

Trauma-informed coaching: A transpersonal perspective

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Abstract

Unresolved trauma has no demographic boundaries and can be passed on from one generation to another. The high prevalence of trauma throughout the world today can detrimentally affect not only the direct victims of traumatic events, but also their family, community and society, as well as how those treat others and the natural world. In Transpersonal Coaching Psychology (TCP) it is recognised that many of the issues which clients present are impacted by or influenced by trauma. How coaches can work with traumatised clients ethically is discussed. Somatic approaches in coaching and the value of embodiment practice are introduced. TCP models, frameworks and guiding principles are outlined. The importance of coaching being trauma-informed and working from a transpersonal perspective is emphasised.

Keywords: trauma, trauma-informed coaching, transpersonal coaching psychology

*“You can't go back and change the beginning,
but you can start where you are and change the ending.”*

C.S. Lewis

Introduction

Trauma is a fact of life – with devastating and debilitating effects, according to the psychiatrist and trauma researcher, Bessel van der Kolk (2015). Gabor Maté describes trauma as a disconnection from the *authentic self*, which is not necessarily the result of what happened to the person in the past, but the result of what is currently happening inside them (2022). A trauma spectrum is referred to in the literature (E.G., Scaer, 2005; Van der Kolk,

1998), based on the severity of the traumatising, with some practitioners referring to severe trauma, such as the effects of war/terrorism, physical/sexual abuse, or disaster/devastation as *big 'T'* trauma; and the less severe types, such as the effects of interpersonal conflict, bullying, humiliation, or abrupt change, as *small 't'* trauma. However, an accumulation of small 't' events, including attachment and attunement problems in childhood, or adverse childhood experiences can amount to big 'T' traumatising, understood as complex trauma (Boullier & Blair, 2018). Furthermore, the nervous system cannot always distinguish between an actual threat to physical safety, versus something relatively harmless that triggered an emotional reaction (Porges, 2011). For this reason, small 't' trauma can have a similar effect as big 'T' trauma. Moreover, the nervous system of a trauma survivor may continue to react even when there is no immediate danger. This occurs because the brain and body have not yet found a way to process and let go of a traumatic event (Porges, 2011). Transpersonal Coaching Psychology (TCP) does not distinguish between big 'T' and small 't' trauma, but rather concerns itself with how the traumatic experience is currently affecting the client's life.

In his ground-breaking book, *The Body Keeps the Score* (2015), Van der Kolk draws on research and clinical experience to show how trauma literally reshapes both body and brain, compromising sufferers' capacities for pleasure, engagement, concentration, self-control, and trust – which are among the issues that people seek coaching to resolve. He argues that trauma results in a fundamental reorganisation in how the mind and nervous system manage perceptions. Trauma changes not only how we think and what we think about, but also our very capacity to think (2015). Van der Kolk explores innovative treatments – such as those used by transpersonal coaches, introduced in this article – that have been found to activate the brain's natural neuroplasticity. He exposes the tremendous power of our relationships both to hurt and to heal. Research by Stjernswärd (2021) shows that early trauma and failures in attachment and attunement can affect future relational patterns, health, and well-being. They suggest that the processing of trauma, especially complex trauma, through adequate interventions may help integrate traumatic experiences, enhance health and quality of life. A fundamental aspect of TCP involves fostering a healing relationship with the client, based on empathy, compassion and open awareness.

Applied TCP is a trauma-aware and non-pathologizing methodology that promotes healing beyond symptom relief. This is achieved through creating a safe and receptive space in which clients can more successfully anchor their awareness in the here-and-now while connecting with their vital energy, thereby helping traumatised clients to (re)-engage in the present. Van der Kolk (2015) asserts that for real change to take place, the body needs to learn that the danger has passed and to live in the reality of the present. In addition to expanding perspectives, reframing understanding, reflecting on meaning, and inspiring new ideas and/or actions (top-down), applied TCP also involves somatic and embodiment (bottom-up) processes to support the release of blocked vital energy in the body and foster integration.

