights two lessons – first, the heuristic potential or what we can learn from practices that facilitate non-ordinary states of consciousness, and second, the therapeutic applications of such practices. Grof expressed a vision for the future of psychology in his 1995 lecture, which he expands on in his 2000 book, “Psychology of
the future”, and incorporates into his latest book, “Healing Our Deepest Wounds: The Holotropic Paradigm Shift” – published in 2012 on Grof’s 81st birthday, where he writes:

I have come to the conclusion that the theoretical concepts and practical approaches developed by transpersonal psychology, a discipline that is trying to integrate spirituality with the new paradigm emerging in Western science, could help alleviate the crisis we are all facing. These observations suggest that radical psychospiritual transformation of humanity is not only possible, but is already underway. The question is only whether it can be sufficiently fast and extensive to reverse the current self-destructive trend of modern humanity (p. 163).

Born in 1931 in Czechoslovakia, Grof was raised without any religious affiliations. In the 1960s he became a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst. Over time his intellectual interests that stemmed from the insights of psychoanalysis began to clash with his disappointment about its practical effectiveness. It took a long time to achieve very little! This prompted Grof to explore other approaches. **Holotropic Breathwork**, a method that Grof co-created with his wife (Christina Grof) in the 1970s and 1980s involving accelerated breathing, evocative music and bodywork to reach deep levels of transpersonal awareness. Some methods used in transpersonal coaching today (for example: the **open awareness** technique) are also designed to induce holotropic states, yet they do so within the framework of a coaching dialogue.

Based on his work with thousands of individuals over five decades, Grof (2003) suggests that stressful and traumatic events during life are not the causes of emotional and psychosomatic disorders, they are merely the triggers that cause the emergence of psychological material from deeper levels of the unconscious. According to Grof (2000, p. 75) psychological problems develop as a result of the reinforcing influence of traumatic events in our postnatal history, which in turn have causal links to perinatal, prenatal and transpersonal origins. Grof (2000) argues that a newborn’s birth experience (the perinatal phase) profoundly influences that individual’s emotional and social development, and therefore this has important implications for the future of our society. Grof points out that the amount of emotional and physical stress involved in childbirth clearly surpasses that of any trauma later in life and is an event of immense psychospiritual importance (2000 p. 31). Grof’s studies have revealed that the memory of birth is recorded in detail down to cellular level and it therefore profoundly affects
psychological development (Grof 2000 p. 31). For this reason Grof sees value in regressing to the perinatal stage for the purpose of healing and personal development. Grof’s methods of facilitating transcendence and spiritual growth also transit the perinatal, as he views this domain as a gateway to the transpersonal realm.

Ken Wilber criticises Grof’s emphasis on the perinatal, which he sees as simplistic. Birth may well be traumatic and may be an entry into transpersonal experience but it is only part of the story, according to Wilber (1997). The difference of opinion involves what is referred to as the pre/trans fallacy:

The point is simply that, for example, since prerational and transrational are both, in their own ways, nonrational, then they appear quite similar or even identical to the untutored eye. Once this confusion occurs – the confusion of “pre” and “trans” – then one of two things inevitably happens: the transrational realms are reduced to prepersonal status, or the prerational realms are elevated to transrational glory (Wilber, 1997 p. 181).

Wilber maintains that Grof confuses the pre-personal and the trans-personal. Grof counters this through stating that, although he agrees with Wilber in principle, Wilber’s model is too absolutist and linear in his thinking about the multidimensional world of the psyche (Grof, 1985). In addition it could be considered that Grof has worked with thousands of individuals in the many years of his involvement in transpersonal psychology and that his claims about the transcendental nature of peoples’ experiences are derived from many observations, hardly an untutored eye. Wilber’s views are largely based on the wisdom traditions combined with his own practice and theories. Grof is certainly not alone when it comes to exploring the healing potential of addressing perinatal experiences. In addition to Grof’s findings, the value of better understanding the extent of prenatal and perinatal trauma in order to address their influences on mental health and emotional wellbeing through life has long been suggested by those in the field of prenatal and perinatal psychology (http://birthpsychology.com/journals).

Dr. Michael Odent also supports Grof’s claims by suggesting that the quality of life in the womb, during birth and post-birth lays the foundation for a loving and altruistic relationship with fellow humans, or conversely for a mistrusting and aggressive attitude toward society (1995, cited in Grof 2000 p. 112). Dr. Dan Siegel (2012, p. 11) confirms that our earliest experiences shape the narrative of our lives. Awareness of the importance of prenatal and perinatal care dates back to ancient
China and India, with Caraka, an Indian embryologist writing in 1000 BC that psychological factors in the mother may cause mental disturbance in the foetus (cited in Axness 2012, p. 93). While Odent (2010) provides evidence for the fact that our level of mental, emotional and physical health in adulthood is significantly influenced by the attitudes of our mother during pregnancy and birth, Grof goes one step further by suggesting that there are even more complex subtleties at play which contribute to why we are the way we are.

An example given by Grof (1995) is that the cause of claustrophobia could be tracked back to an incident in childhood, but if explored further it will most likely have deeper roots that may stem from factors relating to birth or pre-birth, and looking further still one may discover that the potential for claustrophobia to manifest may even come from a particular experience in a past life. Full healing will therefore involve interventions that address all the causal domains and triggers that influence the existence of the condition. Further examples given by Grof (1995) indicate that traumas associated with prenatal and perinatal related experiences are of significant influence on the physio/psycho/spiritual development of each individual.

Therapeutic interventions that are designed to heal early life (or even past life) traumas are not within the scope of traditional coaching models, however, the transpersonal coaching approach can include the facilitation of processes that enable clients to transcend their subjective experience of time, and can therefore address traumatic memories. This is done for the purpose of helping clients to become consciously aware of the original causes of their current issue, in order to learn from those past or symbolic experiences, and then give them a new and constructive meaning. The following step in the process is to discharge the energy of the trauma so that it no longer has any hindering effect in the client’s present life experience. In such a way, transpersonal coaching can include regression techniques, although such sessions need not involve eye closure, breathwork or any form of ritualistic procedure. Regression for the purpose of healing can be facilitated in the context of a coaching dialogue that utilises attention shifting methods (for example: open awareness) in combination with appropriate (ethical and relevant to the client) use of healing metaphors.

Grof realised that the Newtonian/Cartesian dualism that dominates the West has no place for spirituality. He refers to the anthropologist Michael Harner, pointing out that we have adopted an ethnocentric view of mental health, by seeing our culture as superior to any others. He says in his 1995 lecture:
We have pathologised all non-ordinary states with the exception of dreams. When they are not repetitive and associated with anxiety you are allowed to dream and be considered normal. And with this kind of attitude, we have really, if you think about it, pathologised the entire spiritual history of humanity.

Lukoff (2007) suggests that the worldview of contemporary society is bound to be challenged as an increasing amount of people report visionary spiritual experiences through engaging in spiritual practices. “Spiritual emergence” is the phrase that Grof uses to describe as a natural process of growth and unfolding, while “spiritual emergency” he describes as an overwhelming, often unwelcome or frightening onslaught of contents from the unconscious mind which produces a disruption of normal functioning. “Spiritual emergency” is often misunderstood and seen as a form of psychosis (Grof & Grof, 1997).

A well-documented disruption in normal functioning is that of Near Death Experiences (NDEs). NDEs include transpersonal phenomena entering someone’s experience during the short time that they are dead, or on the brink of death, or in a coma. Once brought back to normal consciousness (most often through emergency medical intervention), individuals who have experienced NDEs often report being deeply affected by their experience of an ‘after-life’ during the time that they were considered devoid of consciousness. Having personally been on the verge of death on three separate occasions, I can most certainly confirm the life changing effect of such experiences, which amplified my perceptions about myself and everything in existence – described in the article: What I learned while dying in an ambulance.

If NDEs represent non-ordinary states associated with events after this life, then events experienced before this life present another type of non-ordinary state. Grof refers to ‘past life experiences’ in the accounts of his clients and workshop participants which seem to be corroborated by historical details (Grof & Bennett, 1993 p. 122). One of the ways of understanding past life experiences, suggested by Grof and Laszlo (2009) is Erwin Laszlo’s Akashic Field,- a sub-quantum field, in which everything that has ever happened remains permanently holographically recorded. Rupert Sheldrake’s ‘formative causation’ hypothesis offers yet another explanation for the experience of past life phenomena, through suggesting that we resonate with that which is most like ourselves, thus we may tune in by morphic resonance to someone who lived in the past (Sheldrake, 1988). Formative causation might also help us to comprehend the experience of group consciousness to which Grof refers in his 1995
lecture, as this may suggest an attunement with the morphic field of a particular group or culture.

Perhaps one of the most valuable aspects that Grof’s work has to offer society is confirmation of the importance of approaching pregnancy and birth mindfully. With awareness of parental influence as well as the trauma that is associated with birth, future parents should be encouraged to take steps toward treating pregnancy and birth as a precious and delicate transition into a new life that will be effected by the way in which the pregnancy and birth are treated. For parents who in hindsight are concerned about the effects of negative pregnancy or birth experiences on themselves or on their children, there is still hope. Tom Robbins (1990) reminded us that “it’s never too late to have a happy childhood”, and on that note the unwanted effects of prenatal and perinatal trauma can be healed. First of all, how would one identify if one’s current mental, emotional or social problem stems from negative programming in the womb or during birth? Transpersonal coaching involves establishing the root causes of the client’s issue. If it is identified that healing in the prenatal or perinatal domain is required, then transpersonal coaching will include that along with strategies to resolve postnatal factors and other determinants of the client’s issue. Furthermore, the holistic nature of transpersonal coaching processes can also include identifying and, if necessary, resolving other factors that influence the client’s issue, for example: physiological, psychological, interpersonal and spiritual phenomena.

Considering the multi-dimensional extent of human consciousness, we can now make more responsible choices with regards to how we will pave the way for more fulfilment in our own lives and for the collective, as well as for future generations. A final word on the value of non-ordinary states is included here from Grof’s 1985 book:

The deeply felt unity with the rest of the world tends to open the way to a genuine appreciation of diversity and a tolerance of differences. Sexual, racial, cultural and other prejudices appear absurd and childish in the light of the vastly expanded world view and understanding of reality that includes the transcendental dimension (p. 432)
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Approaching a working definition of Transpersonal Coaching Psychology

By Jevon Dangeli

Transpersonal Coaching Psychology involves a dialogical relationship between a coach and client with the intention to resolve issues in the client's life, by engaging in processes that serve to transcend the client's self-constructs and limiting beliefs. Typical outcomes of this form of psychological coaching are an enhanced sense of meaning and purpose in life, bringing with it greater clarity and resourcefulness, especially in the contexts where the client had been experiencing issues.

The transpersonal approach to coaching may be of particular value when it comes to identifying transpersonal states and how these can be leveraged for positive change. This coaching methodology can also be useful when it comes to detecting and dealing with psycho-spiritual crises in the context of coaching. In general, all transpersonal interventions, including this specialised type of coaching, can be of value for the purpose of transforming a crisis into a spiritual awakening. A wide variety of interventions are used in the field of transpersonal coaching, based on the coach's background. We can assume that the one commonality shared amongst all
transpersonal coaching interventions is that they allow for and work with processes that transcend the domain of ego.