Unresolved trauma has no demographic boundaries and can be passed on from one generation to another – adversely affecting all sectors in society, including how we experience ourselves individually and our collective perception of reality (Haines, 2019; Hübl, 2020; Maté, 2022; Siegel, 2020). Due to the impact of trauma on the brain and body, as well as the pervasiveness of trauma across generations, TCP recognises that many, if not all, of the issues that clients present are the product of trauma. This article introduces how trauma-informed approaches in transpersonal coaching may support the resolution and healing of trauma on an individual and collective scale.

Evidence base informing the TCP perspective on trauma

In TCP training the importance of being trauma-informed and working in a trauma-sensitive manner is emphasised. Many resources and practice hours are dedicated to developing these competencies. Applied TCP aims to optimise the conditions for healing and integration when trauma presents, drawing from the work of Van der Kolk (2015), Schwartz (Internal Family Systems, 2021), Hübl (Healing Collective Trauma, 2020), Porges (Polyvagal Theory, 2011), Dana (Polyvagal Theory Practices, 2020), Vaughan Smith (Coaching & Trauma, 2019), Levine (Somatic Experiencing, 2008 & 2010), Haines (Somatics and social change, 2019), Maté (Compassionate Inquiry, E.G., 2022), Siegel (Interpersonal Neurobiology and attachment/attunement, E.G., 2020 & 2022), Fisher (Transforming the Living Legacy of Trauma, 2021), Scaer (trauma, dissociation and disease, E.G., 2014 & 2005), Ruppert (splitting of the psyche after trauma, 2018), and others.

In addition to the trauma related sources from above, TCP also draws from the knowledge and experience that has emerged from research and practices in the fields of Transpersonal Psychology, Jungian Psychology, and Psychosynthesis applied in coaching (E.G., Firman, 2018). Related approaches described in The Wiley-Blackwell Handbook of Transpersonal Psychology (Friedman & Hartelius, 2013) have also contributed to TCP, including applied mindfulness, breathwork, nature immersion and psychedelic assisted therapies. The methods used in transpersonal coaching have been emerging since the early 2000s through exploring, testing and synthesising essential practitioner qualities and skills, including their theories and guiding principles that foster healing and integration for individuals and groups.

One of the contributions that the author has introduced to the coaching field is based on the practice of soft martial arts, involving training to establish centeredness and resourcefulness even under the stress of dangerous or uncertain situations, which may help to curtail traumatisation. The key principles that underpin Judo have had a major influence in this practice, these being the effective use of energy – cultivating maximum efficiency with minimum effort, accompanied by an orientation toward mutual benefit and welfare (Kano, 2013). To this end, the embodiment practice of *jumi* - an acronym for *judo-mind* (Dängeli, n.d.1.) can serve as a practical resource in coaching sessions through developing mindful resilience and adaptability to change, as well as a means to support clients in post-coaching

embodiment and integration (how jumi can serve this function is discussed later in the article).

Trauma triggering and tunnel awareness

In TCP, coaches have observed that most issues presented by clients involve a challenging, confusing or painful state being triggered. When triggered, the person's attention becomes narrowly fixated on the perceived source of the trigger, or on a means to avoid/repress the state that it has activated, regardless if the person is consciously aware of the trigger, or not. Whether the trigger is expressed verbally or non-verbally (e.g., locked/distant eye-gaze, a shift in breathing, physiological contraction and/or energetic constriction/retraction), the author has identified that this narrowing of perception, understood in TCP as *tunnel awareness*, is common when triggered.

According to Polyvagal Theory (Dana, 2020; Porges, 2011), in the case of trauma victims, triggering typically evokes a state of hyperarousal (e.g., fight or flight response) or hypoarousal (E.G., numbing, dissociation, helplessness). In both scenarios, the unresolved trauma from the past – ‘there & then’ (Figure 3, p. 17) – holds the person's awareness hostage, inhibiting the flow of energy and information (Siegel, 2022), therefore impairing a conscious, creative, and resourceful response. Trauma disconnects us from the present moment (Levine, 2010). Therefore, there are potential therapeutic benefits in being able to re-open one's *aperture* of awareness – from narrow and fixated, toward being more aware and in tune with the body and its environment in the present – ‘here & now’ (Figure 3). This concept is referred to as *presencing* by Scharmer (2018), a hybrid of the words "presence" and "sensing". Similarly, the jumi *awarenessing* exercises (Dängeli, n.d.1.) utilise conscious breathing in conjunction with gentle movements to access and embody the state of open awareness – thereby helping to alleviate the effects of trauma, through enabling people to feel safe and resilient in their bodies again, and more able to regulate their level of arousal according to their actual needs in the present situation.