According to Elmer, MacDonald & Friedman (2003), a transpersonal intervention is any activity aimed at utilizing and working with non-ordinary states of consciousness to facilitate health and well-being with primary emphasis given to the activation and integration of spirituality into an individual's sense of identity. They propose that transpersonal interventions are generally implemented under one of three conditions: (a) to treat conventional pathology, (b) to treat spiritual pathology or problems relating explicitly to religion or spirituality, or (c) to facilitate heightened states/modes of functioning and wellness in persons who do not demonstrate any overt dysfunction. This third condition (c) is handled within the domain of transpersonal coaching, while the other two conditions, (a) and (b), are usually approached through psychotherapy and spiritual direction/counselling respectively.

Discerning between these conditions may not always be clear cut, as any form of transpersonal intervention may reveal or even lead to any of these types of conditions, and slide from one to the other. It is therefore important that the transpersonal coach is able to identify changes from one condition to another throughout the coaching process, as well as 'hold the space' for the client to both experience and safely move through various states and conditions as they arise. If the transpersonal coach lacks the background to continue working with the clients who find themselves experiencing conditions that are beyond the scope of coaching, then an ecological policy is to refer such clients to appropriate professionals for specialised treatment. In all cases, clients need to feel safe and supported throughout the coaching process and should leave each coaching session in a, at very least, resourceful enough state to 'function' in the world.

Transpersonal Coaching Psychology, like other transpersonal interventions, generally intends to actively move clients towards an enhanced level of spiritual awareness and a fuller realization of his/her ultimate potential. Elmer, MacDonald & Friedman suggest, however, that this is dependent on the perceived level of functioning of the client and his/her readiness to begin utilizing spiritual experiences and insights to bring about improved health and well-being (ibid).

In order to approach a broadly acceptable definition of Transpersonal Coaching Psychology, we are challenged to explore the implications of engaging with clients to enhance their level of spiritual awareness, as well as promoting their willingness and

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ability to incorporate expanded states and perceptions practically in the contexts in which they seek solutions to 'real life' problems.

Visit the Transpersonal Coaching and Therapy Network Forum to share your views and explore others.

Reference

Transpersonal Coaching Essays

The essays in the following section have been contributed by professional coaches and transpersonal coaching students

INVITATION

If you would like to contribute an essay, article, or suitable resource related to transpersonal coaching for inclusion in future editions of the Transpersonal Coaching Handbook, please email info@authentic-self-empowerment.com
Coaches’ Qualities Promoting Transformation in Coaching

By Dagmar Suissa

In an interview addressing the evolution of coaching, Sir John Whitmore conveyed that in the future a skilled coach would need to have transpersonal skills (Kauffman & Bachkirova, 2008). There are a number of research papers attempting to understand the key skills or behaviours of a coach (e.g. Auerbach, 2005; Boyatzis, 2002; De Haan, 2008; Moen & Federici, 2013). However, none of these studies attempted to understand the skills in the transpersonal context, which presents a need for more research.

This need was endorsed by the posts in Forum 2 [part of our online Transpersonal Coaching course], which showed an appetite for a richer understanding of the coach’s qualities with regard to the process of coaching in the transpersonal context. A number of criteria or conditions related to the coach were introduced, e.g. the level of consciousness experienced by the coach (Balaraman, 2017), knowledge and understanding of transformation and spiritual awakening (Jayne, 2017), holding the liminal space (Suissa, 2017; Dangeli, cited in Thomas, 2017), the coach’s internal representation and transcendent view of the client as well as the diversity of the perspectives coaches bring into their coaching relationship (Dangeli, cited in Suissa, 2017). Some of these criteria could be viewed as transpersonal skills yet others, e.g. the level of consciousness experienced by the coach (Balaraman, 2017), still refer to a quality the coach brings into coaching but cannot be defined as skill.

This debate made me think about the qualities of the coach more broadly than in the sense of their skills. Understanding the qualities of those who help others (coaches, facilitators or teachers) through the journey of transformation has been a subject of my long-term interest, which flavoured this assignment with genuine curiosity. I am therefore determined to probe into what qualities of the coach help them “hold the liminal space” and introduce at least a foundational discussion of these.

In the following paragraphs I will first attempt to ground the concept of transformation in the transpersonal context. Next, I will briefly introduce the AQAL.
model (Wilber, 2001), which shall serve as a springboard for applying a multi-perspectival view on the qualities of coaches. I will then propose and discuss these qualities in more detail. Finally, I will address the shortcomings and questions that remain open.

“Understanding and cultivating human transformation” (Hartelius, Caplan & Rardin, 2007, p.11) is one of the key aspects defining transpersonal psychology. Different schools of psychology or thought describe and call the process of personal transformation differently, e.g. individuation (Jung, 1971), psychosynthesis (1993), self-actualization (Maslow, 1967) or evolution of consciousness (e.g. Wilber, 1979; Barrett, 2014). In order to provide a working definition of transformation that is transpersonal yet does not lean towards a specific school of thought, I propose to employ Anderson and Braud’s (2011) view:

Personal transformation involves a qualitative shift in one’s lifeview and / or worldview…Transformation may manifest as changes in one’s perspective, understandings, attitudes, ways of knowing and doing, and way of being in the world. It may be recognized by changes in one’s body, feelings and emotions, ways of thinking, forms of expression, and relationships with others and with the world. (p.xvii)

Applying such definition of transformation to the coaching context means that we need to look for client’s perceived change of ways how they view and interpret themselves, events and the world as well as for different ways how they embody these and how they act. This also means that a pure behavioural change could not be viewed as transformation as much as a mere shift in perspective or understanding without relevant embodied action could not be considered transformational. Consequently, the transpersonal coach’s qualities need to reflect this complexity. Furthermore, Anderson & Braud (2011) also point out that transformative change tends to be persistent, pervasive and profound, which adds to the complexity. The transpersonal coach will thus need to work with the client in a way that impacts the client at more levels deeply and permanently, even if the client brings a real life problem that might give a first impression of being simple and not needing such a holistic view, e.g. losing weight.

Having anchored a working definition of transformation in the coaching context, I will now briefly touch on Wilber’s (e.g. 1997, 2001) “all quadrants-all levels” (AQAL)
model as well as explain, how some of its features can provide a supportive guideline in navigating through the different qualities of a coach promoting transformation. AQAL is one of the fundamental frameworks developed by Wilber (e.g. 2001) as part of his integral theory (e.g. 2001, 2005). It introduces five elements: quadrants, levels, lines, state and types, all of which are available in our awareness in any given situation. As Wilber (2005) suggests, it helps us make sure that we are “touching all the bases” (p.4). It provides any individual in any situation multiple perspectives on how to view, interpret and approach the situation in more comprehensive and effective ways ().

Given the scope of this essay, I will limit the discussion on how applying the lenses of the different quadrants can help us understand the transpersonal coach’s qualities. The upper left (UL) quadrant refers to the individual’s interior – their thoughts, feelings, self-concept, self-awareness, values, beliefs, intentions, visions etc. - while the upper right (UR) quadrant is what the individual looks like from the outside, e.g. their behaviour, their energy, their practical skills, their actions. The lower left (LL) quadrant represents the group interior, i.e. the intersubjective awareness, as the individual is always part of a network of relationships. It refers to the shared meanings, values, feelings, beliefs or ethics. The lower right (LR) quadrant mirrors the exterior collective forms, e.g. group behaviour or action, systems, laws or norms. The AQAL framework has been subject to extensive critique (e.g. Wagnon, 2010) for e.g. being too static, not explaining how change happens or not explaining “everything” as Wilber (2001) originally suggested. Keeping these criticisms in mind, I will only use it as an approximate map, helping us unfold perspectives that could otherwise remain concealed. I will now attempt to navigate the territory of the coach’s qualities through the lenses of the four quadrants, reflecting the different kinds of awareness coaches can hold, manifest and hone to be able to facilitate client transformation.

The UL quadrant invites us to consider the coach’s interior and to ponder how their feelings, thoughts, beliefs, values, self-concept or self-awareness influence the coaching process and outcome. Scholarly input on coaches’ mindsets is not extensive though their role in promoting client transformation can be vast. This is endorsed by Kegan & Lahey (2001) when they point out that we must consider our ways of meaning making when trying to affect change in other people. What comes to question is: what are these ways of meaning making and these mindsets? In a review of studies analysing counsellor and coach competencies Boyatzis (2002) concluded that emotional self-awareness, i.e. the ability to focus and reflect on one’s feelings, is one of the critical competencies predicting coach’s effectiveness. This is clearly a competency that is tight to the coach’s interior rather than a skill or technique explicitly
applied to the coaching situation. Similarly, McLeod (2003) pinpoints the importance of the coach’s interior, when he suggests that coach’s own disappointments, frustrations, desires and hopes express themselves non-verbally, affecting the coaching dynamic. He also presents a number of beliefs or values that assist coaches in creating transformative coaching sessions (e.g. having nothing to prove, having trust in the coachee, etc.). This was echoed in some of the comments in Forum 2, when e.g. Jevon (Dangeli, cited in Suissa, 2017) pointed out the influence of the coach’s internal representation on the client. Finally, this account would remain incomplete, if I did not mention the contribution of Amy Mindell (1995). Her concept of *metaskills* refers to subtle feelings, beliefs or values that are often unconscious, yet which determine the impact a therapist or coach will have on the development of their client. The specific metaskills Mindell (1995) discussed are: compassion, recycling often overlooked experiences and nuances, playfulness, detachment, fishing (ability to recognize when to act), shamanism, fluidity, stillness and creativity. The metaskills are independent of the theories, models or techniques used by the coach, yet they permeate these and create strong atmosphere. When they remain unconscious, coaches do not realize their impact, which can both generative and hindering. This also means that coaches should consciously nurture and develop their metaskills, should they wish to work for the greater good of the client.

I will now proceed to exploring the coach’s qualities from the perspective of the UR quadrant, which is related to the coach’s applied skills and behaviours. As this is the domain of the observable, the research available is richer. Examples of such research would be the aforementioned study of Boyatzis (2002). Besides emotional self-awareness, which concerns the coach’s interior, the second critical competency identified was the coach’s empathy toward the client. In another study, Moen and Federici (2013) attempted to operationalize coachees’ perceptions of coaches’ competencies and developed and validated a Coaching Competence Scale, consisting of five competencies: creating the relationship (respectful understanding and responsive listening), communication attending skills (asking the right questions and active listening), communication influencing skills (asking powerful open-ended questions, which influence coachee’s motivation), making the responsibility clear (clarifying that the coachee is responsible for their learning process) and facilitating for learning and results (encouraging the coachee to be active and involved in their learning process). Finally, a set of competencies is also defined by the International Coach Federation (ICF) or the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC. Competencies unanimously endorsed by the ICF, EMCC and by the coaching
literature include: establishing coaching contract, listening, questioning, action planning, goal setting and managing the process and progress (McCarthy, 2010). Overall, *listening* and *questioning* belong to the most valued competencies across different resources. This is perhaps not surprising and should be relevant for transpersonal coaching, too. However, these competencies may be insufficient in the context of coaching for transformation of the whole person. Coaches facilitating a client’s transformation need to have an additional set of knowledge and skills, or as Assagioli (1993) suggests, have “at least an understanding of and a sympathetic attitude towards the higher achievements and realities” (p.55). Should this not be the case, this could translate into the coach’s dismissive approach to such realities or into the coach interpreting these in materialistic ways, which could hinder client’s transformation. Specific skills, that may support client’s transformation are referred to in Ho Law, Lancaster and DiGiovanni (2010), who remark that transpersonal coaches need to able to cultivate meditative and other practices aiming to gain greater control over the “I” focused mind processes of their clients. According to them, “transformation comes about through shifting the leading edge of consciousness” and the coach needs to have the skills to use relevant coaching techniques, e.g. mindfulness exercises, visualisations or NLP (p.34). This significantly broadens the competencies suggested by the mainstream coaching literature.

Having reviewed the coach’s qualities from the individual perspective, I will now discuss the coach’s ability to work in midst of the intersubjective as well as interobjective spaces. Starting with the LR perspective, Hartelius, Caplan and Rardin (2007) noticed that personal growth often happens in social contexts. Therefore, coaches need to be aware of the larger system their client is part of. In the broadest sense, this could be the universe but it could also be narrowed to a specific culture or a family system. This could have multiple implications on the qualities coaches manifest. First, probing into coach’s own as well as client’s position in these larger systems could bring more awareness into the client’s issue. As Gilbert and Rosinski (2008) point out: “The organisations and structures in which clients are working are at once shaping and shaped by a collective human activity. The coach with acute cultural ‘antennae’ can keep an eye on the overall cultural context of the client” (p. 90). I am of the opinion that such an antennae should ideally be attuned to smaller and larger collective contexts like families, the society or the universe. In practical terms and in its minimal form, the coach should bring awareness into the “ecological” perspective of the client’s problem, i.e. checking with the client who will be affected by their goals,
decisions or actions (David, 2016). Otherwise, a potentially important part of the client’s transformation could be disavowed and dismissed.

From the LL perspective representing the intersubjective awareness, the coach’s qualities will manifest at more levels. At the very core, coaches should attend to basic ethical principles organising their relationship with the client. Meeting ethical guidelines is ultimately one of the key competencies promoted by the ICF (n.d.). At a deeper transpersonal level, the intersubjective perspective can also involve transcendent intersubjective phenomena. Research on intentionality in transpersonal healing (Zahourek, 1998, 2012) provides evidence and an important example of such phenomena. Intentionality is defined as “both the capacity for and the quality of intention”, while intention is viewed as “a mental set of purposes, plans and goals” (Zahourek, 2012, p.8). Intentionality turns the static nature of intention into manifestation. The author suggests that the highest form of intentionality is transforming intentionality, which is characterised by awareness of what is conscious and unconscious, by ease of intense focus, trust in intuition, attention to paradox, duality and spirituality, seeing greatest good as the ultimate goal. Intentionality is a complex concept and its untangling would go significantly beyond the scope of this paper. I will confine myself to point out that when intentionality comes about in the intersubjective space between the caregiver and the client, it is proved to shape transpersonal healing (Zahourek, 1998, 2012). This should be equally relevant for the context of coaching for transformation and intentionality should thus be considered another quality to be honed by transpersonal coaches. Finally, the intersubjective space could also be understood in terms of a universal field (Mindell 1992, 2004, 2014) that organises people into groups and relationships in the same way that a magnetic field organizes the magnets (Mindell, 2014). As Mindell (2014) remarks, “fields create and organize us as much as we organize them” (p.15). This could have vast implications into how the coach works with their client as well as on themselves, being aware of the potential entanglement between the client’s and the coach’s edges (Mindell, 2014). Sensing the atmosphere, noticing and processing feelings and reactions not only on the client’s side but also on the coach’s part, viewing them as meaningful parts of the transformational process, could become another quality of transpersonal coaches.

The present essay aimed to address the limitations of much of the existing research on the subject, which mostly focuses on the observable coach’s skills effective in achieving behavioural change of the client. The AQAL model allowed for
introducing multiple perspectives, which is conducive to bringing fuller awareness into what transpersonal coaches need to hone, should they facilitate transformation of their clients. The qualities discussed involve beliefs about the self, world and the client, emotional self-awareness and metaskills; empathy, listening, questioning, transpersonal knowledge and skills to facilitate shifts in consciousness; awareness of the social context and the wider systems, applying an “ecological” perspective; and ethics, intentionality as well as the ability to notice patterns organising the client-coach relationship. On the other hand, any model is an idealization and the boundaries between perspectives are more permeable than the static model suggests. From this perspective, applying the AQAL model is problematic. Additional shortcomings are represented by certain simplifications, gross focus on quadrants without a finer discussion of levels, lines, states and types (Wilber, 2001) and by only a framing approach to the topic, which is devoid of depth and fullness of examples. This represents a natural complication associated with most integrative attempts as well as an opportunity for further inquiry. However, despite these drawbacks, this essay plays an indispensable role in my own learning at both intellectual and practical levels, which is its biggest value.

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Transpersonal Coaching: Models for Transformation & Self-Transcendence

By Johnny Stork

Introduction

Throughout history there is evidence of humans having profoundly transformational psychological experiences within a spiritual or religious context, which have been given many names or metaphors such as Enlightenment, Illumination, Spiritual/Religious/Mystical Experience, Nirvana, Satori, Moksha or Awakening (Metzner (1980)). These experiences, regardless of tradition or context, appear to share many characteristics, with self-transcendence as the primary and most prevalent transformational effect (Taylor, 2015). In many cases these experiences are brief, lasting from only a few minutes to possibly a few days. As a transpersonal coach our goal should be to assist and encourage our clients through a process, which leads to more permanent transformations of self. Jevon Dangeli describes this as “…transcending our normal sense of separateness and thereby cultivating a sense of interconnection is one of the key features of transformation, provided that the new state and perspective becomes an enduring one” (Dangeli, 2017).

Following sections where definitions for transformation, awakening and self-transcendence are provided, I will outline two potential models of transpersonal coaching which may be suitable for creating permanent, transformative changes in client’s characterized by self-transcendence: the Modified GROW model by Law, Lancaster & DiGiovanni, (2010) and the Integral Coaching Model (ICM) developed by Laura Divine and Joanne Hunt (Hunt, 2015). In the final section I will outline a few potential challenges faced by the transpersonal coach when dealing with this particular client population: those having had or seeking transformative awakening experiences characterize by a permanent transcendence of self.

Transformation & Awakening

Awakening Experiences

Most religious/spiritual traditions have one or more terms or metaphors used to describe a subjective, transcendent and transformational experience (Metzner, 1980), which alters one’s perception, awareness, and consciousness and is thought to represent our “ultimate nature” (Welwood, 2002). A few examples of terms used
include “Nirvana”, “Buddha Mind”, “Satori” and “Moksha”. When these experiences occur in a religious, spiritual or mystical context they may be labeled respectively as a religious experience, spiritual experience or mystical experience. In order to avoid definitional challenges with words like “spiritual”, “religious” or “mystical”, or the implied religious connection to an experience, which has been found to occur more often outside a religious/spiritual context (Taylor, 2012), the more generic term “awakening experience” is used to describe these experiences both within and outside a religious/spiritual context.

Transformation & Transcendence of Self

From a psychological perspective these awakening experiences are so powerful and disruptive that they tend to induce a shift, a transformation of the person’s way of thinking. Value systems tend to be revised and even how they perceive the world and their place in it (Taylor, 2017). In many cases, their personality is changed (Neuman, 1964). But what exactly is changing in the person to produce such profound and pervasive changes? The common thread, the core experience running through descriptions in spiritual texts or self-reports from those who have had such experiences, is unmistakably one of self-transcendence and union (Metzner, 1980; Oyserman, 2012; Taylor, 2017; Weldwood, 2002). A powerful and transformational experience of self-transcendence where one’s self-concept moves beyond separateness and into connection or union with, a universal essence or Universal Self. The common experience of separation and individuation of self dissolves and a sense of unity or interconnectedness is felt. Oyserman (2012) describes the typical awakening experience as one where our sense of self expands from an “individualist self” towards a “collectivist self” when we realize our similarities with others, or in the case of an awakening experience, our fundamental interconnectedness with others.

The significance of the transformation and transcendence of self in human psychological development and motivation is also evident when Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) modified his Hierarchy of Needs pyramid in his later years. Maslow added “self-transcendence as a motivational step beyond self-actualization” (Koltko-Rivera, 2006. p. 302) to reflect what he believed was the highest state of human consciousness which is characterized by a shift in motivation towards higher goals and purpose outside of or beyond, our selves.

Coaching Models for Awakening
Although transpersonal psychology (and now transpersonal coaching) continues to struggle with a definitional problem, I believe we can agree that at the very least, a transpersonal approach to coaching is going to begin with the assumption that the human self is capable of states which transcend beyond (trans) “normal” states of functioning and experiencing the world. Since we have already demonstrated that the very definition of awakening is a transcendence of self (Metzner, 1980; Welwood, 2002), we should be well-equipped foundationally and philosophically for developing a transpersonal coaching model for permanent awakening and self-transcendence. It is also important to note that awakening is not a destination or even a state, it is very much a process, a switch to a different road in life and to borrow an analogy from Taylor (2017), “… this road is higher up the side of the mountain; the view is more panoramic and the scenery is more beautiful and vivid (Loc. 3494).

Due to the limitations on length for this paper it was impossible to explore in depth, every technique or model that could be utilized in a coaching process to help clients attain and then sustain, the self-transcendent state indicative of an awakening experience. And whether we use mindfulness or meditation (Law et al, 2010; Taylor, 2012, 2017; Vago & Silbersweig, 2012), body-work techniques, guided imagery (Strohl, 1998), breath manipulation like holotropic breathwork (Grof & Grof, 1988) or peripheral awareness (Dangeli, 2015), all these tools appear to produce only temporary awakening experiences. Therefore I have chosen to explore a few coaching models (rather than tools) which may be best suited to not only offer the client means through which they can experience temporary states of self-transcendence, but which may assist the client to better understand and integrate the experiences into their own sense of self which may lead to permanent awakening (Elmer, et al. 2012).

Modified GROW Model

The popular GROW coaching model developed by Whitmore (2009) is heavily influenced by Assagioli’s psychosynthesis (Law, Lancaster & DiGiovanni, 2010). Psychosynthesis (integration of multiple psychological states or components) is considered an early precursor to both humanistic and transpersonal psychology as it considers not only aspects of optimal human growth and self-actualization from an integral perspective, but also considers transpersonal aspects as well. Although this is a very basic outline, the GROW model represents a structured approach whereby the client is taken through four stages in the coaching process (Whitmore, 2009):
1. **Goal**: What do you want?
2. **Reality**: Where are you now?
3. **Options**: What could you do? What are your skills?
4. **Will**: What will you do? Actions and behaviors toward the goals.

With the intention of implementing more transpersonal methods into coaching, Law et al. (2010) propose extending Whitmore’s GROW model to include a “Pre-Goal Setting Stage” where the coach would encourage some mindfulness exercises to “increase self-awareness and state of readiness (pre-conscious) for building internal capacity and mindfulness about one’s responsibility” (p. 5). In the final phase of the GROW model (Will), the coach would evaluate and register the client’s “responsibility and commitment in relation to a wider context” beyond the client’s ego-self (Law et al., 2010. p. 5). Along with additions to the Reality and Options stages of the GROW model, taking into account aspects of the client’s self and identity beyond his/her-self, the revised GROW coaching process may help to facilitate a more permanent transformation of self through shifting the client’s leading edge of consciousness (Law et al., 2010).