Scharmer (2019) asserts that when one faces a moment of disruption, such as the triggering of trauma, there are two possible responses: We can close down and turn backward [toward the past] or we can open up and lean forward [toward the future]. Applied TCP involves identifying the unconscious processes and triggers, including those that result from trauma, that underpin the client's presenting issue. It does so in a natural, client-centred, and dialogical way that makes this approach versatile and effective. Clients are helped to somatically expand their sense of self and their view of the issue. This fosters a holistically resourceful state, which the client is guided to embody and integrate into the context where they experienced the issue. The process promotes the client's capacity to live more fully in the present and to open up and lean forward toward the future that they want.

Open awareness and the window of tolerance

Helping clients to access and embody *open awareness* (OA) in the contexts where this is useful to them is one of the primary aims of applied TCP. OA also serves as a means for the coach to hold a safe and compassionate space, while walking the client through a transformative passage – involving enquiry, empathic and generative listening (Scharmer, 2015), somatic awareness and opening (Haines, 2019), followed by helping the client to integrate their new, widened, and resourceful perspectives into the relevant areas of their life. The author’s research explored the phenomenology of OA (Dängeli, 2020), revealing that OA bears the following characteristics:

- ***Introspection*** – metacognitive awareness in which we can mindfully observe mental activities, emotions, and somatic experiences
- ***Outrospection*** – heightened awareness of others and the ways that we relate to them, which cultivates empathy and compassion
- ***Envirospection*** – broad awareness of the space around us which connects us to everything in the environment and the cosmos

In the context of coaching, OA is a transpersonal perspective that is naturally *ecological* – beneficial for the client (introspection), beneficial for those with whom the client is in relationship (outrospection), and beneficial for the broader environment in which those relationships exist (envirospection). This three-way mutual benefit can be considered a *win-win-win* orientation.

Another important function of OA regarding trauma integration relates to what Dan Siegel (2020) refers to as the *window of tolerance* – a concept to describe the optimal zone of arousal for a person to function in everyday life. When a person is operating within this zone or window, they can effectively manage and cope with their emotions and stress levels. The victims of trauma often experience difficulty regulating emotions and stress levels, as their window becomes narrowed - an unconscious defence mechanism against threat (Siegel, 2020). Traumatized people are easily triggered if situations that activate a traumatic memory cause them to be pushed out of their window of tolerance. Due to their narrowed window, even seemingly minor stressors can cause a traumatized person to become dysregulated; resulting in anger, anxiety, or similar states of hyperarousal; or cause them to dissociate, become emotionally numb, or similar states of hypoarousal (Dana, 2020; Porges, 2011). OA skills such as jumi awarencing (Dängeli, n.d.1.) may help to open/widen a person’s window of tolerance. One of the author’s clients recently reported: “There is more space in my brain to think clearly [after a jumi awarencing exercise]”. Somatically, in the felt sense, one’s window opens, allowing more light and vital energy to enter the self, which fosters a sense of

clarity, vitality, and embodied mindful presence – which Hübl (2020) considers essential in the healing of trauma on an individual and collective scale.

Splitting and Disembodiment

Hyper- and hypo arousal can result in the splitting/fragmenting of the psyche, where one part relives the imprint of the trauma and another part tries to avoid anything that might remind the person of the traumatising event or activate the state associated with it (Herman, 1992; McFarlane, 2004; van der Kolk, 2015). In an attempt to cope with the painful and/or horrific imprint of a traumatic event, the part that relives the trauma typically becomes repressed, or “exiled” as per Internal Family Systems (IFS) terminology (Schwartz, 2021). The part that tries to avoid anything which might activate the trauma memory or emotion, develops coping or defence mechanisms to serve this function. It is referred to as a “protector part” in IFS.

Parts split off unconsciously, becoming somewhat disembodied from the traumatised person’s functional body-mind system in order for the rest of the system to continue functioning (Ruppert, 2018; Schwartz, 2021). This is an intelligent survival response; however, the split off parts need to be re-integrated/re-embodied for the person to heal and return to being fully functional (Levine, 2010). Failure to integrate/embody these parts may result in blockages in the person’s vital energy flow, dysregulated states, emotional sensitivity, or numbness and powerlessness (Haines, 2019; Porges, 2011; Van der Kolk, 2015). Left unresolved, trauma affects each person differently, such as the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), including flashbacks, sleep problems, feeling anxious, angry outbursts, depression, phobias, alcohol or drug misuse, addictions, obsessive behaviours, performance issues and physical symptoms such as pain and sickness (NHS, n.d.). Scaer (2005) describes how trauma can also be the cause of chronic fatigue syndrome and various maladies of the immune system. A pervasive consequence of disembodied parts involves losing touch with the flowing sensation of aliveness within and between us – our sense of interconnectedness (Siegel, 2022), which is arguably an underlying cause of many, if not all, relationship, and social issues (Haines, 2019; Schwartz, 2021). Therefore, an embodiment practice such as the one introduced below, engaged in under the supervision of a trauma-informed practitioner, may promote the re-integration of disembodied parts and foster a living experience of interconnectedness, thereby nurturing the healing process for trauma victims – individually and collectively.

Embodiment Practice

A fundamental aspect of applied TCP involves embodying and integrating expanded states of consciousness. In this way, TCP not only promotes widening and deepening one’s perception of reality, thereby more fully perceiving the interconnectedness of life, but also involves exploring ways to apply one’s expanded awareness practically in everyday life. For this reason, TCP students, practitioners and clients are encouraged to engage in an embodiment

practice. The embodiment practice example below focuses on group participation, but it can also be done by oneself, and it can be adapted to serve as a post-coaching practice according to the client's needs, which may be of particular value for clients who suffer from the effects of trauma.

Over the past two decades of experimenting with embodiment practices in groups, including both in-person and online settings, TCP practitioners have discovered that the energy of the group's collective field/consciousness may become amplified, enhancing somatic OA for most participants, and potentially enabling them to become aware of split off parts and coping/defence mechanisms that they were previously not conscious of. Hübl's work with groups (2020) has identified similar phenomena.

The following steps outline one example of a group embodiment practice that the author has developed (Dängeli, n.d.2.), which can be adapted for practising by oneself:

1. **Collective centering** – intentionally co-creating a safe and conscious participatory space.
2. **Somatic open awareness** – gentle meditative movements and breathing exercises to promote vital energy flow and an expanded sense of self – practised standing or seated (E.G., Jumi awarenessing).
3. **Somatic experiencing and mapping** – embodied witnessing and making a *somap* (somatic map) of what is alive/present in one's soma (bodily sensations, perceptions, emotions, thoughts, and behaviour).
4. **Embodied inquiry** – sharing experiences and somaps, exploring common themes and what is emerging/unfolding in the group's shared space – collective sensemaking.
5. **Integrating** – embodied journaling of one's core insight from the session, clarifying one's response to the insight, and committing to a personal embodiment practice.

The above embodiment practice example has emerged through the applied domain of TCP, involving Jumi and related somatic OA approaches. There are also other embodiment practices, such as those described by Dana (2020), Haines (2019), Levine (2010), and Van der Kolk (2015). It is important that the facilitation of any embodiment practice for an individual or a group is guided by a trauma-informed practitioner.

Transpersonal Coaching Models and Frameworks

In this section, three trauma-informed TCP models and frameworks are introduced that the author has been co-developing, along with input from other practitioners and feedback from clients since the inception of this methodology in 2002. Although these models and frameworks have been written about more extensively in the cited sources below, here they are introduced according to their relevance in trauma-informed coaching.