**Integral Coaching Model (ICM)**

Ken Wilber is a well-known figure in the world of transpersonal psychology with his integral theory of consciousness (Wilber, 1997), which forms the basis of his AQAL (All Quadrants, All Levels) model. The AQAL model attempts to combine a dozen different perspectives on consciousness, including those from eastern and other contemplative traditions. The AQAL map (Wilber, 2005) yields a four quadrant model representing intentional, behavioral, cultural and social aspects of self, further divided into inside/outside, individual/collective and internal/external perspectives, producing an eight zoned model of methodologies or paradigms for understanding consciousness called Integral Methodological Pluralism or IMP (Wilber, 2006).

Through their review of popular coaching models Hunt (2015) found that most focused their efforts on only one or two of the four quadrants (intentional, behavioral, cultural and social) of Wilber’s AQAL map (Wilber, 2005). Hunt (2015) argues that for embodied change to occur in the client where the changes are deeply entrenched, sustained and more likely to become permanent, all four quadrants of the AQAL model should be satisfied in an interconnected manner (as opposed to treated as separate segments) in the coaching model.
In response to identifying the limitations of many current coaching models as they incompletely map to Wilber’s AQAL, Laura Divine and Joanne Hunt (founders of Integral Coaching Canada - ICC), developed their Integral Coaching Model (ICM) to more fully integrate Wilber’s AQAL and IMP into a “transcend and include” (Wilber, 1980, pp. 93-96) approach. The ICM model is driven by two concepts of “self”; the client’s Current Way of Being (CWOB) and their New Way of Being (NWOB). From the very start, the coaching process/goal is presented as a transcendence or transformation of a client’s current “self” to a new “self” (Frost, 2009). Hunt (2015) describes the ICM as follows;

“Integral Coaching Canada works with two concepts of “me” that exist simultaneously: a “current me” and a “future or new me.” Both of these identities have a way of being that includes: 1) a way of seeing, perceiving, and making sense of; 2) a way of going that includes actions, words, interactions, “doings”; and 3) a way of checking or gauging if the results or consequences of actions are a success or failure, a happy result or sad one, good or bad, and so on. Each of us has a CWOB and we all grow into NWOB in repeated and everwidening cycles over our developmental lifetime. Integral Coaching® builds the capacities and capabilities to grow into a NWOB while also working to integrate the healthy aspects of our CWOB as we transcend and include it.” (p. 12)

Further emphasis on self-transcendence in the ICM model is seen in Hunt’s application of Wilber’s “subject-object” theory of psychological growth and transformation from The Atman Project:

1. A higher-order structure emerges in consciousness (with the help of symbolic forms);
2. The self identifies its being with that higher structure;
3. The next higher-order structure eventually emerges;
4. The self dis-identifies with the lower structure and shifts its essential identity to the higher structure;
5. Consciousness thereby transcends the lower structure;
6. And becomes capable of operating on that lower structure from the higher-order level;
7. Such that all preceding levels can then be integrated in consciousness. (Wilber, 1980, p. 94)

Through application of Wilbur’s (2005) AQAL model and subject-object theory (Wilber, 1980) to the coaching process, the coach works with metaphors to describe a
client’s CWOB as it deals with language, perceptions, behavior and how they respond to stimuli or events. The coach would then work with the Goals outlined for the client (GROW Model) and develop a metaphor for a NWOB which would indicate the various shifts required in the client across language, perceptions, behaviors and their response patterns (Frost, 2009). “Through this structured, integral developmental process, the client progressively dis-identifies with their CWOB and shifts their essential identity to the NWOB” (Hunt, 2015. p. 13). By focusing on the belief structures thought to underlie human change within each of the Four Quadrants of the AQAL model, the coach can guide the client through a comprehensive approach touching on all aspects or domains thought to effect self, leading to the changes or shifts from CWOB to NWOB (transformation) which may sustain the changes for the client over time (Frost, 2009).

Challenges

There are many challenges facing the transpersonal coach when working with clients who have had, or are seeking, a transformational and awakening experience through self-transcendence. What I have attempted here is an outline of some of the challenges, which a transpersonal coach may face when working with this population and intended goal of self-transformation.

• Since our approach is one of self or ego-transcendence, there is recognition that before one can consider transcending “normal” ego/self-functions, the person must have an intact, healthy and of course flexible ego structure to begin with (Elmer et al. 2012). Individuals with underdeveloped or aberrantly developed egos are viewed as lacking the requisite personality structure to cope with, understand, and effectively or consistently utilize self-transcendence for the enhancement of health and well-being (Epstein, 1986).

• In order to determine if a client possesses an intact, healthy and flexible ego structure (Elmer, et al. 2012) prior to entering into the coaching process, a pre-screening tool such as Friedman’s (1983) Self-Expansiveness Level Form (SELF) may be utilized. The SELF is intended to be an objective measure of a person’s level of self-expansiveness beyond the boundaries of the here-and-now and a biologically oriented organism, towards a capacity to transcend any limitations in self or self-concept (Friedman & MacDonald, 1997). Those who score high on the SELF Transpersonal Scale may be more likely to see positive results from a transpersonal coaching approach to attaining the level of self-transcendence necessary for an awakening experience. Along with its value as an assessment tool, the SELF could
also be used to measure progress when the stated goal is to increase the client’s level of self-transcendence (Friedman, 1997).

- The coaching process involves dialog with a client in order to understand their circumstances, goals, values and experience of self. Therefore the ineffable nature of such subjective experiences as self-transcendence may be difficult for the client, or the coach, to express. William James (1961) expressed this challenge in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* where he states these experiences “defy expression that no adequate report of its contents can be given in words” (p. 300).

- Whether the client has already had an awakening experience, or experiences one during the coaching process, the transpersonal coach should be aware of the possibility that the client may be having a more radical and disruptive form of awakening which Grof & Grof (1989) have labeled *spiritual emergency*. Since there is no clear delineation between the symptoms or characteristics of a psychotic experience and an awakening experience, distinguishing between a psychotic episode with awakening features, or an awakening experience with psychotic features, may not be clear (Lukoff, 1985; Neuman, 1964; Sinclair, 2016).

- One also can’t always assume the coach is operating at a higher level of transpersonal function than the client. In the case where the coach feels the client is operating at a higher level of consciousness and transpersonal awareness, it is expected that the coach refer to a practitioner who may be better equipped to facilitate higher growth in the client (Elmer et al. 2012).

- Many of the methods potentially deployed in the coaching process involve a potential for deep levels of personal exploration and self-transcendence, which, in the presence of unknown or undisclosed mental illness, could result in harm to the client. Even the simple practice of meditation or mindfulness is not entirely benign and can both exacerbate and reinforce existing pathology (Epstein, 1986; Walsh & Vaughan, 1980).

**Conclusion**

This paper described a profoundly transformational psychological phenomenon called an “awakening experience”. The hallmark of these awakening experiences is a transcendence or a “stepping out of one’s self, of joining with something beyond or outside one’s normal ego boundaries” (Kasparow, 1999. p. 12). Put another way, during
an awakening experience “…the subjective sense of one’s self as an isolated entity can temporarily fade into an experience of unity with other people or one’s surroundings, involving the dissolution of boundaries between the sense of self and “other” (Yaden, Hood, Haidt, Vago & Newberg, 2017, p.1). This notion of self-transcendence during the awakening experience can be both temporary as well as permanent leading to long-term changes in the person’s state of well-being, interactions with others as well as how they perceive themselves in relation to the entire cosmos, ultimately leading to a healthier and higher-functioning state of consciousness (Taylor, 2017).

A transpersonal approach to coaching called the Integral Coaching Model (ICM) developed by Laura Divine and Joanne Hunt (2015), is solidly based on Wilber’s self-transcending AQAL Map (Wilber, 2005) and Integral Methodological Pluralism (Wilber, 2006) models of human consciousness and development. The ICM model offers an encouraging approach to transpersonal coaching where the explicit and foundational goal is a permanent transformation of self for the client – an awakening experience.

References


Coaching for Transformation

By Robert Thompson

As I set out to write this essay I am aware that I should be conscious of what I am doing, to indulge in the now, to be the best I can be now and to be focused on what I am doing in the moment. I want to experience it for what it is – the thoughts and feeling I have now, not what it will be – an essay submission to be scrutinized and scored at a later date. Perhaps this might be a reasonable definition of how a transpersonal coach should be while working with a client. The essence of this essay is a reflection on the contributions and comments made in Forum 2 [part of our online Transpersonal Coaching course], which explores coaching for transformation. That Forum encouraged students to consider and reflect on how transpersonal coaching psychology might be of value to clients, the key criteria that promotes transformation in coaching, what we know from other transpersonal approaches and what learning these might provide for coaches while giving due consideration to the impact of introducing these approaches.

In developing content to publish in this forum, which would generate challenge and discussion, with a view to improving one’s knowledge of the topic and expand thinking in the field, it felt that it was necessary to find a definition or at least an explanation of transpersonal coaching psychology as a starting point to provide a reference base. In the first instance it was useful to consider the following statement on coaching psychology from Grant & Palmer (2002) that “Coaching psychology is for enhancing performance in work and personal life domains with normal, non-clinical populations, underpinned by models of coaching grounded in established therapeutic approaches (p. 8).” This is particularly impactful given that this statement was crafted by Anthony Grant, who is considered a pioneer of coaching psychology, and was adopted by the coaching psychology special interest group of the British Psychological Society as the basis for its working definition. It is interesting to note that the definition refers to ‘non-clinical populations’, which could appear to be at odds with ‘grounded in established therapeutic approaches’ since this could imply a clinical intervention of some description at some stage. Bradley (2017) commented on the use of coaching techniques stating, “You are initially helping the person through ‘therapeutic holding’ as opposed to therapy” (para. 2). The difference between ‘therapeutic holding’ and ‘therapy’ could be misinterpreted if one assumed something other than the former is holding the space for the client to think through their concern and the latter a course of
action to treat a condition. It is reassuring to find that Grant (2016) updated his thoughts when considering the content taught on undergraduate and graduate psychology degree programs stating:

Many of us were frustrated that there was so little taught about the normal, well-functioning adult person, and even less about how to apply theory to practice, and it was frustrations such as these which gave impetus to the emergence of coaching psychology (p.12).

To consider coaching psychology from a transpersonal perspective it is useful to reflect on an early definition of transpersonal psychology by one of the founders of the field, Antony Sutich (1968), who stated that:

Transpersonal (or Fourth Force) Psychology is the title given to an emerging force in the psychology field by a group of psychologists and professional men and women from other fields who are interested in those ultimate human capacities and potentialities that have no systematic place in either ‘First Force’ (positivistic or behavioristic theory), ‘Second Force’ (classical psychoanalytical theory), or ‘Third Force’ (humanistic) psychology (p.77).

This initial part of the definition states what the field is not, before going on to explain “The emerging ‘Fourth Force’ (Transpersonal Psychology) is concerned specifically with the scientific study and responsible implementation of becoming, individual and species-wide meta-needs, ultimate values, unitive consciousness, peak experiences, B values, ecstasy, mystical experience, awe…” (ibid, p.77). It is interesting to note that some forty years later a major analysis carried out by Hartelius, Caplan & Rardin (2007) offered a summary definition of transpersonal psychology as “An approach to psychology that 1) studies phenomena beyond the ego as context for 2) an integrative/holistic psychology; this provides a framework for 3) understanding and cultivating human transformation” (p.11). A somewhat more contemporary view benefitting from the passage of time. Bringing these definitions together one could conclude that transpersonal coaching psychology is a process which supports individuals in their self-development, whether personal or professional, to look beyond their issue and themselves to develop their new world view offering the ability to transcend their current state supported by a suitably qualified transpersonal coach.