1. The Open Awareness Integral Process

A flexible framework used by transpersonal coaches when facilitating groups is the OA Integral Process (Figure 1) (Dängeli, n.d.3.). This is a systematic, yet completely customisable approach to help groups of any size to address organisational and global issues. It does so through the means of mindfully harnessing the group's collective consciousness, combined creativity, and energy for ecological enactment. A unique feature of this process is the co-creation of a *participatory space* — characterised by openness, multisensory perception, and a deep sense of interconnection, which in turn promotes inclusivity, mutuality, empathy, compassion, embodied presence, and co-regulation (Dängeli, n.d.3.). Trauma practitioners advocate the importance of cultivating these qualities in the facilitation of collective trauma healing, E.G., Dana (2020), Fisher (2021), Haines (2019), Hübl (2020), Van der Kolk (2015), Maté (2022), Siegel (2022), and Vaughan Smith (2019); therefore, the OA Integral Process may be considered a trauma-sensitive and healing approach for coaches who work with groups.

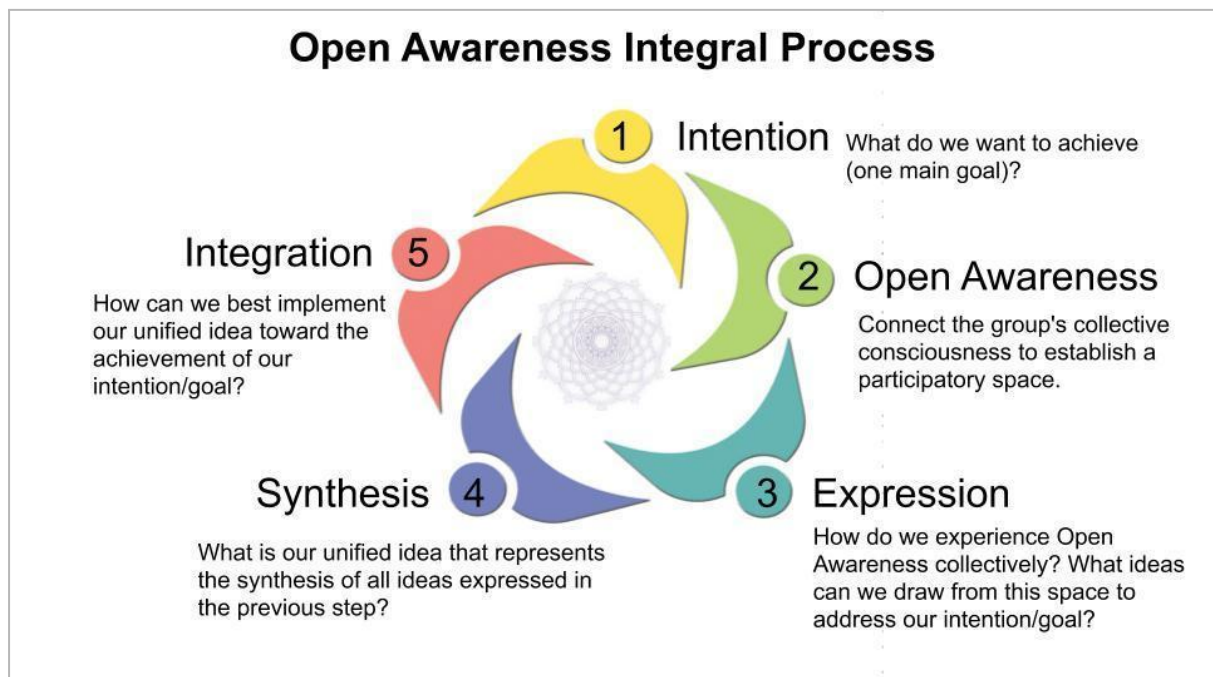


Figure 1.

2. The Transpersonal Coaching Model (TCM)

The TCM (Dängeli, 2022) (Figure 2) shares a core function with the OA Integral Process, that being a means to help clients – individuals and groups – to access and embody OA in the contexts where this is useful to them. However, the TCM also includes two distinct directions/processes that help practitioners to address a broad range of issues through this holistic and integrative coaching methodology.

In the case of trauma, the transpersonal coach identifies if the client's activated state is one of hyperarousal or hypoarousal, and the respective trigger is elicited. With the client's state as a starting point when using the TCM, in the instance of hyperarousal, applying this model in its clockwise direction is indicated. In the instance of hypoarousal, applying the TCM in its anticlockwise direction is indicated. As shown in Figure 2, the TCM is depicted as a spiral. Both directions/processes involve moving along the continuum of the spiral from the client's triggered state, toward their desired state and new response. The segments of the TCM serve as optional steps – with each one providing an opportunity for exploration and insight. The coloured layers of the spiral indicate the overlapping levels on which the process can focus – as per the client's response on each step. Naturally, there may be instances in which both hyperarousal or hypoarousal manifest in the coaching process, in which case both versions of the TCM can be applied in a single coaching session, or over a series of sessions.

An in-depth discussion of these directions/processes is beyond the scope of this article, but comprehensively laid out in the Transpersonal Coaching Handbook (Dängeli, 2022). It should be noted that the TCM is primarily a conceptual framework – providing two complementary processes and guidelines for coaches to draw from in a manner that honours the client's needs and adapted fluidly according to their unfolding process.



Figure 2.

3. The T Model

Applied TCP also utilises a foundational framework, the T Model (Figure 3), underpinning the other transpersonal coaching methods for individual and group coaching.

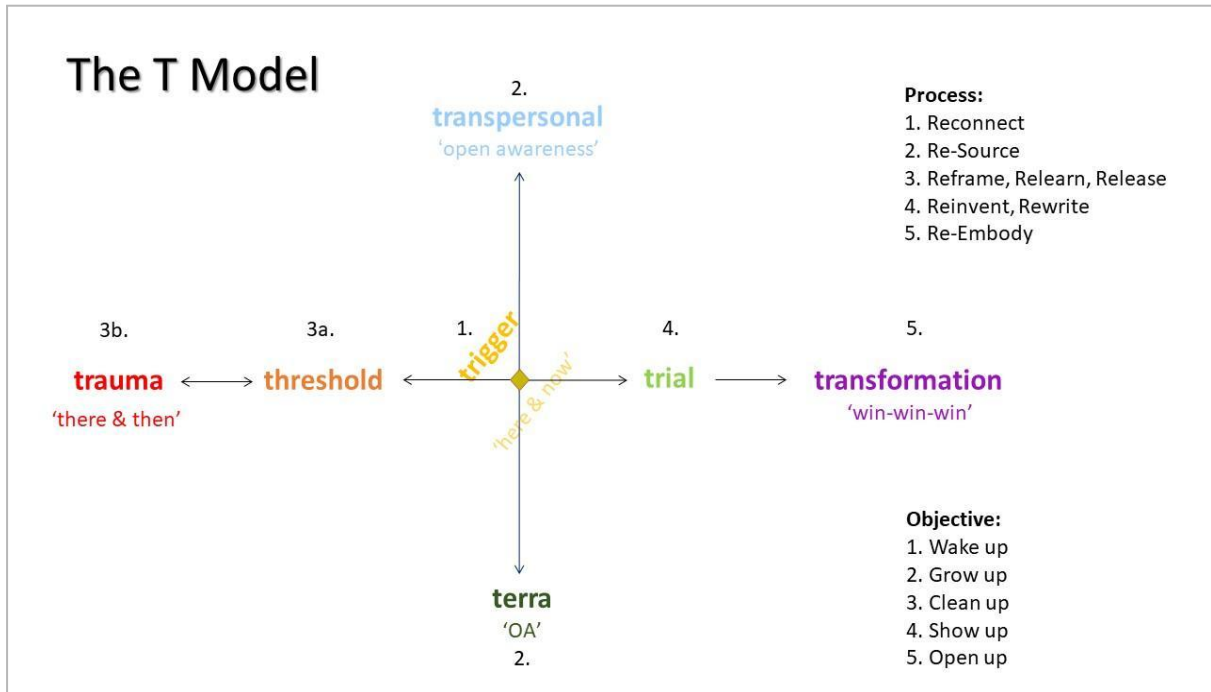


Figure 3.