The impact of a coaching session or series of sessions on a client will differ greatly based on their expectations and the ability of the coach. The outcome will in most cases result in a change of some description in the client and potentially the coach. This is a reasonable assumption given that transpersonal psychology considers human experiences as a source or catalyst for change. Stork (2017) comments that
At the most basic level we could consider ‘transformation’ to be a change from one state of consciousness or awareness, to another with the most extreme example of transformation to be a ‘spiritual awakening’. At this level of basic transformation, it would seem to be the most common goal or expectation of any client seeking transpersonal coaching services (para. 1).

This observation captures a scope ranging from task or goal based coaching through to transformative or transpersonal coaching. A coach can support their client using transpersonal techniques or approaches such as that suggested by Dangeli (2017) to guide the client into an expanded state, and then as soon as they are able to verbally express their experience of that state, which is usually a few moments after the peak of it, we ask them something like: “what is this experience like for you?”, followed by: “how do you know you’re experiencing (client’s words to describe their state)...”? Then, as the client articulates their experience and while they’re still in that expanded state, one potentially useful next move on the part of the coach is to respond with something like: “now think of that (use the words that the client used to describe the trigger of their issue” (para. 3).

This questioning methodology achieving that expanded state or other method depends on the skills of the coach and the willingness of the client to engage. Stork (2017) reflects that “The bigger question/topic I have though, is around how do we identify those methods (holotropic breathwork, mindfulness, open awareness, body/energy work etc.) which may be best suited to any given client” (para. 5). As with all professions it is the ability of the coach to determine each encounter on its own merits and act accordingly, acting ethically, taking into consideration the contracting agreement with the client and the reaction of the client to given situations. Thomas (2017) questions the ability of coaches who are not transpersonally trained to deal with spiritual crises, potentially creating a negative client outcome, and sums up the matter stating “a duty of care would exist” (para. 3). This relies on the coach following a specific code of conduct reflecting ethical values, professional qualifications as required by their accrediting body, and a commitment to continuing professional development including supervision.

The methodological approach to transpersonal coaching psychology documented in publications such as that of Law, Lancaster & DiGiovanni (2010) which diagrammatically offers a link between transpersonal psychology and cognitive neuroscience could help support coaches who might have a problem with applying transpersonal techniques in their practice or explaining the topic to clients. This could be useful for individuals to help them to understand and express the spiritual and mystical elements of the transpersonal alongside the more scientific aspects of
cognitive function. The default in our society in some circumstances seems to be the demand for or alignment with empirical evidence over more subjective learning based on traditional teachings. The paper mentioned above helps expand thinking to challenge the current norms of quantitative research being superior to qualitative research.

The impact of some transpersonal approaches which includes those such as open awareness (Dangeli 2015; Glaser & Strauss 1964), holotropic breathing (Grof, 2003) and mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2003) are visible as processes driving positive outcomes which have been documented and generally acknowledged as useful contributions to the field.

Introducing a client to coaching can sometimes be a challenge depending on the circumstances around which they became involved in the process. This can range from corporate coaching instigated by the individual’s company which they have not engaged in voluntarily through to an individual presenting personally to resolve a challenge, crisis or decision that needs to be dealt with. Both of these client types will have a very different approach to the early sessions. One could be expected to be somewhat combative while the other heavily engaged in the process. Either is a challenge to the coach in the first instance. It could also be assumed that any client compliance or intransigence could surface during the latter stages of the coaching program, challenging the coach to alter how to deal with the client. If one assumes that the client becomes engaged then they are committed to a learning process to help them move forward, that exploration process driven by the coach should not in itself have a label or be presented as a particular approach since as Suissa (2017) states,

Some of the few texts I found, in my opinion, lacked depth and only brushed the surface when discussing the value of transpersonal coaching: e.g. work-life balance, becoming less reactive, becoming more self-aware, choosing behaviours more consciously, building maturity in people, gaining emotional and spiritual intelligence (para. 1).

If it is this difficult to find literature relevant to a topic then one could conclude that explaining that topic to people outside the field is all the more difficult. That is not to say that one should not try to encourage discussion and debate on various approaches as long as one acknowledges that one size does not fit all. On that point De Haan, Culpin & Curd (2011) observe “It is therefore not the preference for a specific technique that makes a difference, but rather the ability to employ many techniques, to use them well and at the right moment” (p. 40).

The ability of a coach to introduce approaches and concepts to clients lies not only with the skill and experience of the coach but also in the familiarity a client might
have with the topic or their awareness of its impact in other fields. Mindfulness in particular, has been recognised as a way to increase well-being and create other positive outcomes across a number of fields. Kabat-Zinn (2003) defined the practice as being aware that you are in that moment, and hold judgement, and acknowledge the experience, a process which became mainstream following the development of his mindfulness based stress reduction model that has become widely used. Recognition of this lies in the support and promotion of mindfulness in healthcare, education, business and the criminal justice system in the UK described in the Mindful Nation UK report commissioned by the Mindfulness All-Party Parliament Group (2015). If other transpersonal approaches were to harness similar support then general understanding would be higher and possibly more acceptable such as in the case of mindfulness. However it is interesting to note that this report, which makes significant recommendations and funding suggestions states that “It is important to emphasise that this proliferation of programmes has outstripped the research evidence which, while promising, remains patchy”(ibid, p.40). A research program (“Mindfulness and Resilience in Adolescence (MYRIAD) Project - Oxford Mindfulness Centre", 2017) to investigate the outcomes of this initiative will report in 2022. This observation on the volume of research evidence serves as a timely reminder to coaches that using most techniques and transpersonal approaches in particular should be pursued with relative caution. Again this is dependent on the knowledge and experience of the coach, reflecting the opinion of Suissa (2017) that further research is needed. Stepping back from process and method Dangeli (2017) advises

This transcendent view in coaching is not something that the coach should seek to master. Rather, it should serve as a conceptual guideline to sharpen the coach’s sensory acuity, prevent them from becoming lost in the client's story (or their own), and help them to hold the liminal space as effectively and as effortlessly as possible (para. 5).

This observation challenges the coach to look beyond process and method, a position that seems to be supported by Drake (2009) who asks “Is not coaching a quintessential art in this regard—helping clients get to the heart of their dilemmas, the core of their values, the essence of their life, the meaning of their legacies?” (p.13). The inclusion of ‘essence’ and ‘meaning’ in the question points to the expanded realms of the transpersonal.

How can the coach impose, direct or drive a change of view in the client? Taking an observation by Jayne (2017) that “It's down to the client as to whether they're ready and prepared for a breakthrough or awakening” (para. 1), gets to the heart of the coaching process. The tools and techniques that coaches acquire over
time need the compliance of the client to create successful outcomes. The statement also recognises the outcomes as ‘breakthrough or awakening’ which delineates between differing coaching approaches which deliver solutions or a breakthrough to problems and the awakening of a client to a different level of perception which one could contend that the mind, body, soul, spirit, continuum is functioning for that client equipping them with a different world view.

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Using nature as a tool to create transformation in transpersonal coaching

By Tabitha Jayne

As a coaching approach, transpersonal coaching is difficult to define (Sparrow, 2007). This is not helped by the fragmented nature of coaching psychology literature which tends to focus on specific types of coaching approaches or interventions (Passmore & Theeboom, 2015). Sadly, evidence based research on transpersonal coaching is underdeveloped in comparison to other coaching approaches, though this will change due to the large body of transpersonal research that can be now applied to coaching (Rowan, 2014).

As such, this paper starts with the assumption a function of transpersonal coaching is to create transformation in a person’s life. Indeed, the second forum topic for this module was entitled, “coaching for transformation”. Therefore, this paper will first consider what transformation is and why it is a necessary component of transpersonal coaching. Secondly, the paper will explore why nature is a valuable tool in transpersonal coaching and how the use of nature in transpersonal coaching has the potential to create transformation. Thirdly, it will identify ways in which nature can be used in transpersonal coaching, touching upon a nature-connected process the author has developed and uses with clients before finally reaching a reflective, and personal, conclusion.

Taylor (2013) defines transformation as an experience or set of experiences that deconstruct a person’s understanding of self and helps to create a new identity that involves changes in values, beliefs, attitudes and lifestyle choices. Lasley, Kellogg, Michaels, & Brown (2015) state that transformation is a powerful change that comes from a state of deep awareness and creates a new way of looking at life and encourages people to forge new paths.

Within transpersonal psychology there are three key themes, one of which is as a psychology of transformation (Hartelius, Caplan & Rardin, 2007). If transpersonal psychology is a psychology of transformation, then it follows that transpersonal
coaching is coaching for transformation. This takes the idea that the function of transpersonal coaching is to create transformation in a person’s life beyond assumption.

Lasley, Kellogg, Michaels & Brown (2015) state that the function of coaching itself is to create transformation, making no reference to transpersonal coaching. Nevertheless, they consider the coaching relationship as sacred and make explicit suggestions to bringing soul and spirit into coaching. In essence, they are talking about transpersonal coaching without naming it as such. Whitmore (2009) also highlights that transpersonal coaching is a powerful tool for transformation, especially into today’s climate of crisis as it helps provide a stable foundation upon which to build on within the coaching relationship.

Despite there being a lack of evidence based research to currently support the validity of transpersonal coaching there are a number of practitioners of transpersonal coaching who tout its benefits and state that it is extremely effective in developing leadership skills and teams (Whitmore, 2009); as a pathway to create personal and social change (Lasley, Kellogg, Michaels & Brown, 2015); has the potential to help organisations achieve true Corporate Social Responsibility (Law, Lancaster & Giovianni, 2010); as a way of going beyond ego, thoughts and action that block an individual’s growth (Dangeli, 2017a) and works best in solving problems and helping people find meaning and purpose in life (Whitmore & Einzig, 2010).

As a practising coach myself for the last seven years, I have been using a form of coaching, which could be considered transpersonal due to its way of working with nature. Anderson (2011) highlights that what is considered unconscious, symbolic or imaginal processes in our western culture is, in indigenous cultures fully integrated with the sensory experiences of the Earth which are seen as patterns, symbols and visions. This is the approach I have taken in developing my transpersonal nature connected coaching and has culminated in the development of a coaching training program that sees the first of its trainees completing their certification process. On a personal level, this paper is the start of developing an evidence-based approach to my work.

Nature is a valuable tool in transpersonal coaching as when an individual engages with the natural world there are a number of immediate benefits for our clients. Not only does their health improve (Han, 2009; Moore et al., 2006; Maller et al., 2009) but the body’s ability to cope with stress increases (Lottrup, Grahn & Stigsdotter,
2013; Hartig et al., 2003; Thompson et al., 2012; Ulrich et al., 1991). Blood pressure reduces (Tsunetsugu et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2014), the heart slows down (Cracknell, 2013; Song et al., 2014) and the body experiences an increase in parasympathetic nerve activity, which promotes a sense of rest and relaxation (Tsunetsugu et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2014; Song et al., 2014). Our clients are able to think better after interacting with nature (Blair, 2009; Lottrup et al., 2013; Shin et al., 2011; Wu et al., 2014) and also experience less depression, anger, aggression and stress (Kuo & Sullivan, 2001a, 2001b; Morita et al., 2007).