The T Model includes five phases of a transpersonal coaching approach that can be tailored according to the client's presenting issue, goals, and based on what emerges for the client as their process unfolds. If identified as helpful for the client, the T Model can serve as a single coaching session structure, in which the coach can permissively guide the client to navigate and progress through their process according to the five phases of this model, as outlined below and illustrated in Figure 3:

1. The coach helps the client to consciously identify the trigger of their presenting issue.
2. The coach assists the client to access open awareness, emphasising the somatic experience of OA, to whatever extent this is achievable for the client. A subsequent aspect of the OA facilitation may involve the client establishing an overview perspective (view from above), and/or a rooted in earth (terra) perspective (view from below).
3. In 3a, through the embodied state and perspective of OA, the client can identify where their issue comes from, the part (subpersonality or shadow aspect) that has been

triggered, and the behavioural pattern that it is responsible for. The “threshold” shown in Figure 3, represents the outer rim of the client’s window of tolerance (Siegel, 2020). When trigger activation propels the client’s state beyond their threshold, either hyperarousal or hypoarousal manifest, showing up behaviourally as a coping/defence mechanism, or the enactment of a protector part (Schwartz, 2021). Through the subsequent transpersonal coaching process, the client recognises the objective of the mechanism and/or the needs of the protector part, and they are supported in formulating a new/ecological means to fulfil those needs.

Phenomena associated with 3b, trauma, may naturally occur in the coaching space if the client spontaneously accesses a traumatic memory, and/or a deep wound, and/or an emotional injury - originating from their past. This may show up as a somatic manifestation, and/or mental image, and/or intense emotion, when contact is made with an exiled part (Schwartz, 2021). In such instances, the role of the transpersonal coach is to maintain embodied presence, while supporting the client to anchor somatic OA, thereby co-creating a safe space for the client to process their experience and to release the energy of the trauma in a way that feels natural to the client. Trauma energy can be released in various ways, including emotional discharge, physical trembling/shaking, jumi *awarenessing* exercises (Dängeli, n.d.1.), or other forms of somatic catharsis (E.G., Klopstech, 2005).

4. Once the needs of the protector part are understood and the trauma energy is released (if an exiled part was accessed), the integration of the parts and of the client’s new response in the triggering situation is put to “trial” (Figure 3). This involves the client being in OA while actively imagining potential future scenarios that would ordinarily trigger them. Each successful - non-triggering - visualisation, deepens/embodies the change more, instilling confidence in the client that they can sustain their new/desired state in scenarios that used to be triggering. If the client is still triggered, this indicates that the process in 3a needs further attention, in which case the coaching cycles seamlessly back to that phase and continues forward from there.
5. Once the trigger’s former effect is neutralised and the client displays congruence/alignment with their new state, this final step in the process then involves the coach helping the client to establish an ecological (win-win-win) means of enacting their change in the relevant context/scenario, with the client committing to that enactment. Lastly, with the coach’s support, the client identifies a practice/exercise that they can engage in regularly to continue embodying their new state, thereby promoting transformation. TCP adopts a range of definitions for transformation, including:
 - A radical change that arises from deep awareness and leads to a fresh orientation and new direction (Kellog, Michaels & Brown, 2011).

- A transformation of identity accompanied by an enhanced sense of meaning in life (Hunt, 2007).
- Experiences that dissolve the understanding of self and create a new [expanded] one (Taylor, 2013).

Ethical considerations

Since transpersonal coaching utilises expanded states and perspectives, these coaching processes quite frequently enter the *grey space* – where psychotherapy and coaching intersect. Transpersonal coaches undergo extensive training in how to hold this liminal grey space with care, compassion, and open awareness. In so doing, the root causes of clients’ issues may be unveiled, including deep wounds and trauma, if that exists for the client. Conventional forms of coaching steer away from confronting those underlying issues, sometimes leaving the client feeling fragmented, confused, or overwhelmed. However, in TCP it is recognized that these phenomena cannot be ignored and that it is not always appropriate for the coach to immediately refer a client to a therapist that the client is not familiar with when they have entrusted the coach to help them. In these cases, compassionate support and guidance for integration are crucial, and this is one of the hallmarks of applied TCP. Transpersonal coaching competencies (Dängeli, 2022) involve knowing one’s scope of practice, so that it can be identified if the client should be referred for psychotherapy and/or clinical care. Being trauma-informed, transpersonal coaching can serve as a complementary modality for clients who are undergoing psychotherapy.