By having a client spend time in nature during a coaching session, we are focusing attention immediately upon creating optimal conditions to work with our client. Transpersonal coaching works because it considers the whole person; body, mind and spirit (Dangeli, 2017b). Through tapping into the health benefits for the body and mind by enabling our clients to spend time in nature, we make it easier for our clients to connect with spirit. Indeed, the part of the brain that controls self-rumination experiences a reduction in activity after ninety minutes walking in a natural setting (Bratman et al., 2015). Our clients’ brains start to function differently in nature, which supports the potential for transformation.

Furthermore, Taylor (2012) suggests that spending time in nature is a frequent trigger of awakening experiences; those experiences that have the potential to create transformation in an individual’s life. According to Taylor’s (2012) research, psychological turmoil and nature are the top two sources of spontaneous awakening experiences; those experiences that are not consciously sought through religious or spiritual practice. Therefore, using nature as a tool in transpersonal coaching has the potential to help trigger a spontaneous awakening experience in an individual during an actual coaching session. But how can we help facilitate this as a transpersonal coach?

Before using nature as a tool for transformation in transpersonal coaching we first must consider the immediate needs for the client with regards to spending time in nature. For example, if a client is experiencing burnout, which is a form of physical, psychological, social and spiritual suffering that happens when our existing ways of being in the world no longer function effectively and starts to fall apart, what is first needed, according to Wright (2005), are the 3R’s: rest, re-energising and recuperation. In this circumstance, what the client needs most is contact with the natural world to support their need for rest, re-energising and recuperation. However, it’s important to
ensure that clients experience a state of mindful awareness when out in nature to ensure they harness the full benefits of contact with nature upon their well-being (Mantler & Logan, 2015). Suggestions for ensuring a state of mindful awareness when in nature will be explored when discussing the use of nature for transformation from the two nature-connected processes the author has developed and uses with clients.

Contact with nature leads to a connection with nature. Schultz (2002) identifies three components necessary for nature connectedness; how much a person identifies with nature, how they care for nature, and how committed they are to take care of the natural environment. The more time a person spends in nature, the more connected they feel to nature and the more concern they may experience about what’s happening to the natural world (Mayer & Franz, 2004; Nisbet, Zelenski & Murphy, 2009). Starting from a place of connection with nature in transpersonal coaching is appropriate when a client is not experiencing a state of burnout, or other psychological turmoil, and is looking to deepen their relationship with the natural world around them as a way of exploring their identity as a part of nature.

It's from this place of connection with nature that we are then able to help our coaching clients to use nature as a catalyst, which is where the use of nature in transpersonal coaching has the potential to create transformation. Taylor (2012) highlights that a similar definition of awakening experiences is Maslow’s concept of peak experiences. Peak experiences are moments when an individual loses track of time and space, experiences a feeling of wholeness and freedom from fear and doubt, feels as if they are fully functional and experiences a state of flow and ease in the present moment (Maslow, 1962). Maslow (1986) highlighted that a vast majority of peak experiences were associated with and achieved through nature – and that peak experiences were spontaneous and uncontrollable. So, how can a transpersonal coach use nature as a tool for transformation to create peak experiences or spontaneous awakenings when it's seemingly impossible to control or artificially create transformative experiences?
The transpersonal coach starts by considering their client’s existing experiences with the natural world. Buckley & Brough (2017) highlight that there are seven types of experiences an individual can have in nature, starting from a place of low cost, high frequency to high cost, low frequency:

1. Virtual (on-screen only)
2. Incidental (vegetation along roads)
3. Occasional (neighbourhood nature)
4. Visitor (day visits to parks)
5. Immerse (multi-day recreation)
6. Intense (wilderness adventure)
7. Extreme (life changing, life threatening)

Understanding not only these different types of experiences but also what type of nature experiences the client already has had, allows the transpersonal coach to create a tailor-made program designed to support contact with nature, connection to nature and create space for nature to become a catalyst for transformation. This paper will now move onto identifying ways in which nature can be used in transpersonal coaching, touching upon a nature-connected process the author has developed and uses with clients.

The Nature Process is a simple way of deepening an individual’s connection to nature by encouraging people to be in the body and experience nature through the senses (The Nature Process, 2016). It involves five steps/principles:

“Natural Presence: Step into a deeper experience of the natural world as you become aware of your 54 senses.

Natural Body: Connect to the wisdom of the body.

Natural Attractions: Let go of stories and beliefs you have about life and learn to think like Nature and as a part of Nature.

Natural Communication: Experience and understand the non-verbal language of Nature.

Natural Release: Feel yourself as a part of a greater whole, Nature, and use your sensory connections to return to a state of balance and well-being.
Practised together, these five principles form the basis of The Nature Process which can be done daily in as little as thirty minutes.” (Jayne, 2017, p. 40).

Within The Nature Process, I have identified five specific techniques that are helpful in creating contact with nature, connection with nature and enable nature to become a catalyst for transformation.

**Nature Memory**

When a client does not have access to nature, it is possible to use a memory of a favourite time or place in nature instead. This works through the body-mind connection whereby changing the mental thought patterns results in measurable changes in the central nervous system activity (Jacobs, 2001). In this way, focusing intensely on a memory of a time in nature can create a similar response in the body as if the client were actually outside.

**54 Senses**

A key element of The Nature Process are the 54 Senses. Originally developed by Dr Mike Cohen of Project NatureConnect, the 54 senses help individuals experience the world in a far deeper and intimate way (Jayne, 2017). The aim of using the 54 senses in a coaching session is to enable the client to create a subtle shift in their state of consciousness and help bring them deeper into the present moment. Using the 54 senses helps create mindful awareness in the client. This ensures that they harness the full benefits of contact with nature upon their well-being (Mantler & Logan, 2015).

To do this the client is asked to describe whatever nature they have access to, whether it be a picture, a nature view from a window, a pot plant or their immediate environment. Focus is put on describing as many sensory experiences as possible and the coach is encouraged to ask as many questions as possible to help the client come fully into the present moment.
Nature Metaphors

Metaphors are a way of understanding an abstract idea by relating it to another concept (Kovecses, 2010). Exploring how nature functions can be a way of helping coaching clients better understand the experiences of their own life. A common metaphor used is the one of the caterpillar/butterfly to explain the process of transformation.

Using metaphors in this manner is particularly helpful in supporting the development of an ecological identity. Our ecological identity is the way in which we view ourselves in relation to the Earth, particularly in terms of personality, values, actions and sense of self (Thomashow, 1996). Our ecological identity is inherently transpersonal as it creates a connection between what is considered the person and what is considered the world, which is one of Friedman & Hartelius’s (2015) key distinctions in defining transpersonal along with experiences that are considered spiritual.

Nature as an Aspect of Self

This technique goes a step beyond using metaphors into directly working on not only developing the ecological self, but also identifying positive qualities about a client to improve self-esteem. This is the need or want for a secure high assessment of themselves, something which is necessary for everyone in our society, especially if they wish to reach a state of self-actualisation (Maslow, 1943). Most young people tend to base their self-esteem on the dominant cultural values of their society rather than their own individual values (Becker et al., 2014). This can then create problems when individuals fail to live up to the dominant cultural values of their society, or successfully do. High self-esteem has been both associated with lower depression and anxiety and a greater life satisfaction, though it has also been linked to defensiveness, prejudice, aggression and over-optimistic task persistence (Konrad, 2012).

To use this technique with clients during a coaching session, you first ask them to identify a part of nature that they are drawn to in that moment, whether it be from memory or in real life (Jayne, 2017). Ask them to identify why they like that part of nature. Once they have stated the reasons why, ask them to change the sentence around to state why they like themselves and then observe the thoughts, feelings and
sensations that arise as they speak the sentence. For example: I like trees because they are strong and powerful. I like myself because I am strong and powerful. The space for transformation is created in this technique is through the exploration of how they respond to the statement about themselves and also through an exploration of how they feel about the original statement made about the aspect of nature. When using this technique it is key to make explicit the assumption that nature is a reflection of self in order for it to work successfully as this helps identify limiting beliefs that are inhibiting an individual’s growth.

**Self-guided Nature-based Imagery**

Clients are encouraged to create their own nature-based scenario whilst in a relaxed state with their eyes closed. The aim of this exercise is to encourage clients to not only develop this as a skill that they can use when they don’t have easy access to the natural world but it also helps them tap into their middle unconscious, which is readily accessible through coaching and relates to the most recent past and present time period (Whitmore, 2009). Following a self-guided nature-based imagery exercise, the transpersonal coach then asks the client questions to explore the significance of any symbolism within the scenario and what the experience meant for the client.

Self-guided imagery also has the added benefit of being helpful for emotional self-regulation in healthy people and has the potential to increase productivity in the workplace (Velikova, Sjaaheim & Nordtug, 2017). However, caution must be taken when using this technique as mental imagery has been shown to negatively impact people suffering from PTSD (Ehlers & Clark, 2000; Brewin, Dalgeish & Joseph, 1996; Holmes, Grey & Young, 2005) eating disorders (Tatham, 2011; Guardia et al., 2010), social anxiety (Hirsh, Clark & Mathews, 2006), depression (Patel et al., 2007) and certain mental health conditions such as bipolar disorder (Holmes et al., 2008) and ADHD (Abraham et al., 2006).

The power of nature cannot be underestimated. I wrote this paper while housesitting for my sister. I lay in bed with the weight of her two dogs lying upon my legs. Birdsong serenaded me through an open window as the grey, cloudy sky and bright green foliage gave me a welcome break from the laptop screen every time I looked out it. Nature surrounded me and supported me as I wrote this.

At times, I have felt blinded by my belief in the power of nature for transformation. Other times I have doubted the merit of mixing nature and coaching, to
the point of wondering if I should give up what I do. Writing this paper and reflecting on the science behind it leads me to conclude that using nature as a tool for transformation is an essential part of not just transpersonal coaching, but transpersonal psychology itself. Humans need nature, not just to survive and live on this planet, but to reach their full potential – and transpersonal coaching with the use of nature is one of the ways we can achieve this transformation. However, what is needed is more evidence-based research to identify the most effective ways to do this.

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Transpersonal Coaching to resolve stress, burnout and PTSD

By Donna Thomas

During this essay I wish to explore transpersonal coaching, critically analyzing the evidence relating to how techniques may assist stress-related illness and the validity of using this methodology within my organisation. I hope to use this essay as a spring-board to create evidence-based practice (EBP), focused on the best research and expertise to ensure the provision of an effective coaching service that aligns with officer’s needs. Throughout, I will refer to my own coaching experience and wish to specifically focus on burnout and post-traumatic stress (PTSD).

Having served in the Police Force for 16 years, I have witnessed the increased pressure on staff causing sickness levels to rise. In 2016, it was reported that the number of officers experiencing stress had risen by 58% in just two years and the Police Federation have stated that due to the high-stress nature of the job some officers have considered suicide. (The Mirror, 2016; Politics Home, 2016). Alongside unprecedented change, I believe that recent terrorist and other significant events are pushing resources to breaking point and “if levels of demand continue to rise we may end up facing an epidemic of burnt-out cops” (Thomas, 2017). I also recognise that the Police Service is only one of many organisations feeling the strain. During last year alone, stress accounted for 37% of all work related illness and 45% of working days lost in the U.K. (Health and Safety Executive, 2016, p.2). This is supported by a fellow student, who wrote:

I think burnout applies to most sectors in the workplace…it is most visible within the caring professions, however it is also well known that within banking, the technology sector … and …others… pressure when individuals are driven to perform creates the same outcomes – stress, burnout and suicide (Thompson, 2017).