TCP respects the legitimacy and potential relevancy of medically unexplained symptoms (e.g., persistent physical complaints, such as dizziness or pain), as well as parapsychological/PSI phenomena (e.g., clairvoyance, telepathy, precognition, or extrasensory perception), while recognising that these may be underpinned by trauma. In mainstream healthcare, these symptoms and phenomena may unfortunately remain unnoticed, neglected, misunderstood, or pathologized (Lukoff, 2007). While it is important to identify if the client requires clinical care, it may be equally important to help the client to cope with, make sense of, and integrate their nonsensical, abstract, or profound experiences in a non-clinical setting.

TCP training involves learning how to identify the key differences between psychosis and spiritual awakening experiences (Grof, 2000), acknowledging that trauma might be causal in both instances (Taylor, 2021). In all cases, the role of the transpersonal coach is to hold a safe space while enabling the client to observe their experience from the embodied perspective of open awareness, which in turn supports the client to learn from their experiences, including those that were perhaps overwhelming or traumatising. Unlike some traditional methods in psychotherapy that may have the client enter painful memories repeatedly, transpersonal

coaches help their clients to access relevant memories and resources through the state of somatic open awareness – anchored in the present and with access to the bigger/fuller picture, by establishing an overview perspective – which, in turn, may fertilise the ground for the potential of healing, transformation and post-traumatic growth (Taylor, 2021).

Another important ethical consideration for all transpersonal practitioners, which TCP embraces, is that the practice entails being careful to not employ spirituality as a coping mechanism. Moreover, transpersonal practitioners should take measures to avoid *spiritual bypassing* (Wellwood, n.d.), which is the tendency to use spiritual ideas and practices to sidestep confronting psychological wounds, unresolved emotional issues, and developmental impairments. TCP acknowledges that it is possible for a person to be on a spiritual path and not deal with their trauma, as much as it is possible to be over-consumed with one's own individual trauma while losing connection with the wider transpersonal perspective of human existence. In general, the role of a transpersonal coach is to support clients (individuals and groups) to develop the quality of embodied presence that emanates an awareness of universal interconnectedness and, in so doing, helps them to access the necessary resources (physical, intellectual, emotional, social, psychological, and spiritual) that may optimise their inner healing potential and their outer performance in all areas of life.

Guiding principles

In practice, trauma-informed coaching from a transpersonal perspective means that coaches should:

- Recognize the prevalence of trauma, and explore its causes and effects from a systemic, collective, intergenerational, and transpersonal perspective.
- Be able to identify trauma symptoms in clients, as well as notice and feel their own trauma symptoms.
- Understand how trauma can impact the body and mind, including decision making, behaviours, and relationships.
- View the trauma response as a valid attempt to cope with the current imprint and internal experience of something that has happened to the person, rather than something that is wrong with the person.
- Acknowledge that trauma is not a curse, but an opportunity for healing, growth, and transformation.
- Undergo supervision with a trauma-aware supervisor or mentor and regularly engage in embodiment practice.

Conclusion

Trauma-informed approaches in coaching may support the resolution and healing of trauma on an individual and collective scale, by helping to neutralise the effects of trauma triggers and supporting trauma victims to feel safe and resilient in their bodies. To aid this process, the value of a transpersonal perspective in coaching, in particular applied open awareness, has been emphasised.

TCP can be understood as the theory and practice of coaching that takes a holistic and integrative approach to nurture healing and post-traumatic growth. By recognising and working sensitively with trauma when it presents in coaching sessions, transpersonal coaches can utilise somatic open awareness skills, TCP models and frameworks, as well as embodiment practice. These are all informed by ethical considerations and guiding principles to create a safe space for clients to process and potentially resolve the effects of trauma, while optimising the conditions for the potential of transformation.

Through client-centred and trauma-informed coaching, along with embodiment practice, applied TCP takes a broad-spectrum approach to help clients live more fully in the present so they are able co-create a more loving and ecologically sustainable world. Transpersonal coaching involves moving beyond mere surviving — toward thriving – individually and collectively.

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