Although burnout is considered a Western phenomenon, in general terms is appears to emerge in countries once they have become developed. According to Neckel et al (2017), “globalization, privatization and liberalization cause rapid changes in modern working life…which…can produce burnout”. They also conclude that
symptoms may vary from “psychological distress to a medically diagnosed incapacity to work” (p.119–124). It is hypothesized that work pressures and emotional demands are the most influential causes and even working more than 40 hours a week could increase the risks (Bakker et al, 2004; Schaufeli et al, 2009; Montero-Marín, et al, 2011). If we consider evidence that excessive stress can lead to chronic mental and physical health problems, this could present a real threat to work force productivity. It is essential; therefore, that we find appropriate long-term solutions.

Having provided voluntary coaching, I speak to officers suffering with exhaustion or PTSD and whilst support is provided, it appears that, as an organisation, we take a ‘sticky plaster’ approach. This results in individuals returning to work too soon, providing little opportunity to understand the root causes. I believe that the transpersonal perspective is relatively unexplored and could provide a more holistic approach to care and recovery (Elmer et al, 2003). This may require a culture shift and this is why EBP is key to driving the change forward. EBP is popular in health care disciplines and has more recently been endorsed by the College of Policing. According to McKibbon (1998) one of its main features is “the partnership of hard scientific evidence, clinical expertise, and individual patient needs and choices”. Alongside emerging research in transpersonal psychology, EBP could provide a relevant framework in which to introduce transpersonal techniques to the organisation.

Understandably, stress-related illness is complex and often misunderstood. A perception in my organisation is that individuals just need a few days to recover, with sick-leave being interpreted as a lack of resilience. This is not helpful and highlights the importance of improved awareness. We should also consider whether unrealistic demands are being placed on resources. As fellow student and psychotherapist, Robin Jordan observed:

I … want to resist the urge to collude with the madness …
Rather than trying to help people adapt to a world of ever competing demands and increasing workloads, do we have a responsibility (through the coaching process?) to help client be ‘authentic’ enough… to resist unrealistic demands and pressures. (Jordan, 2017)

How do individuals identify what is unrealistic for their ‘authentic’ selves? Many struggle to establish who they are, never mind what is right for them. I do not believe that Robin was referring to ‘authentic’ in this context but authenticity does raise some
interesting questions. I advocate the use of instruments such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) that allow individuals to recognise unique characteristics indicating that they are experiencing stress. However, if we transcend this layer, how can we develop authentic awareness? During a forum discussion, Jevon wrote “Authentic Self is the unobscured and unlimited aspect of who we are. He questions “Can we ever truly know and experience this? (Dangeli, 2017). According to Davis et al (2015) “people may experience spirituality in a variety of ways, including a sense of oneness, or connection with a theistic being”. Perhaps a ‘spiritual’ focus within coaching will achieve this aim, but certainly, the questions around authenticity are central to this essay and the wider debate about the validity of transpersonal approaches.

Research suggests that there are many variables that exacerbate workplace stress, including poor management, heavy workloads, time pressure and a lack of control. (Lazarus, 1995, p.4). With regards to PTSD, Yehuda (2002) postulates that it “represents a failure to recover from a universal set of emotions and reactions”. This manifests as distressing memories or nightmares, providing a heightened state of physiological arousal. An important part of the recovery is to understand the triggers for anxiety, often caused by a perception that future activities may pose a similar threat (Ehlers, 2000, p.319-345). Grof (1985) believes that stress itself is not the factor that causes health related problems; stress is merely the trigger that causes the emergence of psychological material from deeper levels of the unconscious. Healing then, may be encouraged through processing trauma at an unconscious level, allowing access to this deeper psychological material.

Dangeli (2017) interprets burnout as “the point some people reach when the values and goals of an…ordinary life do not satisfy them anymore. They yearn…to make contact with a deeper part of themselves”. Wright (2005) describes this as “a form of deep human suffering…which occurs when old ways of being…no longer work”

“Burnout is nature’s way of telling you, you’ve been going through the motions, your soul has departed” - Sam Keen (nd)

According to McBridge (1998), the spiritual core of a person is foundational and holds our internal belief system (p.2). Any crisis, therefore, which impacts upon our core could be defined as a spiritual crisis. Pre-occupation through life’s conditioning could divert attention away from our inner selves, causing us to lose connection to
important values and meaning. In the words of Michael Gunger – “Burnout happens when you try to avoid being human for too long”.

Transpersonal coaching could provide a platform to allow the process of rehumanization; peeling back the layers of conditioning and connecting individuals back to their core. Jung recognized that faith, like any other of life’s conditioning, hinder an individual’s ability to fathom a deeper understanding…making it harder to awaken to the divinity within our souls (Baring, 2013, p.245). Jung is referring to our ‘shadow’ and according to Hall (1983) if we integrate our repressed ‘shadow’ qualities we may develop as healthy functioning adults. (p.15). However, from an ethical standpoint, our ‘shadow’ may include aggressive or other ‘negatively viewed’ qualities that were repressed as a child. Should we encourage an awakening of material that may prove problematic for the client? Careful clinical management may be needed that goes beyond the remit of coaching. It also raises questions regarding our ‘authentic selves’. If as Jung postulates “the pattern of God exists in every man” (Van der Post, 2010 p.216), then does this indicate that these qualities also exist within God? This redefines the widely-held perception that we, as man, are ‘imperfect’ in comparison to an all-loving deity. If we are part of a ‘unified’ consciousness as postulated by Buddhist philosophy, then there is no separation between us and God. The variations of belief regarding our connectedness are too vast to evaluate here, but I do believe this demonstrates the vital role that transpersonal psychology has within coaching practice; if not for any other reason than to explicate points such as these.

Jung also went on to say “that this pattern has at its disposal the greatest of all his energies for transformation” (Van der Post, 2010 p.216). If we can form a greater understanding of this pattern, we may develop a framework to tap into this transformative energy, providing a gateway for clients to reconnect with their soul, in a supportive and safe environment.

Taylor (2013) postulates that trauma could cause a loss of meaning or normal identification. This could be, for example, due to physical illness or another significant event, dissolving normal life conditions. For some, they feel cut off from ‘God’ or their authentic selves. Wright (2005) describes this as “Everything (that) we once thought of as normal, valuable or certain… is suddenly thrown into turmoil”. Research established that the most frequent trigger of awakening experience is psychological turmoil (Taylor, 2012b, p.73-91). “The man who comes back through the Door in the Wall will never be quite the same as the man who went out” (Huxley, 1998, p.64). This evidence supports
transpersonal techniques that divert energy from the ‘ego’, providing an opportunity for increased psychic energy and potentially triggering a spiritual awakening. It is important, however, that we do not demonize the ego. In the words of Goswami (2012) “living in the ego and…the quantum self have to be balanced in a life focused on personal growth” (p.256)

Some researchers argue whether post-traumatic growth truly exists. Cognitive processes may allow the formation of a positive illusion to cope with a bleak future and ensure psychological equilibrium is maintained (Taylor, 1983; Taylor and Brown, 1988; Allen, 1999). I can certainly relate to the feeling of ‘relief’ once equilibrium is restored following a period of stress, often resulting in the creation of new meaning and focus. However, the perception that a ‘spiritual awakening’ is merely a cognitive illusion leans towards the materialistic viewpoint and appears to deny the potential, or even existence of psychic energy. Psychic energy forms a fundamental element of psychoanalytic theory, however, there are many critics who believe this concept to be the weakest element in psychological causation theory (Rosenblatt, 1970). Jung (1989) supported this theory, but moving away from Freud’s interpretation, he stated “I wished no longer to speak of instincts of hunger, aggression, and sex, but to regard all these phenomena as expressions of psychic energy” (p.234). He believed this energy to be comparable with other manifestation such as heat and light, with its differing levels of intensity. This allows a more unified approach without the need to focus on a particular category e.g. libido. According to Gray (2006) psychic energy is expressed through three channels, “the id (the pleasure principle); the ego (reality orientated and pragmatic) …; and the superego (the moral channel), whose goal is the ideal… and… strives for perfection”. Psychic energy theory could provide objectives within coaching practice, allowing individuals to obtain a new perspective to tackle longstanding problems. Transpersonal techniques may allow this to occur at a ‘spiritual level’ opening access to creative solutions.

According to McBridge (1998) there are no available models to integrate all aspects that cause concern, for example, physical, mental etc. they tend to be dealt with individually (p.2). Ericson-Liman & Ahlin (2017) believe that interventions to constructively address stress of conscience are also rare. Transpersonal techniques may provide a solution and according to Walsh and Vaughan (1980) transpersonal psychology is "concerned with expanding the field of psychological inquiry to include the study of optimal psychological health and well-being" (p.16). We may not need to focus on one particular area; alternatively, we may allow clients to expand awareness through alternative conscious states in order to find their own solutions. As discussed,
stress can manifest due to a variety of issues and breaking down each element could prove difficult. Transpersonal psychology could help expand current understanding; providing complementary methodology, as opposed to replacing other types of therapy (Elmer et al, 2003, p.161).

Transpersonal psychology maintains that spirituality and associated states of consciousness embody aspects of us, which extend beyond those recognized by humanistic theory (Elmer et al, 2003, p.160). This positive approach to supporting self-transcendence towards a higher potential, may include the use of imagery e.g. visualizing future aspirations. However, Gray (2006) indicates that few people are able to realize these hopes, so may begin to experience psychic conflict or even hostile impulses. As coaches we will need to ensure we recognise and carefully manage these potential consequences.

Mindfulness has proved effective when dealing with crisis and a recent inquiry by the Mindfulness All-Parliamentary Group (MAPPG) recommends that Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy should be implemented across the NHS and Criminal Justice System. (Mindfulness Initiative, 2015). Awareness of mindful practice is expanding, which may avoid resistance from the majority of officers, who generally lean towards a materialistic view.

A similar technique, peripheral awareness was used during a study by Dangeli (2015) where he established that it played a positive role in relation to performance enhancement and stress resilience. Participant feedback suggested that this method was simplistic. For me, this provides a practical approach, easily used by officers experiencing time pressure.

Lucid dream practice could provide individuals access to their unconscious state. Jung (1989) postulates that the unconscious is a process which transforms the psyche by developing the relationship between unconscious content and the ego (p.235). ‘Shadow work’ could help individuals face their nightmares and this practice has proved to be transformational, providing powerful healing and insights for the client.

Whilst coaching is emerging as a popular approach to development, exploring the psyche at these levels means we are undoubtedly crossing over to the realms of psychotherapy. This creates ethical responsibilities, which must be considered. If we wish to achieve real growth, then utilising theories relating to human psychology is
unavoidable. For me, studying transpersonal psychology before embarking on the use of any technique is important.

In my attempt to integrate transpersonal methodology, I am likely to face resistance. Generally, people tend not to prescribe to this view unless they have experienced something paranormal or profound themselves. Even then there may be denial. Interestingly it can be an experience such as this that can lead to a spiritual crisis (Grof & Grof, 1989; Turner et al, 1995). I hope, positive feedback or improved performance will support its relevance. Rather than the 'sticky plaster' approach, if implementation of a new coaching model is successful, it could support the appointment of transpersonal psychologists across the country. Perhaps then we can start making the changes needed to ensure that the developed workforce becomes more authentic, resilient and connected.

References


Transpersonal Coaching Core Competencies

The International Association of Coaches, Therapists & Mentors (IACTM) recognizes that the nature of each relationship between clients and their coaches is always unique; furthermore, no two clients or their needs are the same. As such, for any list of core competencies to be truly “core” or fundamental, it should adhere to ethical and authentic practices in service to helping others identify and nurture their potential, to become more fully functional, and to thrive ecologically (body, mind, spirit and society).

Rather than prescribing an extensive list of skills that coaches should be competent at in their practices, the list below represents what we at IACTM have identified to be useful core competencies that can and should be applied in coaching practice.

One of the IACTM accreditation criteria that all the coaches in IACTM’s Directory are expected to be in alignment with in their professional practices is our Core Competencies. Nobody is expected to master these competencies all of the time, however each of the IACTM accredited coaches is expected to understand and apply these Core Competencies and refer to them regularly as guidelines.

We take measures to ensure that the services provided by all the IACTM accredited coaches are congruent with our Core Competencies, as outlined in the following six categories:

1. Values and attitudes

- Beneficence and non-maleficence (intent to do good as far as is possible and not to do harm intentionally)
- Non-judgmental and accepting of the client’s map of reality.
- Motivated primarily by compassionate service, rather than personal gain or money.
- Have personal qualities appropriate to role: compassion, humility, insight, integrity, etc.
- Hope and faith grounded in but not bound by realism.
- The conviction that anyone can change and that at their core, everyone has good intentions and infinite potential.
2. Inter-personal skills

- Open, honest and pertinent communication from practitioner to client is essential at all times, including how the practitioner presents their way of working to prospective clients and sets the parameters in each session.
- Active listening and acknowledging of the client’s verbal as well as non-verbal communication.
- The ability to ‘hold the space’ for the client to express themselves freely.
- A willingness, intent and ability to develop and maintain rapport with the client. This involves creating a safe and supportive environment that cultivates mutual respect and trust.
- Awareness of the phenomena of transference and countertransference, as well as being proactive in maintaining accountability, ethics (see IACTM’s Code of Ethics) and professionalism in this regard.
- Open-minded and accepting of all belief systems, cultures, paradigms and individuals.

3. Intra-personal development

- Measures to nurture one’s personal journey of growth and self-discovery.
- Actively practising mindfulness and self-awareness to enhance one’s ability to be fully present in sessions with clients.
- Keeping up to date regarding the methodologies, techniques and interventions used in one’s profession.
- Maintaining accountability for one’s intra-personal development by undergoing appropriate supervision, especially while practicing professionally.

4. Transpersonal development

- Recognition of the transpersonal phenomena that can occur in the coaching process, as well as being able to discern between these phenomena and pathologies, while responding to them with sensitivity and empathy.
- Involving oneself in personal inner explorations of the shadow, emotional and spiritual aspects of the self so that, as far as is possible, these aren’t hidden barriers in the coaching relationship with a client.
- Engage in regular spiritual practice(s) oneself, for example: yoga, meditation, prayer, journaling, going on retreat, etc.
• Join and participate in the Transpersonal Coaching & Therapy forum.

5. Professionalism

• Inform prospective new clients upfront about how you work and get agreement from them regarding the types of interactions and the realistic outcomes that they can expect as a result of the session(s) with you.
• Be client centred (as opposed to agenda or script centred). Work at the optimal pace and frequency for the client to get maximum benefit from your service.
• Clients should be encouraged to measure their own success and be provided with the means (if necessary) to do so. In this way clients can decide how long to remain in the coaching relationship.
• The coach should be able to demonstrate that they offer: fair costs, confidentiality, safeguarding of vulnerable persons, data protection, equity of access, and criteria for dealing with complaints.
• Work within the IACTM Code of Ethics.

6. General

• Knowledge and experience of a range of relevant coaching approaches, as well as their underlying philosophy.
• An in-depth understanding of transpersonal practices in the professional coaching context.
• Developing an intuitive coaching ability that integrates knowledge and skill with intuition, while being able to adapt to what is best (ecologically) for the client in the moment.
• All processes should lead to wholeness and ultimately develop the client’s accountability to hold their attention on what is important to them and to take appropriate actions. Furthermore, all processes should assist the client to be aware of the impact of any personal transformation and resulting actions in the other contexts of their life that will also be affected.
• Clients should leave each session in a resourceful and grounded state.
Books, Articles, Videos and Resources

The books, articles, videos and resources listed below are included as complimentary information and learning tools for those interested in expanding their knowledge and understanding of subjects relating to transpersonal coaching.

Books:


Articles:

Link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19349630902864275


Link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08873267.2003.9986929


Link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15401383.2013.844655

Link to this article: http://www.spiritualcompetency.com/pdfs/smjvision.pdf


Link to this article: http://www.transpersonalstudies.org/ImagesRepository/ijts/Downloads/Taylor%20Psychological%20turmoil%20as%20trigger%20for%20awakening%20IJTS%2032-2.pdf
Online resources:

Video: John Rowan on Transpersonal Psychotherapy -
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVJx5_Ybx0U

Video: John Rowan on 'The Centaur, Subtle, Causal and Non-Dual' -
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6Jo37f14P8

Video: Bruce Anderson on 'The Integral Coaching Model' -
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hR202omNxzM

Video: Linda Bark on 'The Wisdom of the Whole – Integral Coaching Model' -
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3UdFDliHLw

Videos: Jevon Dangeli's NLP training video channel on YouTube -
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R230c0Y1c7g&list=PLTjboWAPYDnI82LiyMBH_f2LrshtNm70B


More resources to come in future editions of this handbook
Transpersonal Coach Handbook Review

The following review questions form one of the assignments that participants on our Certified Transpersonal Coaching Courses are to submit.

1. Considering the content of “The Evolution of Coaching Psychology” on page 7 and “The key differences between traditional coaching methods and transpersonal coaching” on page 10; write a short paragraph in your own words on what distinguishes transpersonal coaching from ‘classic’ or ‘life’ of coaching.

2. Building on your answer to question 1, write about half a page on the value of transpersonal perspectives in coaching.

3. Read through “The Presuppositions of Transpersonal Coaching” on pages 12 and 13, then outline the value of at least 5 of those presuppositions in coaching. Write a few sentences for each of the presuppositions that you select.

4. Think about a typical issue that a person might come to coaching for and describe the steps involved when using the Transpersonal Coaching Model to help that person.

5. Describe in a few sentences the relevancy of eliciting the “trigger” of the client’s issue, as well as when and how in the coaching process you would go about eliciting the trigger.

6. Picking up on your answers to the above 2 questions, outline how you can incorporate the “3-Phase-Future-Pace” (described on page 33) and how you will bring the session to a close.

7. Write about half a page describing “Open Awareness” and its various functions in transpersonal coaching, including “Holding The Space”.

8. Write up to a page outlining the characteristic differences between psychosis and a spiritual crisis (sometimes referred to as “spiritual emergency”). Include a brief description of one or more ways in which a transpersonal coach can help clients

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through a spiritual crisis.

*For content on spiritual emergency, search the web for work in this area by Stanislav Grof (e.g. see article on p 65), David Lukoff (e.g. his [Visionary Spiritual Experiences article](#)) and other scholars.*

9. Can coaching processes lead to transformation or spiritual awakening? If so, how? Write about half a page addressing these two questions, validating your answers as much as possible through your own experience, or the experience of others, or by referring to scholarly texts including (but not limited to) the articles in this handbook.

10. If you were asked to either comment on and/or add to the points listed in IACTM’s Transpersonal Coaching Core Competencies (see pages 129-131), what would your comments or additions be?

11. In a few sentences, describe what you might imagine your metaphor as a transpersonal coach to be (e.g. change agent, gardener, transformation catalyst, spiritual midwife, container, etc.) and your reason for choosing this metaphor.
Last words

The perspectives, ability to empathise and the quality of the coach’s presence can be as important as the methods used in any coaching process. For this reason, the coaching competencies that we promote include not only the techniques of transpersonal coaching, but also the means through which coaches can add value and be of support to the client’s experience.

While this handbook features a distinct coaching methodology – drawing from the fields of Transpersonal Psychology, applied mindfulness practices and the holistic aspects of NLP – it also emphasizes the importance of not relying on a particular set of techniques or principles, but rather honing the skill of facilitating a context for transformation. This fundamental transpersonal coaching skill (known as Open Awareness) can also be thought of as holding a liminal space (open, receptive and emergent), walking the client through a transformative passage of questioning and expansion, while helping the client to reintegrate new, widened and resourceful perspectives into their lives.

Many coaching methods claim to be “client centred”, however, transpersonal coaching (TC) is the only approach that addresses the whole person by stressing the integration of self, shadow and spirit in a transformative manner. TC draws on the transcendent quality of consciousness to shift the client from ego-based problems towards spiritual solutions, yet it does so in a pragmatic way that empowers people in the contexts of their everyday lives. TC facilitates peak experiences, recognising that such states can bring forward insights that have meaning and practical applications in the area where the client wants to resolve a challenge. Clients learn how to embody their insights and anchor their new perspectives into the relevant contexts of their life. TC ultimately promotes a sense of connection with a broader spectrum of consciousness, which in turn cultivates a sense of meaning and purpose in life.

The general TC approach outlined in this handbook embraces the philosophical view described by John Welwood (2016, p3)

We are not just this relative body-mind organism; we are also absolute being/awareness/presence, which is much larger than our bodily form or personal history. But we are also not just this larger, formless absolute; we are also incarnate as this particular individual.

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If we identify totally with form—our body-mind/personality—our life will remain confined to known, familiar structures. But if we try to live only as pure emptiness, or absolute being, we may have a hard time fully engaging with our humanity.

Our Transpersonal Coaching Model is designed to help people integrate their “being/awareness/presence” with their “body-mind/personality” in order to bring their Authentic Self to life.

Reference


*Download a complimentary copy of our Open Awareness Handbook*
About the author

Jevon Dangeli, MSc Transpersonal Psychology, Certified Transpersonal Coach & Hypnotherapy Practitioner, Certified NLP Trainer, developer of Authentic Self Empowerment (ASE).

In addition to the Transpersonal Coaching Handbook, Jevon has written seven other training manuals, recorded over 30 audio-programmes and a comprehensive video series where he teaches the ASE approaches for personal, transpersonal and professional development. He’s been active as a professional coach and trainer since 2004.

At the heart of ASE is the skill of Open Awareness, which was the topic of his MSc research, and which he presented at the International Transpersonal Conference and at the Transpersonal Research Colloquium in Prague, 2017. ASE and Open Awareness are fundamental aspects of his live (in-person) Transpersonal Coaching courses, as well as the online Postgraduate Certificate Course in Transpersonal Coaching Psychology through Alef Trust, accredited by Middlesex University in London.

His desire to help people lead a purposeful life was catapulted when he survived an armed robbery at age 25. The perpetrator deliberately shot at him from close range and the bullet brushed past his ear. This near-death experience became a defining moment for him. He felt spared for a reason and after intense soul searching the reason became clear: 

*cherish each experience of your life, not because you never know when it may be over, but because each experience is valuable!*

By combining his 40 years of judo experience with his 20 years of psychology exploration and his passion to help children grow into happy, healthy and authentic adults, Jevon created the “jumi” (judo mind) concept and practice. The core objective of jumi is to develop Open Awareness and the ability to maintain it in all types of situations. He provides jumi training at various locations around the world.

Jevon lives in the alpine region of northern Italy with his wife and their 2 children.

http://jevondangeli.com

http://authentic-self-empowerment.com